

## **PEDAGOGICAL IMPLICATIONS OF ENGLISH FOR THE SECONDARY LEVEL STUDENTS IN BANGLADESH**

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### **Abstract**

English is a foreign language in Bangladesh. But it is taught as a compulsory subject in all schools, colleges and universities. Therefore, it is mandatory for all students to study it from class one to the tertiary level. Language is used for communication. So, communicative activities are important aspects of language learning and teaching in the Bangladesh context. The aims and objectives of teaching English may not properly be materialized if the course contents are inappropriate, dull and difficult. The topics and situations used in the course books should not only convincingly reflect actual social situations outside the classroom, but also make the learning of English relevant, useful and enjoyable. At the end of secondary level education students are expected to be in a position to describe and discuss familiar topics in English. They will also be able to use reference books like dictionaries, translation of passages from Bangla into English and vice-versa. The present article will study teachers' free access to a variety of teaching materials (i.e., textbooks and other supplementary materials) suitable for their classes; and once they are properly trained in how to use these materials, they would be able to use them to develop their students' communicative competence.

**Keywords:** Pedagogic, Adequately, Implications, Convincingly, Achievement, Vigorously, Integration, Acquainted

### **Introduction**

Syllabus design is an important step in English language course design. A syllabus means the content of the course or what the teachers are going to teach. The course designer lists the items to teach, which are known as the syllabus inventory. Then they put the items in the order they should be taught. This listing and ordering of the items to teach is widely known as the syllabus for a course. The content, however, varies the teaching aims and objectives of the course. (Hoque *et al.*, 1997)

Secondary English text books should be used as a useful aid for teaching and learning English communicatively in our situations. These books based on a national curriculum, are centrally produced by National Curriculum and Text Book Board, one for each class,

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and are followed in all the secondary schools, government and non-government, in the country and they are available in the market.

Most of our teachers use, rather over use, these books, because these are the only teaching materials available to them. Moreover, they are not adequately trained upto use any other materials. As a result, most of the lesson activities help variety and challenge, and as such, they hardly stimulate students to learn. To help our teachers to use the text books and other supplementary materials effectively, they should be properly trained. This is because only trained teachers can best use the textbooks, aids, newspapers, magazines or any texts adapted or prepared by themselves or their students, to teach English for communicative purposes (Hoque *et al.*, 1997).

### **Background**

Students can learn the language for communicative use only through practicing the basic language skills i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing. That is why the lessons of a textbook should include adequate language activities for practicing language skills. Students can memorize words, sentences or even the entire text of a lesson and then think that they have learned English. The words and sentences of a lesson are used to provide suitable contexts for practicing language skills. Once the students have practiced the language skills with the help of a lesson, they should be able to use the skills in real-life situations. A text book lesson should have tasks and activities which will involve students in communicating with others in English. In other words, the textbooks or exercise will be so designed that their practice inside the classroom will lead to language use outside the classroom i.e. in real-life situations.

Teachers' guide should be used to make a lesson effective. The guide will help the teachers with knowledge and techniques of how to make a lesson plan, how to present a word or a structure and most importantly how to make the class participatory through pair-work group-work, role play etc. However, teachers should be free to use or adapt the guidelines provided in the teachers' guide according to the need of the individual classes.

As teachers, it is their responsibility to take into consideration with what aims students choose English from a wide range of courses available. Is their choice dictated by a genuine personal interest or by mere material consideration? In their answers to the question "Why have you chosen English?" most of the students express the view that English is an international language and a degree in the subject would provide them with wider opportunities to find a better job. The course is designed primarily with a view to developing the incumbents' ability (Dutta, 2001):

- i. to use the language precisely and efficiently;
- ii. to read with understanding and sensibility;
- iii. to think systematically and logically; and

- iv. to initiate a process of self- discovery and personal improvement.

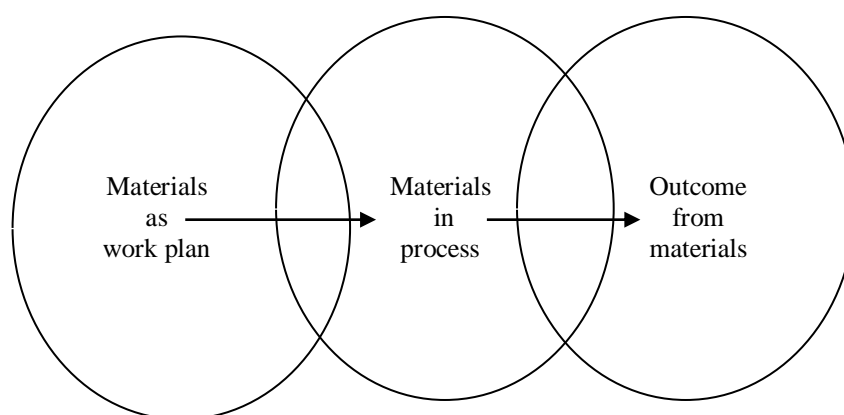
A multiple-textbook policy should be introduced at the secondary level. That is, instead of a single textbook for a particular class, there should be more than one book. So writers and publishers should be allowed to produce textbooks freely. English teachers should have freedom to choose any book or books which they think would be suitable for their classes. Only then the writers and publishers will compete for developing quality books.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

In learning a second or foreign language the most important thing which should be taken into consideration is the material. Without suitable materials it is impossible to teach the target language appropriately. Therefore, the evaluation of materials based on adequate criteria is necessary. On the other hand, English language teachers, in order to be successful, should consider the availability of their textbooks and materials. They should provide activities that match with their materials for their students. Teachers should also prepare themselves for their classes regarding teaching materials of the textbooks.

In addition, the present study has analyzed the pedagogical difficulties in implementing the secondary-level materials to develop a useful material and to produce a set of guidelines for its successful implementation. At each level of development, appropriate measures should be taken considering how far the materials are being effective. Thus, evaluation should be an integral part of each of the levels.

The study evaluated the materials in the classroom and preferred the diagram, given by Breen (1989, as cited in PGCTE 1995: ii, block-I, CIEFL, Hyderabad).

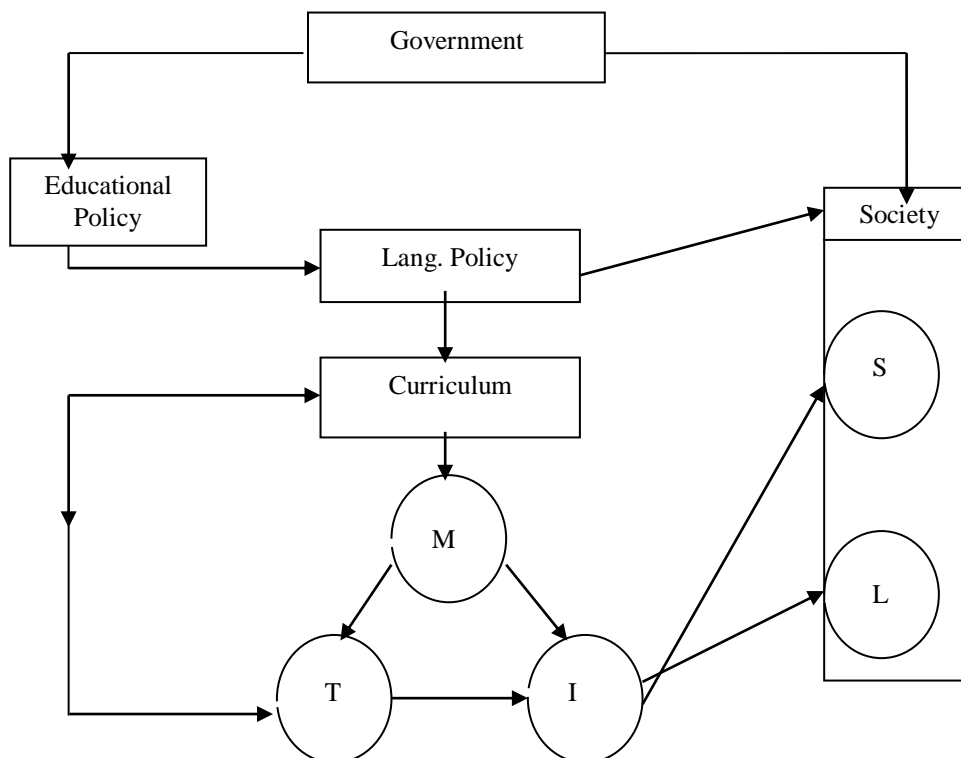


**Fig. 1.** Materials used in the classroom teaching.

From the Fig. 1 the researcher observed whether there is a match or mismatch between the last two phases. The first phase is presented with materials as work plan in Fig. 1 while, materials used by someone in the classroom teaching, represents as materials in

process in this diagram (01). The figure illustrates from the classroom, the ways in which the learners actually use and respond to materials. The outcome from materials illustrates relative achievement of learners. Therefore, this course may be one step towards teachers' reflection on their classroom and on their roles as teachers.

The integration of different levels of curriculum process can be visualized in Jacobovits (1970) diagram as follows:



**Fig. 2.** Integration of curriculum Process.

The above diagram refers to the government policy which determines the national policy for language. This decision should address the social demands, socio-linguistic environment and students' psychological make-up(S) curriculum, which is the direct offshoot of government policy, will be implemented if an appropriate methodology (M) is adopted by teachers (T) for their instruction (I). Teachers must take feedback from what learners (L) do and say in relation to all that happens.

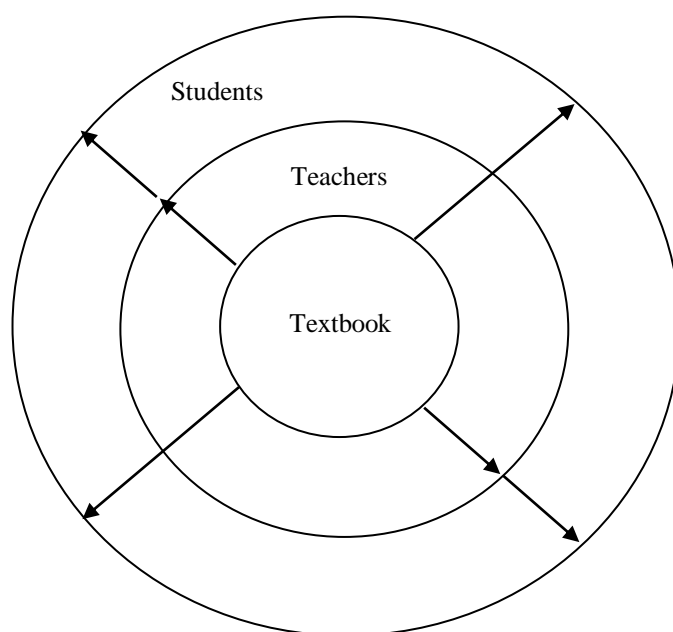
The policy maker should address the actual needs of the students. Needs analysis should be done vigorously. A needs analysis includes not only students' English language needs rather their ability, utility of prescribed texts, existing ELT condition, infrastructure of institutions, long standing ELT tradition of the country and teachers' and learners' attitudes towards English. In favor of the English language policy, the government should first develop the infrastructure of the institutions and convince the people working at

different levels of the curriculum development. For the implementation of what is done in the planning level, people who are working in implementation levels need to think in line of planners and policy makers. Development programmes like trainings, workshops and seminars, publishing journals and bulletins can put teachers, textbook writers and even the students within the lines.

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) itself can produce textbooks or different writers and publishers can produce them. In the later case the NCTB will monitor the work. Even some foreign titles can be approved. The government can arrange workshops, seminars and training programmes for textbook writers to make them interpret its curriculum. Some of these programmes can be broadcast and telecast on mass media. During examining the book, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) should look whether they have met the findings of need analysis level or not. Because a textbook should follow the bottom up process, based on grass root realities. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) should look carefully into some important points as follows:

- (i) textbook content should be authentic or close to real life situations.
- (ii) it may include original and retold works of creative writers.
- (iii) lessons should be lively, interesting and motivating.
- (iv) language should be presented as discourse. Opportunities should be provided for the four basic language skills in an integrated manner.
- (v) the textbooks should include variety of topics and themes.
- (vi) different varieties of English should be presented with the four basic language skills.
- (vii) notebooks and guidebooks should be examined whether they are misleading the teacher and student communities.
- (viii) the activities of rapidly flourishing coaching centers and private schools should be monitored. There can be a government body to look into this matter.
- (ix) communicative grammar books should be written and prescribed for the students .
- (x) teachers` book, which has been promised in the national curriculum (report 1995, vol,ii),should be published and distributed so that teachers can get immediate help. And each lesson of this book should be vivid enough to give teachers a clear idea about how to teach the lesson. In the teachers book, each lesson of the student`s books should be structured clearly and setup in chronological order.
- (xi) finally, however to carry out all acts effectively, teachers must be trained in how to use these materials effectively. A provision of in-service training is required.

The relationship between teachers, students and materials should be useful for both teachers and students. This instrument can work effectively more or less depending on the understanding of the users according to nature of the instrument. That means, the teachers need to know this relationship with the students, what they can best accept and how they can adapt, enrich and interpret. The above mentioned relationship can be shown in the form of a molecule.



**Fig. 3.** Relationship between teachers, students and materials.

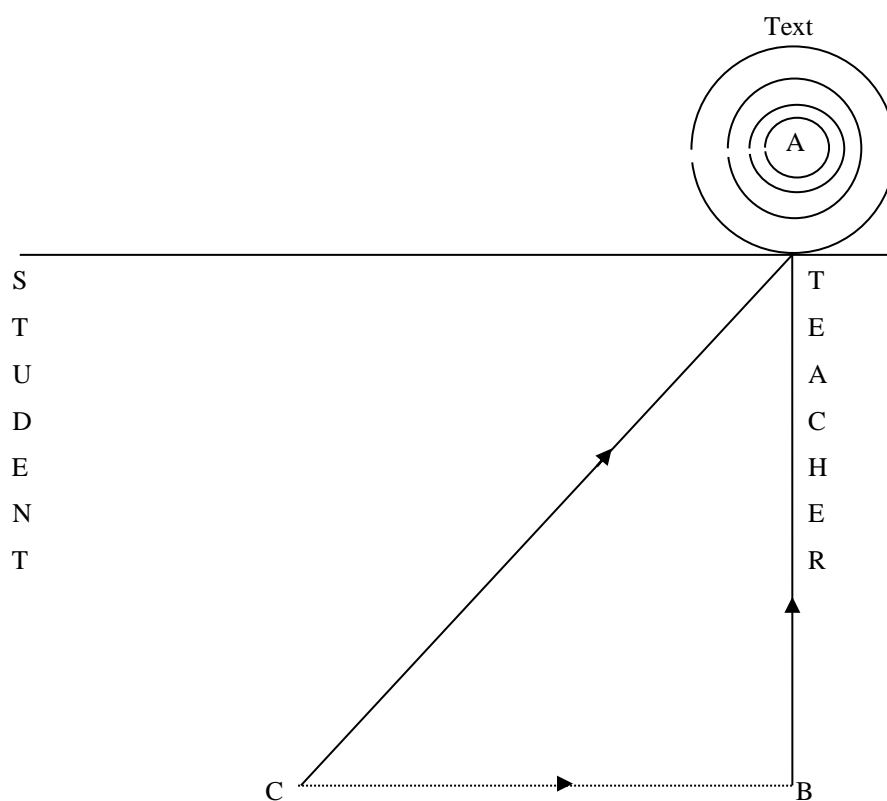
The above figure shows that the central element is texts and the students (learners) and teachers are in orbits. The students can learn the related subject matter directly from the suitable textbooks or through the mediation of the teachers. Finally, deficiency was found at all levels of development, even the students failed to achieve expected levels of proficiency. Therefore, teachers should have direct contact with the students. They are responsible for the integration of all work and activities in the classroom. With the changed view of language teaching, the teachers should change their role in the classroom instruction. They are not the rulers of the class. They have to act as the learning partners of the students and manage the class very tactfully so that learning takes place.

Just adopting a communicative syllabus and textbooks does not certainly ensure effective teaching. If the teachers fail to use this in an effective way, teachers' development programmes (e.g. in-service training) should be taken by Upazilla/Thana level and experts from a higher authority can monitor these programmes. Self-development scheme can also help teachers to develop their teaching skills.

Ideas and implications are suggestive for all of the seven General regional education boards together with Bangladesh Madrasa Education Board and the Bangladesh Technical Education Board. But the Madrasa Education Board is yet to adopt the communicative curriculum developed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). Just arranging public examinations and giving the students certificates should not be the sole responsibility of the education boards. In many cases, curriculum guidelines and syllabus specification do not reach teachers and students, who, in fact, are the target beneficiaries of these. The education

boards should investigate into different schools whether they have understood the curriculum and whether the teachers are teaching the students in the same way as planners intended it. Of course, the teachers must be relatively free in designing their class lessons. They must be acquainted with the approach and methodology.

In formulating an integrated teaching approach, the teacher, however, will be careful enough to choose only those items which not only stimulate students' interest but also reveal aspects of the text under discussion. After selecting the relevant activities, the teacher will have to make, along with the students, a cautious and step-by-step journey to the spots cited in the text which the students are usually reluctant to visit. In this journey the teacher is not required to perform the role of an assessor-cum-corrector, but that of a participant-cum-guide, who will turn the whole journey into a wonderful excursion by making the participants forget its pains. In this approach the role of a teacher in the classroom may be explained with the help of the diagram (Fig. 4).



**Fig. 4.** The role of a teacher in the classroom.

The circle on the top marked A is the text, made up of layers of meanings. At a distance from A is the base point B where the students are situated. AC is the area from where the teacher guides and controls students to make an eventful journey to A. The dotted line

BC suggests that without the teacher's guidance, the students may get lost on the way and hence may not reach the text spot. However, both the teacher and the students meet at the journey's end at A where the former engages the latter to discover for themselves the world inside A, i.e. the text. In this position the teacher, as we can see, is not imposing himself/herself between the readers and the text, but he/she is actually, through a set of activities, encouraging the learners to decode the layers of meanings from A, the literary discourse. (Dutta, *et al.*, 2001)

Finally, Bangladesh is not an exception for those teachers who have gone through a long-standing tradition of grammar translation method of language teaching. It is deep-rooted in our ELT culture that teachers may be frustrated as they can do little in coping with the changes that had been made in the planning levels of the curriculum.

### **Conclusion**

The teacher should only try to clear necessary difficulties or false assumptions leading to a wrong approach. He/she should try to create in the classroom a challenging situation for the students to bring all their available resources to it. This can be done by incorporating in the teaching process activities like predicting, gap-filling, creative writing, role-playing, paraphrasing, and media transferring. Such an approach would help the students to see below the surface of what they read and improve their abilities in the language by offering many wide ranging activities to practice.

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