

# The Application of English Textbook in HSC level: A Case Study in Bangladesh

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National Curriculum and Textbook Broad, Bangladesh under the English Language Teaching Improvement Project has designed English textbook, English for Today, for classes 11 and 12 as a continuation of class 6 onwards following the principles of 'practicing language activities' 'not knowing the rules of language'. This book targets four skills through the communicative approach and aims at using English for various purposes. But observation shows that there is a far discrepancy between text contents and testing system in board examination. Besides, our students are exam-oriented who use this book as a medium of academic excellence, not as a medium of language competence. For this, the application of this textbook is in question. This article aims at exploring the application of the HSC English textbook and investigates what the teachers and students focus on the text on and what they escape, and why they do so. The study has been done through both open-ended and close-ended questionnaires and interviews with teachers and students of some urban and rural colleges of Bangladesh. The study revealed that almost all teachers and students agree that the text is rich enough for acquiring all four language skills, but their learning and teaching activities are rather examination-oriented than acquiring language competency. The reshuffling of examination questionnaire in keeping with four language skills according to text can be a proper way to eliminate the gap between the textual contents, classroom and homework practices and testing system.

*Key Words:* NCTB, English for today, communicative approach

## Introduction

English for Today (EFT) is a prescribed book of English language for every student of Bangladesh up to Higher Secondary Certificate level. But it is a matter of fact that after 12 years of practicing English; Bangladeshi students have not set up a strong foundation of English up to the mark for the higher study. They always search another source to learn the English language properly, though this text has been organized with rich contents for English language learning. Another reality is that students of our country have a tendency of practicing this text only for acquiring academic excellence, but not for learning the English language. This kind of practice is apparent especially in H.S.C. level of Bangladeshi students. EFT for H.S.C. level is a well-organized textbook for communicative approach, but students and teachers are so much examination-oriented. The students practice English Text Book and the teachers make them practice it only for the preparation of board examination. Besides, the testing method in board examination and the text contents have a far discrepancy. As a result, students and teachers avoid those parts of the text which are not necessary for the examination. So, the effectiveness of this book is in


question for English language learning. Though many researchers have been done to find out the lacking of this book in different levels, we have initiated a case study among students and teachers to find out the lacking of the application of textbook of 11 and 12 classes and to explore an effective way for the application of this book which will be an impetus or foundation for learners in their graduation level and will make them efficient English language learners.

## Research Objective

The main objective of the study is to have a survey among the students and the teachers of HSC level to analyze the application of the English textbook and to find out the gap between the text contents of H.S.C English textbook and the assessment system in HSC level of Bangladesh. Besides this, the core emphasis is:

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i). to find out the students' aim and the learning process of their English textbook. ii). to depict the condition of classroom practice in HSC level. iii). to explore the lacking in the application of English textbook of HSC. Iv). to recommend an effective way of the full application of the English textbook.

### Literature review

About CLT method, Wu (2008) regards Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) "as an approach to language teaching and its function of language use is communication" (p.59). For the process of CLT learning, one study expresses that in the learning process of CLT is communication but it is challenging for teachers to create genuine communication within the classroom setting. To facilitate this some ELT experts have proposed general principles and practices. (Ullah, 2013, p.203) In the function of teachers in CLT, he (2013) also says that "teachers need to know what communication means for classroom practices and to work that out for themselves" (p.206). Moreover, another study proposes that communication is likely to occur in the classroom when: (1) a significant amount of pair work and group work is conducted; (2) authentic language input in real life context is provided; (3) students are encouraged to produce language for genuine, meaningful communication; and (4) classroom tasks are conducted to prepare students for actual language use outside the classroom. (Brown, 1994, p.38).

In order to use language effectively, Hymes (1972) argues that "learners need to develop communicative competence the ability to use the language they are learning appropriately in a given social encounter" (p.89). For the dealing of CLT, as Richards & Rogers (1986) put, "Communicative Language Teaching is best considered an approach rather than a method" (p.81). The textbook is very important on the part of teaching and learning. Callison (2003) states that "No other institutional technology has had more influence on teaching over the past 100 years than the textbook" (p.34). Testing is also an important part of English language learning. Testing is being held on language competency, but not on giving marks. Brumfit & Johnson (1985) expose that "tests should be designed not to reveal simply the number of items which are answered correctly, but to reveal the quality of the candidate's language performance" (p.126). In the validity of testing in HSC level in Bangladesh, a study again reveals that the validity of testing at HSC is always seriously criticized as HSC testing is too much predictable and the construction of the test does not truly reflect the standard of communicative language testing (Ullah, 2003, p. 198).

Speaking is equally important as writing and reading. Speaking is the reflection of the competency of reading and writing. So in CLT method examination without speaking test makes the testing incomplete totally. As Rivers (1968) says that "When we read and write, we call upon what we know of the language orally" (p.78). Ur (1984) unearths that "the objective of listening comprehension practice in the classroom is that students should learn to function successfully in real-life listening situations" (p.213). The reality of speaking and listening test in HSC level is that Kaisar and Khanom (2008) say that "listening as a skill is absent from the very beginning in the history of English language learning of Bangladesh"(p.125).

The students of H.S.C level are examination oriented and they only expect only what is necessary for their examination but teachers think of this a useless way of teaching the English language. A study explores that "Ultimately, there is a mismatch between teachers' perceptions and practices and learners' needs and preferences...these two factors cause great difficulty in implementing CLT" (Rahman & et al, 2006). Moreover, for the importance of teachers' attitude, as McGrath (2006) uncovers that "Teachers' attitudes to textbooks are likely to have an impact on how they use them" (p.176). So, this study has the initiative to explore the lacking on the application of the English textbook in HSC level and to find out the gap between the text contents and the assessment system in HSC level in Bangladesh.

### History of English for Today

The initiation of the English Language as a compulsory subject in the Indian subcontinent educational institutions resulted from Lord Macaulay's recommendations on Education Minutes of 1835 A.D. as a researcher says, although the establishment of schools for teaching English dated as far back as 1787 A.D. with the efforts of Rev. Swartz. (Krishanaswamy & Sriraman, 1994, p.67) After a decade later in 1797, John Miller, a British author, Howatt (1984) expresses, "wrote the first English book and himself published it in Serampore in British Bengal to teach the English language to non-Europeans"( p.31).

As per Lord Macaulay's recommendations, all the Indian Sanskrit and Arabic schools were closed and all sorts of government financial endowments were withdrawn. Hence, English replaced the Sanskrit and Arabic languages and became both the medium of instruction and a subject of study.

Immediately after the British colonial rule in the Indian subcontinent and the creation of Pakistan, the language movement of 1952 in East Pakistan made the

use of English language in greater scale inevitable. As an offshoot of this historic movement, both Bangla and Urdu attained the status of state languages, but neither Bengali nor Urdu became the common language of communication between the East and West Pakistan. And since 1959 English assumed the status of a second language till the independence of Bangladesh. In this period the syllabuses of English books were designed with a view to teaching students English as a functional language at secondary schools in Pakistan. The corollary of the independence of Bangladesh followed by spiraling passion for Bengali as a state language observed the decline of the English language from the status of a second language to the status of a foreign language. Bengali replaced English in all official communications with few exceptions. In secondary and higher secondary education, Bengali became the only medium of instruction, But the increasing demand of the use of English as an international language made the government of Bangladesh think otherwise and necessitated the steps to take for the development of secondary and higher secondary English language teaching.

In response to the recommendations forwarded by the Education Commission, the Ministry of Education formed English Language Teaching Taskforce (ELTT) to assess English language teaching in Bangladesh. The evaluation showed that in most cases grammar was given emphasis; the contents of the textbooks were taught and learned without understanding. The Article 3 of the commission recommends, according to the report of Bangladesh Education Commission (1974), “Even after the introduction of Bangla as the medium of instruction at all levels of education; the necessity will remain for English to be learned as a foreign language.... For historical reasons and for the sake of reality, English will continue as a compulsory language”. As a result, the National Curricular and Textbook Board (NCTB) with the technical support of British Overseas Development Administration (ODA), in 1990, developed a project resulting in the implementation of English as a compulsory subject for the schools, colleges, and madrasah

English for Today for class 11-12 was prescribed by the National Curriculum & Textbook Board as a Textbook from the academic session 2001-2002. This new English book was developed for classes 11 and 12 by English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) jointly funded by the government of Bangladesh and DFID of the UK Government. The whole process of writing, training and evaluating the manuscript was done under NCTB. The textbook is set up on the principle- as says Paul (2015) in the preface of English for Today “the principle of learning a language by actually practicing it” (preface). This

practice will focus on four skills of language through a communicative approach. The aim of this book is: 1. to use English in various interesting situations 2. not to emphasize on forms but on functions of language 3. to practice different skills. 4. to exercise grammar inactivity. The book is divided into units. Each unit, based on a theme, carries several lessons which are designed for reading texts, a range of tasks and activities to enable students to practice the different skills. This textbook is organized in such a way that any individual student or a pair of students or a group of students can practice this book to acquire a proper knowledge of the English language. There are 24 Units and 158 lessons in this book for 2014-2015 sessions. Just after the table of contents, there is a Book Map to show the name of a topic, language skills, functions, grammatical structure; and vocabulary has also been placed respectively in a chart according to per unit. At the beginning of each unit, the objectives of each lesson are given to make it more effective and focusing on language skills, grammar or structure. Finally, a Sample Question Paper is given at the end of this book. But for session 2015-2016, a new edition has been printed. In this book, new contents, some poems and short stories especially some literary texts have been included. The writing of the theme of a poem and the graph or the chart description has been added to the question paper setting.

### **Methodology**

This paper is prepared with the help of primary and secondary data. Secondary data has been accumulated from journals and books. The interview has been accumulated from some areas of Bangladesh though it doesn't cover the whole country. To conduct the research, information was collected from both the teachers and the students of different urban and rural colleges of Bangladesh through the direct interview. The teachers and the students give the information through a questionnaire. Thus we collect the data. The questionnaire for the students comprises twenty questions and the questionnaire for the teachers comprises 5 questions on the related subject. Question no.18 and question no.20 were asked in mother tongue for the better understanding of some students. The data collection date was 8th September to 15th November 2017.

### **Observation**

The question of how many samples are needed for findings is answered in a study that “it depends on your resources, how important the question is to the research, and even to how many respondents are

enough to satisfy committee members for a dissertation. For many qualitative studies, one respondent is all you need – your person of interest...” (Baker, Elsie & Edwards, 2014). This study also finds out that “it is impossible to specify the number of qualitative interviews necessary to complete a project at its inception. Thus, while many experts agree that situation is ideal, some give numerical guidance. For example, Adler and Adler advise graduate students to sample between 12 and 60, with 30 being the mean; and Ragin suggests that a glib answer is ‘20 for an M.A .thesis and 50 for a Ph.D. dissertation” ( Baker & et al.,2014). Moreover, according to McGrath (2006), “Interview is the preferred method for researching attitude since it permits issues to be explored in greater depth”( p.176). In this regard Punch (2005) shows that “Interview is a way of accessing people’s perceptions, meanings, and definitions of situations and

constructions of reality. It is also one of the most powerful ways we have of understanding others” (p.156). So we have collected the data from 60 students providing questionnaire, interviews and open discussion in a class, as it is in Appendix-1. Moreover, we have collected data from 20 teachers with face to face interviews, sharing everything related to the textbook and gathering a specific data through a questionnaire, as it is in Appendix-2. They have all appreciated the inclusion of literary items in the new edition of this book and also praise to include this item as a part of testing in the examination. But they have expressed their doubt of the full application of the textbook because still there is a gap between text contents and the sample question for board examination. Now we present the collected data through the simple percentage method:

Collected data from students:

Table: 1- Student’s aim of reading their English textbook

For examination 98%	Of English learning 2%
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The above Table regarding the aim of reading textbook shows that about 98% student studies it only to pass or get their expected marks in the examination.

On the other hand, 2% student reads the textbook for learning English.

Table: 2- In the classroom, the teacher gives emphasis on

Reading		Writing		Listening	Speaking
Grammar	Vocabulary	General writing	Creative writing		
30%	50%	15%	5%	0%	0%

The Table 2 indicates that in the classroom, 80% emphasis is given on reading in which 30% for grammar and 50% for vocabulary. 20% emphasis is

given to writing in which 15% for general writing and 5% for creative writing. But no emphasis is given to speaking and listening.

Table: 3- Medium of instruction in the classroom

English 5%	Bengali 95%
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The above Table indicates that only 5% teacher teaches in English in the classroom while 95% in Bengali.

Table :4- Students’ process of study

By themselves 5%	By other’s help		
	By teacher 10%	By guidebook 5%	Combination of both 80%

The above Table shows the condition of the students' way of textbook study. Only 5% student studies the English Textbook by themselves. On the other hand, 95% student takes others' help for reading this

textbook and among them, 10% student takes teacher's help, 5% student depends on different types of guidebooks available in the market and 80% student takes the help of both teachers and guide.

Table: 5- Full application of the textbook is not ensured

Reason -1	Reason-2	Reason-3	Reason-4
Not examination oriented	Practicing only selected lessons	Lack of proper guideline of a teacher to practice all lessons	The size of a classroom is too small to learn the English Language
80%	10%	5%	5%

The above Table represents students' opinion regarding the full application of the English textbook. Reason-1 indicates that though the contents of the textbook are rich, these are not examination oriented. There are many lessons to practice but no application of these lessons is seen in the examination. As for example, it can be mentioned here that in Unit-3, Lesson- 4, there is a work using four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. But in the examination, no question on these patterns is set.

Reason -2 shows that the students practice only some selected topics of a lesson escaping others. As a

result, many useful topics remain untouched and unknown to them which make a hindrance on the way of full application of the text.

In Reason-3 the students opine that they don't get proper instruction or inspiration to practice all the lessons of a Unit of the text.

Reason-4 depicts that the size of a classroom is so large for language class that it cannot be possible for a teacher to get feedback from all students. As a result, full application of the textbook becomes very tough.

Collected data from teachers:

Table 1: In the classroom teacher emphasis most on

Reading	Writing	Listening	Speaking
80%	20%	0%	0%

The above Table indicates that in the classroom, teachers give 80% emphasis on reading, 20 writing. But no emphasis is given to listening and writing.

Table: 2 Students' expectation in the classroom

Study only for examination	For learning English
95%	5%

The above Table regarding students expectation in the classroom practice shows that 95% student wants to study the text only to meet the requirement of

examination. On the other hand, only 5% student deals English textbook for learning the English language.

Table : 3: Whether this textbook is organized properly or not

Yes	No
80%	20%

From the above Table, it is observed that about 80% teacher opines that the text is well organized and 20%

teacher says that it is not well organized for learning the language.

Table 4: Whether any gap is found between the contents and the assessment method

There is a gap	No gap
100%	0%

The above Table shows that 100% teacher agrees that there is a large gap between the contents and the

assessment method in the board examination of Bangladesh in HSC level.

Table 5: Teachers' opinion to minimize the gap

i) Question pattern should be changed according to contents	95%
ii) Question on listening and speaking should be included in the test	95%
iii) More emphasis should be given to creative writing	90%
iv) Classroom practice should be according to CLT method	100%

From the above figure, we get many suggestions from the teachers to minimize the gap mentioned above. 95% teacher suggests that question pattern should be designed according to the contents, 95% teacher says that like reading and writing, examination on listening and speaking should be included, 90% teacher opines that more emphasis should be given on creative writing. Finally, 100% teacher says that CLT method should be followed in classroom practice to eliminate the gap.

### Recommendation

The evaluation method should be designed in a way that the students are compelled to study all contents of the text to meet up the requirements of the examination since Bangladeshi students are in the tendency to avoid those items in the text which are not necessary for board examination. Observation shows that when we place a topic of their textbook to them and ask whether they read this or not, they all tell us without hesitation that they do not read this because this will not be included in the examination. So a sample question has been suggested here to minimize the gap between the text contents and testing.

### Conclusion

From our above study we can say that all the teachers and students agree that though the textbook English for Today for class 11-12 is rich enough for acquiring four language skills, the students are not able to utilize it properly as there is a large gap between the contents and testing method. To eliminate this gap evaluation method should be reshuffled by including a question on listening and speaking, creative writing, practical life-related theme in the contents. Besides this, the aim of communicative approach should be more clarified

to the student so that they can study the textbook for learning English instead of passing the examination. Moreover, by ensuring a suitable classroom environment and conducting the class in English, it will be possible to make the textbook more easy and acceptable to the students. Practicing every content of the textbook and applying the text content in different situations, the full application of the textbook in HSC level will be possible.

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