Chapter One

Introduction
1.0 Preliminaries

Besides consistent attempts, especially over last half a century both internationally and locally, in the area of language learning and teaching, a dissatisfaction towards the achievement of language proficiency has been shown by different sections of the society such as teachers, learners and parents. Some of the significant research in this direction are:


These researches suggested, in general, that the main cause for the ineffectiveness of language courses is the mismatch between the principle and the practice, between the policy and the provision and also between the learners' educational needs and the curricular aims. among many others. It has also been felt that even when the learners' needs and the curricular aims match, there is a dichotomy at the level of language teaching, ELT materials and testing. Despite the fact that in the old day, ELT materials were consisting of a grammar book and a bilingual dictionary that have been replaced by a broad range of communicative language teaching materials, still the gulf between the prescribed materials and the learners' needs have not been cemented properly.

The present study, therefore, is an attempt to evaluate the prescribed materials vis-à-vis learners' needs at secondary level in Bangladesh. so that if any remarkable dichotomy between the two is found, it should be met and materials are amended by experts in this area in order to improve the learners proficiency in the English language which is very crucial in the present day scenario.
1.1 Different Phases of ELT in Bangladesh

English in Bangladesh, like many other countries all over the world, enjoys the status of significance, opportunity, eliticism and prestige. Although Bengali is so widely used in Bangladesh, that it appears to be a monolingual country, yet English, today, is used for both intranational and international purposes, for interpersonal reasons in some circles of the society, as a library language for higher education and for various other purposes such as business, trade, and scientific and technological advancements.

Such a place of English in Bangladesh is an outcome of the British legacy. Therefore, it is important to see it in the following manner:

a) The Colonial Phase

John Miller (cited in Howatt 1984:67) - in his book *The Tutor* published in Serampore in 1797 - mentioned that the socio-historical context for the dominance of English was gradually taking shape at least by the end of the 18th century. Miller was right in the sense that the preparatory work for the establishment of English by the Missionaries (in the forms of English schools in Tanjore and Marwar) was strengthened by the natives.

As early as 1823, speaking in favour of English, Ram Mohan Roy, for instance, had written to Lord Amherst that the Sanskrit system of education could only keep the Indians in darkness. This time was later (towards the middle of the country) taken by Mohd. Mohsin in Bengal and Sir Syed Ahmad Khan in North India. Finally Macaulay's Minute of 1835 gave the official seal of approval to English in India.

English and vernacular languages had already replaced Persian in the proceedings of the law courts by 1837 - English in the higher and vernacular languages in the lower courts. Sir Charles Wood's Despatch of 1854 marked a position for vernacular languages, at least in policy. Although Wood recognised that the vernacular languages can play important role in mass education, English remained unquestioned at higher levels. The Despatch said.
"we look, therefore, to the English language and the vernacular language of India as the media of diffusion of European knowledge" (Wood 1856, from Aggarwal 1983:16). English thus was to be the language of the select elite, used in power and prestige, 'vernacular' languages were for the masses to be used in peripheral domains. In fact, a large-scale literary and linguistic engineering was done for the permanence of British imperialistic expansion in India. The consolidation of English literature as a discipline and the introduction and establishment of English as medium of instruction and as a subject of study were a part of this engineering (Rajan 1993: 9-11). The story of English in the remaining period of colonial rule can be described in terms of a few landmarks such as the establishment of universities in Kolkata, Mumbai and Channai in 1857, Aligarh in 1920 and in Dhaka in 1921 resulting selective education and training in administration, imparted through English, the Indian University Act (1904) and the Resolution on Education Policy (1913).

As far as English education during the British rule is taken into consideration, we noticed three broad developments:

1) Levels of attainment in English: During the early years (1600-1800) the high variety called the Sahib variety was imitative and formal. During the later years (1850-1947) more varieties (from very high to very low) appeared.

2) Interaction with vernacular languages: A number of words of vernacular origin were absorbed in English, e.g., Brahmin, Coolie, jungle, and so on.

3) Methodology: Language studies in colonial period were based on literature and grammar and the means of studies was the grammar-translation method. The spoken component of the language was not practised much. The emphasis was given on accuracy.
However, during colonial period Bengali was radically modified by the influence of English, but Englishmen did not use it except in the most superficial way. English, thus, was adopted by Bengalis, transplanted to a new soil that affected the growth of the language in more and more radical ways, though it might seem in the immediate colonial context that Bengalis were merely trying to imitate English linguistic practice (Chaudhury 2001:36).

b) The Post-Colonial Phase

In 1947 when the sub-continent was divided into India and Pakistan. India opted for 'Hindi' and Pakistan for 'Urdu' as the state languages. In the face of violent protest from the East Pakistan, culminating in the tragic death on February 21, 1952, both 'Bengali' and 'Urdu' were made the state languages of Pakistan. In these circumstances, neither Bengali nor Urdu but English became the common language for communication between East and West Pakistan. As a legacy of the British rule, English gained the status of the official language in both the newly independent nations. Thus in Pakistan English enjoyed the status of second language and it was taught as a functional language at secondary schools in Pakistan (1962, Report of the Curriculum Committee).

After the liberation, Bangladesh made Bengali the state language and the status of English, was drastically reduced. Bengali replaced English in all official communications except those in foreign missions and countries and in armies, where English is still used as official language. Bengali also became the only medium at secondary and higher secondary level. Attempts were made to translate English books into Bengali to meet the needs of books in different subjects. Thus, English is still a compulsory subject through secondary, higher secondary and undergraduate levels. English was withdrawn as a compulsory subject from B.A. level, result was drastic. But the scholars realised, later, the frustrating reality that Bengali has failed to be an adequate medium of education at the higher levels. The standard of English fell to the abysmal depth in public schools and universities. And in recent years a large portion of the
population have been going abroad for jobs, business, education, etc., and this made the government rethink the emotional withdrawal of English from B.A. level that was made in 1974. Nowadays the people of Bangladesh have been perceiving the growing importance of English day by day.

c) The Present Phase

English is, no doubt, a necessary language for survival in the modern era. So English is introduced as an academic subject from class one to graduation in Bangladesh. Now students learn Bengali and English simultaneously. But they hardly have any scope to use English outside the classroom because English is a foreign language to be used and it is not used as frequently in social situations. Regarding medium of education at lower levels e.g. public school, primary school, most parents fail to send their children to English medium schools, where students can prepare for English Cambridge or 'O' and 'A' level examinations. Only a rich section affords to bear the high cost of this English medium school. Graduates from these schools often remain very weak in Bengali but comparatively good in English. Many of them prefer to get admitted in foreign universities.

The Private Universities Act, 1992 allowed the setting up of some private universities, on the American model, so far, where English is used as the medium of instruction. These universities give special emphasis on English because English is of much demand and also to attract students and their money. Though students from these universities have the same level of proficiency as those from the public universities while getting admitted, but at the end of a four year stay in private universities they acquire a higher level of proficiency which help them to introduce with multinational organizations and agencies (Preface to the book of 'Revisioning English in Bangladesh' Alam et al. 2001).

Now the growing number of private universities, English medium schools and tutorial centers that offer courses of different foreign universities
and institutions and job opportunities of different local and multinational organisations and agencies represents the status of English in Bangladesh.

English, by now, has acquired a central position in the Bangladesh education system. There are three education systems, for instance, at secondary level in Bangladesh. These three systems are: 'General education sub-system' (which include government and semi-government school, non-government school, English medium schools), 'Madrasa education sub-system' and 'Vocational education sub-system'. English is taught as a compulsory subject in each of these systems and sub-systems. Bengali represents the mainstream and medium of education as in the public schools and colleges. English represents the mainstream and medium of education as in the English medium schools and colleges. In madrasas, though Bengali is the medium of instruction, Arabic has a prestigious place there. In vocational education, Bengali plays a dominant role in the medium of instruction (started in 1995).

While the middle class people opt for Bengali (in public schools and colleges), the poor and the rich Arabic and English respectively. Thus education in Bangladesh, instead of bringing people together works as a divisive force (Choudhury, S.I. "The state and people" appearing in The Daily Star in the special supplement on 'Amar Ekushey', 21 February 2003).

1.2 Objective of the study

The present study is an attempt to analyse the prescribed ELT materials vis-à-vis learners' needs at the secondary level in Bangladesh. In the context of Bangladesh, ELT materials include texts produced by Bangladesh National Curriculum and Text-book Board (NCTB) and the publishers approved by the Board (NCTB). In this study our aim is to analyse the ELT materials used in the secondary schools of Bangladesh, which follow the curricula of NCTB and to review whether these materials meet the educational needs as put forward by the curricula. Our study will also provide insight into why there is a mismatch between what is in our curricula and how the text-books and other materials are
organised. For this, first some books and materials used in the secondary schools will be evaluated; secondly, some teachers, students and syllabus designers will be informally interviewed and finally a questionnaire will be piloted to elicit the responses from both teachers and students. The findings collected from above sources will be analysed and discussed and some suggestions will be made to minimise the mismatch, if at all prevailing in the ELT programme.

Furthermore, the present study will provide an overview of English language education in Bangladesh. A language programme can be looked at from different historical perspectives. Three different phases, in this regard, are noticeable in the context of Bangladesh, viz., the colonial phase, the post-colonial phase and the present phase. An enquiry will be made to explore how each of these phases contribute to form the nature of the English language in Bangladesh.

The study is also concerned with the nature of the English language education in reference to the language programmes as set out in syllabus outlines, sets of objectives, teaching materials, textbooks and various other planning documents. The study attempts to analyse the pedagogic difficulties in implementing the school-based material to develop an effective material and to produce a set of guidelines for its successful implementation.

1.3 Significance of the Study

This study is significant in the sense that it tries to show the history and the present condition of English language teaching at secondary level in Bangladesh education system which is an interplay between centralised and decentralised curriculum, syllabus and material as well. It also tries to analyse the ELT materials used in the secondary school of Bangladesh, which follow the curricula of National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and to review whether these materials meet the educational needs as put forward by
the curricula. To elicit teachers' and students' reaction, English language teachers and students will be observed and interviewed.

The study presents the changed views on the nature of language, particularly the development of communicative language teaching model in its various facets with its implication of differentiated materials for different learner types (secondary level). It is hoped that the present study will bring about some useful beneficial pedagogical suggestions concerning the role of material in English language teaching / learning and achievement and the findings of the study will be used in curriculum, syllabus design and evaluation of teaching materials.

1.4 Outline of the Study

The study consists of the following chapters:

Chapter one (Introduction) introduces the problem under investigation. It presents the preliminary discussion about the place, role, need and ELT situation in different phases of Bangladesh. It also presents its objective, significance and an outline of the study.

Chapter two (English Education in Bangladesh: historical overview) presents the status of English language in Bangladesh through history. It also includes the constitutional and Government policy regarding English language in Bangladesh.

Chapter three (Existing Curriculum and Syllabus at the Secondary level in Bangladesh) proposes to assess the place of English in the National Curriculum of Bangladesh. It also analyses and discusses the existing curriculum and syllabus at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

Chapter four (Analysis of learners' needs at the secondary level in Bangladesh) investigates the issue related to teachers' and learners' attitude towards English language and their needs, the extent of the use of English and the utility of the prescribed texts at the secondary level in Bangladesh. It also
deals with the reporting, tabulating, finding of the analysis, and discussing of the results.

Chapter five (Evaluation of ELT materials vis-à-vis Learners' needs at the secondary level in Bangladesh) presents the types, aims and objectives, and some criteria for evaluating the prescribed ELT materials vis-à-vis learners' needs at the secondary level in Bangladesh.

Chapter six (Summary, conclusion and implications) is the final chapter of this study, presents the conclusion obtained from the findings of this study. It also gives the summary of the results of the study and some pedagogical implications and suggestions for further research.