

Promises and Pitfalls of the Higher Secondary English Textbook of Bangladesh: A Critical Evaluation¹

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Abstract

The selection of a textbook, its evaluation, and the implementation of this evaluation are all processes integral to the improvement of students' learning. The current evaluation of the higher secondary *English For Today* (EFT) (Hani & Siddika, 2018) textbook intends to examine if the textbook possesses the credentials and credibility necessary to achieve the aims and objectives of the higher secondary English curriculum. Using interview and document analysis, the current researchers analyzed the higher secondary curriculum, the textbook itself, and other relevant documents. The layout of the textbook, its contents, language level, organization, skills covered, classroom activities, methods of assessment, illustrations, and quality of print were considered. The strengths and weaknesses of the textbook have been identified by the critical evaluation conducted by the researchers. Although the textbook has strengths, such as diverse contents, and the writers' consciousness of "glocal subjectivity" (Khan & Rahaman, 2019, p.169), it has some limitations, such as, exclusion of listening skills, inadequate communicative tasks and activities, overuse of traditional assessment methods, and poor quality of images and illustrations. To overcome the limitations, the researchers suggest to use high quality paper and images, to integrate diverse communicative tasks and activities, and assessment methods. The researchers also suggest that more attention is required by the policy makers in order to more effectively implement the goals and objectives of the higher secondary curriculum. Furthermore, integration of intended learning outcomes (ILOs) in each lesson, consideration of novelty in designing tasks and activities involvement subject experts in writing textbook, provision of recommended readings, and consideration of 21st century skills in designing tasks and activities will enable the textbook to help learners develop proficiency in English. The findings of the study may inspire the scholars, researchers, practitioners, and textbook developers in Bangladesh and beyond in various academic subject areas at the higher secondary level to be more aware of the curriculum goals and objectives while writing the textbooks.

Resumen

La selección de un libro de texto, su evaluación y la implementación de esta evaluación son procesos integrales para mejorar el aprendizaje de inglés de los estudiantes. La evaluación del libro de texto de secundaria *English For Today* (EFT) (Hani & Siddika, 2018) busca determinar si este libro de texto posee las credenciales y la credibilidad necesarias para lograr las metas y objetivos del plan de estudios de inglés de secundaria. Mediante entrevistas y análisis de documentos, los investigadores examinaron el plan de estudios de secundaria, el libro de texto en sí, y otros documentos relevantes. El diseño, el contenido, el nivel de idioma, la organización, las habilidades propuestas, las actividades en el aula, los métodos de evaluación, las ilustraciones, y la calidad de impresión fueron los elementos a considerar durante la evaluación. Las fortalezas y debilidades del libro de texto fueron identificadas por una evaluación crítica. Si bien el libro de texto tiene fortalezas, como la diversidad de contenidos y la intención de los autores de crear conciencia sobre la "subjektividad glocal" (Khan & Rahaman, 2019, p.169), el libro también tiene algunas limitaciones. Entre estas limitaciones están la exclusión de las habilidades auditivas y tareas comunicativas, y de actividades inadecuadas. También se identificaron un uso excesivo de métodos de evaluación tradicionales y una mala calidad de imágenes e ilustraciones. Para superar las limitaciones, los investigadores sugieren utilizar papel e imágenes de alta calidad e integrar diversas tareas y actividades comunicativas y diversificar los métodos de evaluación. De igual manera, los investigadores sugieren que los responsables de formular políticas requieren mayor atención para implementar de manera efectiva las metas y objetivos del plan de estudios de secundaria. Además, la integración de los resultados de aprendizaje previstos en cada lección, la novedad en el diseño de tareas y actividades, la participación de expertos en la redacción de libros de texto, la provisión de lecturas recomendadas y la consideración del desarrollo de las habilidades del siglo 21 en el diseño de tareas y actividades permitirán que el libro de texto ayude a los alumnos a lograr el dominio del inglés. Los hallazgos del estudio pueden inspirar a académicos, investigadores, profesionales y creadores de libros de texto no solo en Bangladesh sino en otros países a considerar las metas y objetivos del plan de estudios cuando escriben libros de texto.

Introduction

¹This is a refereed article. Received: 15 July, 2020. Accepted: 17 September, 2020.

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In many foreign language teaching scenarios in Bangladesh, textbooks are often the only materials used in classroom instruction. However, instead of using the English textbook as a tool for improving English proficiency, English language learning courses are treated as content courses, and incorporate pedagogical practices similar to those found in mathematics, science, history, and geography. That is to say that classroom activity tends to be lecture-oriented, and is focused more on rote learning, and preparing students for standardized tests, rather than helping students to develop real-life skills. Similar to other English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, teachers at higher secondary levels in Bangladesh adopt the textbook *English For Today* (EFT) (Hani & Siddika, 2018), and use it in class to prepare students for taking standardized examinations. Students use the EFT textbook to gain knowledge necessary for academic achievement in English on the high-stakes examination called the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC). Because of the high-stakes assessment, teachers tend to spend classroom instruction time teaching the tests, and students invariably learn by rote learning methods (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018). This practice causes a detrimental washback effect on language teaching and learning in Bangladesh (Ali & Hamid, 2020). Hani and Siddika (2018) contend that despite some merits of the textbook, the exclusive use of EFT by the students for test preparation has limited its potential to enhance students' English language communicative abilities. While reviewing literature on the EFT that demonstrates various shortcomings in the textbook (e.g., Ali, 2014; Hani & Siddika, 2018), the current research attempts to examine if EFT can be used to fulfill the goals and objectives of the higher secondary curriculum.

The goals and objectives of the higher secondary English curriculum include:

1. To acquire competence in four language skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading and writing.
2. To use the competence for effective communication in real life situations locally and globally at intermediate level.
3. To acquire necessary grammar competence in English language for better accuracy.
4. To use English literary pieces for enjoyment and language learning.
5. To develop creativity and critical thinking through English language.
6. To become independent learners of English by using reference skills.
7. To use language skills for higher studies and technical education.
8. To be skilled in inter-cultural communications for better access to the globalized world.
9. To use English language skills for lifelong learning where necessary.

(National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2012, p. 25)

As a developing nation, Bangladesh emphasizes the role of English education for two fundamental reasons: 1) to help to maintain the current economic growth trend, and 2) to develop a skilled workforce that would be locally relevant and globally compatible (Hamid, 2010; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). These two issues have been addressed in the recently enacted education policy (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Based on the Bangladesh Education Policy 2010 (Ministry of Education, 2010), the Higher Secondary English Curriculum (HSEC) was developed in 2012 (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2012). Later, based on the 2012 curriculum, the English textbook *EFT* (Hani & Siddika, 2018) was developed and prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) as a textbook for classes XI-XII and Alim (i.e., a graduation certificate equivalent to HSC offered by the Islamic religion education board in Bangladesh) beginning in the academic year 2015-2016. Since EFT has been used as the primary source of learning English in higher secondary levels, it is essential to examine how it fulfils the objectives delineated in HSEC. Through a comprehensive evaluation, this study aims to investigate the extent to which the textbook reflects the curriculum, and thereafter carries the potential to help students achieve the goals and objectives of the curriculum.

The Textbook and Evaluation

One of the most significant resources used to carry out teaching and learning activities is a textbook (Mahmood et al., 2009). "It is one of the pivotal aspects of the total teaching and learning process" (Awasthi, 2006, p. 1). These statements place textbooks at the epicenter of the teaching/learning process. For Hutchinson and Torres (1994), textbooks seem to be an unavoidable component of teaching. The authors also maintain that a textbook is a teacher's guide, the pupils' memory device, and they are lasting records of pupils' learning. However, Gabrielatos (2004) had expressed mixed opinions about the role of textbooks, stating that textbooks can be viewed as "the bible, a guide, a crutch, a necessary evil, or a burden" (p. 28). Cunningsworth (1995) attempts a comprehensive coverage in defining a textbook as a useful resource that

promotes self-regulated learning, a tool to preserve materials, a reservoir of ideas and activities, a reference material for students, a document that reflects predetermined learning objectives, and an aid to support the struggling teachers. All these assertions clearly demonstrate that textbooks play a significant role.

Textbook evaluation is directly associated with the implementation of a curriculum (Fullan, 2007), and it is an integral part of language policy and planning (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). The adoption of a suitable textbook appears to be significant for stakeholders, since the selection of a textbook will ultimately aid or impede the achievement of the course goals and objectives. The authors argue that contents, learning activities, tasks, and assessment instructions are often not appropriately aligned with the course goals in a textbook. This misalignment confuses and misguides learners. Thoughtful adoption may be ensured if the selection follows a comprehensive evaluation. For one thing, a detailed evaluation of the textbook enables administrators and teachers to choose an appropriate textbook, whether it be for professional, financial, or even political purpose (Sheldon, 1988). Since textbook development is an investment usually for a relatively long term, careful systematic evaluation and planning is crucial. In addition, textbook evaluation is necessary to ensure that the textbook facilitates the attainment of the intended learning outcome (ILO) (Mukundan, 2007). If it is not properly evaluated, learners may reach a wrong set of ILOs, which are not indicated in the curriculum. Supporting textbook evaluation, Cunningsworth (1995) suggested that carefully selected materials within the textbook should represent the aims, methods, and values of the curriculum. Success or failure in students' learning is largely determined by the quality of evaluation, since it guides the revision of the materials in later editions (Tomlinson & Masuhara, 2004). Finally, the process of textbook evaluation has immense potential for contributing to teacher development and professional growth. Teachers develop necessary understandings of the materials used in the textbook they are going to use (Cunningsworth, 1995; Ellis, 1997). This understanding may later lead teachers to conduct their own action research. Likewise, a textbook evaluation report may be useful for teacher-training programs, since it can highlight significant critical features of the textbook.

Materials Evaluation Approaches

In general, evaluation refers to the process of collecting data, followed by data analysis that can be for making decisions about adopting, revising, or rejecting the presented information. It is a continuous process for investigating the suitability and appropriateness of any product or practice currently in use, or for use in the future (Rea-Dickens & Germaine, 1992). Despite its tremendous potential for the improvement of an existing product, or practice, evaluation has failed to receive adequate attention (Hargreaves, 1989). As a procedure, material evaluation attempts to measure the actual or potential value of a volume of learning resources (Tomlinson, 2003).

The current work adopts the model of materials evaluation proposed by McDonough et al. (2013). This is because this model covers a wide range of textbook aspects and is aligned with the aims of the current study. They have categorized two kinds of ELT materials: open-market materials, and materials produced by the Ministry of Education or similar institution. However, the current study is relevant to the second category of materials. Although the instructors are involved in using the textbook developed by the Ministry of Education of Bangladesh for classroom instruction, they also may be interested in its evaluation since this would help teachers gain insights into the organizational principles of the materials. These insights would improve their critical and creative awareness to help them adapt the textbook materials to a particular group of learners (McDonough et al., 2013). Although a plethora of checklists for English language teaching (ELT) materials evaluation exist (Mukundan & Ahour, 2010), the authors found the model proposed by McDonough et al. (2013) most suitable for the evaluation of the higher secondary English textbook of Bangladesh. According to this model, evaluation occurs in two stages: 1) macro- or external evaluation, which reports on the overview of the materials as it has emerged from the cover, preface or introduction, and table of contents, and 2) micro- or internal evaluation, which involves a detailed evaluation of all other aspects of a textbook.

External evaluation results in an inclusive overview of the organization of the ELT materials. During this stage, the evaluator considers the cover of the book, the blurb (a short description of a book written by the authors to arouse interest among the potential users), the introduction, and the table of contents. McDonough et al. (2013) used blurbs as a part of textbook evaluation since these often provide vital information about the textbook that may include the publication date, skills integrated, learning styles considered, range of grammar and vocabulary, nature and variety of topics, instructional approaches, tasks and activities offered, and also assessment methods. They explain that the blurb and introduction also

provide information on the intended audience of the textbooks or materials, level of proficiency of the language they target, contexts where the materials can be used, methods used in organizing the materials, and views of the authors on language and instructional methodology. The other factors they mention that demand researchers' attention during the external evaluation include the purpose of the materials, if they are core or supplementary, the role and availability of a teachers' guide, the inclusion of a glossary, use of visuals, cultural sensitivity of the materials, the availability of digital materials, and the integration of assessment tools.

According to McDonough et al (2013), the main purpose of internal evaluation is to perform an in-depth examination of the materials to check if the claims made in the external evaluation are aligned with the internal consistency and organization of the materials. They suggest that the evaluation criteria at this stage involve various dimensions of the materials, instructional methodology, nature of learning, classroom interactions, nature and methods of assessment, etc. Precisely, the foci of evaluators' attention they mention are: 1) how language skills have been dealt with and the way they are presented, 2) the rationale of sequencing and grading of the materials, 3) the nature of materials for various skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), 4) effectiveness and suitability of assessments tools, 5) scope of self-regulated learning and 6) the proportion of student-teacher engagement. Additionally, they mention some overarching factors that also influence ELT materials or textbooks evaluation methodology: 1) the usability of the materials for a particular syllabus, 2) the generalizability of the materials, 3) the adaptability for use in other contexts, and 4) the flexibility of the materials in terms of sequencing and grading.

Contextualizing ELT and Teaching Materials in Bangladesh

The introduction of English as a compulsory subject in the educational institutions in the Indian subcontinent began with the 1884 Education Minutes of Macauly (Hani & Siddika, 2018). However, Howatt (1984) reports that a textbook by John Miller was written much earlier in 1797, and he himself published it in Serampore, British Bengal, to teach the English language to non-Europeans. The status of English continued to change as the history of the Indian subcontinent took various political turns until the emergence of Bangladesh in 1971 as an independent country. Bangla, the language of the mainstream population of the region, was recognized as the national language in Section 3 of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, right after its independence in 1971 (Constitute, 1972). This resulted in the selection of Bangla as the only medium of instruction in the educational institutions in the country (Rahman et al, 2019).

However, realizing the increasing demand for English, the government rethought its decision and asked the Ministry of Education to form the English Language Teaching Task Force in 1976 to evaluate English Language Teaching in Bangladesh (Hani & Siddika, 2018). The taskforce recommended introduction of English in the curriculum beginning from Grade III, and that structure-based English textbooks were to be used for classroom instruction. However, the necessity of a uniform English textbook, Roy (2004) reports, was realized, and the development of English textbooks have continued in successive phases (Khan & Rahaman, 2019).

The government started a project entitled *Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh* (OSSTTEB) in the early 1990s, which involved British expert, Robert Shrubal, and a national expert, M. H. Hoque, working together to develop an English Textbook for Grade VI, VII, and VIII. The developers adopted the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach as a basis in developing the textbooks. These textbooks, which replaced the structure-based textbooks, were introduced in 1996. Later, in 1997 the NCTB launched the *English Language Teaching Improvement Project* (ELTIP) funded by the Department of International Development (DFID) from the United Kingdom. After the base-line survey, the project recommended recruiting a panel of local experts to produce English textbooks for Grades IX, X, XI, and XII following the CLT approach. These textbooks were introduced in 2001 and continued to be used until 2014 (Khan & Rahaman, 2019). However, the current textbook, *English For Today: Classes XI-XII And Alim* (Saha, 2017) under evaluation was introduced in 2015 at the higher secondary level.

Statement of the Problem

Addressing the requirement of the communicative needs of the learners, the Bangladesh government revised the textbooks earlier in order to make them compatible with the learners' contemporary communication realities (See Rahman et al., 2019). According to Kirkwood (2013), there is lack of speaking and listening exercises in the EFT textbooks. In fact, as stated in Ali (2014), there are discrepancies between the goals of the national English curriculum and their integration into the textbook. Ali (2014) further stated

in his review that the contents of the textbook lack validity due to the absence of the communicative aspects. Kirkwood and Rae (2011) observed that selections of grammar and vocabulary rather than communicative activities predominate in Bangladesh's primary and secondary English textbooks. However, in a recent study, Rahman & Pandian (2018) found that the current version of the textbooks in the secondary level has incorporated more communicative activities, and the lessons are more contextualized and authentic than before. Moreover, although some studies have evaluated the CLT-based textbooks used at different levels in Bangladesh in recent years (e.g., Khan & Rahaman, 2019), only a few studies have focused on textbooks at the higher secondary level.

Purpose of the Study

The study aims to evaluate and examine if the higher secondary English For Today (EFT) (Hani & Siddika, 2018) textbook has (1) integrated the goals and objectives of higher secondary English curriculum (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2012) (2) appropriately entailed the essential external and internal aspects of a textbook (McDonough et al., 2013) and (3) promised to help students improve their proficiency in English. To meet the aims, this evaluation of the higher secondary English textbook of Bangladesh addresses the following research questions:

1. Is the textbook appropriately and accurately aligned with the curriculum?
2. Do the aspects of the textbook adequately demonstrate the coverage of the curriculum?
3. Does the textbook have adequate potential to help the students improve their proficiency in English?

Method

This qualitative study adopted document analysis (Bowen, 2009), and an email interview (Creswell, 2012). Various types of educational documents, such as the curriculum standards, assessment policy, and textbooks provide essential information on educational issues (Case et al., 2004). The current researchers collected the following documents related to higher secondary English education: 2012 National Curriculum and EFT (Hani & Siddika, 2018) textbook.

Participants

One curriculum specialist who works in the NCTB was invited for an email interview. The authors employed an interview protocol (see Appendix 1). The interview was integrated in the study primarily to explore the method of recruiting textbook writers. In addition, the curriculum specialist commented on some aspects of the textbook. At the time of the interview the curriculum specialist had been working in the National Curriculum and Textbook Board for nine years. He was a curriculum developer, textbook writer, and English assessment planner. The specialist had MA in English and a Masters in Education (MEd) in ELT. Therefore, the inclusion criteria that were considered for recruiting the curriculum specialist for the interview included his experiences and academic credentials.

Data analysis

A qualitative content analysis (QCA) (Schreier, 2012) procedure was used to analyze the documents and the interview data. Bardach (2009) argued that documents and people are the two general sources of information, data, and ideas in policy research. According to Yanow (2007), documents provide background information and can influence research design. The QCA was guided by the model of materials evaluation proposed by McDonough et al. (2013). Eventually, a list of criteria of evaluation emerged from their model, and the review of the existing checklists of textbook evaluation, such as checklists by Cunningsworth (1995) and Wahab (2013). The layout of the textbook, the contents, language level, organization of the contents, skills covered, classroom activities, methods of assessment, illustrations, and quality of print constituted the criteria for evaluation in the current study.

Results of Research

The higher secondary English textbook was developed by local academics and experts. This textbook had been edited by two professors of English who taught English literature in the public universities in Bangladesh (Curriculum Specialist). Four of these writers had postgraduate degrees in ELT/TESOL while the other two writers were teaching English literature in universities. Writers of ELT textbook require expertise in domains such as TEFL, ELT, which was supported by their academic histories. The table below illustrates the profile of the writers (Author 1, Author 2, Author 3, Author 4, Author 5 and Author 6) and editors (Editor 1 and Editor 2):

Writers	
Author 1	Completed an MA in English from a prominent university in Bangladesh, and earned a second Master's in English from a public university in the United States. He is a former Professor of English.
Author 2	Completed a BA and MA in English from a prominent university in Bangladesh, and earned a second Master's degree in literature from a famous university in Canada. He earned his PhD degree in literature from another reputed university in Canada.
Author 3	Is a Professor at a public university in Bangladesh. He has an MA in English from the university where he is teaching now and then a Diploma in ELT from Australia, a PhD from a reputed university in India and Post-doctoral fellowship in
Author 4	Completed both BA and MA in English from a public university in Bangladesh, and earned a second Master's degree in literature from a famous university in USA. He earned his PhD degree in literature from another prominent university. He has Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA).
Author 5	Obtained a PhD and MEd in TESOL from a prestigious university in Australia and also a Masters in English from a public university in Bangladesh.
Author 6	Has MA in English from a public university in Bangladesh and a Masters in Education (MEd) in ELT from a distinguished university in UK. He is currently working as a curriculum specialist at the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh.
Editor 1	Completed both BA and MA in English from a famous university in Bangladesh. He obtained his PhD in literature from a prominent university in Canada.
Editor 2	Has an MA in English from a famous university in Bangladesh, and a Post-graduate Diploma in ELT from a prominent university in UK. She is a former Professor of English of a public university in Bangladesh.

Table 1: Profile of the Writers and the Editors of EFT

When the curriculum specialist was asked about the process of recruiting these writers, he stated:

NCTB follows criteria to select the writers' panel that comprises subject specialist, classroom teacher, assessment specialist, and teacher trainer. In selecting these professionals, generally NCTB considers the persons' reputations/contributions, and experience in the related field. The Ministry of Education is the authority to finally approve the list of the writers recommended by NCTB. Though rare, sometimes a few names are nominated by the Ministry of Education and then NCTB complies with those requests. (Curriculum Specialist)

However, the curriculum specialist maintains that the NCTB may, for objective and effective recruitment of the writers, advertise in the national dailies in order to recruit professionals with the appropriate expertise. He suggested that appropriate academic qualifications, relevant experience, research and academic publications, and extensive training on curriculum development and textbook writing may be included as criteria. He categorically suggested that English textbook writers should have academic education in ELT pedagogy: "language textbooks should be written by people with ELT or TESOL [Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages] background" (Curriculum Specialist).

The preface explicitly mentions that communicative language teaching (CLT) as the underlying pedagogical principle was unfailingly followed throughout the textbook, which contains 205 pages, divided into 15 units and 57 lessons.

The current study focused on a number of features of the textbook under evaluation. The major features include layout, alignment between ILOs and the contents, level of language, unit as well as overall organization, coverage of the four skills, instructional activities, assessment methods, illustrations, grammatical accuracy and lexical appropriacy, and print quality.

Layout of the Textbook

Layout refers to how the language items are organized and presented in a textbook (Tok, 2010). An attractive layout of a textbook includes design variety, regular organization of headings, icons and labels, inclusion of detailed overview of structures and functions of language, detailed inclusion of skills in a meaningful table of contents, units and lessons with appropriate titles, provision of complete bibliography, and logical and effective organization of contents (Wahab, 2013).

The textbook under evaluation has a simple cover page followed by the usual pages that include the names of the editors and authors, printer and copyright details, the preface, table of contents, and an overview of the text materials.

Content

The writers of the textbook need to consider a number of factors, such as maintaining alignment between the curriculum objectives and the selection of the contents, and offering variety in contents that are aligned with the lesson goals and objectives. In addition, the writers should make the contents interesting for the

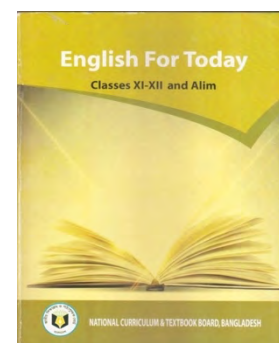


Figure 1: Cover of the EFT

students so that they feel motivated. Moreover, it is also important to exercise cultural sensitivity while developing the textbook materials, and integrating contents that arouse students' aesthetic sense. Finally, we believe that writers should integrate materials that demonstrate proximity to the real-world contexts, and orient learners to the local and global dimensions.

It is difficult to determine if there is alignment between the curriculum objectives and the textbook contents since the lessons of this textbook do not integrate ILOs. Therefore, the alignment must be explored from the classroom activities and the exercises. The lessons in the textbook begin with the lesson topics and warm-up activities. The warm-up activities are typically content-related, and invariably focus on the students' oral skills.

Khan & Rahaman, (2019) reported that while examining variation in the contents, it was evident that a wide range of global and local phenomena had been addressed. While distinguishing topics in the lessons, they identified 37 lessons related to contemporary global issues, and 20 others concerned with local interests. The authors argued that across the world, priority is often given to topics of local interest in pre-university level textbooks; however the opposite is the case in these higher secondary English textbooks.

Critically evaluating the topics of all the lessons of the textbook, Khan and Rahaman (2019) identified ten broad themes in the textbook: history, raising awareness, philanthropy, education, eco-consciousness, literature, globalism, science and technology, aesthetics, and entertainment. The overall focus of the first five themes (history, raising awareness, philanthropy, education, eco-consciousness) are on critical applied linguistics, while raising awareness includes food adulteration and adolescence. The theme history is focused on historical transformative leadership and significant historical events. Eco-consciousness seems to be the most essential contemporary theme, and the textbook writers have given a substantial amount of attention to it. Lessons on globalism address issues such as international peace and fraternity. Traffic education and ideas on higher education are covered in the theme education, while art and music appear in the textbook as aesthetic elements. Entertainment involves tours and travels.

Level of Language

As mentioned in the curriculum, the level of higher secondary English curriculum is intermediate. When the language of the textbook being studied was compared with the language of globally well-known intermediate level textbook such as *New Headway Intermediate* (Soars & Soars, 2009), an incongruence was found between them. The current authors used text analysis (Kuckartz, 2019) on the EFT and the *Headway Intermediate* and found the language level of the texts in EFT was more complex than that of the *Headway Intermediate*. For example, the following excerpt may be difficult for the students to understand the meaning and the message of the text:

I am in a tiny steel cage attached to a motorcycle, stuttering through traffic in Dhaka, Bangladesh. In the last ten minutes, we have moved forward maybe three feet, inch by inch, the driver wrenching the wheel left and right, wriggling deeper into the wedge between a delivery truck and a rickshaw in front of us. (EFT, U4:L2, p. 47)

It seems that some texts might be, in the current researchers' opinion, difficult both in lexical and syntactic terms, and the students as well as the teachers, may struggle to understand them.

In addition, the following excerpt also demonstrates the complexity of the text:

Man's intellect has a natural pride in its own aristocracy, which is the pride of its culture. Culture only acknowledges the excellence whose criticism is in its inner perfection, not in any external success. When this pride succumbs to some compulsion of necessity or lure of material advantage, it brings humiliation to the intellectual man. (EFT, U6:L1, p. 68)

The curriculum specialist who was interviewed also found that some texts in the EFT were too advanced for the learners:

The level of difficulty is too high in some lessons. This has happened due to some writers who are from non-ELT background. I personally do not consider them good to work as writers though they are quite prominent as classroom teachers at different universities. (Curriculum Specialist)

As mentioned in the curriculum objectives and the ILOs, the students are expected to develop four types of communicative competence: linguistic, discourse, sociolinguistic, and strategic competence. However, based on the critical examination conducted, it was found that proper attention has not been given by the textbook developers to maintain harmony among these four competences, while attempting to integrate the materials development, designing instructional activities, and constructing assessment methods. Classroom

activities and assessment methods are mostly merged as true/false, matching, short/long answer questions, and summary writing. Hence, it may be claimed that the textbook lacks the potential to help students develop the four competencies which might be facilitated if more diverse classroom activities and assessment methods are integrated.

Organization

The textbook is systematically organized with slight variations in some parts. The entire book is divided into 15 units which are further divided into three to five lessons. The units are based on themes that are developed by the lesson topics. The themes are quite diverse having explicit foci on different real-life matters which have added authenticity in the texts. The lesson topics are more specific and are based on the unit themes. The lesson organization is found to be more or less uniform. Each lesson begins with one or more warm-up activities that are supposed to be carried out in pairs or groups. The majority of these activities are directed toward developing oral skills. The reading sections come with comprehension questions which are both objective and subjective. Objective questions include true-false, multiple choice questions, matching, fill-in the blanks using words provided while subjective questions entail short and long answer questions, and summary writing. In addition, there are writing tasks of various genres such as paragraphs, essays, summaries, stories, articles, and letters. This is the general pattern of the organization of the textbook.

Additionally, some students might enjoy using a textbook that offers diversity in the organization since any novelty in the next unit will give them surprises which spark interest in them (Wahab, 2013).

Coverage of Skills

The first objective of the higher secondary curriculum explicitly states that once completed successfully, students will acquire competence in four skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. However, the textbook does not contain any listening activity with specific focus on various macro- or micro-skills. Macro-skills are skills that pertain to the discourse level while the micro-skills are related to the sentence level (Brown & Lee, 2015) (see Appendix 2 for the macro- and micro-skills of language skills). Therefore, it may be commented that the writers of the textbook might have overlooked the importance of the integration of skills. Engaging students in speaking is mostly limited to the warmup activities. There are only few speaking activities inside some lessons, and the specific attention on various macro- or micro-skills are missing.

Moreover, intensive analysis of each lesson reveals that exclusive attention to reading and writing skills is persistent throughout the textbook, although CLT pedagogical norms have not been followed. Again, the macro- or micro-skills related to reading and writing skills have not been adequately integrated. For example, long answer questions to test reading comprehension have predominantly been used in the entire book with occasional variations by true/false and summary completion tasks. These tasks are inadequate to integrate all the macro- and micro-skills of reading. It may be argued that learners' needs for specific English skills are not adequately addressed while developing materials and designing activities. Learners' needs, apart from learning styles or instructional methods, need to be emphasized (Ansary & Babaii, 2002; Mukundan & Roslim, 2009).

Instructional Activities

Classroom activities are the lifeblood that helps keep the classroom active. Textbook materials that integrate well-planned and diverse activities benefit both the students and the teachers (Angell et al., 2008). Although the curriculum emphasizes an outcome-based education, textbook writers overlooked this crucial goal, which is evident in each lesson which does not integrate ILOs (Khan & Rahaman, 2019). ILOs lead to the designing of relevant tasks and activities. The absence of ILOs has caused chaos in designing instructional activities. Therefore, all the lessons have repetitive tasks that are integrated without appropriate pedagogical consideration (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). The most common warm-up activities are pair or group work, while the reading activities are predominantly post-reading comprehension exercises such as true-false questions, matching, short/long answer questions, and summary writing. The writing activities are mostly paragraph and essay writing. In all situations, writing tasks appear as a follow-up activity of reading texts. Listening is absent except when students are listening to peers' and teachers' responses in classroom discussion.

Training students with the writing process is also absent in the textbook. For example, students are frequently asked to write a paragraph, an essay, or a summary. However, there is no discussion in the

whole book on the writing process that involves steps such as generating ideas, selecting ideas, organizing ideas, writing the first draft, proofreading and editing, while the introduction of the curriculum clearly mentions that the pedagogical approach adopted to teach the higher secondary English is CLT. According to the CLT approach, "how to teach" is more important than "what to teach" which implicitly refers to teaching the students "how to produce a piece of language" (Richards, 2006). In this regard, we contend that the approach to writing the current textbook is conflicting with CLT methodology. In this regard, following Hyland (2003) and Dix (2016), Khan and Rahaman (2019) argue that a writing activity should go through these steps: pre-task, language scaffolding, model texts and references, and stimulus for thinking. Similar limitations of the textbook are also true about reading and speaking skills. Speaking and reading tasks and activities are not designed or organized according to the norms followed in textbook development. The curriculum specialist states: "Language learning activities should be added". He also holds that activities consistent with the instructions of the textbook and relevant to real life situations should be created.

Assessment Methods

Assessment essentially gauges students' learning and targets providing feedback to the learners; feedback involves the students and the teachers in constructive dialogues that eventually provoke students to repair their own mistakes (Islam & Bt Stapa, 2019). Students use such dialogues to explore their strengths and weaknesses in learning. This knowledge helps them to determine appropriate learning strategies and techniques to overcome their weaknesses. Assessment should be embedded in the instructional activities. As mentioned, the tasks integrated into the textbook to check if the students are learning are typical assessment tasks used in the high-stakes HSC assessment. Therefore, it may be said that teachers will teach students to prepare for the test, and as a result compromise learning in other areas. The whole book does not integrate any task to assess speaking and listening. Reading assessment is invariably through writing while writing assessment does not include rubrics. The assessment methods included in the textbook should demonstrate the two essential assessment qualities: validity and reliability (Miller et al., 2009).

Illustrations and Print Quality

Cover design, images, and use of color constitute the illustrations of a textbook. According to Wahab (2013), good textbook illustrations include appropriate font size and type, quality of paper, binding, printing, clear appearance of texts with appropriate line spacing, clear heading and sub-heading, and attractive, creative, culture-sensitive, and functional visuals. The textbook is of sub-standard quality in terms of illustrations and print quality.

First, the cover design of the textbook is of poor quality and too simplistic. The purpose of using images inside the textbook is to facilitate students to understand the text. However, the images used in the textbook are blurred and printed in black and white; so, they are not able to create much impact on the learners (Khan & Rahaman, 2019). Besides, the textbook has been produced using low-quality paper. As a result, pages get torn and damaged when the students use the textbook for more than two years. Better printing standards and attractive illustrations are crucial to motivate and to encourage students in learning both inside and outside the classroom, and they help students sustain attention and interest while using the textbook (McGrath, 2002).

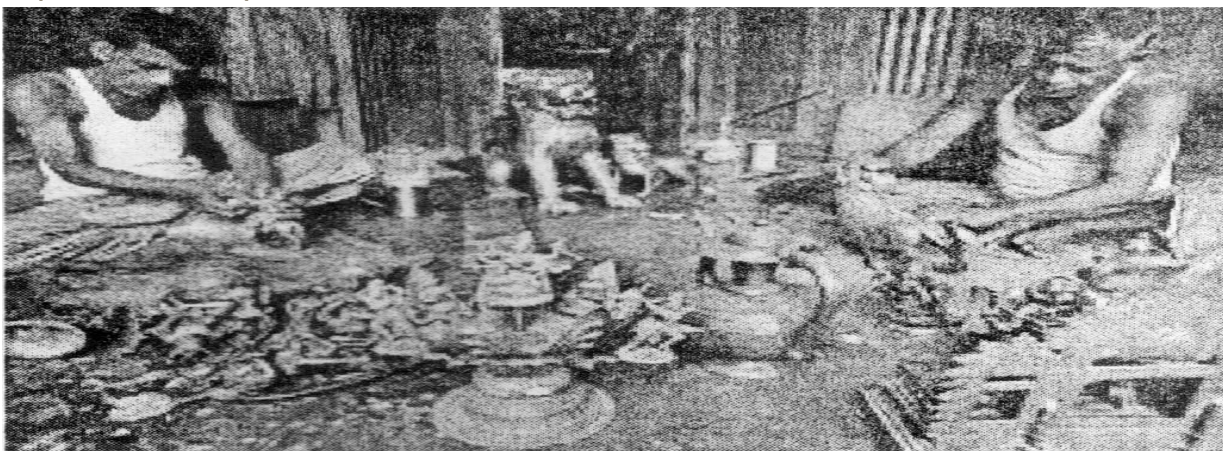


Figure 2: Visuals in Higher Secondary English Textbook (Introduced in 2015)

Note: Notice the poor image quality

Conclusions

The writers of the higher secondary English textbook have considered diversity in the selection of the contents of the textbook. While using the textbook, the learners will be exposed to a wide variety of topics starting from 'People or Institutions Making History' (Unit One) to "Adolescence' (Unit Five) to 'Diaspora' (Unit Eleven). Moreover, the writers were conscious of "glocal subjectivity" (Khan & Rahaman, 2019, p.169) while selecting the materials for the textbook since the materials include both local and global topics. Khan & Rahaman also argue that the writers could resist the imperial culture (Said, 1993) by employing their critical agency (Baez, 2000) during the materials evaluation and preparation. This approach is consistent with the *English Curriculum* of 2012 which states that the curriculum will prepare the students to meet the demands of the globalized world of the 21st century.

However, the limitations discussed above may not enable the learners to yield the desired benefits. For one thing, the level of language may challenge the learners to comprehend the materials of the textbook. Their struggle to comprehend the textbook can result in failure to achieve the curriculum goals and objectives. In addition, the textbook lacks adequate communicative tasks and activities that are essential to engage learners in the classroom interaction. There is little integration of process-oriented tasks and activities. Lack of process-oriented tasks and activities will deprive learners of becoming independent autonomous learners. Moreover, assessment seems to be addressed traditionally. Traditional assessment practices usually prepare the students for high-stakes tests rather than helping them improve proficiency in spoken or written English. Furthermore, the exclusion of listening skills may deprive the students of the acquisition of this important language skill. Besides, formulaic organization of the textbook may cause monotony among the students. Finally, the poor quality of print and illustrations may not offer a joyful experience to the learners.

The following initiatives may be considered to overcome the limitations. First, to improve the quality of print and illustrations, good quality paper should be used, and for the illustrations to be attractive, multi-colored images may be inserted. Second, appropriate learning processes should be sequentially presented when English productive skills (speaking and writing) are taught in the lessons. For example, the students may be taught the steps in composition writing, such as generating ideas, selecting ideas, grading ideas, writing the first draft, proofreading and editing, and writing the final version. Besides, more alternative formative classroom assessment procedures may be included.

Implications

This evaluation has several significant implications for the improvement of the textbook so that it can better help not only students achieve their specific curriculum goals and objectives, but also guide those who design future textbooks in Bangladesh and in other parts of the world. First, the whole purpose of assisting learners by the textbook to enhance their proficiency in English will not be met if the lessons do not have ILOs. ILOs are the references in the lessons to what the instructors and the learners will focus on. Second, repetitive and monotonous activities may fail to attract the students in the language learning processes. Hence, any follow-up editions may take this into consideration. Third, publishers of textbooks for teaching English as a second language (ESL) or EFL can learn from the experiences of Bangladesh. Fourth, it is the policy in Bangladesh (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2020) that subject experts are involved while planning for the development of the textbooks for the national curricula. The email interview with the curriculum specialist of NCTB revealed that this policy is often overlooked because of the social and political influence of the possible textbook writers. They use their power to form the panel of the writers of the textbook development. It could be argued that the development of the higher secondary English textbook might be influenced by such practice since many textbook writers and the editors do not have subject expertise as far as pedagogical expertise is concerned. Such practice implies that its persistence may affect the quality improvement of the textbook in the years ahead.

Finally, the 21st century skills such as communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving and so forth may be considered while textbook writers design tasks and activities for the classroom because any educational initiatives are mandated to produce graduates who are well-equipped to survive the 21st century challenges.

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APPENDIX 1

Interview Protocol

As part of a study on the evaluation of *English For Today* of the higher secondary level, we are conducting this interview. Please feel assured that all measures of confidentiality will be maintained at all phases of this study. We would really appreciate it if you could respond to the following questions.

Best regards
On behalf of the authors

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Part 1: Warming Up

1. Could you please introduce yourself with reference to your academic background and professional affiliation?
2. How long have you been working in NCTB?

Part 2: Open ended responses

3. Tell us about the process how the editors and the authors of the *English For Today* have been recruited?
4. Do you have any suggestions regarding how this process can be improved?
5. Have you ever felt that the system has loop holes that allow incompetent, or inappropriate authors to get selected for English textbook writing?
6. How do you evaluate the *English For Today* textbook of the higher secondary level?
 - Does it meet the goals of the curriculum?
 - Does it represent the objectives of the curriculum?
7. Tell us if you think that some reading passages in EFT (such as, Traffic Capital of the World, unit 4, Lesson 2, p.47) are too advanced for the higher secondary level students.

Part 3: Wrapping up

8. Do you have any suggestions on how the *English For Today* textbook may be improved in the next editions?

APPENDIX 2

Micro- and macro-skills of Language (Brown & Lee, 2015)

Listening Skills	Micro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-time memory. 2. Discriminate among the distinctive sounds of English. 3. Recognize English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, intonational contours, and their role in signaling information. 4. Recognize reduced forms of words. 5. Distinguish word boundaries, recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance. 6. Process speech at different rates of delivery. 7. Process speech containing pauses, errors, corrections and other performance variables. 8. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.) systems (e.g., tense, agreement, pluralization), patterns, rules, and elliptical forms. 9. Detect sentence constituents and distinguish between major and minor constituents. 10. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.
	Macro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize cohesive devices in spoken discourse. 2. Recognize the communicative functions of utterances, according to situations, participants, goals. 3. Infer situations, participants, goals using real-world knowledge. 4. From events, ideas, etc. described, predict outcomes, infer links and connections between events, deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification. 5. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings. 6. Use facial, kinesics, body language and other nonverbal clues to decipher meanings. 7. Develop and use a battery of listening strategies, such as detecting key words, guessing the meaning of words from context, appealing for help, and signaling comprehension or lack thereof.
Speaking Skills	Micro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce chunks of language of different lengths. 2. Orally produce differences among English phonemes and allophonic variants. 3. Produce English stress patterns, words in stressed and unstressed positions, rhythmic structure, and intonation contours. 4. Produce reduced forms of words and phrases. 5. Use an adequate number of lexical units (words) to accomplish pragmatic purposes. 6. Produce fluent speech at different rates of delivery. 7. Monitor one's own oral production and use various strategic devices – pauses, fillers, self-corrections, backtracking – to enhance the clarity of the message. 8. Use grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs etc.) systems (tense, agreement, pluralization), word order, patterns, rules, and elliptical forms. 9. Produce speech in natural constituents- in appropriate phrases, pause groups, breath groups, and sentences. 10. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
	Macro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use cohesive devices in spoken discourse. 2. Accomplish appropriately communicative functions according to situations, participants, and goals. 3. Use appropriate styles, registers, implicature, pragmatic conventions, and other sociolinguistic features in face-to-face conversations. 4. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main ideas, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization and exemplification. 5. Use facial features, kinesics, body language, and other nonverbal cues along with verbal language to convey meanings. 6. Develop and use a battery of speaking strategies, such as emphasizing key words, rephrasing, providing a context for interpreting the meaning of words, appealing for help, and accurately assessing how well your interlocutor is understanding you.
Reading Skills	Micro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Discriminate among the distinctive graphemes and orthographic patterns of English. 2. Retain chunks of language of different lengths in short-term memory. 3. Comprehend writing language at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose. 4. Recognize a core of words, and interpret word order patterns and their significance. 5. Recognize grammatical word classes (nouns, verbs, etc.), systems (e.g., tense, agreement, and pluralization) patterns, rules, and elliptical forms. 6. Recognize that a particular meaning may be expressed in different grammatical forms.

	Macro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Recognize cohesive devices in written discourse and their role in signaling the relationship between and among clauses. 2. Recognize the rhetorical forms of written discourse and their significance for interpretation. 3. Recognize the communicative functions of written texts, according to form and purpose. 4. Infer context that is not explicit by using background knowledge. 5. Infer links and connections between events, ideas, etc., deduce causes and effects, and detect such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification. 6. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings. 7. Detect culturally specific references and interpret them in a context of the appropriate cultural schemata. 8. Develop and use a battery of reading strategies, such as scanning and skimming, detecting discourse markers, guessing the meaning of words from context, and activating schemata for the interpretation of texts.
Writing Skills	Micro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Produce graphemes and orthographic patterns of English. 2. Produce writing at an efficient rate of speed to suit the purpose 3. Produce an acceptable core of words and use appropriate word order patterns. 4. Use acceptable grammatical systems (e.g. tense, agreement, and pluralization), patterns and rules. 5. Express a particular meaning in different grammatical forms.
	Macro-skills	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Use cohesive devices in written discourse. 2. Use the rhetorical forms and conventions of written discourse. 3. Appropriately accomplish the communicative functions of written texts according to form and purpose. 4. Convey links and connections between events and communicate such relations as main idea, supporting idea, new information, given information, generalization, and exemplification. 5. Distinguish between literal and implied meanings when writing. 6. Correctly convey culturally specific references in the context of the written text. 7. Develop and use a battery of writing strategies, such as accurately assessing the audience's interpretation, using pre-writing devices, writing with fluency in the first draft, using paraphrases and synonyms, soliciting peer and instructor feedback, and using feedback for revising and editing.