CHAPTER III

PEDAGOGY, SYLLABUS, MATERIALS AND METHODS–THE EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

3.1 THE SURVEY AND ITS FINDINGS:

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the three countries of the subcontinent. It was under the British rule till 1947. After Partition it became a part of Pakistan known as East Pakistan. But in 1971 it emerged as a sovereign state under the present name – Bangladesh. Until 1971 English enjoyed the status of second language as the land was a part of multilingual society both in Pakistan and in British India. But with the emergence of Bangladesh English has been reduced almost to the status of a foreign language, because officially Bengali is used in all walks of life. As a result English became overnight a language of academic study. But with the advent of free market and globalisation the need for English was felt afresh by both the young and the old alike. In the situation this study as a part of Ph.D. programme was undertaken. A field analysis was carried out in eight colleges of Sylhet region, the eastern part of Bangladesh. The purpose of the survey was to determine the status, role and function of English in Bangladesh. In addition to this, the survey aimed at presenting a “profile of needs, attitudes and motivation of its users”. With this end in view a questionnaire of the following kinds was prepared to elicit information from the twelfth class students of some eight colleges of the region.

i) Personal background – name, age, sex, parental education etc.

ii) Claimed proficiency in English.

iii) Watching and/listening to English programmes including news.
iv) Reading of English materials.

v) Attitude towards English-knowing Bangladeshis.

vi) Attitude towards the teacher of English, H.S.C. Examination, and English Text.

vii) Use of English in the class and outside the class.

viii) Opinion on the role of English.

ix) Introduction of English.

x) English as a medium of instruction.

3.1.2 Selection of Colleges:

Sylhet region has many colleges – both new and old, govt. and non-govt. located both in urban and rural areas. Since it is not possible to collect data from each and every college, some particular colleges were selected for eliciting samples. From Sylhet town itself the most prestigious college - M.C. College having co-education and two other less eminent colleges – Sylhet Degree College having co-education and Sylhet Women’s College were chosen for collecting data from urban areas. All the three colleges are government institutions where the teaching quality and other related facilities are much better than those in the non-government colleges. From rural areas especially from thana headquarters four colleges were selected. Except one the other three have the facilities of co-education. Only one-Yaqub Tajul Mahila College is meant for women only. Among them only Beanibazar College was government. T.N. Khanam College was selected from remote rural area other than thana headquarter. The purpose of such selection of institutions is to see the differences between rural and urban students in respect of attitudes, needs and motivation.
3.1.3 Informants:

Informants were randomly selected. Since it was rainy season, when the survey was conducted very small number of students attended the colleges. Yaqub-Tajul Mahila College, Beanibazar College, T.N. Khanam College and M.C. College had very poor attendance. The number of students was not more than 33. So all the students were taken as informants. There were many sections in Sylhet Degree College. Only two sections were chosen for collecting data.

The ratio of urban and rural informants was 1:1, male and female 14:11; government and non-government college students 25:19. The informants were also divided into two groups namely elite and non-elite according to their parental education. Informants with one or both parents having S.S.C. and higher degrees were considered as belonging to elite class and the rest to non-elite class. Financial status was ignored intentionally. In rural areas financially insolvent families would not generally send children to colleges. In both rural and urban areas “education is very important in lifting a family socially and financially” (Agnihotri and Khanna 1997:55). 63 per cent of the informants belonged to the elite families and the rest to the financially solvent non-elite families.

3.1.4 Problems:

While collecting data from different institutions, no major problems of any kind were faced. The only problem was that the time of data collection accidentally coincided with the time of annual examination in most of the colleges. So it was necessary to go to some colleges more than once.
Here it is worth mentioning that all the principals of both government and non-government colleges were very co-operative so much so that they sacrificed one valuable class to allow the students to fill in the questionnaire. In addition to this other teachers were also found very helpful, otherwise the task of collecting samples would have been very difficult.

Following are the findings of the analysis of the data.

3.1.5 Claimed Proficiency in English:

The claimed proficiency was measured through four statements of the questionnaire. They elicited the informant’s personal assessment of his proficiency in understanding, speaking, reading and writing English in terms of “good, moderate and little”.

3.1.5.1 Reading:

74 per cent of the informants claimed the highest proficiency in reading which was followed by writing. Only 6 per cent claimed good proficiency in speaking and 30 per cent good at listening. This is because in Bangladesh speaking and listening skills are neglected. Great importance is attached to the acquisition of reading and writing ability. Moreover examination system assesses students’ ability in reading and writing too. As a result classroom teaching is Grammar-Translation Method oriented and great stress is laid on writing English correctly. So students develop only reading and writing skills. Moreover, outside the class there is no exposure to speaking and listening to English for the learners.

77 per cent informants from elite class in comparison with 68 per cent informants of non-elite class claimed ‘good’ proficiency in reading. This may be due to the advantage they enjoyed of educated parent(s) which
the other group was deprived of. Similarly 79 per cent urban informants as compared to 69 per cent rural informants claimed good proficiency in reading because in urban areas they might have enjoyed better academic, library and parental support which the majority of rural students usually did not have. *(See Appendix II, Table 1)*

3.1.5.2. Writing

59 per cent informants claimed good proficiency in writing of English. 70 per cent male students showed a far better performance than 46 per cent female students. This may be because male students are more oriented to go in for higher studies or jobs either in home country or abroad and this would require good proficiency in English. The students from elite families and urban areas showed a better ability in writing than students from non-elite families and rural areas. This may be due to the facilities they were getting from their families and urban areas. *(See Appendix II, Table 1)*

3.1.5.3. Listening

Only 30 per cent students claimed 'good proficiency' in the area of listening comprehension. This poor result may be because of the lack of exposure to spoken English. 35 per cent male students in comparison with 23 per cent of their female counterparts had 'good' listening comprehension. Such positive achievement on the part of the male students may be due to the fact that male students are more exposed to English programmes on TV, radio and cinema than the female students. That the students from elite families, urban areas and government colleges showed a higher positive tendency towards 'good listening' than their counterparts may be because in urban areas there are facilities for watching English
cinema, films in halls and by satellite connection which have virtually opened the world of English before the urban people.

Interestingly 71 per cent females as against 55 per cent males, 66 per cent students from non-elite families as against 60 per cent students from elite families, 70 per cent rural students as against 54 per cent urban students and 70 per cent non-government college students as against 57 per cent government college students claimed ‘average’ proficiency in listening comprehension. This is quite the reverse of the proclaimed ‘good’ proficiency tendency. (See Appendix II, Table 1)

3.1.5.4 Speaking

It has the lowest proficiency claim. Only 6 per cent students claimed their proficiency in speaking as ‘good’. This poor proficiency score may be due to the fact that Bangladesh is a monolingual state and English is learned as an academic foreign language subject. 9 per cent male students as against 1 per cent female claimed ‘good’ proficiency in speaking. Male students do not have any hesitation in speaking English if they know it, whereas in conservative society like that in rural Bangladesh a female is likely to hesitate in speaking English in public. They may be troubled by the fear that their conduct of speaking English may be considered a sign of modernity. They may also be haunted by the thought of being laughed at behind their back if they speak English. 38 per cent claimed their proficiency in speaking as average and 59 per cent as little. (See Appendix II, Table 1)

3.1.6 Watching and Listening To English News on TV and Radio.

25 per cent students claimed that they watched English news on TV regularly and 67 per cent occasionally and 7 per cent never. 33 per cent males in comparison with 16 per cent females watched TV news regularly.
Such poor number of TV news watchers may be due to the fact that there is Bengali TV news which is more intelligible to them than the English news. Moreover people are not interested in BTV (Bangladesh Television) as it does not present the events of the day faithfully. So it lacks reliability. This is why at the time of news most people often switch it off. The same is the case with the radio also.

There is much lower number of female TV news watchers than the males. (See Appendix II, Table 2(a))

Only 41 per cent students watched English film on TV. In urban areas, 50 per cent urban students in comparison with 32 per cent rural students and 46 per cent government college students (90 per cent of them were from urban areas) in comparison with 34 per cent non-government college students watched TV films regularly. (See Appendix II, Table 2(b))

3.1.7 Watching English Cinema

Only 4 per cent informants went for English cinema. Interested students could watch English films at home on the cable TV. Further, there is hardly any cinema hall in rural areas except in some thana headquarters and these few halls do not generally show English films. 93 per cent female students claimed that they never went to cinema (See Appendix II, Table 2(c)).

3.1.8 Reading English Novels, Dailies and Magazines

Only 1 per cent informants read English novels often and 44 per cent read sometimes. This poor percentage may be due to the lack of competence in English. In addition, English books on literature are hardly
available in the market of the region and if available they are prohibitively costly.

Another reason of such negative attitude towards reading English books on literature is parental pressure. Most of the parents think that if their children read novels they will not be able to give much time to the study of their prescribed textbooks on syllabus. This is why they often discourage their children from reading literature including English novels. (See Appendix II, Table 3(a))

Only 8 per cent read English dailies. In rural areas only 2 per cent students in comparison with 15 per cent urban counterparts read the English dailies regularly. Similarly 2 per cent non-government college students as against 13 per cent government college students also read the English dailies. Obviously, very few rural families subscribe to English dailies. On the other hand, many families in towns and almost all government colleges buy English dailies. So interested students can have an easy access to English dailies. It is already mentioned that most of the urban students have a better foundation in English than majority of their rural counterparts. This is why these students have no problem in understanding the news in English, whereas rural students may not have similar competence in English.

The same is the case with English magazines also. (See Appendix II, Table 3 (b&c))

3.1.9 Watching and Listening to Sports-Commentaries on TV & Radio

39 per cent students listened to English sport commentaries. Since sport – commentaries were not available in Bengali in case of international games, 48 per cent male students and 29 per cent females always listened to English commentaries. The number of female students was lesser than
that of males because girls are usually not much interested in sports and games. 47 per cent urban students as against 32 per cent rural informants listened to commentaries regularly. The reason of higher number of urban students than rural students may be due to the fact that English commentaries of sports and games are available through satellite channels. This facility usually exists in urban areas. In addition to this, people of urban areas are more interested in international games than the rural people. So more urban students listen to sports commentaries in English than their rural counterparts. (See Appendix II, Table 2(d))

3.1.10 Attitude towards English-Knowing Bangladeshis

For measuring this attitude four statements were given and each was followed by a three point scale ranging from ‘agree-to disagree’.

The overall attitude of the students towards English-knowing people of the country was positive.

38 per cent students agreed that English-knowing Bangladeshis were progressive. 15 per cent disagreed and 44 per cent refrained from passing any comment. The reason for being neutral as well as antagonistic to the statement may be attributed to the fact that now in Bangladesh a lot of atrocities are being done by highly educated people in the name of religion to women and writers who are in favour of female emancipation and who want to shake off the shackles of superstitions. These informants might have also found a lot of highly educated people turning into fanatics. (See Appendix II, Table 4(a))

36 per cent students agreed with the statement that English-knowing people of Bangladesh were callous to their own culture. That may be because most of the English-knowing Bangladeshis they found were less religious and less adherent to native traditions and customs. Most of them
were more inclined to English songs, English music and above all English way of life.

It is generally found that majority of the males are more inclined to traditions and customs than females. So, 43 per cent of the male students as against 27 per cent of their female counterparts accepted the above statement. Moreover males are sort of custodians of their traditions. They are, therefore, more conscious of slight departure from their native culture. (See Appendix II, Table 4(b))

Regarding the honesty of the English knowing Bangladeshis only 6 per cent students were convinced of their dishonesty.

71 per cent students from elite families as against 63 per cent students from non-elite families, 76 per cent students from urban areas as against 60 per cent rural students and 75 per cent students of government colleges as against 58 per cent students from non-government colleges were sure of the honesty of English-knowing Bangladeshis. There may be two reasons for this opinion. Firstly, all these students might have their parent(s) or close relatives as English-knowing. They knew them thoroughly. So from their own experience they held these positive views about the English-knowing people of the country. Secondly, they might know them as dishonest but since they were their dear and near ones, they did not like to degrade them in public eyes by disclosing their dishonesty. (See Appendix II, Table 4(c))

3.1.11 Motivation

About 98 per cent students from all categories e.g. male and female, urban and rural; students from elite and non-elite families and government and non-government college claimed they could communicate with outside world in English and 97 per cent from all categories claimed that they
needed English for higher studies. 92% students from all categories claimed that English made them knowledgeable persons. And 82 per cent students from all groups also claimed that English added to their prestige and personality. Only 10 per cent maintained neutrality and 7 per cent contradicted it. The reason of their disagreement may be that in the monolingual context of Bangladesh, English according to them was not that much important as it had been during the British and Pakistan periods. They found that many people having very poor or no knowledge of English became great public leaders, rich businessmen and many others became socially eminent and commanded great public respect as much as the English-knowing people of the country. From all these circumstances they might have drawn the conclusion that knowledge of English is not essential to enhance one’s prestige and personality. (See Appendix II, Table 5 (a,b,c&d))

But in fine it can be concluded that motivation for learning English in both urban and rural areas is very high.

3.1.12 Opinion Regarding the Introduction of English at Primary and Secondary Stages:

Regarding the introduction of English in educational institutions options were given for introduction of English from class I to X. Largest number of informants were for the introduction of English from class I. The scores of options for other classes were below 10. None were for the introduction of English after class VI. The highest score for class I may be due to the fact that almost all of them had English in their class I. Another reason may be that they were aware of the importance of English in today’s world. 78 per cent female students as against 53 per cent of their male counterparts were in favour of English in class I. This female support may be due to the boost given to th female education both by the government
and NGOs working in Bangladesh for the upliftment of women. Now girls are coming out of their traditional shell. These female informants realised that English education was essential for full emancipation of Bangladeshi women. This is why they were in favour of introducing English in class I. 72 per cent from elite families as against 51 per cent students from non-elite families favoured the introduction of English into class I. The reason of their option for class I may be attributed to the fact that these informants from elite families were more aware of the social prestige and economic affluence which their families were enjoying for having English knowing member(s). On the other hand students from the non-elite families might not be that much aware of the privileges enjoyed by the English-knowing people of the society.

The reason of contradiction regarding introduction of English at Primary level may be attributed to the fact that the students might have thought that introduction of English in earlier classes of Primary school would be extra-burden for the small children who were already loaded with a lot of books on different subjects. Another reason may be the dearth of competent teachers. The vast majority of the teachers especially in rural areas are only S.S.C. holders who are miserably poor in English. (See Appendix II, Table 6 (a))

3.1.13 English as a Medium of Instruction

Regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction four stages of options were given. 28 per cent students did not express their opinions. Only 10 per cent students opted for English at Primary level. Such low scores for Primary level may be attributed to the fact that English as a medium of instruction would be too much for such young children. Another reason may be the dearth of competent teachers of English. 16 per cent female students as against 4 per cent were in favour of English
medium of instruction in Primary schools. The reason of female support for Primary school may be the same as the reason for their support for the introduction of English in Class I. 29 per cent students thought of English as medium in High Schools. This was the highest score. The reason for this may be that the students of High Schools are considered more mature than those of Primary schools. So they, in the opinion of the informants, were capable of coping with a foreign language. 19 per cent students opted for English medium at the H.S.C. level and 14 per cent at degree level. These informants might be careful of the age of the learners and advantages of instruction in English medium. Further they might have thought that Primary and Secondary education should be in mother tongue for the rapid spread of education. As a result a child will acquire his/her mother tongue more or less perfectly. And if English became the medium of instruction at lower levels the students might be incompetent in all the skills of their mother tongue (the standard variety). (See Appendix II, Table 6 (b))

3.1.14 Attitude towards English:

In order to measure the attitude towards English five statements were given, each followed by a measuring scale ranging from 'agree to disagree'.

95 per cent students agreed that English was an international language. 67 per cent held that English was a popular language in Bangladesh. Only 13 per cent contradicted it and 18 per cent neither agreed nor disagreed. This contradiction and the neutral position may be attributed to the fact that the respondents were staunch supporters of Bengali. They might want Bengali to be used in all walks of life. They might have thought that English would stand in the way of the spread of Bengali. (See Appendix II, Table 7 (a&b))
Only 7 per cent students were in favour of abolishing English in the country. This small opinion also needs to be accounted for. This small fraction of students might be filled with nationalist fervour. Perhaps they think Bengali is rich enough to be the vehicle of instruction at all levels of education. Another strong reason for this idea may be that in schools and colleges English teaching-learning is not satisfactory. So, among the failures 90 per cent students fail only in English in both S.S.C. and H.S.C. Examinations. It is a great loss for the nation as well as for the concerned families. Moreover English has created a division in the society e.g. English-knowing privileged class and non-English-knowing non-privileged class. The former class enjoys prestige, power and wealth and the latter class is deprived of this. And the ludicrous thing is that in Bangladesh society English-knowing people are regarded as more educated and more honourable than others. For all these reasons some students with class consciousness agreed with the statement asking for abolishing English. On the other hand, because of the advantages of knowing English as mentioned above 83 per cent students of the elite class as against 77 per cent students from non-elite families, 87 per cent students from urban areas as against 75 per cent rural students and 86 per cent students of the government colleges as against 74 per cent students from non-government colleges disagreed with this statement. (See Appendix II, Table 7 (d))

91 per cent students were in favour of English as a compulsory subject. In the present day of globalization and free market these students were aware of the importance of English. Any job either at home or abroad requires now the knowledge of English. Since education is job oriented and for career building, it should include English. Perhaps according to these students, if English is made compulsory they could learn it better and prepare themselves for shouldering the future responsibility for earning bread and butter. (See Appendix II, Table 7 (e))
3.1.15 Attitude towards English Text

Measuring students’ attitude towards English text four statements were provided with each followed by a measuring scale ranging from ‘agree to disagree’.

55 per cent students agreed to the statement that there was a great dearth of suitable texts at H.S.C. level. The present text was introduced during Pakistan period (before 1971) and is still in use. At school levels (Primary and High schools) up-to-date texts have been introduced and are revised from time to time. But in case of H.S.C. level no efforts have been made to prepare a text in keeping with the changing theories and methods of language learning and teaching and the needs of the society.

63 per cent males in comparison with 37 per cent female respondents thought that the present text was not suitable. Since they had to shoulder the future responsibilities of maintaining a family, they wanted to equip themselves for the task. They might have found that the present text was good only to pass the examination and not for learning English. Since most female students were seeking a certificate by any means, this text provided them a good opportunity for achieving their goal. That is why a large portion of them was not against the present text. 34 per cent female students as against 20 per cent of their male counterparts kept mum. It is already mentioned that urban students are more aware of the advantages of learning English than the rural students, so 62 per cent urban students as against 48 per cent of the rural students thought that there was a dearth of suitable English texts for H.S.C. level. They might have found that the present pure-literature oriented text had failed to equip them with all the language skills. (See Appendix II, Table 8 (a))
As to the statement – the present text was difficult for the students to follow -23 per cent agreed and 46 per cent disagreed. Only students with a weak foundation in English found the present text difficult to follow. 51 per cent students from elite class as against 35 per cent of their rural counterparts did not find the text difficult. (See Appendix II, Table 8 (b))

As to the statement that students cannot enjoy the writings of Shakespeare, Maugham, William Wordsworth, Coleridge, Browning etc. 87 per cent students agreed. Only a small number of students – 7 per cent from elite families, 8 per cent urban students and 7 per cent from government colleges and 4 per cent from non-elite families, 3 per cent from rural areas and 4 per cent from non-government colleges said that they enjoyed the works of these writers. The success may be due to their family support and their own efforts. In addition to this, they might have a strong base in English. (See Appendix II, Table 8 (c))

Here some contradiction is noticeable. In the case of difficulty of the text, only 23 per cent of the students found it difficult and 30 per cent of them remained mum. But in the case of above statement regarding their enjoyment of the works of these writers 87 per cent students expressed their view that they could not enjoy them. The difference of percentage between the two cases remains quite inexplicable.

81 per cent students were in favour of the continuation of the present text. Again here a contradiction is noticed. Though 87 per cent students found many pieces of the text by famous writers of English as difficult, 81 per cent agreed to the continuation of the text. The reason may be that majority of the students were not motivated to learn the language. In the case of the present textbook, students did not necessarily have to understand the text for passing the examination because some common questions are set every year in the examination. They can easily select
those common questions and memorize the answers. And they also succeed in passing the examination. For this reason many students did not feel the necessity of attending English classes. Moreover the market is full of cheap guides, notes and suggestions which give 100 per cent guarantee of preparing answers to the questions expected in the examination. So the present text stands for maximum result at minimum labour for most of the students. It may be because of this that 91 per cent female students, who very often kept themselves absent from the classes, in comparison to their 73 per cent male counterparts wanted the present text to continue. 86 per cent students from elite families as compared to 72 per cent students from non-elite families were in favour of the continuation of the present text. (See Appendix II, Table 8 (d))

3.1.16 Attitude towards the Number of Students in the English Class

67 per cent students were in favour of small English classes. In Bangladesh both government and non-government colleges suffer from an acute shortage of teachers of English and some colleges also from accommodation problem. In big colleges generally the number of students in English class is 200 plus. So students sitting at the end cannot hear their teacher. Moreover, in such large class the teacher does not and cannot invite questions from the students. So most students prefer small classes. 70 per cent from non-government colleges as compared to 56 per cent students from government college preferred small class. It is already mentioned that most of the students of non-government colleges are poor in English. But they are very much aware of the importance of English in
the present day world. The non-government college authorities often cannot provide sufficient number of teachers of English for students. As a result large number of students have to attend an English class. (See Appendix II, Table 9 (a))

3.1.17 Attitude towards the Use of Mother Tongue in English Class

80 per cent students were in favour of the use of Bengali in the English class. The reason may be that they had a poor base in English. They could not follow English lecture thoroughly. If the lecture was in Bengali they could understand its content. Only 11 per cent students opposed the use of Bengali in English class. These respondents might have a very strong foundation in English (See Appendix II, Table 9 (b)).

3.1.18 Attitude towards the Teacher of English

About the apathy of the teachers of English two statements were provided for the informants. 41 per cent students were of the opinion that most of the teachers of English were not dedicated to their mission of teaching. Such negative attitude towards teachers may be due to the fact that students found their teachers neglecting the duty. They were teaching in a perfunctory way. The students might have also found that their teachers of English were more busy with private tuition than with class-teaching. They might have further noticed that majority of the teachers of English with some exceptions did not regularly engage their classes. Since
male students were more vocal and outspoken than female students. 48 per cent male students as against 33 per cent of their female counterparts said that the teachers of English were not dedicated. So also 44 per cent females as against 24 per cent males expressed the same opinion by keeping silent because they did not contradict it. (See Appendix II, Table 9 (c))

3.1.19 Attitude towards Grammar Teaching

66 per cent students agreed to the statement that the teachers of English did not teach the grammar portion of the H.S.C. syllabus. 73 per cent boys as against 57 per cent girls held the same opinion. Howatt holds the interesting opinion that boys are more interested in grammar than girls. He writes “The Local (Oxford and Cambridge Local Examinations) admitted girls in 1882 and from the outset they proved they were better than boys at French, German and the more expressive aspects of English. The boys, on the other hand, excelled at classical languages and the more linguistic side of English grammar” (Howatt 1994: 134). 75 per cent urban and 57 per cent rural students supported the statement. (See Appendix II, Table 9 (d))

3.1.20 Attitude towards English in the H.S.C. Examination

Four statements were given to measure the attitude of the students towards English in the H.S.C. Examination. As to the statement – “text-reading is not required for passing English in the examination”, 77 per
cent students disagreed with that. 82 per cent students from elite class as compared to 68 per cent students from non-elite families did not agree with it. The reason may be that students from elite class are generally under parental pressure to read the text for improving the competence in English as well as for passing the examinations, whereas there might not be such pressure on the students from non-elite families. It may be due to the same reason 83 per cent students from govt. college as compared to 70 per cent non-govt. students disagreed with the statement. This attitude could also be due to an instinctive recognition of the importance of reading. (See Appendix II, Table 10 (a))

76 per cent students disagreed with the statement that mere memorization of notes and guides was enough for passing the examination in English. 83 per cent students from elite class and 63 per cent students from non-elite class also disagreed with it. The reason for the gap in the difference of opinion between the two groups is obviously the first group’s exposure to better teaching practices. But most of the second group as well as most rural students, including non-government college students, depended entirely on the memorization of notes and guides as their sole aim was to pass in English somehow. (See Appendix II, Table 10 (b))

78 per cent students agreed with the statement that because of common questions in the final examination students were tempted to copy
in the hall. 83 per cent females as against 74 per cent male students agreed with the statement. Girls are obviously more honest. 80 per cent from elite families and 73 per cent students from non-elite families also supported the statement. This fairly the same response is due to the fact that a particular pattern was followed in setting questions of English in the H.S.C. Examination. Almost all students with some exceptions memorized the answers of probable questions. Those who failed to memorize took the answers to the exam halls and copied them. The students from the elite families in order to secure good marks in English went to the private tutors who prepared answers of very high quality. The students memorized them thoroughly. So the particular pattern of setting questions lay at the root of mass memorization and mass copying in the examination halls. (See Appendix II, Table 10 (c))

About 63 per cent students agreed with the statement that students copied extensively in English examinations. 73 per cent females and 55 per cent males also agreed with it. Girls are again more honest. Perhaps the males wanted to keep it a secret to themselves. 69 per cent students from elite families as against 43 per cent students from the non-elite families agreed that there were malpractices in the examination halls. Newspapers have coined a phrase -- "free style in the examination" to refer to rampant copying in the examination.
Interestingly 66 per cent students from rural areas as compared to 46 per cent students from urban areas and similarly 73 per cent students from non-government colleges as against 56 per cent students from government colleges (only one out of four was located in rural area) agreed with the statement. This shows that there was mass copying in rural examination centres. Perhaps from the experiences of their own centres they had formed such opinion about mass copying. But in case of urban centres there was much less copying than rural centres evidently because of the stricted supervision by the vigilant teams from the administration. (See Appendix II, Table 10 (d))

3.1.21 Use of English Skills Inside and Outside the Class

45 per cent students agreed with the statement that they felt nervous while speaking English and 25 per cent students disagreed with it. 46 per cent students agreed with the statement that they speak English in the class and 62 per cent outside the class. In the classroom situation the students were troubled by the thought of correctness of their English. But outside the class the situation was quite different. The students felt free to use English. 73 per cent male students and 49 per cent female students spoke English outside the class. (See Appendix II, Table 11 (a,b&c))

34 per cent students from elite families as compared to 50 per cent students from non-elite families expressed the view that they felt they were
laughed at when they spoke English. The former group was more confident of their English because of their strong base in the language than their counterparts. The educated parents, in order to give children a strong foundation in English, often send them to convent schools where the children develop their competence in English. At home most educated parents use English in day to day life with their children. As a result these students develop conversational skills and self-confidence in English from childhood. So they do not feel nervous or any kind of hesitation while speaking English in the class. This is why 41 per cent students from elite families in comparison with 26 per cent students from non-elite families disagreed with the statement that they felt others were laughing at them while they were speaking English. (See Appendix II, Table 11 (d))

3.1.22 Attitude towards Need for Skills in English

67 per cent students agreed with the statement that Bangladeshi students needed to acquire only reading and writing skills in English, 19 per cent disagreed and the rest kept mum. According to these informants Bangladeshi students needed English only for reading newspapers, books, scientific and medical journals and to pursue higher studies. This is in any case the major function of English in the sub-continent.

On the other hand 95 per cent students agreed with the statement that our students also needed to acquire the speaking skill in English in the
context of the globalized world of today. Since English is an international language, all students, according to them, needed speaking skill in English in order to interact with the rest of the world. (See Appendix II, Table 11 (e&f))

Though 95 per cent were in favour of acquiring speaking skill, only 42 per cent students disagreed with the statement that students were not interested in learning English. So English is seen as a hurdle by a large number of students. Since most urban and government college students were better in English than the rural and non-government college students, 54 per cent urban students as compared to 31 per cent rural students and 48 per cent government college students as compared to 35 per cent non-government college students disagreed with the statement. (See Appendix II, Table 7 (f))

3.1.23 Attitude towards Private Tuition

As to the statement – students can learn a lot of English from private tuition, 42 per cent students agreed with it and 30 per cent disagreed. In Bangladesh private tuition is now a very profitable business for teachers especially of English. So in order to attract more students, private tutors give notes of high quality, discuss the text well, give heavy home tasks for practice, check them next day, correct the errors, explain the rules, discuss all the grammatical points in detail with examples, give full attention to each and every student, ask them questions and invite also questions from them. They teach in such a way so that students learn English and pass the
examination as well. From such private tutors students are highly benefited. This is why 42 per cent students agreed with the statement. On the other hand, there are some private tutors who are purely commercial. Students coming in touch with or hearing about such tutors from their classmates and friends get disenchanted with private tuition. So 30 per cent students disagreed with the statement. 43 per cent non-government college students as compared to 28 per cent government college students were positive towards private tuition. It is mentioned earlier that most teachers of English in non-government colleges are not very serious in teaching and are more sincere in private tuition. Since there is greater shortage of English teachers in non-government colleges than in government colleges a teacher in non-government college has to manage a vast class there. It becomes teacher-centred. So students cannot participate in language learning. But in private tuition the tutor gives full attention to each student of the batch. So 43 per cent students of non-government colleges agreed with the fact that they learnt a lot of English from the private tuition. But in urban areas a private tutor teaches a large number of batches. Moreover each batch is like a large class. He cannot give attention to each and every student due to lack of time and energy. He becomes very much commercial. The students who go to such private tutors expecting to learn English get disappointed. Moreover the educated parents who can take care of the English of their children, discourage private tuition. This is why 35 per cent urban students as against 24 per cent rural students have a negative attitude towards private tuition. (See Appendix II, Table 12)
3.2 HIGHER SECONDARY PEDAGOGY IN BANGLADESH

3.2.1 Introduction

The present education system in Bangladesh "had been designed to produce literate manpower to assist the colonial masters at the lower level of governmental and economic administration. Fundamentally, the British were guided in developing the institutions of their imperial holdings by their own interest... Given its colonial purpose, the educational system erected by the British was not particularly effective in producing creative and self-reliant citizens. Education was meant only for the privileged few who were supposed to govern the masses rather than to serve them" (Louis D. Hayes 1987:3). So the teaching materials and methodology were devised to make them English in "blood, intellect and in morals". To understand the present-day English pedagogy in Bangladesh it is necessary to present a historical overview of the English teaching-learning during the British and post-colonial eras. For this, the present study heavily draws upon Agnihotri and Khanna (1997).

For convenience of discussion it is worth mentioning here that ELT situation is almost the same in the three countries of the subcontinent, i.e. India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. According to Agnihotri and Khanna (1997) there is a touch of Englishness in all the ELT materials. The English teaching-learning was originally intended to introduce our learners to the ‘best literature and culture in the world’. So anthologies selected from famous writers, poets, essayists and playwrights were introduced for teaching English.

"Although the focus of teaching English was supposed to be on reading comprehension and on a critical appreciation of the works of well-known authors, more often than not the whole exercise ended up just being a reproduction of the ideas of these authors in the final examinations" (Agnihotri & Khanna 1997: 29).
Translation is still considered as a reliable and powerful tool for teaching a second or foreign language. So most of the teaching materials across the world are bilingual in nature and the language which the learner already knows is considered implicitly as an asset. Moreover, grammar is given great importance. Memorization of grammatical rules and vocabulary building constitute the back-bone of language teaching.

At the beginning of English education in the British India, according to the Bengal Presidency Report on Public Instruction, there was a great stress laid on the teaching of English literature to the natives and the teaching materials selected from among the books used in Great Britain and in English seminaries in India were recommended. And at that time the texts already in use in India were such as Byron's "The Evening before the Battle of Waterloo' and Young's "Folly of Human Pursuits". By this time English had already gained ground in the society because people had started looking upon English as a means of attaining success in life.

Studies by Gokak (1969) and Ram (1987) provide interesting insights into the nature of methods and materials used in the early stages of teaching English in India. According to them the primary purpose in the beginning was to spread European knowledge among the 'superstitious' Indians and English was regarded as the potential medium for achieving the goal. For this purpose a bilingual approach became inevitable. So officially it was decided to translate the well-known English texts into the native Indian languages. In this way the earliest English teaching technique became translation-oriented in India.

After Macaulay, English became the language of government, education and social upliftment. And all the funds were diverted to imparting the knowledge of English literature and European science to the natives of India. The English missionaries were also imparting English
education in India. Their curriculum included the Bible, Paley's 'Natural Theology', Bunyan's 'Pilgrim's Progress', Bacon's 'Novum Organum', Plato's 'Dialogue', Milton's 'Paradise Lost' etc. The curriculum of the secular government of that period included poems from Richardson's 'Selections from the British poets', 'Milton's 'Paradise Lost' (the first four books), Pope's 'Iliad' by Homer, Shakespeare's 'Hamlet', 'Othello' and 'Macbeth', Addison's 'Essays' and Johnson's 'Lives of Poets'. In both the cases the curricula were thus heavily classical.

English teaching used translation along with the explicit teaching of grammatical rules. The importance of translation in language learning can be seen in the Annual Report of the College of Mohammad Mohasin, Hoogli, published in 1841 Report of the General Committee of Public Instruction of the Presidency of Fort William in Bengal for the year 1839-40. According to this report, nothing could facilitate learning English as translation from Bengali into English and vice-versa. In mid nineteenth century teaching grammar was a discipline in itself.

Towards the beginning of the twentieth century there was reaction to the Grammar Translation Method. Cyril (1929) and Ryburn (1940) reacted sharply against the popular method.

Cyril and Wren were of the opinion that grammar should be taught inductively and applied deductively because the learners could create their own grammar while learning.

Due to the influence of Direct Method in the thirties and forties the substitution tables were introduced in language teaching. Ghosh (1940) prepared a syllabus on this model. Ryburn (1940) points out that these were the days of textbooks and in lower classes some oral work was done. In higher classes of school the teaching of English exclusively centred
round reading and writing and grammar notes in the light of questions likely to be set in the examination.

The situation continued the same after the establishment of Pakistan.

"Pakistan was carved out of British India in 1947. But the use of English remained almost same in both countries. In 1956, 1962 and 1973 constitutions have all articulated the desire to replace English by Urdu in all domains but as in India's case, this has not happened so far. Thus the central government of Pakistan, most provincial governments and institutions of higher education do use English...

The pedagogical norm remains BSF (British Standard English) and English literature is the main focus of English studies in most of the universities. One major change which has occurred in the eighties is that English language teaching (ELT) and linguistics have begun to be taught in addition to mainstream English literature" (Tariq Rahman 1990:79).

So it is obvious that before eighties and before 1971 English teaching in both the wings of Pakistan was basically literature teaching especially at Secondary, Higher Secondary and tertiary levels.

3.2.2 English Pedagogy in Bangladesh

For more than 150 years English has been taught as a compulsory subject in the land now called Bangladesh. But now it is no more a language of instruction at Secondary, Higher Secondary and tertiary levels except in some specialised branches. "It is used in Bangladesh today in many forms that differ from its foster variety – British English. Nineteenth century literary English however, is still held in high esteem by a large section of educated persons in Bangladesh" (H. Rahman 1996:191).

English has been taught now for some time with the objectives of enabling the students to learn the basic skills.
"But in fact both teachers and students often concentrate only on language forms. The skills and functions, on the other hand, are not properly practised, as there are hardly any situations especially in the rural areas where English could be genuinely used. As a result the study of our English courses turns into the study of mainly the language contents not as a means to an end but as an end in itself. So the students cram up the textbook contents even without understanding what they mean, with the sole aim of passing the compulsory examination papers in English" (M.S. Hoque et al 1997: 32-33).

3.2.3. Inconsistent Foreign Language Teaching Policy

A sound language teaching policy is a must for the successful foreign language learning and the absence of such a policy may result in vagueness in the aims of teaching-learning activities. The ministry of education usually looks after the affairs of education in a country. So while drawing up the language teaching policy the ministry should consider whether all the students need to learn a foreign language or only a section of them requires it. It should also take into account how great is the demand for the target language. In addition the policy makers should also consider availability of teachers (Theo Van Els et al 1984). Only then a country can have an effective language teaching policy.

Because of the lack of well-defined foreign language policy there prevails a confusion in the area of English teaching in Bangladesh. In some urban areas English medium schools have mushroomed. There are also private colleges where the medium of instruction is English at Higher Secondary level. Recently the government has introduced English medium in some schools of Dhaka at Secondary level. Similar inconsistency we find at university level. In private universities medium of instruction is English. But in government universities there is no uniformity in this regard. According to the reports of The World of Learning and the Commonwealth Year Book (Kamal: 1999) the medium of instruction in Dhaka University, Rajshahi University, Bangladesh University of
Engineering and Technology (BUET) and Bangladesh Agricultural University is English, whereas according to the same reports, the medium of instruction in Chittagong University and Jahangirnagar University is bilingual.

This means that the question of the medium of instruction has not yet been decided consistently at all levels of education. Such inconsistency is not conducive to the healthy development of the education of a nation. The lack of uniformity is creating barriers between the rich and the poor, the urban and the rural and it also divides the educated class into English-knowing privileged and non-English-knowing underprivileged groups. Because of the lack of stable language teaching policy the decision regarding the introduction of English at Primary level had undergone constant changes with the change of government since independence 1971.

"According to the old curriculum for Primary schools of the pre-Partition period, English was an optional subject and was taught in classes III and IV of those Primary schools only which could satisfy certain conditions... English was also taught as a compulsory subject from class III upward in Secondary schools and this practice continued even after the Partition" [Sharifa Khatun 1992: 89). English was dropped from Primary curriculum on 16-12-1948. At that time the Primary section covered upto class IV. When in 1952 class V was added to Primary section, English was again dropped from class V. Under pressure from different quarters, English was reintroduced in East Pakistan in Class IV and VI as an optional subject from January 1956. The Commission on National Education (1959) recommended English "to be offered as an optional subject from class III to V. Since then English virtually became a second compulsory language in the Primary schools of East Pakistan" (ibid: 92). After liberation in 1971 the Bangladesh Education Commission of 1974
(the recommendations of the Commission were not implemented fully) had kept no provision for teaching English at Primary level. With the implementation of new curriculum in 1978 English was made compulsory from class III. Since 1991 English has been taught as a compulsory subject from class I. Recently the Education Commission set up in 1997 has recommended English to be taught from class III onwards.

Similar inconsistency in English teaching policy is also observed at tertiary level. Until early eighties, English was a compulsory subject for arts group of Pass course in all the affiliated colleges under Dhaka, Chittagong and Rajshahi universities. But in mid eighties in keeping with the executive decision of the government, Dhaka and Chittagong universities made it an optional subject of 100 marks for all groups at degree level for both Pass and Honours courses. But Rajshahi University continued teaching it as a compulsory subject for degree Pass course students. In 1992 English was again made a compulsory subject for degree students of all groups including Pass and Honours courses in all the affiliated colleges under the National University.

About the stage at which a foreign language should be introduced experts differ. Some psychologists are of the opinion that early age is the best period for learning a second or foreign language. Krashen et al (1979) hold that "child second language acquirers will usually be superior in terms of ultimate attainment, younger is better in the long run" (as cited in Stern 1983; 365). For the opposite view Stern (1983) cites Carroll (1975). According to Carroll "In fact the data suggest that students who start the study of a foreign language at relatively older ages make somewhat faster progress than those who start early" (cited in Stern 1983;365). Current researches are in favour of early start of learning a foreign language. Evidence shows that children do not find learning two or three languages
simultaneously a serious problem when the learning process is richly contextualized. (Agnihotri and Khanna 1997). Some experts think that early education of a child should be in his mother tongue because they feel that "a child who is not proficient in his/her first language will rarely be able to acquire any significant levels of proficiency in the second language" (ibid: 133). Prof. Pabitra Sarkar (cited in Agnihotri and Khanna, 1997) with reference to West Bengal is in favour of learning a second/foreign language at a later stage. He says:

"Our experience with teaching English for about 14 years; that is beginning with class I and ending with the degree course, has yielded very little result so far. The example of such vernacular schools as the Hindu School, Balligonj Government School, Rama Krishna Mission School in Calcutta has proved beyond doubt that adequate level of proficiency in English can be achieved within a period of six years" (Agnihotri and Khanna 1997:181).

In Bangladesh the situation is the same. The end-result of 12/14 years study of English is almost nil for majority of the students. English teaching at Primary level is the worst owing to incompetent teachers. It (especially in government Primary schools) is simply a waste of time, energy and public money. Moreover failure in English adversely affects the psyche of the young children. They develop an inferiority complex. They think failure in English means failure in academic career. Moreover, most of the children spend most of their time in memorizing English and consequently they cannot give enough attention to other subjects. As a result they also remain weak in other subjects along with English. Once they become weak in English they carry on their weakness throughout their educational career.

The main purpose of Primary Education is to raise the rate of literacy and build up the young children as patriotic and responsible citizens of the country. English does not play any role in achieving these
goals. Rather it is a barrier. It is not unlikely that if research is carried out, it may be found that teaching English at Primary level is adding to the drop out rates.

The most harmful effect of teaching English at Primary level is that a vast majority of students enter class VI with only a small knowledge of English letters and meaning of a few words in isolation and find the English text of class VI too difficult to cope with. As a result students depend heavily on rote-learning and private tuition to cover up the deficiency.

3.2.4 H.S.C. English

English is compulsory from class 1 to degree level (both for Pass and Honours courses). At the Higher Secondary level, students have to study for a two-year English course of two compulsory papers carrying 100 marks each. The Higher Secondary compulsory English may be looked upon as an extension of the Secondary level. English is taught at this level with the aim of strengthening the command of skills which the students have already acquired at the Secondary level and giving them a taste of English literature to some extent. The Higher Secondary English may be regarded as the terminal course in the sense that after the successful completion of H.S.C. course, students find a wide range of higher studies' options before them.

"Some of them go to medical colleges, some others enroll at Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology (BUET) or Bangladesh Institute of Technology (BIT), still others go to Agricultural University to pursue professional studies in agriculture. Others go to colleges and universities to study degree Pass and Honours courses in different faculties and subjects. Those who go to study professional courses have to engage themselves in intensive and extensive reading. They have to undertake various types of writing tasks. They have continual need
for comprehension skills that focus on finding, processing and re-expressing information and ideas" (M.S. Hoque et al 1997:153).

In addition to this many students go abroad for higher studies after their H.S.C. course. They have to do everything generally in English. This is why the Higher Secondary English course is very important for them.

During the last two-year course the students are expected to acquire an additional vocabulary of six to eight hundred words and some complex sentence structures. They also study short stories and poems. They have to answer comprehension questions on the stories and poems.

For conducting Secondary and Higher Secondary education there are six boards in Bangladesh. These boards prepare the syllabus of study, conduct examinations and do a host of other things relating to the smooth running of Secondary and Higher Secondary education in the country. These boards have a centrally prepared syllabus of teaching materials showing the distribution of marks and model questions for the H.S.C. final examination. Though English is a compulsory subject and has been taught for a long period of time, the board authorities are mute about the aims and objectives of teaching English and there are no guidelines for the teacher about the methodology of presenting the teaching materials to students.

A glance at the H.S.C. syllabus gives the impression that the seeming objective of the course is to develop the reading and writing abilities of the students giving them a taste of what may be called the "best English" by famous English writers and poets. The grammatical items might have been designed to enable the learners to write correct English and grasp the meaning of sentences of different structures. The syllabus totally ignores the acquisition of listening and speaking skills. Because of the absence of specific instructions regarding aims and objectives of English teaching both the teachers and the students concentrate all their
attention on the language forms. Skills and functions are not properly practised due to lack of right situations. Consequently, students resort to memorizing the textbook contents even without understanding what they mean, with the sole object of passing the examination.

3.2.5 The Classroom

In colleges, classes have fixed benches. There is hardly any space for the free movement of the teacher around the classroom. As a result the teacher cannot supervise the students sitting at the back of the class. Such sitting arrangement cannot be utilized for pair and group activities. In rural areas some colleges are so poor that they do not have sufficient number of benches and desks. Very often many students listen to lectures standing. Such arrangements are not congenial to teaching – learning of any kind.

3.2.6 Class hours

Since English is a compulsory subject it occupies an important place in our curriculum and it needs to be taught with great care and attention. It needs to be mentioned here that teaching a language in general and a foreign language in particular is a complex enterprise which requires the great care of the teacher. A teaching course requires certain number of class hours without which it is difficult to cover the course contents. If all the contents of the syllabus are not properly taught in the class, students fail to acquire the skills which are required of them. So it is important that all the colleges should have not only well qualified teachers to teach the contents of the syllabus but also allot sufficient number of class hours to cover the course materials.

At the Intermediate level a class of forty-five minutes is allotted for teaching English daily through six working days of the week. Thus a teacher gets four hours and a half per week for teaching English. According
to this schedule, the Higher Secondary students are supposed to be taught English for about 468 hours in their full academic session.

Fortunately or unfortunately the entire education system of Bangladesh is characterised by holiday culture. And the college academic calendar is packed with holidays, vacations, suspension of classes during H.S.C. and Degree examinations. There are two Ramdan vacations of about three months, two Eid-ul-Zaha vacations along with suspension of classes for about more than three months due to H.S.C. examination and sine die closures owing to the calls for strike by political parties. Sometimes normal functioning of the classes is disrupted for days together because of natural calamities like floods and torrential rains. In addition to this the XI class usually begins at least two months later than the actual date of commencement and stands suspended in the like manner at least four months before the closure of the session. So practically the H.S.C. students are taught about 250 hours (sometimes less) in place of 468 hours through out the entire period of two years. As they do not have much time in hand, most teachers only teach the literature portion in detail and cast a cursory glance at the grammar portion relying on the pre-college knowledge of the students. It is obvious that most items of the syllabus are left untaught for lack of time.

3.2.7 The Students

On the basis of their competence in English, Higher Secondary students of Bangladesh can be categorized into three groups. There are students who can carry out conversation in English. They can also read and write well. With great ease they speak standard English with proper accent. They can carry on debate without the slightest difficulty. They have both fluency and accuracy in English. They have convent school background. They read English dailies, watch English movies and other English
programmes on TV. They may have satellite connection at home. They hail from the metropolitan upper class society of Bangladesh. They form the first group. Since they have a sound linguistic competence in English they can enjoy and appreciate any work in English literature. For them the Higher Secondary English is not a problem at all.

The second group consists of those students who are from elite urban middle class. They may or may not have convent school background. They can read and write English well. They watch English movies and other English programmes on TV and can follow the English lectures of their teachers in the class. But they do not have much fluency and accuracy in English. For them too Higher Secondary English does not pose much problem.

The rest belong to the third category: the vast majority of rural population and lower middle and working classes of the town. They do not read English dailies and do not watch English programmes on TV. They cannot follow the English lectures in the class and pressurise the teacher to switch over to Bengali. This group constitutes the vast majority of our total Higher Secondary students. They are also very poor in English writing skill. Literature oriented learning materials scare and push them to rote learning or cheating in the examination.

3.2.8. Class and Discipline

In Bangladesh there is a great dearth of college English teachers. The teacher students ratio is 1:400. Since English is a compulsory subject the teacher has to manage more than one hundred students and sometimes 200+. In large classes use of English only seriously hampers understanding. In most cases teachers use the mother tongue together with English to explain lessons. Even then discipline remains a problem in the
English class. The primary reason is perhaps the difficulty of understanding English. Most students regard English as a tough subject.

Discipline is internally related to good performance. If a student feels comfortable, confident and happy with a subject he/she behaves well. If a student feels troubled, lost and anxious, he disturbs the class.

"The language teacher feels a great deal of challenge in a large class. Added up with physical problems and time constraints, classroom control and discipline also remain an area of concern. An English lesson has to be interesting, needs to be explained well and students have to be motivated to learn it. These are very difficult to achieve under the given circumstances. Perhaps all these could be done if the class had an ideal number 25-30 students only. But with a class of 60 or more the teacher has to strive hard to achieve the desired goal" (M.S. Hoque et al. 1997:109).

In case of a large class, sometimes it happens that a teacher becomes more preoccupied with maintaining discipline in the class other than presenting the teaching materials to the students. This is why any teaching method, however good it may be, becomes unpracticable with such a large number of students. And "teaching English as a language for use is simply impossible in the circumstances even though the teachers are highly qualified and trained" (M.S. Hoque in Belta vol. 1, 1989:71).

3.2.9 Goals

It is important for effective teaching that the goals of teaching English at different levels i.e. Primary, Secondary, Higher Secondary and tertiary should be specified first. Goals will differ from level to level. Even at the same level, different groups may have different goals. For example, at the Higher Secondary level, the science group who will continue their studies in various sciences and technologies will not be interested in studying English for the same purpose as arts group. But according to the present national curriculum of Bangladesh the goals of teaching English at
Higher Secondary level are the same for all groups i.e. goals are general in nature for all.

This is obvious from the national syllabus (designed by NCTB in 1995 and it is not yet implemented) objectives. The English language syllabus aims to focus on the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing as learner-centred activities within communicative contexts. The difference in goals is more obvious at the tertiary level as students at this level have already got some definite ideas about the vocations they will take up in future. On the basis of the goals of teaching English for various target groups the curriculum committee formed by the government (i.e. Ministry of Education) will design EFL curriculums for different levels. Accordingly different courses i.e. general English courses, ESP courses etc. would be developed (M.S. Hoque et al. 1997:61)

3.2.10 The New Syllabus for English for Higher Secondary

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (1995) has formulated some principles of introducing a new text for teaching English in a new model for the Higher Secondary level. In the introduction the Board is very specific about the goals, syllabus, methodology, text, examination and other related aspects.

As to the objectives, the new decision is that the English teaching learning at Higher-Secondary level will be purely communicative. As English is recognised as an essential work oriented skill, "English should, therefore, be taught as something to be used, rather than as something that should be talked about" (NCTB 1995:135).

The students of Higher Secondary level need the intensive and extensive reading of advanced texts. They also require to develop writing skills on various topics.
"Comprehension skills will continue to focus on finding, processing and re-expressing information with the emphasis on language rather than literature. The teaching and learning of language through suitable literary text will, however, continue in order to consolidate and extend students' comprehension skills, creativity and imagination. Consequently greater emphasis will progressively be given to reading and writing skills at this stage" (ibid:135-136).

The terminal competencies for H.S.C. level.

Listening:

At the end of the course students should be able to understand instructions, command texts, television and radio programmes in English, take notes and dictation.

Speaking:

Students should be able to give instructions, commands, express opinion clearly and logically, take part in debate, tell stories, describe an event intelligibly, fluently and appropriately in clear English.

Reading

Students should understand written instructions, narratives as well as descriptive texts, argumentative texts, formal and informal letters, English newspapers and adapted literary texts.

They should be able to read extensively with appropriate speed, skim for gist, scan for specific information, infer the meanings of words from the context, recognize topic sentences, distinguish fact from opinion, draw appropriate conclusions and so on.
Writing:

Students should be able to write instructions, summaries, clear logical arguments, narratives, descriptions, dialogues and reports.

They should also be able to fill in forms (job applications), take notes, dictations and so on.

According to the new proposed syllabus by NCTB (1995) the purpose of teaching English is to acquire language skills, not to learn about particular topic or study literature. Rather than being content-based, English is a skill-based subject. So the themes or topics are a kind of vehicle for practising language skills. Topics that are difficult in themselves are inappropriate for learning a language and should be excluded. NCTB (1995) has proposed that topics which are equally suitable for both the rural and urban students should be chosen for teaching. Another purpose of such choice of topics is that they should appeal to the students aged fifteen plus and be educative in moral values. Topics should also be related to their personal life and should deal with the objects of their surroundings.

Poems and Dialogues

On the basis of their suitability of topic and language, poems should be selected for enjoyment and understanding and for the practice of rhythm and stress. This is also an area where memorization can be both useful and valid.

There should be instruction of dialogues in natural informal speech as far as possible for pair practice. Dialogue is "one of the most natural and effective ways of practising spoken language within meaningful contexts... Short excerpts from actual plays, selected for suitability of topic
and language adapted where necessary may be included" (NCTB 1995: 143).

Values

According to NCTB (1995) the English curriculum should be designed in such a way that it will make our learners aware and adherent of our values. The Board in its guidelines for new H.S.C. English states "the language syllabus seeks to realise the longer goals that are envisaged in the national education system and reinforce the social, cultural and moral values of the country as a whole" (NCTB 1995:144). This, it aims to do in two ways.

Firstly, the language is presented within contexts that are appropriate to the society and culture of Bangladesh and which also embody its moral and spiritual values. For this purpose, traditional stories, fables and other materials which effectively put across a moral message are incorporated in the section where suitable topics and themes are specified. In this way, English is primarily introduced within contexts that are familiar to students, as a language for their own self expression rather than as a foreign language associated with other societies and cultures.

Secondly, a communicative teaching and learning methodology should contribute towards the realization of values essential to the development of society within a learner - centred context... Consequently, the communicative teaching and learning methodology that lies at the heart of the English language syllabus should ensure that essential social values will be learned in the most effective way: not only by knowing about them, but through practising them (ibid: 144).

NCTB has already taken steps to replace the present literary text by a language - based one. The objectives, methodology etc. sound very nice.
But implementation of such a curriculum lies in the womb of future. Only
future can tell us if such a text will be accepted or not, because Bangladesh
had a bitter experience in 1986 when such a language-based text was
introduced at Higher Secondary level, within a year the government was
forced to withdraw it in face of hostile public attitude.

Prior to 1978 the textbooks for Secondary schools and colleges were
literary. But in 1978 steps were taken to drastically replace the existing
literary texts by language based ones written primarily by Bangladeshi
teachers. In case of Primary and Secondary levels the introduction of such
language-based texts had not evoked any resistance from any quarter. They
were rather happily accepted. But trouble started with the textbook for
Higher Secondary level. In this respect Prof. Hamidur Rahman of Dhaka
University writes:

"When the Higher Secondary English Selection - an anthology of
prose pieces and poems was replaced by a book containing
language-oriented texts, it was met with strong resistance from
teachers of the "old school" who demanded a reintroduction of the
literature-oriented text-books. The new book - English for Today
Book VIII for class XI-XII (Mohyud-Din-& Huq 1986) comprised
especially written articles about the history, culture, economy and
social problems of Bangladesh. The writers were well-aware of
proficiency of students at this level, and exercises in the new book
gave practice in language items that are considered to be problem
areas for Bangladeshi learners.... Most of the teachers of English
at Higher Secondary certificate level have been students of
literature, however, and had undergone no training in the teaching
of modern foreign language hence many of them were reluctant
about whether texts written by non-native teachers of English are
acceptable as teaching materials and the book was subsequently

The book was written in conformity with the recommendation of the
English Language Teaching Task Force 1976 set up by the Ministry of
Education, Bangladesh in November 1975.
After the publication of the book, the teachers of English, editors and columnists began to criticise the texts of the book as being 'unEnglish' or 'Babu English' and therefore unacceptably.

"According to some of the critics the book is quite unsuitable for teaching English and at best can be compared to third rate essays in bazar essay books. Some complained that the textbooks' topics were unimaginatively selected while the others pointed to ungrammatical and unidiomatic sentences in the book's essays" (ibid: 144).

Mrs Inari Hussain of Dhaka Varsity has grouped all the criticisms levelled against the text in the following four areas-

i) "the writers were non-native speakers of English;

ii) the writers were not recognized writers of English;

iii) the pieces were boring and did not stimulate learning;

iv) and they contain several grammatical and lexical errors" (cited in Hamidur Rahman 1996:195).

Due to this incident of 1987, it is not unreasonable to doubt about of the implementation of the proposed text by NCTB (1995) unless precautions are taken to remove the causes for which the ill-fated text of 1986 was withdrawn.

The reason behind such hue and cry against the text lies in the fact that the textbook is looked upon as a very important instrument for teaching-learning. In our country textbooks at the rate of one title per class at the Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary levels are produced centrally by NCTB. In the circumstances, our teachers do not have any choice in selecting textbooks for their classes. Also quality support materials are neither commercially produced nor available for use to the institutions. To make the situations worse, most of our teachers are not
adequately trained in ELT. As a result they have to depend solely on the textbook for what they are teaching.

This is why "to both the teacher and the students the textbook is the only means of teaching and learning English" (M.S. Hoque et al 1997:74).

3.2.11 The Teachers

In both urban and rural areas of Bangladesh the teachers of English are non-native speakers of English. They are native speakers of Bengali. Most of them have neither come in contact with the English speaking people nor have ever visited the English speaking countries. Majority of them have studied English in Bangladesh and have themselves been taught English equally by non-native teachers of English.

Most of the Primary teachers are trained and provided with guide books for teaching English. But the sad state of affairs in rural area is that most of the Primary teachers are S.S.C. holders and their knowledge of English is miserably poor. At the Secondary level almost all the teachers of English are graduates and most of them in both urban and rural areas are trained. Unlike the Primary school teachers they are not provided with guide books for teaching English.

The teachers of Higher Secondary level are generally M.A. in English literature having little or no knowledge either of linguistics or ELT.

Since teachers engaged in teaching English at college level have no access to ELT materials, few of them know about recent ELT researches. They do not have any training in teaching. As a result they fail to impart effective and enjoyable teaching. Consequently, students tend to look upon English as a dull and difficult subject.
They learn little English which somehow enables them to pass the examination, but does not provide them with adequate competence to use English in real life situations.

But the most wonderful thing is that with some exceptions, most of the teachers of English are more devoted to private tuitions than to their classroom teaching. Their salaries and other benefits are obviously not sufficient incentives for them to work hard for the profession. As a result they do not give time to planning lessons and designing language activities. Instead they follow the traditional teaching method—"translating and explaining everything in Bengali". Thus they prepare their students by making them memorize even without understanding so that they may reproduce them in the examination hall. Since the teachers have been teaching in this way for years together, teaching for them has become an easy job. Thus they use the saved time in giving private tuition for high fees. The private tuition is meant for preparing students for the examination. Thus private coaching specially in English, mathematics and science subjects has become a thriving business. There are different varieties of private tutors. A person who is good in English can be a tutor for English. But usually the regular teachers of English are mostly engaged in this job. Moreover students also prefer them.

3.2.12 Rationale for Tuition

The reason for tuitions is not far to seek. As English is a compulsory subject in the curriculum, a student has to pass this subject. Extra hours of teaching in English is necessary. The time limit for every class is usually 40/45 minutes. This does not mean that the whole time is devoted to teaching. There are routine activities like class attendance, class arrangement, discipline etc. which take up 10/15 minutes. Therefore the actual teaching time is usually about 30 minutes. Such a short time is not
enough to cover the vast syllabus of English. Moreover it is seen that the entire academic calendar is dominated by holidays. Here it is not out of place to mention that during the session of 1997-1998 only 21 classes of English were held in Sylhet Govt. College owing to vacation and sine die closures. This is a common feature of college and university education. Under the circumstances, students who are poor in English, are badly in need of extra help. This is not only true for English but also for other difficult subjects like mathematics, physics, chemistry etc.

The teachers who regularly teach English are usually the first choice of the students, because they are familiar with syllabus, the mode of questions, the problem areas and so on. In addition to this there are private coaching centres in various places all over the country that also help students to overcome their problems. The students from medical colleges, engineering institutes and English Honours and Master's courses usually do the job of private tutors in these coaching centres.

Many students think that classroom teaching is not enough to make students proficient in English. So majority of them feel that they need more hours of teaching. Hence is the need for private tuition. But it is true if the classroom teaching were given sincerely and properly most of students would not feel the need for private tuition at the cost of high fees.

3.2.13 Methodology

Successful teaching and learning ultimately depends on effective teaching methods. Consequently, it is vital that the teacher should receive sound and appropriate training in language teaching. "The chief aim of an effective methodology must be to give learners as much practice as possible in the use of English. The teachers should help, praise and encourage their students to improve and should not be fussy about minute
points of grammatical accuracy. They should remember that their main
goal is to create and sustain the students' motivation and interest in learning
English" (NCTB 1995 :147).

During the British and Pakistan periods people had to use English
for official, professional and educational purposes. Naturally they
developed communicative competence in English by using English for
practical purposes. But in monolingual Bangladesh there is hardly any need
for using English in real life situation. People require English only when
they deal with people who do not know Bengali, or with foreign agencies,
or for foreign trades and commerce etc. Since the Bangladeshis are not
used to using English for practical purpose in real life situations, they face
great problems if and when they are required to communicate with others
in English.

"And that is why most of our teachers and students use Bengali as
a common and class room language even in English classes. If and
when English is used in a class, it is used mostly by the teachers as
a language confined to the lesson only and not as a language for
ordinary communication" (M.S. Hoque et al 1997: 64).

The teachers explain the text and grammar mainly by translating
them into Bengali. They often translate words, phrases and sentences in
Bengali. They sometimes summarise or paraphrase a text in Bengali. They
think that if students understand the textbook contents i.e. a passage, a
story, a poem, grammar points, etc. they will be able to write answers in
English as is needed for their examination.

So the free use of Bengali in English class is the most common
feature of the methodology of teaching English. With some exceptions
teachers are found speaking Bengali throughout the class "exchanging
greetings, views etc, instructing, informing, explaining, asking, answering
and so on" (ibid: 39). The rationale for their use of Bengali in the English
class, according to them, is that if they speak English none of the students will understand them. Consequently there will be resistance from the students as well as from the parents. Sometimes it happens that students complain to the principal against the teacher for not using Bengali and thus pressurize him to use Bengali.

According to the majority of the teachers of English, teaching English does not require any technique or method. As our students do not need to understand anything in class - what they need is to memorise essays, paragraphs and answers to textual questions to regurgitate them for examinations. And the more meticulously they can do it, the higher marks they are awarded. It is these results that the students, their parents as well as the authority of the institution want. Since the H.S.C. examination does not have any provision for measuring the listening and speaking skills in English, both the teachers and the students feel there is no necessity to practise them.

Another reason for using Bengali in English class is that most of the teachers of English (with some exceptions) are not proficient in using English fluently and accurately. So they feel at ease and more comfortable when they speak Bengali in English lessons. In this way the use of Bengali in English class stands in the way of learning English. It deprives the students of the opportunity of practising listening and speaking skills in English. As the teacher speaks Bengali, the students do not feel encouraged to speak English in the class. Moreover since the teacher very often uses Bengali in explaining textual materials such as a word, a sentence, a grammar point, etc. the students also get used to speaking Bengali in the class. So what the students hear from their teacher and from each other is not English but Bengali.
This use of Bengali in the English class has another adverse effect on students. They do not feel inclined to read a text to understand it, because they know that the teacher is there to explain everything in Bengali. "Thus the students without any practice in speaking, listening and reading cannot be expected to express their own thoughts and feelings in English" (ibid:40). As classroom writing activity what they usually do, is merely writing the content from the textbooks or notebooks or from their memory.

So the use of mother tongue in English class instead of facilitating practice in language rather hinders the learning process.

Translation activity is also a part and parcel of our traditional methodology of teaching English. Our education policy makers, teachers as well as guardians, all were taught English with a heavy dose of translation. So they believe that if students practise thoroughly the art of translating Bengali into English and vice versa, they will have no difficulty in learning English. This is why in the H.S.C. Syllabus there are 20 marks for translating Bengali into English and vice versa.

But translation either from Bengali into English or from English into Bengali is not a basic language skill. It is a skill by itself with specific purpose i.e. to make the content of a text, its depth and flavour known to its readers through another language. Thus, while rendering the text into another language the translator tries to keep the original meaning and the style of expression intact as far as possible. So the whole business is mainly academic or literary and has little or nothing to do with practice in language skills. Moreover, when translation is overemphasized and practised as a language learning activity, consciously or unconsciously a one to one analogy between the languages is drawn. This does not help any one in learning English.
3.2.14 Teaching of Grammar

A considerable portion of the syllabuses of Secondary, Higher Secondary and degree courses is devoted to grammar teaching. This dominance of grammar is owing to the long-standing traditional mode of teaching English through Grammar-Translation Method. The popular belief still is that learning a language means learning the rules of grammar of that language. So, grammar has been taught in the country since the introduction of English in the subcontinent.

The history of language teaching shows that "old tradition of language learning was dominated by Latin and Greek, the study of language meant primarily the study of its grammar, both as an end in itself and also to enable the learner to read and perhaps write, the language in question, a tool of scholarship" (Alan Tonkyn 1994:2).

But soon after the World War II the teaching-learning of grammar started declining with the growing interest in learning spoken language as a means of oral communication. The increasing interest in Communicative Language Teaching also added to the setback to explicit grammar teaching. This anti-grammar-trend did not, however continue, for long. Language teachers started taking fresh interest in grammar. And the traditional grammar made its re-appearance in the language teaching scenario. Allen and Corder discuss the revival and importance of teaching grammar. They say:

"Recently however, a change of attitude has been apparent among writers on second language teaching methods. The experience of a large number of teachers over many years suggests that a combination of inductive and deductive methods produce the best results. .... We do believe, however, that in any given classroom situation just so much attention should be given to grammar as may be necessary in order to promote quick and efficient language learning. Thus, we see the teaching of grammar not as an end in
itself, but as a useful aid and in helping students to achieve the practical mastery of a language" (Allen and Corder 1975: 46-47).

Regarding the importance of grammar Palmer says:

"The central part of a language is its grammar and this should be of vital interest to any intelligent educated person. If it has not been of such interest than fault must be in the way in which it has been presented, or in the failure to recognize its importance within this essentially human activity, language" (Palmer 1971: 7).

Presently the Communicative Language Teaching approach is also in favour of grammar teaching. This is affirmed by Thomson Geoff. He says:

"it is now fully accepted that an appropriate amount of time should be devoted to grammar, this has not meant a simple return to traditional treatment of grammar rules. The view that grammar is too complex to be taught in that oversimplifying way has had an influence, and the focus has now moved away from the teacher covering grammar to the learners discovering grammar.

Wherever possible, the learners are first exposed to the new language in a comprehensible context, so that they are able to understand its function and meaning. Only then is their attention turned to examining the grammatical forms that have been used to convey that meaning. The discussion of grammar is explicit, but it is the learners who are doing most of the discussing, working out -with guidance from the teacher-as much of their new knowledge of the language as can easily and usefully be expressed (Thomson in ELT Journal vol. 50/1 Jan. 1996:11).

But Stevick does not favour this kind of indirect grammar teaching. He is in favour of explicit grammar teaching. He says:

"Picking up grammar from ordinary conversation is an attractive idea but I do not know of any method that relies solely on acquisition in its pure form for the imparting of structural control. The process would simply be too long and outcome too uncertain" (Stevick 1986: 84).

He is in favour of explicit grammar teaching.
So the second half of the 1980s was dominated by the partial reinstatement of grammar in Britain both in mother tongue teaching and in the case of teaching English as a second or foreign language.

David Crystal in one of his radio programmes a few years back used the headline "Grammar is back". In addition there is other evidence in support of grammar teaching at least with regard to English.

Scholars like Krashen, Prabhu, Alwright, Rod Ellis, Brumfit and several others are not in favour of teaching grammar (Krishnaswami 1995). Both the groups have strong arguments in support of their convictions.

"Even the greatest experts in the field do not exactly know how a knowledge of grammar might assist in the language learning process; and certainly as every mother and child show a language can be completely mastered without a knowledge of its formal grammar. Nevertheless, we believe that in training teacher and giving remedial work to matured students a clear grammatical framework can be useful. At least I have found that such a framework can provide interest of new kind, and can help students in overcoming mistakes picked up in earlier learning; and this without demanding a return to the old traditional grind" (Brendan J. Carroll 1971: X).

Following are the other arguments put forward frequently in favour of grammar teaching.

1. "The study of grammar is necessary for, it is at least helpful in eradication of faults and consequently it develops the power to read and speak well.

2. The study of grammar makes possible easier communication between the teacher and the student since the language components can be named.

3. It is necessary as preparation for the study of foreign languages since categories in different languages can be compared.
4. It is a good discipline that gives training in perception and in relation.

5. An intelligent study of grammar reveals surprising and interesting things about the orderliness of what the child has learned in a non-orderly way. Thus there is an intellectual appeal aside from practical benefits" (The Report of the Commission on English College Entrance Examination Board New York (1963) cited in Krishnaswamy 1995. 4-5).

According to Michael West grammar is a "set of labour-saving rules, explanations and patterns which economize effort in language learning" and it is also "preventive and corrective medicine, safeguarding or rectifying those points or word-use which are specially liable to error" (ibid:8).

The arguments of the experts on the opposite side of the spectrum are also equally strong. Some of the arguments against grammar teaching are as follows:

1. Much input produces little output.

2. Many of the definitions and explanations of the grammatical forms and functions are unsatisfactory.

3. "the traditional method was inadequate; the teaching of grammar concerns itself with 'picking out parts of speech, the parsing of words in a sentence, word relationship and grammatical functions, the meaning of the sentence escapes notice and slips through the net of grammatical analysis and synthesis."
4. Error correction and explicit teaching of rules are not relevant to language acquisition” (Brown and Hanlow 1970 cited in Krishnaswamy 1995:5).

5. Widdowson (1979) holds that the best way to impart grammatical competence is through use and not usage.

6. Krashen (1981) is of opinion that conscious learning cannot be applied to performance successfully.

7. Prabhu (1981) also says that structures can best be learnt when attention is focused on meaning.

Whatever may be the arguments against grammar teaching it cannot be denied that a learner of foreign language needs to know the rules of grammar to speak and write correctly. "In order to make the study of meaning as effective as possible, we must first have an objective understanding of structure" (Gleason cited in Rivers 1982:66). “At some level, speakers of a language must know these rules (rules of constructing sentences), otherwise they would not be able to put words together in a meaningful way” (Leech et al 1982: 3). Now it can be safely said that in foreign or second language teaching-learning situation the importance of grammar is paramount.

Descriptive (theoretical) grammars study language for its own sake and provide a theoretical model. According to Stern

"The conviction that linguistic studies cannot be applied to language pedagogy without modification and interpretation led to the formulation of the concept of a pedagogical grammar as an intermediary or link between linguistic and pedagogy” (Stern 1983:175).

It is obvious that pedagogical grammar is concerned with the applicational aspect of theoretical model provided by descriptive grammar
for purposes of teaching-learning of a specific language. In other words "Descriptive grammar of a specific language when given a consumer - orientation, becomes a pedagogical grammar to be used for the teaching and learning of that language" (Srivastava 1995:142).

As to the question of the content of a pedagogical grammar, Stern (1983) asserts that it need not strictly follow one theory of language but in addition linguistic factors, psychological and sociological factors must be taken into consideration while preparing it. Noblitt and Bausch also conclude that the conditions of teaching and learning must be taken into account in composing a pedagogical grammar because

"Linguistics alone cannot say what should go into a pedagogical grammar. It should be based on linguistic psychological and includes a five fold analysis: a pedagogical grammar requires descriptive and contrastive data and concepts, an ordering of the information in terms of skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and in terms of levels of achievement (elementary, intermediate and advanced), and evaluation procedures bearing in mind objectives and educational settings for which the pedagogical grammar is intended" (Noblitt as cited in Stern 1984: 175).

Frank Palmer states that grammar learning was a great boredom. This is also voiced by Stevick. He says:

"Difficulties with grammar cause more discouragement and drive away more students than anything else in our profession. The teaching of grammar is for many new teachers the most formidable part of their undertaking" (Stevick 1986: 84).

He suggests the following four ways of presenting grammatical items in the classroom:

1) Some begin by explaining each new point of grammar in the native language of students along with translated examples. This is
certainly, according to Stevick, the quickest way to bring most people to some degree of intellectual understanding of the point, at least temporarily.

2) "If you follow this method (Direct Method) you present both the form and meaning of each new point without making use of any language except the one you are teaching. On the most elementary level you point to objects and demonstrate actions" (ibid. 84-85)

3) The third way of teaching a grammatical point is by using sentences giving contrast. For example, tenses can be presented in the form of the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>Am</th>
<th>clos</th>
<th>ing</th>
<th>the door</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Am</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>ing</td>
<td>to the desk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I</th>
<th>clos</th>
<th>ed</th>
<th>the door</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>walk</td>
<td>ed</td>
<td>to the desk</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4) Students can then go on to use the fourth way—they can learn the rules.

In Bangladesh the traditional way of teaching grammar is followed at the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. At the degree level recently modern terms like determiners, modifiers etc. have been introduced. Since our teachers are not familiar with these nor trained to teach them, they face some difficulty in teaching them. It is hoped that soon they will be able to overcome this difficulty.

At the Higher Secondary level most of the teachers due to shortage of time (as mentioned earlier), either totally avoid teaching grammar relying on the pre-college knowledge of the students or give a cursory treatment on all the grammatical topics in the form of revision presuming
that the students have already done them at their Primary and Secondary levels.

3.2.15 Examination

Since language testing is as old as language teaching, there are many traditional testing devices for testing language learning. Translation of given passages from the first language to the second and vice versa is a device much in vogue. Writing essay, paragraph, letter etc. are others testing instruments.

No purposeful testing in English literature or any other course, is possible without a clear definition of the objectives of the course. The teacher, the students, the paper setter and the examiner should be familiar with the objectives of the course and the syllabus should reflect those objectives. Only then is it possible to measure the quality and level of achievement of the student by means of suitably devised tests and examinations. The objectives of the course, the syllabus and the examinations are interdependent. Unless we understand this relationship, examinations are bound to be what they are: unsatisfactory instruments of evaluation. If we do not know why we are teaching what we are teaching; then we would not know what we want to find out through the examination (Nagaswara Rao 1992: 97).

The aims and objectives of traditional examination system are discussed extensively by Halliday, McIntosh and Strevens. They provide a distinction between an examination and a test. “By examinations we mean institutionalized texts; tests which have an official or administrative function over and above their task of measuring performance. A test which is also a school leaving certificate or a university entrance qualification or a matriculation equivalent is in fact an examination. It is not necessarily a
worse test because of additional function, but there are three inseparable features of examination and which may have serious consequences. The first is that examinations are conducted in terms of "pass" or "failure", terms which are evaluation, not measurement (Halliday et al 1964: 215-216).

According to Halliday et al the second characteristic of examinations is that they are by nature inflexible. As they are related to an educational system they have an obligation to remain reasonably constant and to change only when accompanied by necessary change in teaching methods and curricula. This means, in practice, that examinations do not tend to change but maintain their existing shape and content regardless of professional developments and innovations elsewhere.

"The third inseparable feature of examinations is that they control the teaching. Whatever technique and principles may be developed for evaluating and constructing language-teaching syllabuses, in practice, it is the examination even more than the syllabus that determines the kind of teaching which is carried out; in all but the best schools in a given area, and an improved syllabus can therefore only be effective if this examination permits it to be so......Enlightened teachers often talk of the bad effects of examinations upon teaching, and certainly where examinations are bad they usually lead to bad teaching. On the other hand a good examination can have good effects on teaching and one way of bringing about improvements in language teaching is to introduce improved techniques of examination" (Halliday et al 1964: 216-217).

There is no doubt that the present examination system in Bangladesh is defective in many ways. Most of the questions test memory of the learners rather than their understanding or their language competence. The essay type questions cover only a small portion of the
sylabus and existence of a large number of optional questions makes the whole examination business even worse. The students concentrate only on a few selected number of questions, neglecting the major portion of the syllabus. The essay type questions which occupy the major part of examination are subjective in their setting and marking; “They cover only the skill of reading and writing, they measure pupils’ knowledge about the language rather than their performance in it, and they confuse the testing of language with the testing of literary and cultural attitude and knowledge” (ibid: 215).

During the whole H.S.C. academic session in Bangladesh, there are two or three internal examinations conducted by the concerned institutions before the final one. At the end of the course there is the final public examination conducted by six Boards of Intermediate and Secondary Education. These boards centrally manage everything relating to Secondary and Higher Secondary education from admission to giving certificates to those who successfully complete the course. Under the direct supervision of the government officials the H.S.C. examination is held in different college centres usually located in district towns and thana head quarters. Vigilant teams from the boards keep on visiting the examination centres off and on. In addition, there is a magistrate from the government side in charge of maintaining discipline in the centre. He plays a vital role in checking corruption in the examination hall.

It is an open secret that corruption in the examination hall mainly in rural areas has become the order of the day. People have started losing faith in the examinations. The news of corruption especially adoption of unfair means in the hall becomes the headline on the front pages of dailies. Very often the invigilators, including teachers and even the magistrates on duty are assaulted by the unruly students. It is reported that students sometimes
come out in the street with procession demanding the right of copying from notes and guides. In order to ensure the safety of the teachers and concerned officials police often has to resort to lathi charge and sometimes even open fire causing death. Such news comes out even in the foreign press.

The pattern of questions in the S.S.C. and H.S.C. final examinations is largely responsible for either rote learning or mass copying. It is already said that the teaching materials (textual ones) have not been changed for a long period of time. The question setters generally almost every alternate year ask the same questions making little or no change in the language. Taking the questions of the last few years of final examinations into account, one can easily predict the probable questions going to be set in the ensuing examination.

For example, there are five prose pieces prescribed for the H.S.C. students. Coleridge’s “The Ancient Mariner” retold by E.F. Dodd is one of them. Similarly there are ten poems in the second paper. Browning’s “The Patriot” is one of them in the syllabus. In the final examination total five essay type questions are set (one from each prose piece) and students are asked to answer only three out of all the five. There are seven short questions from five prose pieces (not more than two questions from one prose piece) and the students are required to answer only five out of seven.

In the second paper five essay type questions are set from five different poems and the candidates are asked to answer only three. Similarly there are ten short questions (not more than two from one poem) and students are asked to answer any seven.

The study of the questions of some consecutive years suggests that it has became an unwritten law that the question set in this year will not be
repeated next year. But it is most likely that the same question will be set after a gap of one year. For the convenience of discussion the essay type and short questions of some few years of the H.S.C. final examination of Comilla Board from the ‘Ancient Mariner’ by Coleridge and Browning’s “The Patriot” are cited below:

The Ancient Mariner

Essay type questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1989</td>
<td>Briefly narrate the sufferings of the old sailor for killing the albatross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>What happened to the ship and the crew after the ancient mariner had killed the albatross?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>How was the old sailor relieved of his curse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Narrate the suffering of the old sailor after killing of the albatross.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>How was the old sailor relieved of the curse?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>How did the old sailor suffer after he had killed the albatross?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>How was the old sailor relieved of his suffering?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above questions of seven consecutive years show that thematically only two questions were asked e.g. about the suffering of the old sailor along with his companions and about his redemption. They are also set almost every alternate year.

The Ancient Mariner

Short questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1989 | 1. What lesson do you learn from the story "The Ancient Mariner"?  
2. How was the ancient mariner relieved of this curse? |
| 1990 | 3. Describe the Ship of Death  
4. How was the albatross received by the sailors? |
| 1991 | 5. What is an albatross?  
6. What lesson do you learn from the story “The Ancient Mariner”? |
| 1992 | 7. Why did the old sailor stop the marriage guest?  
8. Why were the sailors pleased to see the albatross? |
A look at the above short questions of seven consecutive years shows that most of the questions are repeated either every alternate year or, after a gap of two years. Question no.2 was never repeated. The reason may be that this was usually set as an essay type question. Question no.7 and 12 were asked only once. They may be taken as exceptions.

Poem

The Patriot

Essay type questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>Describe after Browning the triumphal entrance of the patriot into the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>Briefly describe the two contrasting phases in the life of the patriot.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>Describe after Browning, the ovation the patriot received at the time of his entry into the city.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Since there is a tacit law that in case of poems no essay type question is set from the same poem in two consecutive years, there were no essay type questions from Browning's 'The Patriot' in the years 1992, 1994 and 1996. Again thematically the same question was repeated with a minor change in language in 1991, 1993 and 1995 (Only in 1993, something additional was asked).
The Patriot

Short questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Question 1</th>
<th>Question 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>How was the patriot led to the place of execution?</td>
<td>What was the harvest of the patriot after one year?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1991</td>
<td>How did the patriot console himself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>What harvest did the patriot reap one year after?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1993</td>
<td>How was the patriot led to the place of execution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>How did the patriot console himself?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1995</td>
<td>What was the harvest of the patriot after a year?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>How was the patriot taken to the place of execution?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above short questions of seven consecutive years show that only three questions have been repeated either every alternate year or after a gap of two years.

The same tendency is found in case of the paragraph and essay writing.

Thus one can easily predict the probable questions to be set in the ensuing final examinations.

So the existing examination system instead of bringing the students to the study table pushes them to memorizing the bazar notes or adopting unfair means in the examinations. This examination system has given rise to the business of private coaching, selling of ready made notes and suggestions (a collection of questions which are most likely to be set in the final examination).

The conscious citizens as well as the academicians are worried about the faulty examination system. This is why Prof. Sadaruddin says "...
the examination system is at fault. The questions set in the S.S.C. and H.S.C. Examinations are of the type which induces cramming rather than learning the language" (Sadar uddin in Belta Vol.I, May 1989).

Another shortcoming of the examination system is the dearth of experienced examiners in English. It has been noted earlier that there is a great shortage of teachers of English at college level. This shortage affects the examination also adversely. Many experienced teachers are not interested to be examiners of the board, because they find private tuition more profitable and more risk-free than the job of examinership. Due to acute shortage of teachers the board authority is compelled to appoint even fresh lecturers with no teaching experience as examiners. Moreover an examiner in such circumstances, is allotted 700 to 900 scripts to examine within the stipulated 35 days. It is a Herculean task. It is a matter of doubt as to how accurately and sincerely the job is done. It is also reported that some examiners get the scripts evaluated by either their wives or other persons whose academic qualification is much below the mark.

Another defect of the present examination system is that sometimes before the examination the questions of some specific subjects get leaked out through the corrupt officials related to examinations.

So the present examination system is not only defective but also a lot of irregularities are associated with it. Until and unless a suitable public examination is devised for testing English language skills rather than students' ability to memorize and copy without understanding, the aims and objectives of the English syllabus can never be successfully realised.