Chapter Four
Text centered Teaching/ Learning an overview

4.1 Text Book Learning Relationship

It has generally been felt that most of the ills at the tertiary level ELT can be traced to the textbooks. Most of the teachers believe that their duty is interpreting and paraphrasing the text. By doing this, only a minimum of instructional objectives of language teaching can be achieved. Moreover, the same quantum of English is prescribed for both B.A. and BSc students; but the B.Com students are exempted from learning poetry and drama.

What is expected of efficient classroom teachers at the tertiary level is not simply implementing the curriculum. They are to define and redefine the curriculum, interpret it and transform it in a way that makes learning experience effectively manageable and highly productive. On the other hand, “what the teachers think and do at the classroom level essentially determines what the learners learn in the classroom”. (Richards 2). Every practicing teacher will agree with Allan Cunningsworth’s observation:

It is very important that the teaching materials used should take learner forward as directly as possible towards his objectives. The objectives should be decided first, in line with the overall aim of teaching programmes, and then materials should be sought, which can be related to these objectives. The aims of a teaching
programme should determine the course materials to be used and
not vice-versa. (5)

The norms regarding the instructional objectives are clearly stated in the
syllabus/curriculum, of an effective teaching programme, and the text books are
prepared on the basis of the guidelines given by the syllabus/ curriculum. In a
well-organized teaching programme, there should be proper instructions for the
productive use of the text books/course books, in the form of hand
books/guidelines. The tertiary level English syllabus of the Universities of
Kerala is only a vague statement, without any specific statement relating to
syllabus- instructional objectives, text/course books or classroom teaching, or
evaluation.

As most of the English teachers are without formal training in teaching, they
lack the technical knowledge of properly assessing the materials used. For the
past fifty years, the method of using the teaching materials in the classroom
remains unchanged, in spite of the increased role of English in the career of the
learners.

The academic bodies concerned prescribe the textbooks. Those who
prepare the books may have greater experience, more extensive training or better
resources to draw on, than the average class room teacher, but they do not seem
to have direct personal knowledge/ experience of the classes and institutions
which are varied and complex. The teachers on the other hand fail to consider
the material produced by the experts as a basis, on which to build as raw
material, which can be fashioned by each individual teacher, to meet his own needs, to produce learning on the part of the learners.

4.2 The role of text books in language teaching / learning

Experienced teachers know that a piece of published material is not wholly and completely suited to an individual teaching situation. The textbooks are not accompanied by any proper guidelines / handbook, showing how to use the text to develop specific language skills. However, there is ample scope for some adaptation and supplementation, which adds a personal touch that makes the lesson more direct and relevant. The material can provide basis and can often suggest possibilities for further development, serving as an inspiration to the teacher. Good material is capable of inspiring / motivating the teacher as well as the student.

The basic norms of teaching as a creative endeavour suggest that the teacher should be encouraged to move away from dependence on the material he is using, towards a more creative and independent relationship in which imagination and an understanding of the students’ difficulties and interests come to prominence. Allan Cunningsworth opines:

The role of the course book can then be seen as that of “an ideas bank”, a source of practical examples of ideas for teaching particular topics and an inspiration which stimulates the teachers own creative potential. The benefits of such a partnership between course book writer and teacher are considerable. The course book writer is no longer expected to do what he manifestly cannot do,
which is to tailor the material to each individual class, and the teacher teaches in a more personal and creative fashion, with greater confidence and originality. (64)

Thus, it becomes clear that the teachers are not to follow the textbooks slavishly. They are to be made aware that it is undesirable to teach the content of the texts completely, and that texts are to be used only as a resource. The teachers have a crucial role to play in material production as well as in their critical classroom use. Hence, the best writers of textbooks are practicing teachers. Material may contribute to both goals and content but they cannot determine either. What is learnt and, indeed learnable, is a product of the interaction between learners, teachers and the material at their disposal.

It is true that the teachers do not have the necessary knowledge of the technicalities involved in evaluating the suitability of teaching materials, but the classroom experiences of most of the teachers make them feel that most of the teaching materials prescribed by the University are not creative. What Jane Crawford said about textbooks is true of tertiary English teaching materials in the Universities of Kerala. He says: “Textbooks nevertheless remain a contentious issue for many teachers and researchers” (80).

All those who have been associated with tertiary English education in the university of Kerala have aired the same view.

4.3 The Nature Of Text Books In The Restructured Tertiary Courses

However, there have been attempts to restructure English education at the tertiary level for the past few decades, there happened to be very little attempt to
examine the exact role of textbooks in the language classroom. Most of the research programmes on ELT materials focus on using the textbooks only as a resource. The classroom teacher closely following the textbooks and confining solely to them is considered an undesirable practice.

In teaching English in Kerala as a second/foreign language, the material writers seem not to be familiar with the learning/teaching processes and contexts of the likely use of language. We are aware that we live in an age quite different from what it had been earlier. In terms of the requirements of communication, we had in the past; we have today a multitude of new subjects of study, and the technological advancement make it imperative to have a new kind of English. More than any one else the teachers have a crucial role to play in material-production and their critical classroom use.

The present pattern of textbooks at the tertiary level English reveals that the changes are only in the labels and that the materials have remained almost the same for the past forty-five years. It is assumed by the textbook writers and teachers that the duty of the teachers is an impassion following the textbook slavishly in teaching the language and that is actually what happens in the classroom, in the present situation.

Various forums of English teachers insist on the need for more research into the dynamics of textbook use. Whatever is the level of teaching there are certain principles underlying the selection of teaching materials, if the materials are to contribute positively to the learning environment. An analysis of the textbooks prescribed at the tertiary level today will reveal that they are not
prepared on the basis of any principles or norms prepared by the experts in this field. For example, the textbooks consist of

1. Essays from classical authors
2. Selection of essays from a single author
3. An unabridged novel of a classical author
4. A Shakespearean play
5. A modern Drama
6. A selection of poems from the 17th century to the modern times
7. A Book of English grammar & composition

The texts prescribed are generally remote from, and irrelevant to the topical interests of the students. Their sense of frustration and inferiority only increase by exposure to texts alien to their own experience and background. What suits the purpose today is a selection of texts for classroom use which may not be part of the traditional literary canon, but which reflect the lives and interests of the students. Such texts help the students to read literature using appropriate literary strategies. As a result, they know how far, literary language deviates from the language used by the community in day today life.

4.4 Nature of suitable textbooks

Texts have to be usually selected based on an intuition, with a good knowledge, and rapport of a group of learners. The basic principle of course book selection is that they must match the instructional objectives of the course. Therefore, the question is whether the course books teach the language skills,
expected to be developed. Each lesson should be related to each other in such a way that the learner can relate new language to what he has already known, and can build up his language skill, by adding new learning units to his existing body of knowledge. Each lesson should show the learner how the new language is used. This is done by presenting new language items in meaningful contexts, which will demonstrate the function of the target language in an authentic context. Structures and vocabulary are learnt in context, so that the students learn, not only what they are, but also how to use them. There is also provision for wide variety of activities at the practice stage in using what they have learnt in realistic situations.

We know well that every teaching situation is different, every literary text is different and every theory explaining literature itself, or how to use it in the classroom is different. The generally accepted qualities for English language teaching material are

1) They should be motivating and should act as a stimulus for language acquisition.
2) They should be Authentic
3) They should have a general educational value
4) They should help the students to understand another culture.
5) They should develop skills of interpretation
6) Students should enjoy them
7) They should have a high value and status
8) They should expand students’ language awareness
9) They should be successful in promoting classroom activities – helpful in generating discussion, controversy and critical thinking

The literary texts should expose students to complex themes and fresh unexpected use of language. If the materials are carefully chosen, students will feel that what they do in the classroom is relevant and meaningful to their own lives. Such literary pieces provide wonderful source material for eliciting strong emotional response from the learners. The use of the materials for teaching must be a fruitful way of involving learner as a whole person, and should provide excellent opportunities for the learners to express their personal opinions, reactions, and feelings.

4.5 Texts Used Today

The teaching of language skills has generally been related to the texts prescribed. The various literary genres that the students learn are in many cases very difficult for them not only in terms of the language used in them, but also in their themes and cultural settings. Their language makes learning a very difficult experience, making learning slowly. The themes, in most cases are unfamiliar to the majority of learners largely because of the socio-cultural milieu that they represent and the life that they portray. The theme of a novel like Wuthering Heights, for example, with all its complicated web of passions and motives, does not appeal to a teenaged boy or girl and therefore he/she learns it half-heartedly.

The language teacher has his base on a course book / textbook, which he uses to ensure maximum learning. Teaching materials, if solely prepared for the
purpose will reflect the writer’s views of language, and learning, and the teachers and students respond according to how well these match with their own beliefs and expectations and mindset.

It is up to the teacher to design the material to suit his students and the process of teaching. Most of the informant teachers were concerned with teaching the content of the materials prescribed, causing much failure of learning / teaching English.

Different types of materials—prose passages (like expository prose, narrative prose, argumentative prose, as also short fiction) genres, modern drama, Shakespeare, fiction, Grammar etc are used by the teacher. Each type of materials requires separate treatment to make them suit the development of various language skills. What Randolf Quirk wrote about English textbooks of the nineteen sixties is true even today. He says:

Students who are scarcely able to read a restricted vocabulary text in modern standard English are expected to study a Shakespearean play, some of Jane Austin at her subtlest, some of Pickwick papers at their most colloquial (not to mention dialectical or archaic) and sporadic poems from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century. (10)

Here is a list of certain authors and their texts to illustrate this.
### B. A. I year

1. **Prose** *(A list of authors whose works have been prescribed is given)*

The following is a list of some of the authors of prose passages prescribed during the past thirty years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Author</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alan Moor head</td>
<td>Hilairie Belloc</td>
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<tr>
<td>Alan K. Kondo</td>
<td>Huxley, Aldous</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alice Meynell</td>
<td>Issac Asimove</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anton Chekhov</td>
<td>Max Beerbohm</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arnold Toynbee</td>
<td>Mostafa.K. Tolbu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arthur Bryant</td>
<td>Montague.C.E</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernard Shaw</td>
<td>Nevil Cardus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bertrand Rusell</td>
<td>Osbert Sitwell, Sir</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bonnie Chamberlin</td>
<td>Patric Pringle</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlie Chaplin</td>
<td>Paul Tabore</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Author</td>
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<tr>
<td>Charles Lamb</td>
<td>Priestly J.B</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cronin A.J</td>
<td>Richard Hillary</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chesterton G.K</td>
<td>Raymond Williams</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edmunt Blunden</td>
<td>Richard Hoggart</td>
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<tr>
<td>Edward Sullivan</td>
<td>Rose Macaulay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egon Larseen</td>
<td>Robert Lynd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ernest Barker</td>
<td>Rosita Forbes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ernest Houser</td>
<td>Ruskin Bond</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flora Annie Steel</td>
<td>Saul Bellow</td>
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<tr>
<td>Forster E.M</td>
<td>Sydney Frankenstein</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frank O’ Connor</td>
<td>Somerset Maugham</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frederick J. Thomas</td>
<td>Stephen Leacock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Galsworthy</td>
<td>Trevelyn G.M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Gardiner A.G        Virginia Woolf

Gerald Durrel        Viscount Gray

George Orwell        Walter de La Mare

Haldane J.B.S        William Ralf Inge

Hallam Tennysom      Winston Churchill

Hardin, B. Jones     Harold Nicolson

Prose II is usually a selection of essays (A single author). Recently a restructuring of English syllabus in Kerala University has reduced the number of prose texts to one consisting of 15 essays.

BA/BSc/Bcom

1 year paper II

I. An unabridged novel by some British or Indian author.

Some of the novels prescribed during the last decades

(1) The Return of the Native (Thomas Hardy)

(2) Mayor of Caster bridge (""

(3) Under the Green wood tree (","

(4) The Eagle has Landed (Jack Higgins)
II. A book prescribed by the university to teach grammar, modern English usage, and composition.

For B.Com students the English course consists only of Paper I Prose, and Paper II Novel (For non-detailed study) grammar and composition. The BA/BSc students have to learn (1) A play by Shakespeare. Some of the plays prescribed during the past few years are Macbeth, Julius Caesar, The Taming of the Shrew, Merchant of Venice, Tempest, As you like it, A midsummer Night’s Dream, and Henry IV.

In addition to a Shakespeare Drama, the learning of a modern play is obligatory. Some of the plays prescribed are ‘Candida, The apple cart, Arms and the Man, The Devil’s Disciple, The Doctors’ Dilemma, Major Barbara, Man and Superman, Saint Joan, Pygmalion (all by Bernard Shaw) The silver Box, Justice (Galsworthy) Doll’s House (Ibsen) A third component of the second year tertiary English course (Paper III) is a book of poems.

The poems are mostly of the British authors and some of the poems prescribed during the past five decades are the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>William Shakespeare</th>
<th>Let me not to the marriage of true minds.</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Milton</td>
<td>Paradise lost (part-I&amp;)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thomas Gray</td>
<td>Elegy written in a country churchyard</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ode on the death of a favourite cat.</td>
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<td>Author</td>
<td>Poem/Literary Works</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Cowper</td>
<td>The solitude of Alexander Selkirk</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oliver Goldsmith</td>
<td>Edwin and Angelina</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>William Blake</td>
<td>The Tiger, London</td>
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<tr>
<td>William Wordsworth</td>
<td>The solitary Reaper, Heart leap well</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Daffodils, Laodamia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ode on the Intimations of immortality from recollections of early childhood.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The stolen Boat. Resolution and Independence (with Batherer) Tintern Abbey. Milton. The world is too much with us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sir Walter Scott</td>
<td>Lochinvar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Byron</td>
<td>The destruction of sennacherib, The Isles of Greece</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P.B. Shelley</td>
<td>To a Skylark.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hymn to Intellectual beauty.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ode to the West Wind. Song to the Men of England.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Keats</td>
<td>Ode to a nightingale, Endimion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>La Belle Dame sans Merci</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lord Tennyson</td>
<td>Lady of Shallot.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lotos Eaters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.W. Longfellow</td>
<td>The slave’s Dram</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Matthew Arnold  
Dover Beach.  
The Forsaken Merman.  

W.H. Auden  
Night Mail  
Musee des Beaux Arts  

Sir Henry Newbolt  
He fell among thieves.  

W.W. Gibson  
Flannan Isle  

Robert Browning  
My Last Duchess, Porphyria’s Lover,  
Patriot, Fra Lippo Lippi.  

Y.B. Yeats  

Rupert Brooke  
The Great Lover  

D.H. Lawrence  
We are transmitters snake  

Wilfred Owen  
Strange Meeting.  

Nizim Ezekiel  
Night of the scorpion  

Robert Frost  
The Road Not woods on a snowy evening  

A Ballad of Sir Pratap Singh  
Henry Newbolt  

A significant argument in favour of the traditional type of materials is that any type of material can be utilised in such a way as to motivate even the weakest student to ensure higher percentage of learning, if a resourceful teacher
makes proper planning to teach them. A negative attitude on the part of the teacher towards the materials will be strongly demotivating for the learners. Certainly some materials are better than others, but the teachers have to make use of them all creatively. According to Jane Crawford, “textbooks should be [...] used only as a resource and that following a textbook is an undesirable way to teach” (82).

Materials for teaching widely approved, and effective ways to develop linguistic skills have been evolved because of the development in the field of textbook preparation for about the past seven decades. Effective textbooks incorporate a number of reforms and innovations made in different places at different times during this period.

In the early decades of the last century, the books used for English teaching were imported from England, where these books were used to teach English to the native children. This practice continued for a long time. It has also been strongly opined that the students maintained a high standard of English communication in those days.

The students who were fortunate enough to undergo University education were also very few. There had not been a proliferation of higher education institutions in the state as we see them today. The teacher student relationship and the classroom atmosphere were all very different. Malayalam medium students could appreciate Shakespeare and Milton very well. They enjoyed Russell’s intellectualism, and laughed with Leacock.
Teachers as well as students were in a very advantageous position irrespective of the material, classroom atmosphere or teaching strategies. Things have changed radically. Various changes in the higher education Scenario have effected deterioration in the tertiary education, which has made the traditional teaching materials unfit for the teachers and learners. Vast majority of teachers feel that a change in the teaching material is essential whereas only a small minority of them feel that no change is required.

With the democratization of university education, in the last three decades of the last century, the higher education Scenario changed completely demanding a total restructuring of education. However, the basic academic constituents, related to higher education have not changed, causing an appalling deterioration in the standards of language education.

How can the learners without the minimum required competence in day today communicative functions of language or an acquaintance with the British Geographical, or socio-cultural background, enjoy the philosophy or the romantic imagination of Wordsworth or Coleridge, the metaphysics of Blake, the romantic spirit of Shelley, the satire of Lord Byron, the sublimity of the poetic imagination of John Milton, the harmony of the poems of Shelley, achieved through different strains of thought and feeling, the emotional poignancy of Keats’ the lyricism, the philosophical out look and Victorian spirit of Tennyson’s poems, the mystic strain of W.B. Yeats, zest in life, freshness of temper, and out look and ‘the delicate sensitiveness to beauty in the poems of
Rupert Brooke, love of Robert Bridges, and the imagination and warmth of the emotion of Matthew Arnold?

Along with the large scale democratization of education, research and experimentation in education in general and language education in particular has been given wide attention by the education departments. The ultimate goal of teaching English has been defined in precise terms of communicative ability. Such teaching objectives determine the course materials required. Classroom procedure also focuses on what the learners need to learn, that is, what they will do with the English that they learn on completing the course. Textbooks are to be viewed only as “an aid to language learning process, which also depends upon individuals, their needs and their relationships in the classroom. Teachers and students find their own ways of using a textbook to suit these circumstances and to suit their own methods of learning” (Cunningsworth 8).

In view of the linguistic requirements of learning English at the tertiary level, it is essential that the teaching materials be prepared in relation to the teaching and learning styles and the contexts of using the materials. According to Jane Crawford, a practicing teacher, who is well aware of the entire process of teaching and learning is the best writer of teaching materials. A resourceful teacher knows well that, “what is learnt and indeed, learnable, is a product of the interaction between learners, teachers and the materials at their disposal” (82).

The changes that took place worldwide, in tertiary education seem to have least affected the general English curriculum in the universities of Kerala. By way of the objectives of teaching English at the tertiary level, only a vague
statement is made in the syllabus of general English, at the tertiary level in the University of Kerala. The objectives of teaching General English at the degree level should be

1. To strengthen the knowledge of grammar the student has acquired in the previous classes.

2. To enable them to avoid the usual pitfalls in speech and writing.


This is a statement repeated over the years in the syllabus of the University of Kerala. Even after teaching grammar for seven years, it is disappointing to note that the strengthening of grammar is the first objective of learning English at the tertiary English teaching of the University of Kerala. The second objective is also a negative one, relating to grammatical rules in speech and writing. There is no importance given to the quality of the content, the psycho-social implications of the content, or appropriateness of choice of course material in fulfilling the general objectives of education.

The textbooks writers confine their objectives to the priorities of the University, stated in the syllabus. For example, the preface to a collection of essays prescribed in the University of Kerala refers to the preferences of the editor which goes thus: “This anthology […] is meant to familiarize the students of our Universities with modern English usage and style. The close acquaintance with the style of the masters will give them an insight into the vigour and beauty of modern English and inspire them to master some of the basic elements of
grammar, idiom and usage.” (Elias, i) Mary T. David & V.S. Muthiah, editors of Drumbeats, an anthology of prose selections from Tagore, O’Neill, Camus, William Golding John Steinbeck, Martin Luther King, Russel, C.V. Raman, Shaw, William Faulkner and John Galsworthy specify the reasons for the choice of learning material as follows: “The authors have been chosen for the relevance of their message to all mankind and for their timeless and universal appeal. The intention has been to draw inspiration from fairly distant corners of the world and to present a varied and balanced fare for the mind and intellect” (ii)

While the second anthology gives importance to the objective of introducing young minds to great masters, the first one referred to above, gives linguistic competence as the primary objective in the selection of materials. Therefore, the selections of learning materials depend solely on the personal priorities of the editors of anthologies.

The syllabus consists of only a list of textbooks the characteristics of which have been discussed above. Most of the teachers believe that their duty is interpreting and paraphrasing the text. A major portion of the teachers confines to teaching the text rather than making it a tool for developing the language skills. Only a small group of the teachers were found going beyond the text books to teach the language skills.

Modern textbooks have been prepared because of a new awareness about language in general and the English language in particular. A lot of thinking and a great deal of research into the language and the process of acquiring/learning have produced results, which are being used to produce better texts.
The first essential constituent to receive the attention of the scholars is vocabulary as Jack. C. Richards observes:

For one thing, the notion of a word has been “broadened” to include lexical phrases and routines, and it has been suggested that in the initial stages of learning these play a primary role in communication and acquisition. In addition, access to lexical corpora has made it possible for applied linguists to access huge samples of language in order to find out how words are used, both by native speakers and by second language learners. (255)

Texts have been prepared giving attention to common patterns of collocation, word formation, metaphor, and lexical phrases that are part of the speaker’s lexical competence.

Yet another significant aspect of research in vocabulary is that it has been identified as “a core component, of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen read and write without extensive vocabulary and strategies for acquiring new vocabulary; learners often achieve less than their potential and may be discouraged from making use of language learning opportunities around them” (Richards255). The number and type of words in store determine the learners’ ability to read different kinds of materials and to process different kinds of oral and written texts. One’s linguistic competence according to D.A. Wilkins is “a mastery of its vocabulary as much of its grammar” (19)
Proficiency of language, in the past was not measured in terms of vocabulary and structures. The contents of the prescribed texts were taught and it was supposed that the learners developed proficiency in communication. Though the curriculum was quite specific about aspects of teaching such as grammar and reading, little attention was given to the role of vocabulary, and structures to be developed as part of the language proficiency. Vocabulary was given only incidental attention in many textbooks. “In the past, vocabulary teaching and learning were often given little priority in second language programmes, but recently there has been a renewed interest in the nature of vocabulary and its role in learning and teaching” (Richard 255). New kinds of texts reflect and help construct changing identities and social relations.

The English language, indeed, plays a key role in the global restructuring of social and economic relations, that have been collectively referred to as “the post modern condition” (Goodman and David Graddol 2).

English was one of the first European languages to benefit most from the standardization and the development of the new modes of representation provided by scientific English. Now English seems likely to benefit most from the creation of new genres associated with the new communication media. It may be possible, technologically, to communicate across the Internet in languages other than English, but will all languages be allowed to develop the linguistic resources required for the range of distinctive Internet genres?
Travor Kerry explains the permanence of language skills thus: “The world of education, and above all educational organizations, change at an ever-increasing pace, but the need for teaching skills remains a constant in this sea of change” (5). Therefore, what is required is of course, the skills themselves have to be reassessed, updated, amended, and refined. It is in the classroom that genuine and meaningful communication which has been considered central to second language learning takes place, if an agenda for second language education is drawn on the basis of the challenges it has to meet today.

An assessment of the textbooks used at the tertiary level English teaching based on the latest findings on second language learning/teaching reveals that they are not at all relevant and challenging. Therefore, the course materials are not sufficient to teach the required linguistic skills.

The curriculum planners, syllabus designers, or textbook writers have nowhere defined the linguistic needs of the tertiary English learners. Therefore, the question of preparing the texts, to meet the linguistic needs does not arise. How to use each lesson in a textbook forms a significant part of language teaching process. The selected pieces in an anthology are usually accompanied by a list of vocabulary and a short introduction to the author. Some comprehension questions form a part of the exercises given but the grammatical or linguistic components are not given serious treatment in the majority of textbooks. Nowhere in any text, there have been any guidelines for the use of the textbooks. While preparing the textbooks, all these considerations have to be specifically taken into account.
4.6 Culture & language teaching

Education in the past was primarily the transmission of a cultural heritage. This remained almost an unconscious and unorganized activity. While an individual acquired his mother tongue he was acquiring his ancestral culture. This aspect of informal Acquisition of culture as an integral part of learning language continued even in civilizations, which organized formal system of education. Even in educational institution in which book learning remained the main item of acquiring knowledge/information, the forming of habits and the training of character have been left to be taken care of by spontaneous effects of social relations between the younger generations and elders and what the child brings with him from his home. These characteristics of education in course of time paved the way for other tendencies. Cultural considerations in education, especially in language education began to draw special attention. With the spread of second language/foreign education, the cultural aspect of language was made an important part of serious consideration.

4.6.1. Cultural Context in the Text Books: Bridging the Gap

‘Culture’ is a rather ambiguous word. In English education, the word assumes ‘a broad connotation’ because the centres of higher learning are the most appropriate institutions to cope with the universal. However, in language teaching we have to deal with ‘culture’ in a narrower perspective i.e. only those aspects of culture manifest in the materials, which form the part of a
language teaching programme. Paul Manickam considers it “unthinkable that
the language should be taught alone in the ‘pure’ state as it were. Language is
a scheme to mould, whose substance is either literature or civilization” (40).

Language teaching primarily aims at preparing the learner to behave
appropriately and purposefully in a variety of social situations. Language, as
everybody knows, has a potential for being developed for all the purposes that
the human society and human brain can conceive. So, various constituents of
language teaching / learning, identify the situations in which the learners are
required to use the language and prepare materials by means of which, it is
believed, the learner can be equipped to communicate in such situations
effectively. Every interaction, every purpose of communication in terms of
language involves a cultural change, which the language learner has to
internalize, if he is to use the language effectively.

The cultural element in the language texts has often been a neglected area
in English teaching / learning at the tertiary level for a very long time.
Developments in linguistics and psychology of learning turned attention on
culture as a major focus in language classrooms. Regarding this aspect, Yueh-
Hung Seng says:

Efforts linking culture and language learning are impelled by ideas
originating in socio-linguistic theory and scheme learning theory. So,
socio-linguistic theory focuses on social and cultural aspects of language.
From a socio linguistic perspective, competence in language use is
determined not only by the ability to use language with grammatical accuracy, but also to use language appropriate to particular contexts. Thus, successful language learning requires language users to know the culture that underlies language.” (12)

Grammatical competence refers to the degree to which the language learner has mastered a linguistic code, which consists of knowledge of vocabulary, rules of pronunciation and spelling, word formation and sentence structure. Socio-linguistic competence is the use of appropriate linguistic codes in a context. In other words, it emphasizes the appropriate use of language in specific cultural contexts as Marquardt explains:

“In selecting literary works for a particular class of ESL/EFL students, two assumptions are basic: (1) that the structure and lexicon of the learner’s language interfere with his mastering of the structures and lexicon of the target language, and (2) that the patterns of the students’ culture interfere with his understanding of the cultural patterns of the speakers of the target language.” (8)

The language teachers at the tertiary level are supposed to know that these two types of interference operate more tellingly as the points where Malayalam sentence structures and English sentence structures as well as the cultural patterns of these two language differ very much. The pattern of interference at the structural level is easy to identify, and thus it is easy to overcome the points
of interference from the culture of the learners, for the latter are subconscious and informal.

For over one and a half century since the introduction of the minutes of McCauley, the system of education prevalent in India was almost similar to the system of education prevalent in England, intended for the native speakers of English. Englishmen wrote most of the literary texts used for teaching English. The materials contained the socio-cultural setting of England. Those who were associated with English language education did not seriously think about the fact that an understanding of the cultural setting of a literary work is necessary for the fullest appreciation of such a work, and that language – learning consists of integrating language and culture. A language learnt in addition to one’s mother tongue endows the learners with the experience of another culture and a different way of coping with reality. In a foreign/second language learning situation, says Cem Alptekin, “ the learners are not only expected to learn accurate forms of target language, but also to learn how to use these forms in given social situations in target language setting, to convey appropriate coherent, and strategically effective meanings for the native speaker” (58).

The use of literature helps language teaching in the following ways.

1. Promotes language skills by extending linguistic knowledge by giving evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage and complex and exact sentence structure.
2. Shows the relation between linguistic expressions and culture. It is only through language that one understands the culture of the speakers. Through the vocabulary and structures, the user of the language makes a tour of the culture represented by the language. The translations of literature and other means to understand the culture of a language do not make any effect that a real tour of the literature of the language produces.

3. All those who have been able to establish their creative achievement, had developed their faculties through the reading of the literatures written by successful writers in the language.

4. It is through literature that one develops higher moral and ethical values and proper awareness of human rights.

The use of literature in its proper place helps an individual to develop moral and intellectual qualities in addition to developing the desired linguistic skills.

Language is a vehicle of culture; learning language is a kind of enculturation, Alptekin further adds “where one acquires new cultural frames of reference and a new world-view, reflecting those of the target language culture and its speakers” (58). That may be why there has been an argument that second language learners need only be aware of the cultural frame of reference and not to internalize the culture. According to Michael Guest, “when we interact with
people from our own culture, we tend not to ‘culturise’ them, that is, we do not search for cultural explanations in order to interpret their behaviour” (157). It is through its language that the culture of a social group takes shape. Every change in culture is mirrored in the language. Venying Jiang who has made substantial investigation in the relationship between language and culture writes: “[…] language is the mirror of culture, in the sense that people can see a culture through its language. Another metaphor used to symbolize language and culture is the iceberg. The visible part is the language, with small part of culture, the greater part lying hidden beneath the surface, is the invisible aspect of culture” (328). Yet another metaphor illustrating the link the language has with the culture is in relation to language and communication. Jiang further adds,” Communication is swimming, language is the swimming skill and culture is water. Without language, communication would remain to a very limited degree (in very shallow water), without culture there would be no communication at all” (329). Naturally, the behaviour of a person belonging to a particular culture makes sense only when observed through the basic beliefs, assumptions and values of that particular social group. The behaviour of the group is often related to the fundamental values, beliefs, assumptions; social interactional patterns, etc. The language of an alien geographical region, and social group would naturally pose serious problems of learning / teaching. Technically the problems have been labelled cultural ‘bump’.

An understanding of the society which establishes and maintains the educational system is an integral part of language education which according to
Dolores Garcia, “must be in harmony with social, economic, and political realities of the changing present, of the relevant and enduring past, on which a community establishes its identity, as well as of the projected future with which man and society must cope” (13).

We use language to convey meaning and ideas and many other things. Every use of language involves meanings, designative or sociative, denotative or connotative. Every language form we use has meanings, carries meanings that are not in the same sense, because it is associated with culture and culture is more extensive than language. People of different cultures can refer to different things while using the same language forms. For example, when one says lunch – an English man will think about some thing quite different from what a Keralite thinks. Names of different animals have the same denotation in all the geographical regions where they are available, but the connotations are different. English words have their translations in Malayalam, but these words are seldom equivalents and often give rise to different associations or images.

Interpreting a text from a linguistic-cultural point of view, however, involves paying close attention to its grammatical construction, its choice of register its idiomatic nuances, its web of semantic interconnections, its use of imagery etc. Foreign language subjects tend themselves easily to the study of texts, where the interplay between culture and language can be analyzed closely and systematically. Cultural ideas and values are embedded in the very language of the text.
All aspects of language teaching had to take into account these features if effective teaching / learning situations were to be a reality. Marko Modiano has described the cultural onslaught made by the unprecedented spread of English in the following words. “Never before in history has the multitude of human languages been more threatened by the spread of one specific tongue. We have been witnessing the expansion of this language for centuries and many of us have dedicated our professional lives” (24). English language has been instrumental in the extinction of a number of native tongues and cultures related to it. Modiano argues: “A number of cultures have lost distinct identity originating from an ancestral language as a result of linguistic imperialism” (343). He further asserts:“[...] learning and use of English, has a profound impact on those cultures which up to now have retained distinctive identities” (343). The recent developments the world over have liberated English from cultural bounds of the UK or the USA. The international spread of the language has made it simply a utilitarian, communicative tool, one which allows the non-native user to retain, to the “greatest degree possible their distinctive cultural characteristics” (Modiano 344) The time at which the spread of English was a threat to the multitude of human languages is over.

Moreover, because of the developments the world over the cultural boundaries and identities are becoming increasingly blurred and intermingled. Michael Guest further observes, “A transcending of cultural categories rather than rigidly defined unique and distinct traits seem to be a global norm” (155)
While restructuring English teaching / learning as a second language at the
tertiary level in Kerala, these developments have to be taken into account.
Revised textbooks / teaching materials to suit the learning / teaching
requirements of the new generation of learners who have to think and act
globally are to be introduced.

On the need for a new kind of English, Modiano writes,” The teaching and
learning of a geographically, politically and culturally ‘neutral’ form of English,
which is perceived as a language of wider communication and not as the
possession of native speakers, is one of the options we have at hand if we
continue to promote English language learning while at the same time attempting
to somehow neutralize the impact which the spread of English has on the cultural
integrity of the learner” (344).

Now English is not a language confined to the British Isles or the USA.
The emergence of it as a world language has made it a property of the whole
world, involving the cultural elements of all the geographical regions where it is
used. It is interesting to note what Sue Leather has to say, “Now, as the lingua
franca, it is public property and has taken on new characteristics. A global
culture is emerging wherein cultural artifacts are being created in the English
language by non-native speakers. In Europe and else where it is becoming
common place to write in English without first composing texts in a native
tongue” (342). More over there are a number of indigenized varieties of English,
which are recognized as dialects of English. These varieties of English have their
own regional literatures, the use of which will safeguard their identity and culture. As Modiano says, “[…] one way to safeguard the cultural integrity of the non-native speaker is to promote those indigenized varieties of English, which are established forums of international communication”(340) The USA and the UK do not hold monopolies on what are perceived to be international cultural phenomena marketed in English. Raja Rao way back in 1938 asserted that Indians should not write like the English now.

Even in countries like China, the English language is making impact at a considerable level. This is mainly because of English being a leading language of international political, academic and community meeting in addition to its being a language of information technology. Just as Modiano has remarked:

[...] the English language is making inroads into the consciousness of non-native English speakers in a manner which is securely cut off from the influences of education authorities. Information technology is producing new avenues for the English language to take as it continues to colonize the hearts and minds of millions of non-native speakers. (343)

In the global scenario, cultural artifacts play a significant role. The artefact itself is not necessarily steeped in the distinctiveness of a defined and unique culture, but is instead a marker of world culture. Across the board from film to music to literature, there are an increasing number of cultural artifacts, which are not produced, in the native tongue of the artists responsible for the expression.
While restructuring the English curriculum, syllabus and textbooks due consideration is to be given to cultural aspects of teaching English as a second language, if the learners are to get the required benefit out of learning the language. We in India, have sufficient literature in English to make any sort of selection for the purposes of language teaching / learning to suit any course. What is required is that the curriculum experts should take into account the relation between culture and language teaching while preparing guidelines for a course in English.

English language has been in use for over six centuries, and by its contact with varied cultures the world over, it has become exceptionally complex. The prolonged use has made many words and expressions in English acquire a peculiar richness of significance, which an ordinary leaner of the language may fail to understand. They are not expected to understand and appreciate the extravagant flights of fancy, which have been used in the course of English literature. However, they are to make themselves acquainted with the background against which such a literature has emerged, if they are to learn the literature. To overcome difficulties as these, the curriculum developers may try to work out a scheme that would put literature in its rightful place in the teaching programme and would show how it is related to other forms of the oral and written language. Selecting the literary works for teaching can be based on the extent to which the student can identify himself / herself with the situations or characters portrayed in the works. In order to do this, the syllabus designers need not confine themselves to Indian literature in English.
alone or British literature. We do have literature written by non-Indian authors in Indian setting, or literature in English produced by Indian writers with a universal theme. There are many classics written by non-Indian authors with a theme of universal appeal. Materials sufficient to meet the requirements of any level of English teaching are available. What is required is a judicious selection and use of them to suit the education programme.