1.0 Introduction

As is evident from the title, this introductory chapter will deal with several crucial aspects. For the sake of a clear understanding of the issues, we have divided it into three parts.

The first part will discuss briefly the term ‘education’ and its function/role in society, precisely in social mobility, specifically in a country like Bangladesh. The second part will provide a brief overview of the present structure of education system in Bangladesh. And in the final part we will delineate a picture of the position of English in this education system.

It needs to be clarified at the onset that the discussions of the first section will be important to apprehend later how the education system like the one in Bangladesh has been fundamental in manipulating stratification and power relations in the Bangladeshi socio-cultural setting for long English, being a prime part of this system, has had substantial role in this regard. In fact, public attitudes and outlook towards education in general, and towards English in particular, have been shaped in terms of this deep-rooted legacy.

1.1 Education and society

In plain and simple words, education can be defined as ‘the process, beginning at birth, of developing intellectual capacity, manual skill, and social awareness, especially by instruction’ (The Wordsworth Encyclopedia, 1995:704). Education, in a restricted sense, has been further defined as ‘the process of imparting literacy, numeracy and a generally accepted body of language’ (ibid).
Eminent social scientists, like Emile Durkheim, propagate the value of education in terms of these definitions. He points out that the human society is based on a kind of homogeneity which exists among its members, and education perpetuate and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands. He also says that, in order to become attached to society, the child must feel in it something that is real, alive and powerful which dominates the person, and to which he also owes the best part of himself and therefore education provides this link between the individual and society.¹

The school, being the first and foremost gateway to formal education, represents the society in miniature,² and a model of social system. As we shall see later on, in complex industrial societies, the school serves a function that cannot be provided merely either by the family or peer groups.³ In a school, the child has to interact with other members of society according to some fixed rules. Thus by respecting the school rules the child learns to respect societal rules. And he develops the habit of self-control and restraint because he needs to restrain himself in the society.

In the light of the above arguments, it is evident that education does two things to people. On the one hand, it teaches the individual specific skills necessary for his future survival, and on the other it is his initiation into the austerity of duty and responsibility.

Progressive liberal thinkers and educationists of the Western societies appreciated the role that education plays in modern democratic societies. Their views, may be summarized as follows. Education fosters personal development and self-fulfillment. It encourages the individual to develop his mental, physical, emotional and spiritual talents to the full. By providing free schooling for all, education gives everyone an equal opportunity for developing these capacities and talents. Increasingly both the educational system and industrial democracies operate on meritocratic principles. Academic credentials are awarded on merit in a system of fair competition. In the same way, jobs are awarded on merit, and there is a strong relationship between educational attainments and occupational status. Since schools provide equality of opportunity for all members of society, regardless of their
position in the stratified system, a more ‘open’ society and therefore a higher rate of social mobility will result. The expansion of education will also reduce inequality in society (Haralambos, 1999: 174).

Many of the reforms in the education system of Western industrial societies have been directed by these liberal ideas. Though the liberals admit that schools have yet to fully realize these ideals, they are of the firm belief that their plans are moving in the right direction.

However in comparison with the Western industrial societies, the societies of developing countries and societies with traditional values are yet to see such type of applications. The reasons are manifold. Firstly, in such societies (like Bangladesh), there exists a rigid system of stratification where class inequalities are the major hindrance for progress. Secondly, these societies suffer from an inordinate load of traditions where the gulf between the rich and the poor has been widening.

Due to these two basic factors, one finds that in such developing societies, unlike the industrial liberal/open societies, the system of education is hardly considered as a major social institution. Even if it is considered as such, there are no feedback in this regard.

Hence, we see that, unlike the modern industrial societies which are increasingly based on ‘achievement’ rather than ‘ascription’, on ‘universalistic’ rather than ‘particularistic’ standards which apply to all its members, the developing societies are lagging far behind as far as human rights are concerned.

In these societies, the opportunities for education are neither equal nor open to all. There exists a definite hierarchy of educational institutions with respect to the standard and quality of education imparted by them to the students. On the one hand, there are public schools equipped with modern facilities and qualified staff, and on the other, there are ill-equipped schools with less or non-qualified staff, both in cities and villages. Moreover, the heavy concentration on educational facilities in the urban areas is on the increase, and consequently the maximum number of dropouts at all stages continue to belong to the lower strata of the society. A similar disparity of standards exists between certain colleges and university departments, and between one university and another.
Let us now focus our attention on the schools. According to Parson, schools (are supposed to) instill two major values—the value of achievement, and the value of equality of opportunity. By encouraging students to strive for high levels of academic attainment and by rewarding those who do, schools foster the value of achievement itself (ibid: 175). He explains that, by placing individuals in the same situation in the classroom and so allowing them to compete on equal terms in examinations, schools foster the value of equality of opportunity. These values have important functions in society as a whole (ibid).

But unfortunately, these functions of the schooling system have seldom worked in developing societies, like many other aspects. What one finds in schools of such societies is the neglect of fundamental learning skills. Many do not complete high school, spending dreary years in classrooms without purpose and enjoyment—dimly comprehending a fraction of what is taught. Consequently, it is not surprising that a fair portion of the high school students fail in the secondary Board examinations. Those joining the Higher Secondary level, in addition to their meagre and inadequate skills in various subjects, are further handicapped by their weaker knowledge of English.

Most of the students failed by the schools and colleges are predominantly from the poorer strata of the society—as mentioned earlier. Their parents/limited educational backgrounds and incomes cannot substitute or compensate for the education system's gross neglect of their children. The chances of an average intelligent child remaining in school is very meagre if s/he is not favoured by factors like parental social status, economic support, suitable place of residence and so on. These are by themselves highly inhibiting and restricting variables operative in the developing societies as far as one's chances of education are concerned.

The cumulative educational experiences of the minority of middle and upper class students are entirely different. They begin with a significant educational headstart well before they join school. There are many deficiencies in the non-government and English medium schools they attend. But in terms of achieving the skills required for external examinations and other purposes, they do a far better job than the students of government schools. Any deficiencies in their examination-oriented learning at any stage of school education invites the immediate attention of
parents, tutors or coaching classes. They are not concerned about merely getting pass marks in the examinations. They and their parents are fraught with anxiety about whether or not they will perform brilliantly.

This very attitude of the ‘well-off’ parents and their children has been responsible for perpetuating the situation of inequality. It can be understood through a simple description. The privileged children want to achieve ‘brilliant’ results, and that desire is not restricted to getting high percentage of marks only. In fact, the result is not ‘that brilliant’ if the student does not secure a position in the merit list. This makes the parents go to any length regarding their children’s ‘proper’ education. Sending children to ‘effective’ coaching classes, managing four or five private tutors for them are parts of the parental activities. And consequently their children have to undergo ‘no play’ ‘less sleep’ ‘some TV’ and so on. In such a context, when these kids come out with outstanding success, one may wonder to whom the credit needs to go – students or teachers or parents or education system. And one may further wonder whether these bookworms have become ‘knowledgeable assets’ or have remained mere ‘studious burdens’ of the society. Nevertheless, ultimately when these rich/semi-rich privileged students proceed to hold key-positions in various domains, and the poor continue to lag behind, the class-based segregation of the overall education system becomes abundantly clear. So how far does the education system play its role as an important avenue of economic and social mobility for disadvantaged groups remains a pertinent question. As regards Bangladeshi society, literary/formal education still remains a monopoly of the upper strata.

1.2 The education system of Bangladesh

Admittedly, the present education system of Bangladesh inherits the legacy of the previous Pakistani era’s educational structure, which was in turn, influenced by the British colonial system of education. Of course, in course of time the system underwent several reforms. But if one goes in for a thorough contrastive analysis of this present structure with those of the earlier ones, especially of the Pakistani regime, one would hardly find any fundamental differences.
1.2.1 A brief background

Till the turn of the 19th Century, i.e. in the British period, there existed Sanskrit tols, vernacular schools, old scheme madrasahs and Anglo-Bengali schools etc. There were partly primary, partly secondary, but fully neither (Sharfuddin, 1968: 195). The then education system has been referred to as ‘make-shift compromise’ (ibid).

With the growth of popularity of English education, secondary education as a category was thought of. And one finds that Zilla (district) schools, established in the third decade of the 19th century, were the forerunners of the secondary education. The entrance examination of the past marked the end of the secondary stage. But ‘entrance’ meant entrance to higher education. Matriculation replaced the entrance. But this change was simply a change of nomenclature (ibid). Substance remained as it was. The critics of the system presented two points against it. Firstly, the adoption of English as the medium of instruction was termed as a weakness of the system. And secondly, the system lacked balance because it was not articulated with an adequate element of scientific and technical education.

There were cries for reforms from various quarters, but the outbreak of Second World War destroyed the possibilities. Later Sir John Sargent, the then Educational Adviser to the Government of India, came out with educational reforms for the subcontinent—which were known as ‘Sargent Scheme’. But the partition of India came as the greatest setback in this regard (ibid).

Then in the initial period of Pakistani regime, the old problems not only remained, but also got complicated due to various issues coming up in social, cultural, religious and political domains. The problems of education multiplied but solutions were dilatory.

Before 1947, the secondary education was under the control of the Kolkata (then Calcutta) University. The University of Dhaka (then Dacca) had no connection with it at any time. The Dhaka Board (controlling authority of Secondary and Higher Secondary education in Dhaka) too had limited jurisdiction. Hence for the time being secondary education was in a vacuum. But shortly, an ordinance removed the gap by reconstituting the Board.
The secondary education faced another challenge from within. The teachers of secondary schools all over the country were mainly educated Hindus – most of whom migrated to India during and after partition. The sudden withdrawal of such a large number of trained personnel shook secondary education to the foundation. Furthermore, the influx of the non-Bangali Muhajirs created a problem of language teaching requiring new pattern of secondary schools. The creation of Pakistan also caused a major problem. The Bengali Muslims, lagging behind their Hindu counterparts, found an opportunity to uplift themselves. Hence, more students came to schools from the hitherto downtrodden Muslim community. The cumulative effect of all these developments brought about the need for expansion of education. At the time of partition the then East Pakistan inherited 1,306 secondary schools and a few hundred trained teachers which was too inadequate for the prevailing need, not to speak of reforms or better education.

This is, then, a brief account of the situation during and after the emergence of Pakistan. The major reforms started right after that –through the first and second five year plans of the government. As a direct result of the plans, the number of secondary schools increased considerably. English was abolished from the primary stage. But the drawback of the First Five Year Plan (1955-60) regarding education was that, it put too much emphasis on university education and neglected the base. It was like a pyramid upside down (ibid: 198). Thus the system needed a thorough overhaul. The ‘Commission on National Education’ was set up consequently in 1959. It needs to be mentioned that prior to that, East Pakistan Educational Reforms Commission, set up under the then Chief Minister of East Pakistan Ataur Rahman, submitted its report in 1957.

However, the Commission on National Education was the first major milestone in the country’s educational system shedding off the British colonial structures. The Commission recommended that secondary education should be organized as a separate academic and administrative unit, and the curriculum, besides the compulsory subjects, should include some additional subjects to prepare the students for a definite vocation. Apart from this, a programme of diversification of courses and accelerated development of junior, secondary and higher secondary
schools was to be undertaken. Simultaneously, upgrading of curriculum and training of teachers were also in progress.

Nevertheless, it did not take very long to set up the well-known ‘Commission on Students’ Problems and Welfare’ in 1964 – more popularly known as ‘Hamoodur Rahman Commission’ (as it was headed by Justice Hamoodur Rahman of the Supreme Court of Pakistan). The Commission mentioned several reasons as to why it had to be constituted. One such reason was that the Higher Institutions of Learning (i.e. the Universities), which had been given extensive powers by the previous National Commission on Education, were ‘authoritarian’ and as a result misused their powers. (Report of the Commission, 1964:5). Also, the standards of teaching and examinations were distressing. The report basically dealt with students’ problems, teachers’ dissatisfactions, tutorial system, teacher-student relationship, moral education, student organizations and some related issues. It did not suggest any radical departure from the existing education policy (ibid: 192). The attitudes and reactions of the people in East Pakistan towards this Commission were interesting. The Commission categorically mentioned that there was a ‘general suspicion’ in East Pakistan against this Commission and neither students nor teachers were inclined to take its work seriously.

The years that followed were full of political turmoil with mass movements, oppressions, arrests and so on. The military head of the government had to step down as the new military ruler took over in 1969. Finally in 1971 the country witnessed one more separation and Bangladesh emerged as a free nation after a nine month long war of independence in 1971.

The newly independent country then faced the uphill task of nation-building. Reforms and restructuring process started in all spheres, and education being a crucial area was of prime importance. On July 26, 1972 the National Education Commission under the Chairmanship of eminent scientist-educationist Dr Qudrat-e-Khuda was formed. Some of the important reforms recommended by this Commission were (a) the duration of Primary education must be raised from five years to eight years and must be made universal, (b) the free education that was prevalent from class one to five must be made compulsory by 1980, and compulsory education up to class eight must be introduced by 1983 (Bangladesh Education
Commission Report 1974: 26). The stage between class nine and twelve was to be regarded as the secondary stage, and consequently the higher secondary colleges were directed to open classes nine and ten, and not start degree classes (pass course). This secondary stage was to be regarded as the ‘terminal stage’ of education for most of the people, and a ‘preparatory stage’ for the meritorious few for higher education. For this purpose education was to be divided into two main categories after class nine—vocational education and general education (ibid: 37). As regards the medium of instruction, Bangla was proposed to be made compulsory till class twelve, and hence textbooks of higher levels were to be translated at government expenses. English, as we will see later on, was to be abolished till class five—but because of the necessity of English, a modern and developed English language teaching system was to be introduced from class six to class eight in order to enable students acquire the skills compulsorily (ibid: 15).

There were numerous proposals for re-structuring all other avenues as well. However, the Commission’s recommendations were hardly ever implemented due to the change of political system in 1975. From then on various small and large scale committees and commissions have been formed, they submitted their reports too, but very little progress have been made. Some may even argue that no progress has been made at all. At different points of time, some reforms were made but those have not had any substantial impact on the overall education system.

The latest major activity regarding the education system was done in 1996 when the present government appointed a ‘National Committee on Education Policy’ comprising 56 members which published its Report in 1997. This Committee basically revived the recommendations of the 1974 Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission, making several adjustments and modifications in terms of the present day situation. The Report is yet to be passed by the Parliament.

1.2.2 The mainstream education system

The mainstream education system of Bangladesh may be broadly categorized 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 subject-wise 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 conducted by the ‘Thana (sub district) Education Officer’. Merit scholarships are awarded to the successful students. There are two grades of scholarship – talent pool 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] (Bangladesh Educational Statistics, 1995).

Primary education in the government primary schools is free.
a.1. Pre-Primary Education

Some formal arrangements for pre-primary education are found in urban areas. This does not fall within the public education system. There exist 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.

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. Class-wise annual examination is held and promotion to next higher class is given only if a student gets the 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 five such Boards having their headquarters in Dhaka, Comilla, Jessore, Sylhet 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 SSC and HSC levels. The examinations 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 papers 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: Jahangirnagar University in Savar, Dhaka; Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) in Dhaka; Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet; Islamic University of Bangladesh in Kushtia and Khulna University in Khulna.

Besides these, there is a good number of private universities, (as per ‘Private University Act No. 34 of 1992’ passed in the parliament on 9.8.92) functioning in Dhaka, Comilla, and Chittagong — which offer 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 equipment used for teaching and research purposes at 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 setups 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 Universities or Degree colleges or professional colleges according to their abilities and aptitudes. 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.]

1.2.3 Technical education

Technical Education in Bangladesh is organized in three phases, viz. Certificate, Diploma and Degree.

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

Polytechnic Institutes and Monotechnic Institutes 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:


Technical Institutions, managed by the Technical Education Directorate, are affiliated to the Technical Education Board for Examination purposes. Besides, the Institute of 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 Institutes where a 2-year course for a Diploma in Extension Work is given after the SSC.

1.2.4 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.

1.2.5 Madrasah education

Madrasah Education offers traditional 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 (High 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 for 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 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.

1.2.6 **Tol education**

There are about 200 Sanskrit and Pali institutions in Bangladesh. These are known as Tols and 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 *Chotspaadi* 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.

1.2.7 **Homeopathic education**

After HSC a student can join Homeopathic Medical colleges for a give 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, recognized by the Government, gets grant for all promotional activities of Homeopathic Medical education.
1.2.8 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 as well as 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 was 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 literature including teacher’s guides have been printed for free distribution among the students and teachers. The Radio and the Television also arrange regular teaching programmes in accordance with the approved primers and follow-up literatures.

1.3 The place of English in the education system

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

But this status of English in the curriculum has undergone frequent changes not only since independence in 1971, but also since the creation of Pakistan. Let us take a glance at the ups and downs English has undergone in Bangladesh since the East Pakistan days.
1.3.1 English in the curriculum: The ongoing saga

The controversies and confusion regarding the position of English in the education system has been, by and large, prevailing since the post-partition period. In the British colonial days, the picture was different. There was no constant controversy with respect to English as the medium because of the fact that both the Western learning and the British rulers existed to make things happen in favour of English.

As Professor Zillur Rahman Siddiqi, a renowned educationist pointed out

English was already there, since the British were already there. But the system of education, the choice of Western learning came after bitter controversies. Once the choice was made, English was entrenched, since there was no question of imparting Western learning in the medium of any of the Indian languages, modern or classical.

(Siddiqi quoted in Sharfuddin, 1968: 145)

Therefore, we need to view the English issue after 1947. At the time of the British rulers' departure, the education system was 'firmly geared to English' (ibid). However, in Bengal, the medium for the matriculation examination for most students were already Bangla. Immediately after the independence, the demand for the adoption of national languages (in both wings of Pakistan) both in administration and education became popular.

As far as education was concerned. The main formulation of our aims came in the form of Report of the Commission on National Education.

(Salek, quoted in ibid).

The Commission, popularly known as Sharif Commission, recommended English to be compulsory from class six to class twelve where English literature should be given less importance. Also highest emphasis in English teaching should be given in classes nine and ten. On the question of the place of languages in school curriculum, the Commission opined in paragraph 54 of section (iv) in chapter III:

The amount of time we give to the teaching of a language should be in direct relation to its usefulness to the individual and our society. The greatest amount of time must, therefore, be given to the national language and to English.

The Report also suggested that English be taught in the first university year to all arts and science undergraduates in both ‘Pass’ and ‘Honours’ courses.

However, the Report came under ample criticism from academicians. Specially many said that there was

No evidence anywhere of the fact that the Commission was aware of the malaise from which the teaching of English suffered, the fact that in a generally weak school education, there were a few specifically weak spots and English teaching was one. It did not clarify how the functional nature of English could be stressed. Also it failed to provide any reason why it recommended maximum emphasis on English in class nine and ten, instead of classes six and seven.

(Siddiqi quoted in Sharfuddin, 1968: 149).

The Report created dissatisfaction among the general public and academicians, especially in East Pakistan. This was one of the reasons behind the formation of the Hamoodur Rahman Commission in 1964.

The Hamoodur Rahman Commission found ‘no problem’ in the fact that Bangla was the medium of instruction at the primary level (Report of the Commission on Students’ Problem and Welfare, 1964:19). The Commission, in an elaborate analyses of the issue of medium of instruction, did not object to the use of Bangla and Urdu as the medium in school education in East and West Pakistan respectively. Rather it recommended that

Provision should further be made for school institution and examination in both these languages, wherever warranted by a sufficient number of pupils/guardians making this demand.

(Commission’s Report, 1964)

It also recommended that at the intermediate and the pass degree level in arts subjects

an institution may be allowed to teach and a student may have the option to answer his examination papers in either of the national languages (i.e. Bangla and Urdu) or in English.

(ibid)

However, the Report highlighted the necessity of keeping in mind the international status of English from rational point of view, and stated that it would be ‘most unwise to reduce the importance of English’ since it has been serving as an indispensable means of communication between the educated people of East and
West Pakistan, facilitating an exchange of ideas as mutual understanding of matters of regional and national concern (ibid). And also for the science education in the Honours and Post-graduate levels, it recommended cautions and thoughtful planning regarding the medium of instruction. Any drastic change-over from English to the regional languages in this regard would be rather harmful as standards of scholarship, teaching and examination could be impaired.

But as mentioned earlier, the response to this Report in East Pakistan was lukewarm. Nothing constructive occurred in regard to the implementation of any of its major recommendations. The place of English in the curriculum remained as usual.

After the emergence of Bangladesh, the Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission did propose various major changes in the education system in general and in the issue of medium of instruction (with reference to English) in particular. These has been mentioned in section B earlier. Since these too had not been able to get implemented, let us rather focus on the recommendations of the latest Report of ‘National Committee on Education Policy 1997’.

According to the Report, English needs to be removed from classes one and two of the primary level. It should start from class three, and that too, through proper and standardized methods. In the secondary level, i.e. from class 9 to class 12, English should be a compulsory subject of 100 marks only the medium of instruction in all other subjects should be Bangla which has been categorically mentioned. Side by side, there is a recommendation of translating text books into English at the secondary level so that students can appear at the examination through English medium as per their wish.

However, one has to wait for the recommendations of this committee to be implemented. The following portion of the discussion bears a description of the current status of English in the education system.

1.3.2 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. 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, it had continued to be 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.

1.3.3 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 (Hoque, 1997):
1.3.3.1 Listening skills:

(a) Recognize sound differences, stress and intonation in the context of words, phrases and simple sentences,

(b) Understand commands and instructions given in simple and clear relatives,

(c) Understand simple questions asked about him/herself, friends, relatives, and

(d) Understand simple statements spoken by others.

1.3.3.2 Speaking skills:

(a) Repeat words, phrases and sentences following the teacher,

(b) Exchange greeting and farewells and to make simple introductions, secondary level,

(c) Ask and answer suitable why and yes/no questions and

(d) Describe persons and objects to take part in conversation on appropriate topics.

1.3.3.3 Reading skills:

(a) Read and recognize statements, commands, greetings, questions and answers,

(b) Identify and recognize cardinal numbers upto 1000 and ordinal number up to 12,

(c) Read and understand simple letters, paragraphs and stories from textbooks and

(d) Read instructions and carry them out.

1.3.3.4 Writing skills:

(a) To write cardinal numbers up to 100 both in figures and words and ordinal numbers up to the 12th,
(b) Recognize and use different punctuation marks,

(c) Take dictation of short paragraphs from textbooks and

(d) Write short description of objects such as a cow, a cat, a book etc.

In short, at the end of the primary level of education, students are expected to have reached 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.

1.3.4 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 carries 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 head words. 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 passage 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 (ibid).

1.3.4.1 Listening skills:

(a) Distinguish between different sounds of English and recognize 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.

1.3.4.2 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.

1.3.4.3 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) recognize topic sentences (v) distinguish fact from opinion and (vi) make simple inferences and draw simple conclusions and

(e) Recognize the functions of different punctuation and graphological devices.
1.3.4.4 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 recognize 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.

1.3.5 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 expected to acquire an additional vocabulary of six to eight hundred head words. Further, they also practise additional structural patterns mainly with conditional clauses (such as 'unless...', 'even if...', 'since...') and with model 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 for the structures and rules of the English language.
1.3.6 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 others 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 the Universities study one paper of Optional English of 100 marks (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, one’s Honours result will be withheld.

Those who opt for professional courses have to engage themselves in intensive and extensive reading. They have to undertake various types of writings 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 of Specific Purpose (ESP) — such as English for Medicine, English for Engineering, English for Agriculture etc. — with 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.

Thus, in brief, the place of English in the Education system of Bangladesh so far appears quite strong, though it is debatable how far it can be, and has been, utilized in reality. As our discussion proceeds further, we will get 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.
1.4 Introduction

English, the most widely used language of communication in the world, has a deep association with Bangladesh. However, despite its existence in the education system and its use in various official and public domains, English is not the second language (SL) of the country. Its is still a foreign language (FL) due to its very low ‘surrender value’ (i.e., lack of adequate social use as a communicative language) in the socio-cultural set up of Bangladesh.

Bangladesh inherited the English language and education through the British colonial rule in the subcontinent. For a thorough understanding of the issues and ramifications concerning this language in Bangladesh, its in necessary to take an overview of the history of English in relation to Western education and knowledge in India.

1.5 The beginning

The beginning of the introduction of English in this subcontinent can be traced back to 13 December 1600, when Queen Elizabeth granted a charter to a group of merchants in London, giving them a monopoly of trade with India (Kachru 1983: 19). Kolkata was founded as a commercial settlement by the British in 1690. By the early decades of the 18th century, a large volume of trade was being transacted between Bengal and Britain (Marshall 1976:1, referred to in Musa 1997:8). Bengal occupied a key area among British interests in India, and Kolkata was the focal point for contact between the people of Bengal and Britain (Musa, 1997:9). The trade relations between these two linguistically different communities gave rise to a language contact situation.

However, this contact had been limited from 1690 upto the battle of Plassey in 1757. The language situation during this period was unstable. It was as if a situation of pidgin arose for discourse among two speech communities (ibid).
But English became an essential tool for trading partners in the business circle of Bengal right after the battle of Plassey. The contact between the British and the Bengali developed as a result of establishment of warehouses, law courts and other institutions, and hence the demand for English in a section of the community increased tremendously. However, in the absence of any administrative assistance to learn English, some expatriates and natives started English schools in Kolkata and adjoining areas to impart a communicative skills in English (Musa, 1997:10). The natives also realised that a knowledge of English would be necessary for maintaining status and influence in the new capital Kolkata.

The British rulers were hesitant to provide Western education to the natives. They took nearly eight decades to introduce English education in this subcontinent. Although Charles Grant, one of the directors of the East India company, wanted English to be introduced in official business as early as 1792, the Company administration in India were not in favour of the idea (Musa 1997:9). In 1872, there, was an attempt to add two clauses to the Charter Act of the year for sending out school teachers to India which encountered severe opposition in the Board of Directors, resulting the withdrawal of the proposal.

Instead of teaching English to the natives, the Company established Fort William College in 1800 in Kolkata to train Company officials in Indian vernaculars, laws and customs. The administrators of the company were busy consolidating their trade and power. They were least concerned about the education of the natives.

1.5.1 Role of the Christian missionaries

The Christian Missionaries had a significant role in spreading English education throughout India. Their role was supported by their real mission of spreading Christianity and converting the natives. Because of this prime reason they needed to teach English to the natives. They also undertook research in vernacular languages in order to translate the Bible into indigenous languages. It was the missionaries who first established English schools and introduced Western education in India (ibid:11).
The missionary efforts started in 1614, but became more effective once they were allowed to use the ships of the East India Company. In 1698, when the charter of the Company was renewed, a missionary clause was added to it. But in 1765, the situation changed again, and the encouragement of the missionaries was stopped (Kachru, 1983:19).

William Carey, who had come to India in 1773, in defiance of the East India Company’s ban, established the Baptist Mission College at Serampore. He then started his missionary activities and the work of spreading education (Banerjee et al, 1957:13). Other church organizations too engaged themselves in similar activities.

The missionary schools played a major part in creating an eagerness to learn English. Student flocked in growing numbers at these schools. The Indians thus started to set up schools in different parts of Kolkata. There were also some ‘free schools’ giving English education. The desire for learning English grew day by day, so much so that schools were being founded in other districts. Books for learning English were so much in demand that the School Book Society sold over 31,000 English books in two years (ibid).

1.5.2 English education: conflicts and controversies

The introduction of Western education was never devoid of conflict. The social elites of Kolkata were divided in their opinions as to the necessity of English education. Consequently, a social controversy called the ‘Anglo-Oriental Controversy’ arose (ibid: 10).

A petition was presented to Warren Hastings in September 1780 by a considerable number of respectable Muslims for the establishment of a ‘Madrasa’ in Kolkata, to which he agreed. He could thus assure himself of a regular supply of Muslim law officers.

Similarly, a Sanskrit College was founded in Benaras in 1792 at the recommendation of Jonathan Duncan, a British resident there, with a view to endear the government to the native Hindus (Ibid: 4).
The Indian bourgeoisie opposed these policies feeling that they would be excluded from access to social, economic and political advancement as a result of such policies (Pennycook, 1994:75).

Raja Ram Mohan Roy, the most distinguished Indian of that time, was the first to speak against Government encouragement or Oriented studies. In a letter to Lord Amherst, he protested the government plan to establish a Sanskrit College in Kolkata. He wrote:

We are filled with the sanguine hope that the sum would be laid out in employing European gentlemen of talent and education to instruct the natives of India in Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, Anatomy and other useful sciences which the nations of Europe have carried to a degree of perfection... We find that the Government are establishing a Sanskrit school under Hindu pundits to impart the same knowledge as is already current in India...

(quoted in Banerjee et al 1957:19)

There was also the same controversy among the ruling class. William Adam, who was appointed in January 1805 to survey vernacular education in Bengal, stated that English language could not be the universal instrument for imparting Western education in millions of villages in Bengal (Banerjee et al 1957:21). Apparently, a General Committee for Education in India was set up by the government. The Orientalists in the Committee were Shakespeare, Princep, Macnaghtenand and Sutherland. The Anglicists were Bird, Saunders, Bushby, Trevelyan and Colvin. The president of the Committee, Macaulay, was leader of the latter (ibid:18). Macaulay’s education Minutes were passed on 2 February 1835 in spite of protests from Princep who termed them as ‘hasty and indiscreet’ (Kachru 1983:21 -27). The Minute on language says:

...It seems to be admitted that the intellectual improvement of those classes of people who have the means of pursuing higher education can at present be effected by means of some language not vernacular amongst them. What shall the language be? One half of the committee maintain that it should be English. The other half strongly recommended Arabic and Sanskrit. Which language is the best worth knowing? It is impossible for us with our limited
means to attempt to educate the body of the people. We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave to refine the vernacular dialects and to render them fit vehicles for conveying western knowledge.

(quoted in Banerjee et al 1957:22)

Macaulay’s Minute espoused a selective and elitist approach to education. It ignored the education of the masses and rejected to native languages (Sridhar 1989:19). Mecaulay understood that it would not be possible to educate all members of the society (Pennycook 1994:78), nor was it the intention of the British colonial policy. In fact Macaulay followed the exact line which his authorities desired to implement. The colonial masters wanted to use education as a tool for generating knowledge of their own country as more ‘advanced’ and ‘superior’ in this regard. This they wished to do with the expectation of preparing not only a more aware workforce [that was needed to function properly], but also a group of obedient people who had awe and respect for their masters Macaulay’s urge and search for Indian-blooded and Indian-coloured ‘Englishmen’ was just a normal reverberation of the colonial’s mindset.

Nevertheless, Macaulay’s Minute was the first major language policy which had a profound impact on the teaching of English and other languages in the subcontinent for a long time to come.

A more liberal and rational language policy was promulgated by Governor General Sir Charles Wood (Sridhar 1989:19). On 9 July 1854, Sir Wood sent the Court of Directors of the East India Company a Dispatch. The Dispatch attempted to allocate complementary roles to English and vernaculars.

In any general system of education, the English language should be taught where there is a demand for it; but such a instruction should always be combined with careful attention to the study of vernacular languages of the district, and with such general instructions as can be conveyed through that language.

(Bhatt and Aggarwall 1969:8, quoted in Sridhar 1989:19)

Despite the clear cut role which Wood assigned to the vernaculars, the emphasis on English continued unabated. The vernaculars were taught only at the
elementary level and could be omitted altogether if the pupil desired (Sridhar 1989:19). The sad state of vernacular education did not go unnoticed by the Saddler Commission (1872). The Saddler Commission noted:

We are emphatically of the opinion that there is something unsound in a system of education which leaves a young man, at the conclusion of his course, unable to write or speak his mother tongue fluently and correctly.


It recommended the use of vernaculars at the primary and secondary stage and advocated the retention of English as the medium of instruction for all subjects, except the classical and vernacular languages. Although these recommendations resulted in the introduction of vernaculars as compulsory and optional subjects in some universities, English continued to occupy its privileged place as a tool of advancement (Sridhar 1989:20).

Three important events occurred during the period. In 1837, Persian was replaced by English as the official language of law courts. In 1844, it was declared that when Indians were recruited to government posts preference would be given to those who had received English education. According to Wood’s Dispatch, three universities—one each at Kolkata, Bombay and Madras—were established. Three in Punjab, Allahabad and Dhaka were also established. The importance of English grew with the establishment of colleges and universities. At the beginning of the 20th century, English got firmly established as the academic and official language of India (Kachru 1983a: 23). This state of affairs continued till the British left India in 1947.

1.5.3 Why English eventually came

However, regardless of the role of English in today’s world and our legacy of English inherited from the British, one needs to assess the prevailing views as to how English came into our lives. There are usually two views regarding the introduction and spread of English by the British. These are:

1) English was imposed on the Indians by colonial rulers in order to destroy and eliminate local languages and indigenous cultures.
2) The sole purpose of introducing English was to produce clerical staff to serve the interest of the colonial rulers.

Historians and academicians, by and large, disagree with the former view as they propound that the British had no intention to educate the Indians in Western knowledge. It was not the British who wanted to introduce English, rather the local elite demanded it (Pennycook 1994:76). There was a conscious effort on the part of the British to teach English selectively to certain groups of people in terms of their own interest as would have been done by any colonial ruler.

It is also true that there was a dichotomy or ambivalence in British language policy – the promotion of education in local languages was as much part of colonialism as was the promotion of English...the denial of access to English may have been as important for colonialism as the insistence or English.

( ibid: 74)

However, that the Indian elites themselves wanted quality Western education through the medium of English can be apprehended by the instance of the founding of Hindu College (later Presidency College). These is no denying that the establishment of Hindu College was the first major gateway to liberal Western knowledge. And this gateway was deliberately created by some Indians. On 20 January 1817, Hindu College was established by some eminent citizens of Kolkata with Sir Hyde East, the then Chief Justice of Supreme Court, as the patron. Sir Hyde, in one of his letters, gave the background story of the establishment of Hindu college. He wrote:

About the beginning of May, a Brahmin of Kolkata (Raja Rammohan Roy)... well known for his intelligence among the principal native inhabitants... called upon me and informed me that many of the Hindoos were desirous of forming an establishment for the education of their children in a liberal manner as practiced by Europeans of condition and desired that I would lend them my aid toward it by having a meeting held under my sanction... The meeting was held at my house on the 14th of May 1816 at which 50 and upwards of the most respectable of Hindoo inhabitants of rank and wealth attended ... when a sum of nearly half a lack of rupees was subscribed and many more were promised ...All expressed themselves in favour of making the acquisition of English language a
principal object of education together with its moral and scientific production.

(Banerjee et al 1957:9)

While giving evidence before a Parliamentary Committee in 1853, Alexander Duff said that English education was in a manner forced upon the British Government, it did not itself spontaneously originate it. There were two persons who had to do with it, Mr. David Hare and Raja Ram Mohan Roy (ibid).

Also, one can take into account the fact how the Treatise of Charles Grant was rejected. In spite of its influential role in the Parliament, it was opposed on the ground that England need not impart her education India as she had lost her colonies in American by doing so (Sinha, 1978:27).

These type of numerous instances along with the fluctuating policies of the British proves that English did not arrive in India willingly. But eventually it turned out to be the only vehicle for socio-economic uplift and political empowerment of the people of this subcontinent.

1.6 English in the Pakistan era

After political independence came to this subcontinent and Pakistan was created in 1947, English retained its importance in Pakistan as the language of wider communication (LWC) among the provinces.

Pakistan consisted of two wings: East Pakistan and West Pakistan – which were separated by 1500 miles of Indian territory. According to the 1951 census, about 99% of the population of East Pakistan spoke Bangla. In West Pakistan, Punjabi was spoken by 67.08%, Pushto by 8.16%, Sindhi by 12.85% , urban by 7.05% and Baluchi by 1.29%. Due to this multilingual situation, English had to be the prime lingua franca of internal communication in Pakistan. Politicians, government officials and businessmen used English for official purposes, business correspondence and interwing communication (Musa 1996:66-7). According to the 1951 census, 3.12% of the total population of Pakistan had some command of English (ibid).
Bangla, being the dominant language in the Eastern wing, was the mother tongue of 56.4% of the total population of Pakistan. Urdu was the mother tongue of only 3.27% of the total Pakistani population. But the controversy regarding the national official language (NOL) soon erupted with the Central Government’s attempt to introduce Urdu as the sole state language of Pakistan. The advocates of Urdu made determined efforts to accord it the new official status while keeping English as the interim official language. Their logics were: firstly, Bangla was spoken in one province only while Urdu was widely known and understood by people of all provinces; secondly, Urdu was close to Islamic tradition than Bangla, language derived from Sanskrit. The Urdu-Bangla controversy in Pakistan was also tied to education and employment opportunities (ibid: 68). Bangali politicians and leaders insisted on the democratic right of the people of East Pakistan. But policy planners of Pakistan, especially Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the creator of Pakistan, were in favour of a ‘one state one language’ official policy model ( ibid).

In a public meeting held on 21st March, 1948 in Dhaka, Jinnah clearly expressed the opinion that the State Language of Pakistan would be Urdu, and those who tried to oppose it were enemies of Pakistan (ibid:20). But when he voiced the same opinion the next day at a convocation held at the Dhaka University, the students strongly protested. The State Language Action Committee was soon formed (ibid:71). Conflict over the language issue with Central Government went on and became an emotional issue for all Bangalee Pakistanis who felt that their culture and tradition were at risk. Their passionate resentment led to a series of turbulence, and ultimately in 1952, a massive movement took place in Dhaka. It has been known as the Language Movement since then. This resulted the death of a number of Dhaka University and Medical College students who are still revered and honoured by Bangladeshis across the globe. However, this incident was responsible for a realistic language policy formulated by the Central Government. Under the 1956 constitution of Pakistan, Urdu and Bangla were given equal status as the state languages (ibid:75) English was retained as the interim official language for an initial period of twenty years for all sorts of official uses. The constitution of 1962 confirmed this arrangement.
English thus kept operating as Pakistan's high level lingua franca for all practical purposes. It kept on operating as the working instrument for almost all government affairs and for intercommunication between the two wings, for the superior courts of law, federal politics, business and commerce, major industrial and development projects, and for education. And due to this factor, English underwent frequent reforms regarding its position in the curriculum Education Commissions were engaged in formulating new policies as to how English could be effectively taught and handled as a functional second language. The situation was quite similar to that of India, as English had to be the LWC in terms of the socio-politics-geographical realities of the country. Since 1947, the education system of Pakistan has been the subject of critical appraisal on numerous occasions. In 1947, the All-Pakistan Education Conference made comprehensive suggestions concerning educational reforms 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 proposals 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 made by such bodies as the Advisory Board of Education, the Council 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 reforms by many foreign missions and experts (Government of Pakistan, 1960) Although a plethora of proposals was made for educational reforms, few concrete steps were taken and little progress was made in the 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 business-like and initiated reforms. In December 1958, the Commission on National Education was set up for the purpose of review, reorganization and reorientation of the educational structure and its objectives. The Commission dealt with all aspects of the nation’s existing
education system and spelled out in its recommendations broad guidelines laying the foundation for its reconstruction. A great deal of attention was devoted to what was considered to be the most critical stage of education – classes 6 to 12. The Commission called for the development of a new English curriculum based on realistic objectives and national needs. It also emphasized the necessity of introducing new and 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, reorganised the entire secondary curriculum in the light of the entire objectives and general principles outlined by the commission on National Education. A new curriculum in all subject areas, including English, emerged out of the curricula. They were introduced in Pakistani 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. The recommendation of the 1958 Education Commission concerning the replacement of outdated and ineffective instructional procedures was made in 1962, but the situation in this area remained unsatisfactory as ever. The proposal could not be implemented due to a variety of social, political, economic and psychological factors stemming from the colonial post, as well as the ongoing politic-economic structure of the country.

Nevertheless, what mattered most was that, the controversies surrounding the status of language in the education system perpetuated, and very little could be done to bring and any sound and systematic English language policy.

1.7 English in independent Bangladesh

The emergence of Bangladesh as a monolingual country in 1971 drastically changed the context of English language. In 1972, Bangla was constitutionally declared as the state 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. The use of Bangla was being emotionally propagated by section of intellectual and professionals in the one hand, and English kept enjoying its status as a prestigious communicative language in some major sectors, like higher
education government services, banks, courts and so on. One can find interest in what Professor Rafiqui Islam, a renowned Professor of Bangla at the University of Dhaka, remarked at a seminar in 1982:

One might be amused to find that the national language of independent Bangladesh is not 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 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 seminars and symposiums, while Bangla is the national language of public meetings. Professors’ national language is English, but the general students have Bangla...

(quoted in Shahed, 1998)

This situation prevailed for quite a long time amid heated debates in favour of and against English from every corner. The protagonists of Bangla held their own views which can summarized as follows.

Our fascination with English stems from our colonial hangover. Since we have been under colonial rule for a long stretch of time, our mentalities remain slave-like. We are ashamed to use Bangla names for our own products. Though our banks established in the Pakistani period have Bangla names (e.g. Sonali Bank, Janata Bank, Agrani Bank), the banks established after independence bear English names (e.g. City Bank, United Commercial Bank etc). Same is the case with insurance companies – we like to have ‘Peoples Insurance Company’ ‘Phoenix Insurance Ltd’ etc. All this because we keep in mind that English is synonymous to modernism. The Universities established after independence, like the Shahjalal University of Science and Technology in Sylhet or the Islamic University of Bangladesh in Kushtia, started without having the Department of Bangla. Our TV programmes are overloaded with English movies and cartoons. Any nation with minimum of self-dignity and patriotic zeal would hate to act like this. Its seems indeed hard to believe that we are the ones who shed our blood for our mother tongue. Japan is a living example who attained superiority using their language, and products with Japanese names are now beating western products world-over.

The protagonists used to question as to what prevented us from undertaking schemes like translating books of higher education into Bangla, given that the
immediate post-independence era was the most suitable time for this? Countries like Thailand have done so, but why could not we?

On the other hand, the protagonists of English (not necessarily antagonists to Bangla) used to highlight the fact that eliminating English would in the long run put Bangladesh far behind in the global race. And also English should not be equated with colonial flavour any more now that we were a free nation.

Also the example of Japan should not come into our mind as Japan had been an economic super power since long – which gave them the required credentials to do away with English and manage things with their mother tongue. They have attained hi-tech superiority in Japanese medium, but could we? Where was our economic footing for that? We were one of the largest dependents on World Bank and aids of other industrial counties.

Such controversy prevailed for a long period. But it was the country’s education that suffered as a result. The impact of the controversy apparently did not allow any government to come up with an ideal and realistic language policy where the status and role of both Bangla and English would be clearly defined. Of course there were several other issues responsible for it which are discussed later in chapter 5.

1.7.1 The reasons for the loss of the status of English

It is argued that three main factors contributed to the loss of the status of English. There were:

Nationalisation of administration: The displacement of one language by another is in the historical memory of the people. The Persian language of the Mughal administration was replaced by English. And hence the logic goes that when the English administration is over, the language of administration would be changed. National administration opted for a new language of administration and accordingly scheduled the phasing out of English. Thus, Urdu in Pakistan, Sinhala in Sri Lanka, Hindi in India and Bangla in Bangladesh were established.
Vernacularisation of education: Education as a civilizing force has been emphasised time and again. UNESCO in its monograph of 1953 gave a permanent sanction for vernacular to be the medium of instruction. UNESCO declaration was very much in keeping with the educational philosophy of Europe and Western educated educators of Bangladesh and India. Tagore, Gandhi and many other national leaders advanced the vernacularization of education.

Decolonisation of society / social structure: The concept of colonial rule emerged with the political development of twentieth century Europe. The nationalistic realization of the idea was that the subcontinental life-pattern was distorted by exogenous forces. So the behaviour and values transmitted through the colonial process must be removed to enhance a new life-pattern in society. The new life-pattern demands new communication symbols. Therefore, vernacular can be the only vehicle of communication in political, economic and educational domains of the society.

In such a context, English gradually lost its status, or to put it in the right word, its 'surrender value' in the Bangladeshi society.

1.7.2 The Bangla Language Introduction Act of 1987

The ‘Bangla Bhasha Procholon Ain’ (Bangla Language Introduction Act) was promulgated in 1987 as part of the first major activity of the ‘Bangla bhasha Bastobayon Kosh’ (Bangla language Implementation Cell) set up under the Ministry of Establishment.

A Gazette Notification of 7 March 1987 issued by the government in regard to the Acts passed in the National Assembly as well as approved by the President clearly stated the following instruction under the section ‘Act No. 2 of 1987’ that, from then on in all government, semi government and autonomous institutions all over Bangladesh, it was compulsory to use Bangla in interoffice memos, legal documents, correspondence as well as in arguments, question-answers in law courts—except in case of communication with foreign governments and organizations.
It was further mentioned that, in case anyone applied and appealed in any language other than Bangla, that would be deemed illegal and ineffective. At the same time, if someone disobeyed this Act, it would be judged as an anti-disciplinary activity and legal actions would follow.

This Act ‘officially’ transformed Bangladesh into a monolingual country. As a result of the enforcement of this law, Bangla began to be used in almost every sphere of national life. Signboards and boarding in all public places, along with the nameplates of all vehicles instantly switched to Bangla.

But all these in reality, served very little purpose for the sincere implementation of Bangla in every sphere. Rather confusion regarding the use and status of English perpetuated as usual. It was because of the two straight cut facts that—first, the ‘significance’ of knowing English has never reduced in Bangladesh even a wee bit; and second, no concrete language policy was formulated to maneuver the actual need and use of English by the people irrespective of socio-economic status.

Therefore, despite the government orders for encouraging Bangla at all levels, one might interpret that the intention was not basically an honest and sincere one. Things changed just at the surface levels.

It should be taken into account that a lot of responsibility in this regard rests upon the 1972 constitutional declaration that Bangla would be the state language of Bangladesh which was ‘unspecific about English’ (Musa, 1997:15). English at that time was performing various roles in higher education, in government transactions and in legal and financial practices. The careful transitional planing that is required in case of such switch-over from one medium to another was absent. It needed a generation of competent bilinguals who could act as agents of change. Moreover, language planning for language maintenance and shifts was necessary (ibid). The example of Persian can be cited here. When Persian was replaced by English in India, there was the non-maintenance of Persian which occurred soon. This loss and non-maintenance created irreparable loss to the intellectual growth of the community. The ‘break’ caused due to lack of maintenance made Persian documents inaccessible to average intellectual and historical needs. Hence in this line, several
academicians at that time expressed their concern that a break with English might repeat the same historical consequences in Bangladesh. Therefore, it was propounded that maintenance of English in Bangladesh was a historical necessity.

That such concerns were not unfounded was proved in no time as not only the standard of English has fallen, but also the overall education system has been affected. One instance of the decline in the standard of English can be apprehended from the following report published in ‘The Daily Star’, a leading national English Daily of Bangladesh, on 7 June 1999: ‘20 percent BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) examinees get “zero” in English!’ Here it should be noted, marks less than 25 out of 100 are considered ‘zero’ by the BCS standard. The report mentioned:

A total of 3,295 or 20.11 percent of candidates appearing at the 18th BCS examination got ‘zero’ marks in English, the Public Service Commission said in its report for 1998. Five of them [Out of these candidates] have been qualified for BCS jobs, three in the education cadre and one each in health and agriculture cadres. The three in the education cadre are likely to teach English in government colleges [italics by this writer].

This may be a better indicator of the gradual downfall of English proficiency than any other instances, say of secondary or higher secondary students. Because the BCS candidates are the ones, who being the seekers of the most secured prestigious and powerful sector of service, are expected to be the better-qualified ones. This type of examples also proves how erosion in the field of education has reached its peak.

The ‘Bangla Introduction Act of 1987, was a ‘definite improvement upon the constitutional declaration of 1972 (Musa, 1997:15) in that it has included a ‘rider’ regarding the language of international communication. What it has further done is that, it has ‘disregarded the question of English language in higher education’ (ibid).

At present, Bangladesh operates internally in Bangla – from the education sector to administration and judiciary. English is used to a considerable extent only in the private sector, like the NGOs, multinational companies, private financial establishments, media and so on.

English is also the medium of instruction in the field of post graduate general and technical education.
We may have a glimpse of nature of the status and use of English in Bangladesh since the historical period from the following table (Islam and Jahan, 1999).

Table: Status and use of English in Bangladesh at different periods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Status of English</th>
<th>Use</th>
<th>Used by</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>British period</td>
<td>As a foreign but royal, prestigious and dominant language</td>
<td>Administrative, educational and commercial works, job communication between rulers and their representatives</td>
<td>Rulers, their local representatives official servants, educated people, businessmen, elites</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistani period</td>
<td>As a foreign but government, prestigious and dominant language</td>
<td>Official, administrative and business works, countrywide communication, international communication and academic works</td>
<td>Rulers government officers, educated people, professionals, businessmen and elites.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladeshi period</td>
<td>As a foreign and international but essential language of modern life</td>
<td>Partially official/government works, international business and communication higher education, research works, job in foreign companies</td>
<td>Services holders of higher or foreign offices, educated people and elites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, the following section would provide a better understanding of the issue of English in Bangladesh.

1.7.3 **Use of and need for English in Bangladesh**

English will continue to enjoy its high status as long as Bangladesh remains dependent on the donors [countries and monetary bodies] – which comprise basically English speakers (Khan, 1989). This type of realisation has been propounded time and again by numerous people in Bangladesh. And the argument in brief goes as such: Being the controllers of politico-economic power of the country, the upper and upper-middle class have been in the fore-front of all making of socio-cultural and educational units, and therefore, their interests have been automatically presented in case of major decisive issues then. When comes to language policy, and
that too regarding English, it is natural that these policy-framers would retain their interests through the enhancement for the ‘hegemony of English’

Without going deep into this argument and stir anew the controversies related to it right now (this issue of politics of language and power-relations are discussed in chapter 5), one can take a look at the present ground reality of English in Bangladesh.

There is no denying that English is used in different fields by a considerable number of Bangladeshis for various purposes. Unfortunately, the data regarding the extent of use of English are not readily available. And it is not even known what percentage of the population has a working knowledge of English.

The participants at a workshop for English language teachers, organized by Bangladesh Education Extension and Research Institute (BERRI), identified three kinds of needs for learners of English in Bangladesh. These are – social, occupational and academic (Harrison 1976:1). Since the natural medium of social intercourse among Bangladeshis is Bangla, it does not affect the student population. Precisely speaking, English has hardly any social communicative use, in other words, ‘surrender value’ in Bangladesh. People hardly use English except situational and occupational needs. If someone can use English socially he is treated as a ‘scholar’. Yet for most of the English knowing persons, they do not normally get any social opportunity to practise, or increase skills in, English. As a result, many forget the skills they had acquired (Islam and Jahan, 1999).

Occupational needs are few and can be met through specialised training. Academic needs or study skills are the ones which affect the learners most acutely. These include- reading books in English, listening to lectures and writing essays, term papers and dissertations. The Banglaization at the secondary and Higher secondary levels has affected the general proficiency in English due to which students coming to the tertiary level have been finding it difficult to cope with the English books and journals. In most cases, the quality of English used by the tertiary or even Masters level students is often far from satisfactory. The sentences spoken and written bristle with common errors. Yet, even a slipshod knowledge of poor English seems to offer better job opportunities than not (Chowdhury: 1994).
Probably due to this reason, in recent times there has been a trend of using more English as encouragement for learning English is provided both at university and at home. As more and Bangladeshi students are seeking admission into the universities of USA, Canada, Australia and the UK, the urge for acquiring English proficiency is on the rise. There has also been a corresponding increase in the number of students taking IELTS, ACCESS and TOEFL tests.

Side by side, there has been a rapid increase in the number of English medium schools in Bangladesh since independence. The total number of English medium schools in Dhaka city is near about 100. Accurate figures of the number of students studying in those are unavailable. According to an unpublished data prepared by Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics (BANBEIS), there were 17138 students in 67 such schools in 1996. But many of them are kindergarten schools, other schools prepare students for O and A level examinations of London University.

According to 1991 census, Bangladesh had a population of 109.9 million on 11 March, of the same year (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1992:1) with a literacy rate of 24.82% (ibid: 285). The literacy rate included people who could read or write Bangla only. The census did not provide any statistics about the number of bilinguals or people who could read or write English. According to a 1995 estimate, the number of people capable of using English in some form in Bangladesh was 3,100,000 (Crystal, 1997:57).

The state-run general education system is however turning out people with different degrees of proficiency in English. Their English proficiency can be classified in terms of a rating scale as follows (Carroll 1980: 134).

- **Extremely Limited users**: People who leave primary school or drop out before completing the cycle are at this level. They will possibly be able to read an address or a signboard in English and follow very simple instructions, but would not really be able to participate in communicate interaction apart from using a few set phrases. According to a 1996 statistics, primary school enrolment in the previous year was 16.6 million (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1990:6). About the same number enroll every year with a rudimentary knowledge of English.
• **Marginal users**: People who complete the secondary and higher secondary levels of education would perhaps belong to this category. A considerable number of them will be able to read simple texts and understand them, write messages and letters, but in general would have difficulty in communicating freely or exchanging information with others. This is due to the fact that most of their learning has been bookish with a large portion of which has been memorized for examination purposes and subsequently forgotten.

Secondary school enrolment in 1994 was 4.9 million (ibid). According to one estimate, the secondary education system is turning out an average of 3,80,462 S.S.C. and 1,57,377 H.S.C. qualified students who are marginal users of English (Bangladesh Bureau of Education & Information Statistics, IS 1996: 80,88). Pupils who appeared at the examinations but failed also had to learn English to a certain extent in order to prepare themselves for the examinations.

• **Modest users**: People who complete their graduation or post-graduation may be called modest users. They might have used English in different measure during their academic careers. They will perhaps be generally able to communicate, but will often use inaccurate or inappropriate language. Some of them who have an English medium background or have passed out from a private university would be more competent in English. The number of expert users (native like fluency) among them would be limited. According to a 1995 estimate, 71,306 students passed Pass Degree, 12557 passed Honours Degree and 17958 passed Post-graduate courses from different universities and colleges (ibid, 96).

Regardless of these categories of English proficient Bangladeshis, the number of users of English has been increasing gradually. Prof. Dil Afroze Qader of the Institute of Modern Language, Dhaka University sums up the reason for the present emphasis on English in Bangladesh:

The library language in this country is uniformly English, particularly at the tertiary level. Our penal code was formulated in English, and even now requires knowledge of English on the part of people studying it. Translations of academic and technical papers are few, so access to any publication made outside our country requires the reader to know English well. Even far accessing information through the internet, one of the deepest and most efficient ways of getting information in our country, one needs English. This shows clearly that far doing well academically and for
conducting one’s work well in Bangladesh, one has to depend on English even though it now has the status of a foreign language in Bangladesh.

(Qader, 1999:187)

A substantial number of students undergo graduate and post graduate studies in teacher education, chartered accountancy, cost management and accounts, business administration, medicine, nursing science and computer-oriented studies at different institutions – all of which involve English for academic purposes in various degrees.

Bangladesh Open University started a Certificate in English Language Proficiency (CELP) programme in 1999. The aim of this course is to develop a communicative proficiency in English among learners with the aid of books, taped materials and televised programmes.

Since 1997, the US Peace Corps, under the invitation of the Foreign Ministry of Bangladesh, has been running an English teaching and English teacher training programme in Bangladesh. The Peace Corps Volunteers (PCV) are all US citizens who are at first trained for 3 months in Bangla language and made familiar with the Bangladeshi culture and traditions. Living at the same economic level as their Bangladeshi counterparts, they teach and train English teachers as a ‘supplement to the governments efforts’. (Peace Corps Bangladesh, 2000). Institutions like Primary Training Institutes (PTI) of Directorate of Primary Education, Training and Resource Centres (TARC) of BRAC, leading NGO, Technical Training Centres (TTC) of Ministry of Labour and Manpower) and Secretarial Science Training Center of Ministry of Youth and Sports host the PCVs in their English training programmes.

As for the education sector, English occupies a strong position in terms of curriculum. English exists from class one to class twelve as a ‘subject’ only, not as a medium of instruction. At the graduation level (both Pass course and Honours), a 100 mark English course is compulsory in every subject. However, as mentioned earlier, the technical and medical courses are instructed in the medium of English. Books and journals in Social Sciences and Humanities are mostly in English – though there is an option for using either English or Bangla in the examination scripts.
At present there are 11 government universities (including 7 general, 3 science & technological and 1 agricultural), 18 private universities (established under the Private University Act which was passed in the parliament in 1992), 13 government medical colleges, 5 private medical colleges and 4 engineering colleges (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 1997:5-6). University enrolment stood at 1,39,813 in 1994 (ibid) compared to 52620 in 1990 (ibid, 1992:5).

Such growth in the education sector and increase in the volume of trade and cooperation with the outside world have created an unprecedented demand for learning English. Leading Bangladeshi enterprises use English in their official business. Business firms linked with international trade have to use English. Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries arranges special English courses for business executives and entrepreneurs. Major NGOs organize courses in English for their employees. Government agencies dealing with external aid and expatriate advisors need people who can adequately communicate in English. A considerable number Bangladeshi government and non-government officials, scientists, agriculturists, engineers and doctors go to Western countries every year for training in their respective fields of work. They cannot do without English for specialization.

Apart from news bulletins three times a day and a hour-long programme called ‘Music Around the World’ thrice a week, English is hardly used in radio broadcasts. The national TV channel, BTV broadcasts English news twice a day besides showing English serials two times a week. The two Bangladeshi private satellite TV channels, Ekushe TV and Channel I, however do not telecast any English news, but show English serials.

There are quite a good number of English language dailies and weeklies with substantial readership – especially in the urban areas. Among the 1601 registered newspapers countrywide, there are 128 dailies within Dhaka out of which 11 are English. Out side Dhaka there are 6 English dailies out of 233 dailies (Source: Dept of Films & Publication, Ministry of Information 1999). The readership of the three leading English dailies are around 35,000, 21,500 and 20,000 respectively ( ibid). These are quite satisfactory if one keeps in mind the vast readership Bangla dailies enjoy. There are 14 English weeklies in Dhaka with the top two enjoying a circulation of 14,000 and 12,000 respectively ( ibid).
As regards literary works in English, the percentage of publications is still not worth mentioning. To be honest, there is almost no readership for English fictions and non-academic books written by Bangladeshi writers. However, literary features and essays appear regularly in the weekly supplements of the English dailies. In contrast, publication of English books on administrative, social, political and historical aspects are gradually on the rise. But the buyers are mostly the ones who are engaged in these respective fields, who buy these for their academic or professional purposes.

From a social perspective, English in Bangladesh is mainly restricted to the urban educated class. In some western-educated wealthy families, English along with Bangla is liberally used at home as the language of normal conversation. Many of these upper-class families send their children to expensive English medium schools, and maintain an English language environment in their homes.

However, along with the learning of English in the prevailing class-ridden social milieu, these children usually develop certain false and artificial values of life; psychologically they become rootless. Let alone the works of Noble laureate Rabindranath Tagore and Rebel Poet Kazi Nazrul Islam or ‘Baul’ and other traditional songs, even any modern Bangla song or Bangla daily newspaper mean little to them – while they are enamoured of western pop-music videos, dogs shows, chat shows and car races.

For the majority, the situation is confusingly mixed. On the one hand, the absence of a definite English language policy and the dishonesty regarding Banglaization in all spheres have affected the country’s education system heavily. On the other hand, despite the gradual demand for English for Specific Purpose (ESP), the learners and public have been suffering confused states of mind – resulting in indecision about learning English. Hence, most of the people just feel or realize that English is essential, but never comprehend why (or in which way), and how to learn what type of English.

The opportunities for learning real and need-based English are pathetically limited. The good number of English teaching centres and academies seldom have qualified and proficient teachers. The ‘most trusted’ centre for English learning has
been the British Council – which has successfully developed among the public the ‘myth’ of genuine English teaching. But few people can avail of the opportunity as the fees are too high to afford. And also how far the British Council possesses the intention and ability to teach English in accordance with the Bangladeshi realities is a matter of argument.

Hence in overall terms, it means that in spite of numerous kinds of demand for English, there is no adequate delivery system either at the state level or at the private sector. 30 years ago English was the official language and the medium of education. It was the LWC. Now English is a foreign language, precisely the most essential foreign language, learnt at schools, colleges and universities unsuccessfully.

In this context, neither Bangla nor English has gained a firm footing in the education system of Bangladesh. And hence the controversies surrounding the use and status of English in the Bangladeshi socio-cultural set up prevails.

However, if planned effectively with some vision and foresight, 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.

1.8 Bangladeshi varieties of English

It would not be irrelevant to cite some instances of lexical, semantic and syntactic features of English that is used in Bangladesh – both in spoken and written forms. These deviations in many cases may be unacceptable in terms of International English (IE), but these characterize the typical Bangladeshi patterns that have emerged from the greater South Asian English context.

English in Bangladesh should be thus treated as a nonnative variety of IE. As linguists have time to time pointed out, such varieties may be regarded as varieties of English in their own right rather than stages on their way to more native-like English. Hence, viewing them as inadequate or deficient forms of English or ‘mistakes’ would be both erroneous and presumptuous (Rahman, 1990:90).
Nevertheless, it should be noted that these lexical or syntactic styles of Bangladeshi English are not so varied and vast like their Indian counterpart. It could have been so only if English enjoyed the 'communicative status' or 'surrender value' in Bangladeshi society – like Indian or even Pakistani societies.

The glossary of Bangladeshi English may be categorized as follows:-

1.8.1 English words used in different senses from IE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bangladeshi English</th>
<th>Semantic change from IE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Black</td>
<td>Used for illegal gain or buying something through unlawful means.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black money</td>
<td>Extra money earned through cheating or any illegal practice in business.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chips</td>
<td>Used for potato crisps as well as finger chips</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colony</td>
<td>Used for an area of residence [usually governmental] where all the buildings have same type of designs and colours.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Family              | i) Used for the extended family comprising parents and all relatives.  
|                     | ii) Used for 'wife' since it is considered impolite by many to refer directly to her as 'my wife'. |
| Hotel               | Used for a restaurant and not only for a place of lodging. |
| Jack                | Used for influential connection that can be used for one’s advantage. [e.g. He has a jack in the Ministry]. |
| Junior / senior     | Used to refer to people from academically or professionally previous / following batches. |
| Lower class         | Used to refer to people from lower socio-economic strata. |
| Teacher             | Used not only for school teachers but for anyone who teaches (in any discipline) |
| Ticket              | Used for stamps as well as bus/ train / plane tickets |
| Sir / madam         | Used to refer to teachers as well as administrative superiors in place of their names and little. [e.g. Sir is in the meeting]. |
| God father          | Used to refer to influential people who support and control criminals or terrorists. |
1.8.2 English words which are either uncommon or obsolete in IE but are very commonly used in Bangladesh.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bearer</td>
<td>A waiter in a club or restaurant, as well as an orderly in the office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bed tea</td>
<td>Morning tea served in bed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash memo</td>
<td>Receipt</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cent per cent</td>
<td>One hundred percent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cousin brother / sister</td>
<td>Any paternal or maternal male / female cousin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Footpath</td>
<td>Slightly-raised road side portion for walking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four twenty</td>
<td>Cheat, scoundrel or swindler (the section 420 of Indian penal code refers to cheating and forgery)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In charge</td>
<td>A person in charge of some duty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical store</td>
<td>A pharmacy or chemist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Microbus</td>
<td>A van (smaller than a minibus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragging</td>
<td>Physical punishments and invective to which junior cadets/ students are subjected by senior ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tea break</td>
<td>Interval for drinking tea plus other snacks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffin</td>
<td>Lunch in schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiffin carrier</td>
<td>Pot in which snacks and meal carried for office goers and students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tube light</td>
<td>Fluorescent light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle / aunty</td>
<td>All grown up relatives and others belonging to parent's generation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Half pant</td>
<td>Shorts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good name</td>
<td>Full name of a person (not nickname)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.8.3 Words which are result of innovation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bio-data</td>
<td>Curriculum vitae</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Car-lifter</td>
<td>A car thief</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eve-teaser</td>
<td>Boy who teases or harasses girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dhaliwood</td>
<td>Film industry of Dhaka (like Hollywood or Bollywood)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lumpen</td>
<td>Scoundrel &amp; dishonest who acts on vested interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Needful</td>
<td>Required course of action (e.g. Please do the needful)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lady smuggler</td>
<td>Reference to a smuggler who is a female.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Play back</td>
<td>To sing in the background for the cinema.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street Romeo</td>
<td>One who roams around or stands across the street to watch or tease girls.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Side hero / heroine</td>
<td>Supporting actor / actress</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.8.4 Compound words used with hyphens that differs from the IE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Words</th>
<th>Use in IE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Family-members</td>
<td>Members of the family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Match-box</td>
<td>A box of matches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welcome-address</td>
<td>An address of welcome</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1.8.5 Words of common use derived from either cultural, political or religious rituals or are results of hybrids

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bangla words</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dhooti</td>
<td>A garment worn by Hindus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gherao</td>
<td>To surround in a mass for fulfillment of demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hartal</td>
<td>Strike (bandh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kabadi</td>
<td>A game</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kurta</td>
<td>A shirt type attire</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loongi</td>
<td>A garment worn by Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saree</td>
<td>A garment worn by women</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pahela Boishakh</td>
<td>The first day of Bangla new year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Panjabi-pajama</td>
<td>A traditional outfit</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Religious words</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eid</strong></td>
<td>Muslim religious festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Buddha Poornima</strong></td>
<td>Buddhist religious festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Jammat</strong></td>
<td>The gathering of Muslims combinedly offering prayers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iztema (also Bishwa Iztema)</strong></td>
<td>The yearly massive international religious gathering of Muslims at the outskirts of Dhaka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Munazat</strong></td>
<td>Concluding prayer after the main praying ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Namaz</strong></td>
<td>The Muslim praying ritual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Namaz-e-janaza</strong></td>
<td>The 'namaz' for the departed person before burial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Puja</strong></td>
<td>Hindu religious festival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rath jatra</strong></td>
<td>A Hindu religious occasion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ramzan</strong></td>
<td>The month of fast for Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qulkhani</strong></td>
<td>A prayer gathering for the departed soul on the third day of the death</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hybrids</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Eid card</strong></td>
<td>A greeting card on the occasion of Eid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lathi charge</strong></td>
<td>Beating with rods by the police</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Iftar party</strong></td>
<td>A party arranged at the evening during Ramadan when Muslims break fast</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
1.8.6 Syntactic expressions (phrases) used in Bangladesh English which are the results of either innovation or mother tongue influence

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expressions</th>
<th>Meanings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To carpet a road</td>
<td>To macadamize or pave a road</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give someone lift</td>
<td>To drop someone to his/her destination by a car or motorcycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give lift to someone</td>
<td>To help someone come into limelight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give lift to someone</td>
<td>To help someone come into limelight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To have a soft corner for someone</td>
<td>To have a sympathy for someone favourite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To back someone</td>
<td>To support someone financially, politically or otherwise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To back something (colloquial)</td>
<td>To return something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To give examination</td>
<td>Sitting for examination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To take examination</td>
<td>Act of teachers to arrange examination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In general, these are perfect examples of how English can be used when transplanted to other cultures. When a foreign language is used to refer to one’s cultural identity, the language is automatically changed so as to able to express the thoughts of its new users. And this is how socio-historical forces determine cultural patterns according to Malinowski (1950: 396, quoted in Rahman, 1990).

Hence, these different forms of English in Bangladesh can be deemed as markers of Bangladeshi English.
In the light of this statement, Durkheim further argued about the bondage between the child and society. Society comprises groups of individuals varying in degrees. Thus he argued that there must be sufficient degree of homogeneity among the members of society for which education plays the key role. Education perpetuates and reinforces this homogeneity by fixing in the child from the beginning the essential similarities which collective life demands.

This view has been postulated by another renowned sociologist Talcot Parsons too. He said that after primary socialization within the family, the school takes over as the 'focal socializing agency'. Within the family the child is judged and treated largely in terms of 'particularistic' standards. Parents treat the child as their particular child rather than judging him in terms of standards or yardsticks which can be applied to every individual. Thus the child has to move from the particularistic standards and ascribed status of the family to the universalistic standards of the adult society. The school prepares the young people for this transition.

Durkheim argued that individuals must learn to cooperate with those who are neither their kins or friends. The school provides a context where these skills can be learned.

The Commission further mentioned in this regard that on probing, it had found that the province of East Pakistan had appointed several Commission in the previous years – all headed by High Court Judges – but none of the reports had been published. Hence one can assume that, basically due to this, a general road of disinterestedness towards such commissions (including the Hamoodur Rahman Commission) prevailed these students, teachers a public suspected that either the Government had something to hide or those reports were never meant to be something serious. Even, as this Commission assumed, the University teachers of East Pakistan regarded the Commission’s effort as 'futile exercise'.

This Commission refers to the one appointed in 1959. The view mentioned here was of Mr. K.M. Salek, the then Headmaster of the Government Laboratory High School of Dhaka. He presented a paper on Secondary Education in the East Pakistan Education Week 1966-67. In order to understand the relevance of his opinion, the time and context should be taken account of.