English Studies and the Marketplace

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Edited by
Fakrul Alam, Muhammed Shahriar Haque & Zohur Ahmed

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgement

The Department of English of East West University is as old as the university itself. The journey began in 1996. Since then this department has grown in terms of stature and reputation. Over the years, the English Department has organized four international conferences, one national conference, and well over 100 seminars, workshops and training. The administrations of this university have always had an open mind towards the pursuit of knowledge, research, and publications. We are indebted to East West University and the Department of English for continuous support over the years. Last but not the least, it should be mentioned that each member of the Editorial Team worked diligently to bring out this edited volume.

Preface

In a globalized world where everything is commodified, English studies can no longer be confined to the humanities branch of academia. It has been commoditized into a consumer product that can be acquired and/or purchased to equip global citizens to be employable in the job market. Previously, English departments offered programmes predominantly based on English literature. At present, courses from Linguistics, Applied Linguistics, English Language Teaching, Media Studies, Advertising, Journalism, English for Specific/Special Purposes have also entered English Department programmes.

The all-incorporating yet inequitable disposition of the global marketplace, facilitated by the neoliberal ideologies of profit maximization, has impacted substantially on all academic disciplines in increasingly conspicuous ways. Consequently, English Studies has found itself precariously poised between the values it has traditionally transmitted to its graduates and the instrumental demands of the marketplace. There is friction between, on the one hand, the humanistic outlook that it has cultivated for generations now, and, on the other, the dictates of the job market and the relentless pressure exerted by forces of capitalism on the education sector. Inevitably, English Studies has been trying to adjust to the changing realties but, there is also among its advocates a deep-seated scepticism of commodification and the urge amongst many of them to resist encroachment on its core values. Indeed, many proponents of English studies have been endeavouring lately to strike the proper balance between the discipline's old world impulses and the changes mandated by the new world of "globalization". It is therefore timely to take stock of recent developments affecting the English discipline in the light of the demands and practicalities of the market. It is an appropriate time also to rethink the future content as well as parameters of English Studies and to reconsider curricula and pedagogy, and to discuss how it can continue to be relevant as one of the core humanities while staying useful for new generations of students. Hence, a number of questions may arise. Whose interests does the marketplace serve and how do these interests impact on creativity, language and literature? How do we evaluate already existing literature in the light of the increasingly "global" marketplace? What new theoretical approaches could we use to understand language and literature in the age of multinational capitalism? How can English studies deal critically with the marketplace? To what extent do the values and coordinates of the marketplace inform recent criticism/discourse /theory? Do globalization and English revitalization policies bring opportunities or challenges for developing nations? How do ELT policy actors-national, international and supranational-co-operate and clash? How should ELT and applied linguistics courses adjust to particular country contexts to meet

the demands of market? What are the evidences of intersectoral and interdisciplinary connections in English curricula/ materials designing? How should ELT practitioners in ESL/EFL contexts deal with "imported" approaches to ELT pedagogies? In what ways are translation studies, print culture and the book trade linked to the demands of the marketplace? Is English studies evolving well to allow its practitioners the scope to envision a sustainable future that is people-centred, just, equitable and inclusive?

Such questions were addressed by the paper presenters of the 4th International Conference organized by the Department of English, East West University, in 2016 on the theme of 'English Studies and the Marketplace'. After a thorough peer-review process, 10 papers were selected for this edited volume with the same title as the conference, that is, English Studies and the Marketplace. The papers explore different dimensions of English Studies in the commodified and commercialized consumer-oriented society.

Fakrul Alam, Muhammed Shahriar Haque & Zohur Ahmed, 2018

Grub Street, Old and New: English Literature, English Departments and the Marketplace

Fakrul Alam

University of Dhaka

"The calm, the coolness, the silent grass-growing mood in which a man ought always to compose, -- that, I fear, can seldom be mine. Dollars damn me; and the malicious Devil is forever grinning in upon me, holding the door ajar."

Melville, "Letter to Hawthorne" June [1?] 1851

Abstract

The name "Grub Street" originates from a street in London that, according to Samuel Johnson's *Dictionary,* was "originally the name of a street…much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems" so that "any mean production" came to be called "Grub Street." The word took on an increasingly pejorative note over time until to "grub" became synonymous with low-end or hack literary work undertaken by writers and intellectuals to survive and even thrive, even if it meant prostituting one's literary abilities.

My presentation will take a look at the origins of the word, the fortunes of Grub Street in the eighteenth and nineteenth century, and the role it has played in English literature over the ages. But I would also like to use my paper to explore the phenomenon of grubbing everywhere and reflect on our own Grub Streets-Bangla Bazaar and Nilkhet market! I intend to conclude my presentation by suggesting that we who teach language and literature in this day and age are either being forced to grub or are increasingly inclined to grub. In ending, I would like to reflect on how "grubbing" has been changing the nature of English Studies in recent decades.

Most knowledgeable students of English literature will know that Grub Street is in English studies associated with a real place in London. Quite a few of them will also know that it is a symbol reminding us that there is good writing and bad writing and that there are writers who write because they have to and have the ability and a real desire to produce quality work, but also writers who "grub" for money, that is to say writers who, like the larva of an insect that digs for food any which way and place they can, will focus more on survival through their pen than on excellence or creativity. The real Grub Street, such students of English Studies know, barely survives in London now as Milton Street, though it was once the name of an area that had quite a spread on the city's map. The real Grub Street, these students also know through their reading of 18th and 19th century English literature, was a squalid place, full of cheap alehouses, dark lanes and rooms let out for low rents that attracted writers and disreputable types associated with publishing, men trying to survive, often in attics or garrets or basement rooms, by their wits, and any which way they could.It was Alexander Pope in his classic

1726 work, *The Dunciad,* who immortalized this seedy location by associating it with literary types that he thought were bungling but dangerous and insidious fools grubbing with their pens for a living, in the process bringing culture into disrepute and dragging dullness, decadence and darkness into the realm of English culture. Since the demolition job Pope carried out on his literary foes Grub Street has thus been associated permanently with hack writing, that is to say writing of low quality, supposedly rushed into print by men desperate to make money and often only writing for money[1]. Or as the great Doctor Johnson, who for some time was almost a denizen of Grub Street, defined the term in his incomparable *Dictionary:* "originally the name of a street…much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems, whence any mean production is called grubstreet."

But that a writer of Dr. Johnson's stature could be linked to Grub Street for some or even a little time suggests that Grub Street was not only about poor writers and despicable or pitiable writing; there were some pretty important writers who lived here, or in similar London neighbourhoods, and who despite grubbing with their pens produced imperishable work. Viewed this way, Grub Street can be seen as a metaphor of literary life, where a budding author struggles to eke out an existence, fighting odds to somehow create works of enduring value, often striving to assert themselves in the face of establishment writers who would if they could stop them in their tracks. If we can go to one more insect analogy, we will be able to see that there are also Grub Street authors who are like the larva that create silk fabric worthy of immense admiration by the most discerning viewers, fabric of the kind of texture and the sheen that have merited praise over the centuries. Thus if Pope targeted only base writers with the label, one can also adduce from the eighteenth century not only Johnson, but also his close companion Richard Savage whom he has immortalized in an unforgettable entry in *Lives of the Poets.* In earlier times we have the example of Daniel Defoe, and more contemporaneously Henry Fielding, Oliver Goldsmith and even Edmund Burke, authors who would attain classic status by the end of the eighteenth century, although at the outset of their careers they would write professionally, indiscriminately, prolifically and indefatigably, trying anyhow to carve a place for themselves in London through sheer hard work and the might of their pen.

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[1] As Bob Clarke observe in "From Grub Street to Fleet Street: The Development of the Early English Newspaper"" "The word 'hack' derives from hackney, originally meaning a horse for hire, and later a prostitute, a woman for hire. Finally, it was applied to a writer for hire. Paid by the line, scratching a precarious living from the lower reaches of literature, including journalism, the Grub Street hack received no public acclaim. Instead, he received the sneers and jibe of his contemporaries" (http://gresham.ac.uk/print/3536 accesseed 10/02/16.

Although the actual Grub Street had more or less disappeared by the mid-nineteenth century, it had by then become a trope for struggling writers not only in London but elsewhere in the English speaking world. In my presentation, therefore, I will look at perceptions of Grub Street then by looking briefly at a late 19th century novel, George Gissing's splendidly representative massive 1891 novel, *New Grub Street,* but we will also discuss briefly parts of Herman Melville's fascinating but flawed masterpiece Pierre. However, I don't intend to stop there, for there are still a lot of writers doing hack work and publishing indiscriminately, supported and sometimes egged on by seedy or disreputable publishers, although among them might also be writers of genuine talent, doing hack work for sheer survival. Indeed, I would like to suggest at the end that something like Grub Street survives even in contemporary Bangladesh, and in fact, our own Dhaka at this time, in the lanes and bylanes of Bangla Bazaar and the crowded stalls and publishing concerns occupying Nilkhet market. By the time I conclude, I hope to make you consider the possibility that Grub Street qualities have even infected the English teaching community in Bangladesh, as many of us do literary hack work, and compromise quality in writing and teaching, and embrace a kind of pedagogy premised entirely on utilitarian considerations. In other words, my concluding section will focus on the commodification going on in English teaching and publishing in Bangladesh in our time, or if I go back to my title, on English graduates grubbing, instead of teaching writing creatively, and instructing our students to be critical and humane writers through a reading of the best that was thought and written in English and American literature.

Restoration and Eighteenth Century Grub Street

A proper analytical survey of Grub Street writing and controversies surrounding it should begin in mid-seventeenth century, since the Wikipedia entry on the street notes that "the earliest literary reference to Grub Street appears in 1630, for the English poet, John Taylor, who had declared then, "When strait I might descry, The Quintescence of Grubstreet, well distild Through Cripplegate in a contagious Map" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grub_Steet). "Descry," of course, means "catch sight of something" but already sounds like a cry of disappointment caused perhaps at the sight of writers and publishers of religious tracts inhabiting the area at a time of civil unrest caused by intense ideological rifts in England over religion.

As some of us who have read a bit of seventeenth century English history will know, religious dissenters were cornered by the politics that led to the restoration, and religious pamphleteering centred around Grub Street was severely curtailed through licensing acts of the kind Milton had argued so passionately against in his classic *Areopagitica,* even though this piece of legislation was actually tabled by

people of his own persuasion. It was not till what is known as the Glorious Restoration and the adoption of the Bill of Rights in 1689 that publishing was freed to a great extent from laws that had stifled dissent in the interim period. The consequence was that the denizens of Grub Street now became hyperactive. Into the street and its surrounding areas swarmed hack writers, pamphleteers and would-be journalists producing material for soon-to-be thriving periodicals published by fly-by-night publishers-in short pens on hire, all in their elements here and all flooding contemporary English bookshops with ephemeral publications. Most of their authors would write for a newly empowered business class and/or Whig politicians in league with them-groups that were threatening to push the landed aristocracy into a corner. Ned Ward, author of *The London Spy* (1698-99), frankly characterized such authors while surveying the contemporary scene thus, "The condition of an Author is much like that of a Strumpet…and if the Reason be requir'd, why we betake ourselves to so Scandalous a Profession as Whoring or Pamphleteering will serve us both, viz. That the unhappy circumstances of a Narrow Fortune, hath forced us to do that for our Subsistence, which we are much asham'd of" (Wiki, ibid).

By the turn of the century there were two clear positions taken in the English literary world of the period. On the one side, to take only the leading lights, were John Dryden and his poetic descendant Alexander Pope, as well as Jonathan Swift, a distant cousin of Dryden, and one of Pope's dearest friends. On the other side were writers who wrote prolifically and often for sheer survival, and therefore writers who could not afford to have settled principles regarding writing; among them were men like Daniel Defoe. Quite naturally, the former group despised the latter and considered them the true residents of Grub Street and treated them with withering scorn and continuous contempt in conversation or satires.

Dryden was typical of establishment, anti-Grub Street writers. Though not quite aristocratic in his pedigree, he had gone to famous educational institutions such as Westminster School and Trinity College, Cambridge, where he had been influenced by the classics. For a long time he had even hobnobbed with royalty. Typical of his group, he was classicist in literature, royalist in his politics and an Anglican in religion; in other words, the literary ancestor of T. S. Eliot! Not surprisingly, Dryden was a great advocate of tradition and land-based values. Although a professional writer, he was not one to compromise quality and elegance for cheap popularity. Like others in his group, he displayed his abhorrence of Grub Street types abundantly in his works. For example, in his great 1679 mock-epic poem *Mac Flecknoe,* he castigates dreary but belligerent pedestrian poets of the area and lambasts their utilitarian poetics. Most of us from an earlier age of English Studies in Bangladesh know that the action of the poem is based on a plot where Mac Flecknoe passes on the crown of dullness to

Shadwell. Here in Dryden's incomparable couplets we find the kind of Grub Street -like atmosphere where such bad poets thrive:

> Roused by report of Fame, the nations meet,
> From near Bunhill and Watling Street.
> No Persian carpet spread the imperial way,
> But scattered limb of mangled poets lay
> From dusty shops neglected authors come.
> Martyr of pies and relics of the bum.
> Much Heywood, Shirely, Ogilby there lay
> But loads of Sh---almost choked the way (ll. 97-103).

The rolling couplets, filled with names of hack writers and references to their unsold books and unwholesome milieu, contrast with the thought of epic actions depicted in classical works evoked by allusions to the meeting of nations and imperial journeys undertaken by heroes. For Dryden, hack writers and Grub Street types were completely symptomatic of the abysmal state of English letters; clearly, the alternative to the writing of these hacks could only be the works of him and his friends- authors who had mastered the classical tradition and were striving to extend it.

Swift too disliked the Grub Street writers not only because of their lack of class but also because of their indifference to tradition. In one of his early satires, *An Account of a Battel between the Antient and Modern Books in St. James's Library (1696-7),* he differentiates between two kinds of writers in terms of insects-the Grub Street ones are spiders while he and his friends are akin to the bee. The spider does not depend on others and will not venture outside its territory; it wallows in dirt and grime and boasts "of his native stock and great genius, that he spits and spits wholly from himself *(The Portable Swift, 57)";* in other words, he regurgitates material and has no time for tradition or for excursions into what Keats would call in his poem on Chapman "realms of gold." In contrast, bees revere the Ancients, depend on the classics and study them continually, endeavouring to roam in gardens and through study and labour produce "sweetness and light" *(The Portable Swift, 58).* Like his distant cousin Dryden and his good friend Pope, Swift indicates, he is the sort of author who will range far and wide through study and observation to produce works of enduring value. As far as they were concerned, hacks and Grub Street writers could only produce works of transient value and feeble content quite like the flimsy lines of spider webs because of their venality and opportunism; the implication is that Swift and his friends concentrated on producing works ambrosial in quality and neo-classic in ambition.

By the third decade of the eighteenth century Swift and Pope had started to retreat from a public world increasingly dominated by Whig politicians and City merchants. Booming trade and commerce and concomitant corruption meant

increase in the demand for professional writers. Grub Street authors flourished and the area associated with grubbing for literary living spread as never before in the first half of the century. Swift took direct notice of the area and its activity in his long satiric poem *On Poetry: A Rhapsody (1733),* written towards the end of his life. The targets of his verse here are unmistakably poetasters, destined to write bad verse but also inclined to do so because of their desperation as far as money is concerned. As he puts it in his tetrameter couplets: "Forever fixt by Right Divine/ (A Monarch's Right) on Grubstreet Line. /Poor starv'ling Bard, how small thy Gains! /How unproportion'd to thy Pains!" (ll. 56-60) Such verse is written compulsively but for small gains and the lives of such poets are lived in unwholesome conditions. Swift locates their habitats thus: "Thro' every Alley to be found, In Garrets high, or under Ground" (ll. 315-16). Since the competition between such poets is intense, and the profits to be made sparse, they are constantly at each other's throat. According to Swift, "Call Dunces, Fools, and Sons of Whores,/Lay Grubstreet at each others Doors" (345-46). The poet can only afford a mock-lament for them: "O Grubstreet! How do I bemoan thee, /whose graceless Children scorn to own thee" although, not being to the manner born, "…by their Idiom and Grimace/They soon betray their native Place" (357-362). As far as Swift is concerned, such poets disgrace the high art of poetry: "O what Indignity and Shame/to prostitute the Muse's name" (405-407). As in all his satires, Swift shows how such a grubbing approach to poetics mean that these poets will never be able to show in their work "Learning, Eloquence and Wit" (428), things he associates with his friend Pope, and things that they have inherited from the likes of "Virgil, Martial, Ovid, Lucan" (l.482).

Swift's poetic assaults on Grub Street characters were perhaps written in tandem with those by Alexander Pope, but certainly Pope's verse assaults on Grub Street poetasters are much more well-known than those of his good friend. As you might have guessed, I am thinking of the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* (1735) and the final version of the *Dunciad (1741),* where in consummate Juvenalian fashion, Swift lashes out at Grub Street denizens, highlights the triumph of dullness in the realm of literature in the venal age headed by Walpole, and rues the dearth of the kind of sweetness and light in contemporary writing that Dryden, Pope and he sought to capture, based on their study and imitation of the classics.

To take the *Epistle to Arbuthnot* first, Pope uses this poetic tribute to his dear friend and physician, Dr. Arbuthnot, to offer us an apology for his life and poetry as well as to assault all the hack writers and publishers who had been making his life miserable one way or the other. He gives us mockingly a portrait of himself as the public poet besieged by bad poets and unscrupulous writers, all trying to grub at his expense and attacking him if he did not oblige them. As instances, he adduces a debt-ridden "Man of Ryme" leaving his sanctuary, known then as the Mint, for he would come out of it only on certain days without being persecuted.

But this man is out to "catch me," he says in mock alarm, just at dinner time" (ll.13-14), no doubt either for a free meal or for a puff for his verse. Apparently, all such Grub Street men had unwarranted favours to snatch from him and would threaten to tarnish his image if he would be unwilling to oblige them. But to Pope such poetasters had nothing to do with the muse of poetry, for they rhymed without inspiration and for material gain. Typically, the bad poet "Rymes e're he wakes, and prints before term ends, /Obliged by hunger and request of friends" (ll.43-44). These men are all schemers, manipulators and/or hypocrites who have adopted poetry as an expedient to prosper. In contrast to such poets and publishers are his gracious, urbane and selfless friends-Dr. Arbuthnot and Swift, of course, but also "Granville the polite..knowing Walsh…Well-natured Garth" as well as Congreve and Bolingbroke (135-138), all cultured and well-off men in Dryden's tradition of suave writing. Pope's contempt for Grub Street types is obvious and amply evident in his many hard-hitting couplets, of which these are typical: "Pain, reading, study, are their just pretence/and all they want is spirit, taste, and sense"; or "Yet e'r one sprig of Laurel grac'd these ribalds, /from slashing to piddling tibalds" (ll. 158-9; 163-64). How different, he declares, is his approach, from such venal poets, because he never had any intention to be "Fortune's worshipper, nor fashion's Fool. /nor Lucre's Madman, not Ambition's Tool" (334-335); his sole intention, he declares, is "Truth" and to "moralize his song" (l.341).

But it is in the *Dunciad,* acclaimed by his most ardent admirers as his greatest work that Pope is at his fiercest in denouncing Grub Street types and lamenting what we would now call the commodification of literature at the expense of quality. Inspired partly by Dryden's *Mac Flecknoe* and greatly by Swift-to whom Book I is dedicated-we can see the work as a complement of his own earlier *Epistle to Arbuthnot* and his friend's *Gulliver's Travels*-let us recall Swift's ferocious attack on the projectors and scientists in the third book. Certainly, this work finds Pope at his most obsessive as well as his most satiric. He worked and reworked it again and again, first thinking of the project as consisting of satiric epistles on contemporary Walpolian England, then as a mock-epic that he would publish in three books in 1728 to castigate the Shakespearean editor Lewis Theobald who had offended him, and finally as a long poem in four books complete with introduction and elaborate notes that he would publish in 1742 that would attack bad poets and their egregious publishers and patrons. He would even dare chastise the Prime Minister and King George himself in the work! But such was Pope's venom and despair at the decadence he saw everywhere, whether in politics or letters, and so outraged was he because of the greed and rampant commercialization he found around him, that he revised the poem again in 1743 and reissued it as *The New Dunciad,* with the actor and poet laureate of the time Colley Cibber as the prime dunce reigning over the kingdom of letters in Great Britain with the sole mission to usher in apocalypse there.

It is not possible to discuss this overwhelming satire in one lecture, given the comprehensiveness as well as the intensity of its onslaught on Grub Street types in any detail. All I can do here is to present to readers the following verse paragraph from the introductory part of Book I, reminding them that it is addressed to Swift:

> O thou! whatever title please thine ear,
> Dean, Drapier, Bickerstaff, or Gulliver!
> Whether thou choose Cervantes' serious air,
> Or laugh and shake in Rabelais' easy chair,
> Or praise the Court, or magnify Mankind,
> Or thy griev'd country's copper chains unbind;
> From thy Bœotia tho' her power retires,
> Mourn not, my Swift! at aught our realm requires.
> Here pleas'd behold her mighty wings outspread
> To hatch a new Saturnian age of Lead.
> Close to those walls where Folly holds her throne,
> And laughs to think Monroe would take her down,
> Where o'er the gates, by his famed father's hand,
> Great Cibber's brazen, brainless brothers stand;
> One cell there is, conceal'd from vulgar eye,
> The cave of Poverty and Poetry:
> Keen hollow winds howl thro' the bleak recess,
> Emblem of Music caus'd by Emptiness:
> Hence bards, like Proteus long in vain tied down,
> Escape in monsters, and amaze the town;
> Hence Miscellanies spring, the weekly boast
> Of Curll's chaste press, and Lintot's rubric post;
> Hence hymning Tyburn's elegiac lines;
> Hence Journals, Medleys, Merceries, Magazines;
> Sepulchral Lies, our holy walls to grace,
> And new-year Odes, and all the Grub-street race.

The frenzied commercial activity of the "Grub-Street race" is described here in carefully chosen detail presented with satiric passion. Clearly, Pope finds the production of such hack writers synonymous with dullness. Their ambiance is "the cave of Poverty and Poetry", their outlook vulgar, and their bent mendacious; their writing, he implies, has to be pedestrian because of their single-minded dedication to money-making though insincere, miscellaneous and made-to-order work. All they can produce are simulated emotions, notebook-type material, student aids and suchlike texts.

Time and again in the poem, such productions are contrasted with the work created in the great periods of western civilization and the names of the outstanding authors of the period that they are sullying daily-the great writers of Greece and Rome and of the new-classical period in France, and England's own Shakespeare:

> Here to her chosen all her works she shows,
> Prose swell'd to verse, verse loit'ring into prose:
> How random thoughts now meaning chance to find,
> Now leave all memory of sense behind:
> How Prologues into Prefaces decay,
> And these to Notes are fritter'd quite away:
> How index-learning turns no student pale,
> Yet holds the eel of science by the tail:
> How, with less reading than makes felons scape,
> Less human genius than God gives an ape,
> Small thanks to France, and none to Rome or Greece,
> A past, vamp'd future, old revived, new piece,
> 'Twixt Plautus, Fletcher, Shakespeare, and Corneille,
> Can make a Cibber, Tibbald, or Ozell (ll.273-286).

In other words, what Grub Street has resulted in is debasement of standards in education and taste, literary inflation, and perversion of tradition.

Such was the impact of Pope's attacks on Grub Street poetasters in the *Dunciad* that after its publication many other writers and poets immediately took up their pens and brushes to write for or against professional writers. One example from the art of the period must suffice here as representative of the visual depictions of Grub Street poets in the light of Pope's satire. This is the oil painting, "The Distrest Poet" by William Hogarth, one of the leading English artists of the eighteenth century. In this work and typically, Hogarth uses his brush for purposes of satire and social commentary. What Hogarth depicts in the painting is a poet in a dismal attic trying very hard to imagine something worthwhile that he could pen to ward off his debtors and feed his family; you can also see clearly in the painting his wife working away on a piece of cloth and a milkmaid demanding that he pays her.

Hogarth, it must be stressed, had his reservations about Pope, but clearly "The Distrest Poet" is illustrating the frustrating living conditions and even despair of immensely pressed hack writers grubbing endlessly for survival in the London of

the 1730s. But it is time to stress that while Dryden, Swift and Pope had more than a point or two to make in lashing out at Grub Street and its inhabitants in their satires and in lamenting the state of English letters where money-making had compromised quality considerably, there is a lot that can also be said about the writers whom Dryden, Swift and Pope attacked so relentlessly in their satires for their Grub Street proclivities. Despite living in difficult conditions, not a few of them managed to come up with works that are now treasures of English literature.

Take the case of Daniel Defoe, for instance. He was everything that these genteel writers were not-a dissenter, trader, pamphleteer, projector, spy, journalist, hack writer, and outspokenly Whig at the beginning of his career. Swift and Pope would have nothing to do with him despite the considerable literary activity of merit he is associated with. In fact, Swift had once sneeringly referred to him as "an illiterate fellow whose name I forgot" ("The Library of the World's Best Literatures") ; Pope had pilloried him in a *Dunciad* line by referring falsely as well as heartlessly to the punishment Defoe had to suffer once on the pillory by falsely alluding to him in his satire thus: "Earless on high stood unabashed De Foe" (ibid), for the novelist had not lost an ear before or in the course of his punishment for writing *The Shortest Way with Dissenters,* the direct cause of his ordeal. As we all know, Defoe had fathered the English novel, and it can be even claimed had had he not inspired Swift to parody and satire, *Gulliver's Travels* would not be cast in the form it is. And it needs to be said that he has not only left behind for posterity other seminal fiction but also non-fictional prose and even poems of very high merit. In other words, Defoe might have been a hack for a large part of his life and may have even been in and out of the Mint for debts and prison for his inflammatory political tracts, but that did not prevent him from being one of the major figures of English literature.

In fact, Defoe's case is only one of many that can be produced to show how a Grub Street existence need not be fatal to producing great writing and may even spur the writer one way or the other on the way to greatness. Take Dr. Johnson as another instance of someone who transcended the limitations of hack writing splendidly to become, arguably, the greatest man of letters in English literature. He was intimately acquainted with poverty; indeed, perhaps better acquainted than any other greats of English writing. For a long time he did hack writing for periodicals such as *Gentleman's Magazine.* For a time he even lived-literally-- in the streets of London. That he also wrote miscellaneous works for a while is well known by anyone who has come across the story of his life or read his nonfictional prose and his brilliant work of fiction, *Rasselas.* He had produced this marvelous narrative of approximately 80 pages in about a week's time to pay for his mother's funeral expenses. And of course anyone who loves him, his sayings and Boswell's *Life of Johnson,* knows that he had once said, "No one but a blockhead ever wrote, except for money!" (www.samueljohnson.com/writing.html.)

He had also told his good friend Sir Joshua Reynolds, with whom he had founded the Literary Club for *adda* every Tuesday that writers engaged in literary reviews in his time could produce good quality writing for money. Or as he put it to Reynolds: "Nay, Sir, those who write in them, write well, in order to be paid well" (www.samueljohnson.com/writing.html). And while I am at this point of my essay, let me tell you that two other prominent members of the Club, Oliver Goldsmith and Edmund Burke, had also at one time of their life initially survived in London by doing hack work.

In his excellent life of his bright but improvident friend Richard Savage, Dr. Johnson himself provides a brilliant example of lives lived precariously in Grub Street conditions but the biography itself is also proof of how one as abundantly talented as Johnson was could produce very fine writing after surviving the squalor of such living. Johnson praises his friend for writing a tragedy called *The Wanderer* despite everything he had to contend with and goes on to describe the circumstances in which he wrote the play thus:

> During a considerable part of the time in which he was employed upon this performance he was without lodging, and often without meat; nor had he any other conveniences for study than the fields or the streets allowed him; there he used to walk and form his speeches, and afterwards step into a shop, beg for a moment the use of pen and ink, and write down what he had composed upon paper which he had picked up by accident (249-50, *Lives of the English Poets*).

The description of the struggling writer here is poignant but it will become even touchier when one realizes that Johnson himself often accompanied Savage in such travails and not unusually ended the night sleeping under some extended part of a building with his friend as he attempted to establish himself as a writer in London. The difference between the two friends is that Johnson learned from such experience and went from strength to strength; Savage's reputation, on the other hand, kept declining while his imprudence about money only made matters worse for him. Johnson defends his friend's works at the conclusion of his excellent biographical by declaring that, "If his works were sometimes unfinished, accuracy cannot reasonably be exacted from a man oppressed with want, which he has no hope of relieving but by a speedy publication" (313). This is a good defence of a man whose biography seems out of place in the *Lives of the Poets* and whose reputation is now thin, but if we think of Dr. Johnson's own works it is not good enough. Everyone knows that the ending of Johnson's *Rasselas* is too abrupt, possibly because given the circumstances of his mother's death he could only think of "speedy publication". And everyone who has read the work knows that

the narrator's own comment about what happens at its end and is that in it "nothing is concluded", but who will ever say that it is not the work of a genius and note that it has easily outlived its century and is now a classic of English literature? Clearly, a Grub Street life did not impair a writer like Johnson for life fatally.

Moving now to nineteenth century literature, I will attempt briefly to present to you the way writers often struggle to balance the need to earn money through their pens with the urge to write without compromising on quality and according to the ideals one has been brought up on or one aspires to. I will take two examples from nineteenth century fiction to show how two novelists of this period reflect the tension between grubbing to eke out an existence and the urge to produce distinctive works. My first example is from the great American novelist Melville's flawed but brilliant seventh book, *Pierre* (1852) and the second one from the distinguished English novelist George Gissing's one real claim to fame, (*New Grub Street*) (1891).

As I begin my discussion of Melville's *Pierre,* let me recall the epigraph of the paper-the quotation I have used from Melville's most famous work *Moby-Dick*-where he talks about dollar damning him by pulling him in the direction of compromise as far as quality is concerned, although his desire is to write in a calm and composed way works of supreme quality and importance. Most of Melville's novelistic career reflects him trying to wriggle out of a position where he would have to sacrifice his commitment to art for the sake of money. *Typee and Omoo,* his first two novels based on his romance with the South Seas, were best-sellers, but when he attempted to turn away from potboilers to philosophically inclined fiction in his third book *Mardi,* he found the reading public to be totally unimpressed by his effort. He turned to potboilers based on his seafaring life once again to support his growing family in *Redburn* and *White-Jacket,* but when he tried to produce in his sixth novel *Moby-Dick* a narrative that would be commercially successful without compromising novelistic integrity he failed yet again.

Pierre reflects all of Melville's bitterness at the fickle, debased and even venal tastes of the reading public and his desire to give them the kind of sensational stuff they devoured in fiction, albeit in the ironic vein. His novel shows his idealistic hero Pierre Glendinning living behind the idyllic countryside in which he grew up for the sake of Isabel, his newly discovered half-sister, fathered apparently illegitimately. Pierre moves with her to New York where he plans to look after her and sustain the two of them through writing fiction. They and their maid take up residence in a building called the Church of the Apostles, where most of the inhabitants are Grub Street types. Here he encounters the writing of a mysterious guru-type person called Plotinus Plinlimmon who seems to preach a gospel that seems to run totally contrary to the idealism that had inspired Pierre to forsake all

material benefits for the sake of his half-sister. What Plinlimmon advocates is "a virtuous expediency" (214), and what he urges against is conduct that can lead misguided idealists to "strange, unique follies" (213).

For the purpose of this paper, I will eschew following the fascinating but convoluted plot of *Pierre* that follows its protagonist getting inextricably involved in "strange, twisted follies". Instead, I will concentrate on the depiction in the novel of Grub Street types and Pierre's own fortunes as an author. Encouraged by the reception he had as a writer who had been lauded for his "occasional contributions to magazines and other polite periodicals" (245), he attempts to support himself and Isabel in inhospitable New York through his writing. But what should he write about? He was sure that he did not want to walk in the path followed by writers who had abandoned idealism for productions "written chiefly for the merest cash" (249). The narrator suggests that the true writer knows that he must be able to come to "the latent gold in his mine" and learn to separate whatever is dross on him from whatever has literary merit (ibid). Unfortunately, worldly considerations often prevent an author from mining the most precious artistic vein in him. The result can be inferior work that the writer himself can end up despising. Or as the narrator puts it, such writers

> …become careless of what they write; go to their desks with discontent, and only remain there-victims to headache, and pain in the back-by the hard constraint of some social necessity. Equally paltry and despicable to them, are the works thus composed: born of unwillingness and the bill of the baker; the rickety offspring of a parent, careless of life herself, and reckless of the germ-life she contains" (258).

Such writers may occasionally meet success-as Melville did with his potboilers when he was able to draw on the rich vein of his unique experience of the world as a sailor---but they should never delude themselves that they have achieved works that are either original or distinctive, and should, in the end, be thankful "when the gapes of the audience dismiss" them "with the few ducats" they earn (259).

In desperation Pierre settles down in the Church of the Apostles along with "poets, painters, paupers and philosophers" to eke out an existence through creative labours (269). He soon realizes, however, that such a course will doom him; he is certainly not destined for commercial success. What is more, the plot of *Pierre* shows him so involved in "strange, twisted follies" in his relationship with his half-sister that he has to think of giving up the masterpiece he had planned to produce to look after her. He realizes that it would be folly for him to opt to write profoundly if he is to think of sheer survival, for "the wiser and the profounder he should

grow, the more he lessened the chances for bread" (305). Torn though he is between his artistic impulses and the need to cope with material circumstances, Pierre finds at one point that "domestic matters-rent and bread-had come to such a pass with him, that whether or no, the first pages must go to the printer" (338). And so the narrator, writing no doubt with the self-knowledge that Melville himself had accumulated in the course of his writing till then, articulates the anguish of a gifted writer who compromises quality for pecuniary considerations. As he puts it: "Therefore, was his book already limited, bound over, and committed to imperfection, even before it had come to any confirmed form or conclusion at all. Oh, who shall reveal the horrors of poverty in authorship that is high" (338).

Like Pierre, Edward Reardon, the hero of George Gissing's *New Grub Street,* is full of self-loathing at the path he has been pursuing as an author. Gissing's novel is more directly and comprehensively that than of Melville's a portrait of a world where authors abandon artistic excellence for the sake of money. Drawing on their own experience, both authors had created protagonists who find themselves in situations where they must forsake idealism for the literary marketplace, and who have to deal with a situation where they might have to impale themselves on the stake of commerce. Gissing, in fact, forced himself to write New Grub Street in less than two months in the sprawling three-volume form that the reading public craved at this time, and was full of self-loathing because of this situation.

Gissing's novel is full of Grub Street types. There is, for instance, Reardon's friend Biffen who attempts doggedly to whet the prevailing taste for realism, Whelpdale, who has opted for hack work and survives any which way he can thereby, the journalist Jasper Milvan who succeeds because he is ready to direct not only himself but also his sisters to making money through writing (he is a pen on hire and they write children's stories) and Marian Yuile, the daughter of the literary critic Alfred Yuile, who writes deliberately for the market, despite her father's pursuit of criticism. In other words, they are all reincarnations of the Grub Street types Pope had castigated in the *Dunciad* and confirmation that the phenomenon of writing for the sake of survival and not art was still very much part of London's authors and intellectuals .

Unlike them, Reardon tries his best to stick to aesthetic standards and not yield to the demands of the marketplace completely at the expense of artistic integrity. But he finds the situation extremely trying. His relationship with his wife is adversely affected by his lack of commercial success. He forces himself to write a popular novel but fails in his attempt to produce one. He dies in miserable circumstances, having failed in every way. In contrast, Milvan succeeds in life and ends up marrying Reardon's wife after his death!

New Grub Street is full of Gissing's bitter ruminations on the commodification of literature in his time and the revival of Grub Street and its denizens in late nineteenth century London. Here, for example, is Milvan's knowing reflection on the contemporary literary world:

> Literature nowadays is a trade. Putting aside men of genius, who succeed by mere cosmic force, your successful man of letters is your skillful tradesman. He thinks first and foremost of the markets; when one kind of goods begins to go off slackly, he is ready with something new and appetizing (38).

In commenting on Reardon's rearguard attempt to stave off a writerly life based entirely on pecuniary considerations, Milvan even hints that contemporary Grub Street has departed from some of the principles that the eighteenth century writer had stuck to, despite everything tempting him to do otherwise, and suggests that the marketplace has now acquired a globalizing dimension too. He points out that unlike Reardon, who was still trying to hold on to the kind of ideals that redeemed Samuel Johnson's Grub Street, he would tailor his work solely for the market. He notes:

> Reardon can't do that kind of thing, he's behind his age; he sells a manuscript as if he lived in Sam Johnson's Grub Street, but our Grub Street of to-day is quite a different place; it is supplied with telegraphic communication, it knows what literary fare is in demand in every part of the world; its inhabitants are men of business, however seedy (39).

Milvan's comments here allow me transit to the twentieth century and to my concluding point: the Grub Street spirit has now infiltrated English Studies even in Bangladesh and we find our subject increasingly possessed by Grub Street types-writers of notebooks, pirated editions, tutors of coaching centers and designers of question and answer teaching-learning systems have been vitiating our discipline. Moreover, there is an international dimension to all this, for more and more many of us find that in the age of satellite communication and bulk transportation our discipline is more and more at the mercy of English language experts based mostly in London who have been capitalizing on the commodity that English has become in recent decades, that is to say, with the advent of globalization.

For the first point, I suggest that we consider the phenomenon that is Nilkhet. In the crowded lanes of the market located between New Market and the University of Dhaka we will find bookshops specializing in all sorts of notebooks, guides to examinations and aids to cope with a system which puts a premium on rote learning and assumes that education is a commodity. It is of course a system

that takes it for granted that students want the shortest path to success in life through publications that help them achieve their goals either in the university or in competitive examinations of all kinds that prepare them for the job market. The Nilkhet marketplace and Bangla Bazaar are the two Grub Street markets of Dhaka-one catering to university students and professions and the other to secondary and higher secondary education. All kinds of students, writers, teachers and publishers flock to these markets. As a consequence, the English Studies situation of the country at the university level is adversely affected by what goes on here.

For my second point, and to avoid repetition of what I have already discussed at some length elsewhere, let me refer to my 2011 essay, "The Commodification of English Studies in Bangladesh". In it I talked about the way English Studies in Bangladesh began to change under the impact of neoliberal policies adopted by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s that led to the British deciding to highlight their expertise in ELT and persuade "underdeveloped" countries like Bangladesh to adopt ELT at the expense of literature in the English departments of its public universities. This was a policy that they would not have to persuade the private universities set up in Bangladesh from the 1990s to adopt, since in any case these institutions were dictated by the logic of the marketplace. The consequence for the study of English, on the whole, was that English teaching from the 1990s onward appeared more and more connected to the job market. Many English departments and their teachers started to refocus their attention on ways of advancing ELT at the expense of literature since then, knowing that this is where scholarships given by western governments were going. They knew too that hiring in the private universities would progressively depend on applicants who had incorporated ELT pedagogy in their university years.

In my paper on the commodification of ELT in Bangladesh I quote the Omanese scholar Ali S. AAl-Isa's citation of a British Council Annual report of 1968 that notes that "there is a hidden sales element in every English teacher, book, magazine, film-strip and television program sent overseas" (Quoted in Alam, 260). Isa goes on to declare in his piece that by the 1980s "the sale and marketing of the various and numerous textbooks, computer software and readers" linked to ELT had made ELT a viable enterprise for English-speaking Western countries, and that their "language experts" were now focused on exploiting the burgeoning Middle East market (ibid). As I point out in the paper, the British Council, although a "registered charity", was forced to become a money-generating machine due to Thatcherite economic policies and began to use the English language as capital from the 1980s. Let me quote at length some lines from my paper to clinch my point here about the consequences of such policies and "globalization" on English language teaching worldwide:

And the consequence was ELT had become big business for Centre universities, publishing houses, and even free-lance consultants! Bangladesh was soon awash with ELT experts…ELT books were flooding the market; and the British Council was selling more and more of its courses and opening language centres everywhere (Alam, 260).

As for the Bangladeshi practitioners, they are now in demand not only in university teaching-public or private-but also in coaching and language centres, IELTS examination situations, newly sprouted publishing houses and affiliated bodies catering to the English language market of Dhaka in situations that remind one of Grub Street and its denizens. These ELT bodies and practitioners appear at times to those interested in the survival of the humanities in our time and critics of neoliberal, market-driven pedagogy to be avatars of the kind of phenomenon we have seen classical writers decry over the centuries.

The Grub Street ethos, then, will continue to surface in human history again and again. The location of the newest Grub Streets will vary; the methods adopted by their denizens, and the technology they put to use to survive through literary hack work or teaching may also change. Nevertheless, literature and language will continue to be served both by authors and pedagogues who will try to stick to tradition and standards of excellence, and hack writers and "experts" on hire who are always ready to compromise principles for easy gain. And then there will be authors like Johnson and Melville who will manage to produce some classical works in Grub Street situations because of their brilliance and learning. The consequences of the commodification of literature will therefore continue to be fascinating for literary historians and students of culture. They will always look out not only for instances where talent had been sacrificed by those bent on grubbing, but also for great writing that managed to transcend Grub Street milieus to shine permanently in the firmament of literature, because of the sheer genius and the doggedness of a writer bent on composing for posterity works of permanent value, despite the demands of the marketplace.

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Historical Contexts, New Realities of the Present Time and Ways Forward for English Studies in Bangladesh

M. Shahidullah
Rajshahi University

Abstract

Whether English studies in Bangladesh like most other countries of the outer and expanding circles (Kachru,1981;1976) or second and foreign language situations should continue with the nineteenth century model of a purely literary curriculum to 'enlighten', 'modernize', 'westernize' or 'Anglo-Americanize' the citizens along with training of English language skills through literary studies, shift to a language-linguistics-ELT curriculum with focus on the communication skills in English for various real life purposes, or combine both to suit the present needs and purposes has been a long debated issue among teachers of English in these contexts. The present paper examines the conditions, needs and purposes for which English was introduced, the kind of syllabus that the English Departments had followed for a long time during the colonial period in the subcontinent and elsewhere in the world. The paper also examines the local, regional and global changes that have taken place over the centuries, and underscores what these changes demand and how the English curriculum should respond to those demands. The paper attempts to scrutinize whether the situation in which and the purpose with which a literature oriented curriculum was introduced and followed in the subcontinent and elsewhere remains unchanged, or have changed significantly, and if they have changed what changes they call for in the English curriculum of Bangladesh.

Introduction

In the present world context, the Departments of English in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) and ESL (English as a Second Language) contexts are faced with an important question- whether to continue with pure literary studies as they have been doing since the beginning, switch to English language-linguistics-ELT programme, or combine both (e.g. Zughoul,1989). The English Departments in the colonised countries were primarily literature teaching departments and started with twin objectives: to (1) help `students learn English basically to communicate in culturally and linguistically 'correct' and 'appropriate' ways with the colonial rulers of the time who were native speakers of English from Britain; and (2) develop liberal, advanced, western values and culture. Afterwards, when Bangladesh, like other former colonised countries, achieved freedom and became an independent and sovereign country, the same type of English Departments continued to operate with the same goals and objectives to produce graduates who would be polished, liberal gentlemen or women with refined sensibilities but with an Anglo-American cultural orientation.

The global scenario, the internal realities as well as the needs of English in each country, has changed significantly over the years. The dynamics of English use in colonial times and those of the present are far different and hence the English curriculum requires a shift to match it with the needs, demands and dynamics of its use in the present age. These factors require a close and critical examination for teachers to decide what type of curriculum would suit the needs and demands of the time. The issue is debatable, and rightly, there has been an ongoing debate in the country among teachers, experts, guardians, and educational administrators, and it demands immediate, close and critical attention. This paper is an attempt to engage in the debate and argues for the third option, i.e., a combination of literature, and language-linguistics-ELT as the most suitable option for English studies in Bangladesh.

Language-Literature Debate

Many people including literature scholars in Bangladesh are critical of the language-linguistics-ELT components of the English curriculum mainly because of the fact that the experiments with the new approaches and methods of ELT, for example CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) have not yet been producing the expected results; though tried for a long time, the learning outcome of the learners has not been any better in the country than it was in the past when traditional grammar translation method was used (e.g. Shahidullah, 2007). The popular perception is that language teaching without literature is very superficial and mechanical; it does not address major issues in education such as aquisition of liberal, humanitarian values, morality, cultivating critical intellect and many other issues that required to be addressed under the national curriculum objectives.

However, such criticism is unfair. ELT has a serious level of its own, though not dealt with at that level as yet in Bangladesh; it addresses most of the major issues of education along with its main focus on language skill training. As an academic discipline, ELT covers areas like syllabus and materials design, methodology and testing, but all these should be addressed not at a mechanical, superficial level, but at a deeper level, taking into consideration the fundamental principles and philosophies, sociology and psychology of education, and values such as classical humanism, progressivism and reconstructionism (e.g. White, 1988, Stern , 1983, among others) must also need to be integrated and emphasized at all levels and with all areas of ELT mentioned above. It is a serious, multidisciplinary field that borrows ideas from fundamental subjects like sociology, psychology, education, philosophy, cultural studies and anthropology (e.g. Howatt, 1984), and addresses serious issues like cultural transmission, values education, and shaping of identity as required and demanded in the present context of the world (e.g. Taba, 1962, and White, 1988).

Many people (e.g. Halliday 1973; Shaw, 1983, Kachru , 1981; Corbet, 2003, among many others) in the present world feel that English is now needed for functional/ operational purposes in daily life, which, they argue, can be learnt and taught better in a language-Linguistics- ELT programme (e.g. Islam, 1986; Zughoul, 1989). It is also held that developing countries like Bangladesh need effective English language programmes to produce graduates with excellent English language proficiency for development, progress and prosperity, as it has emerged as the common langauage of international, trade, commerce, diplomacy, tourism and many other economic activities in today's globalized world, though this may be regarded as linguistic and cultural imperialism (e.g. Philipson, 1972, and 2009, Pennycook, 1994). Bangladesh, like other EFL/ESL contexts, needs human resources with excellent communication skills in English. (e.g. Raqib, 1987, Ahmed, 1987, Islam, 1987)

There are some others (e.g. Zughoul, 1989) who feel that English departments in developing countries should focus on both language proficiency and liberal humanism (e.g. Gokak, 1963; Islam, 1986, and Ahmed, 1986). They argue for a combined language-linguistics-ELT and literature programme. The literature component can help cultivate intellectual and critical faculty, and the language-linguistics-ELT component will help language skills development (e.g) Alam, 2005) , and teacher training for would-be teachers of English is badly needed for improving the state of English teaching and learning in the country.

English Studies in the Subcontinent in its Early Days

English education, as it is well known, originally meant the study of English literature to produce, as put in Macaulay (1835), 'a class of persons Indian in blood and colour but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect' and, as held in the nineteenth century   'liberal' view of education, for example, Newman (1852) to refine sensibilities and inculcate liberal, progressive, western values in the citizens of the subcontinent like other EFL and ESL situations of the world. Literature was considered the best means for producing 'gentlemen', for broadening attitudes and facilitating the 'pursuit of perfection' by cultivating 'sweetness and light' and thus creating liberal human beings.

The local elite, for example, Raja Ram Mohan Ray and others, considered English literature as the route to enlightenment, modern values, rationalism, and a broad, liberal and scientific attitude to life, and as a means to rid the 'backward' societies of the colonies of age-old superstitious beliefs and views. The group of people known as the 'anglicists', the local people who argued for English education considered it a tool for development and windows to a better scientific life against the backdrop of age-old superstitious views and practices such as the caste system and satidah [a system in the ancient Indian culture, that required the wives to burn themselves alive with the dead bodies of their husbands] practices were prevalent (e.g. Gokak, 1963, Ahmed1987 and Mahmood, 1895).

Acculturation/Enculturation Model of English Education in Colonial Time

English education was introduced for developing English language proficiency and at the same time, developing Anglo-American cultural awareness in the learners so that they did not prove culturally inappropriate while communicating in English with company officials or colonial rulers in the subcontinent, who were native speakers of English from Britain. According to Philipson (1992), Pennycook (1994) and Canagarajah (1999), among many others, this was an attempt to acculturate or enculturate the EFL learners (people of the colonies) into English culture and values, which they consider an act of cultural imperialism under the guise of a 'benevolent boon' (e.g. Philipson 2009) to civilize or enlighten the people of the subcontinent.

Learners in the colonies, for example in the Indian Sub-continent, learnt English to communicate with colonial masters who ruled them; power structure between the colonial rulers and the people in the colonies, who learnt English to serve the colonial rulers, was vertical, and hence the learners had to learn the culture, values, and behavioural norms as they were appropriate to the colonial rulers; they were required to learn standard English. RP was the target in pronunciation, standard vocabulary and grammar also were the targets, Pidgin or Creole was not the goal, as seen in the syllabuses taught in the missionary schools and the University English syllabuses in India in the early days of English education in the subcontinent. English literature was used to train the 'natives,' a term that was used to mean the people of the colonies in the English language, and in the Anglo-American culture to transform them into individuals who would be able to communicate appropriately with the rulers both linguistically and behaviourally, but the learners were largely alienated from their local culture. Voicing his concern about it Gokak (1963) says:

> There is a danger which students of English literature in emerging countries will have to avoid if they are to assist in the development of an indigenous culture. ...But there is also the likelihood that they may come under the spell of 'La belle Dams Sans Merci' and be held in her thraldom forever. The contrast between their own society and the social evolution presented in English literature is so great that they may be tempted to give up their attempt to transform their society and to inaugurate their own literary traditions. They may surrender themselves utterly to a kind of colonialism in their intellectual and aesthetic life in spite of their political emancipation. In that case they will be a lost generation, like the Indians in the fifties of the last century [1850s], who thought that they lived in a desert; read Shakespeare, Milton, Wordsworth, Arnold; dreamed of London, Oxford or Cambridge and remembered with avidity Mr Bumble's workhouse .. and every detail in the topography of *Thyrsis* and *The Scholar Gypsy,* but not the landscape pictured in Kalidasa's *Meghduta* or the name of the sage who educated Rama and his brothers. (p.28)

He adds that, despite many good things about the study of English literature, "the bad aspect ... was the uncritical swallowing of the west as it was evolving." It helped the society change in many ways and fight many of the evils in our society; it helped to organize revolts against the colonial rulers afterwards, but for many, uncritical acceptance of western culture and even switching over to it, at least inwardly or psychologically, became a reality. It is true that for most people studying English, an identity is shaped that is more inclined towards Anglo-American life style and values. Subconsciously, a psychological distance, a detachment or alienation from the local culture is created. An example is the products of the English medium schools in Bangladesh, who even take pride in speaking Bangla with English accent.

Abbs (1995) holds that

> English education has a moral vision of education on and a vision of the English teacher as a cultural transmitter, an agent of the articulate life of consciousness in an age in which civization itself is in question. This tradition can be seen to run from Blake and Coleridge to Mathew Arnold, from Mathew Arnold to Sampson to F.R. Leavis and Denys Thomson and from Leavis and Thompson to David Holbrook, Raymond Williams and Richard Hoggart, and then to a small group of writers (both educationists and critics) still working and extending in the most hostile circumstances, the tradition today.

Present Needs and Purposes of English Education

It is important to analyze the present situation to examine the kind of English Studies needed today in contexts like Bangladesh. An important question to begin with is: Do we need English literary studies for cultivating manners and morals of our people, and produce 'brown sahibs' with western values and attitudes like that of the past (e.g. Macaulay, 1835), or do we want to promote local cultural values and norms, and shape learners' identities as Bangladeshis with a multicultural orientation, combining the local and the global, but with excellent functional English proficiency to deal with the realities of the present world?

Dynamics of the Use of English in the Present EFL/ESL Contexts

The present situation in most EFL/ESL contexts is marked by an expansion of science, rapid digitization, increasing international trade and commerce, a growing cult of materialism, and a major shift from liberal to utilitarian values. Most nations of the world are struggling hard to improve their economic status, their per capita income, or GDP and the overall condition of living. Poverty eradication, agricultural and industrial growth, increase in export and import, acquisition of scientific and technological knowledge and skills, and developing communication skills, among other things, are priority agendas for Bangladesh, like most other developing nations in the world. Therefore, projects like ELTIP,

PERC and English in Action have been undertaken to promote the state of English teaching and learning in Bangladesh.

For ESL/EFL contexts, language skills development is considered a more realistic goal than literary or aesthetic sensibilities like many other ESL/EFL contexts. In the present world, communication skills in English, has become the gateway to success in all sectors of life, academic and professional. That is why many countries, for example, Saudi Arabia and some other countries of the Middle East, Brunei Darus Salam, Japan, China, and Korea, therefore, put more emphasis on language than literature programmes and offer language programmes only at the university level.

In a world of increasing international dependence and co-operation, English is the language of international communication. Its importance is steadily increasing in both domestic and international settings. Learning English for functional/operational purposes is the need of the time. However, previously it was argued that the more the learners try to learn English for integrative purposes, the better is the learning outcome. But integrativeness has a cultural implication which is no longer the expected goal in ESL /EFL programmes. The term integrativeness has been described as an effort to identify with a target community and culture, that is Anglo-American culture and values (e.g. Gardner, 1985 and 2001; Lamb, 2004). According to Dorney and Csizer (2002:453), "the core aspect of ...the integrative disposition is some sort of psychological and emotional *identification,*" with the native speakers and their culture. Gardner (2001:5) considers "'integrativeness' a desire to learn a language in order to come closer to the other language community". But most people in ESL/EFL contexts do not learn English because they like and love the English language, the English people or England, or they like to be like them, they want to learn it because they need it for functional purposes. The motivation for learning English today, therefore, is largely instrumental.

A UNESCO study reported by Shaw (1984) clearly shows that learners in Singapore, India and Thailand learn English for instrumental purposes, not to integrate with the English culture and mode of life. Shaw (1984) collected data from 100 students each from Singapore, India and Thailand; his findings show that learners learn English in these countries mainly for their functional purposes. The results show that 95, 94 and 86 out of 100 students each from Singapore, India and Thailand respectively studied English because they need it for work. 78, 74 and 92 out of 100 in each case studied English not to talk to native speakers of English but for business or educational reasons. 75 from Singapore, 66 from India and 87 from Thailand said that they studied English to talk to foreigners. 90 of the Singaporeans, 80 of the Indians and 63 of the Thais said that they studied English

because they need it in their systems. 71 Singaporeans, 71 Indians and 33 Thais said that they learnt English because they thought that knowledge of English will make them better persons. 70 of the Singaporeans, 62 of the Indians and 88 of the Thais said that they studied English so that they could talk to native speakers about general things. 70 of the Singaporeans, 60 of the Indians and 86 of the Thais studied English to talk to foreigners for general things. 54 Singaporeans, 45 Indians and 79 Thais said they studied English so that they could study in a foreign country. 11 of the Singaporeans, 16 of the Indians and 18 of the Thais said that they studied English because they plan to travel to non-English speaking countries someday for their work. The study also shows that a large number of students are not interested now in the native varieties of English; they prefer the local variety. 47% Singaporeans, 30.6% Indians and 34.5% Thais prefer native varieties, whereas 53.0% Singaporeans, 69.4% Indians and 65.5% Thais prefer non-native varieties. All these show an instrumental or functional, operational orientation. However, no such study has as yet been done in Bangladesh.

According to Halliday (1973), 'students' incentives for the study of English are not their intrinsic interest in the language or the literature, nor do they stem from their admiration of western languages and culture to the point where they would like be accepted as members of these communities. Rather, they are deeply interested in the utilitarian aspects of English studies'. Halliday (1973) argues that language is used for instrumental, interpersonal, interactional, heuristic, regulatory and imaginative functions. He summarizes the different functions of English in the following passage:

In its instrumental function, language is used for the satisfaction of material needs; this is the 'I want' function. The regulatory is the 'do as I tell you' function, language in the control of behaviour. The interactional function is that of getting along with others, the 'me and you' function (including me and my mummy). The personal is related to this: it is the expression of identity, of the self, which develops largely through linguistic interaction; the 'here I come' function, perhaps. The heuristic is the use of language to learn, to explore reality: the function of 'tell me why'. The imaginative is that of 'let's pretend', whereby the reality is created, and what is being explored is the child's own mind, include language itself. The representational is the 'I've got something to tell you' function, that of the communication of content. (p.17)

The Cultural Orientation in English Studies Today

In ESL/EFL contexts including Bangladesh, learners no longer need to learn English to integrate or enculturate into Anglo-American culture, as was the case during the colonial times. Today's need is to learn what has come to be known as 'intercultural communicative competence' (e.g. Corbett, 2003), which emphasizes appropriate modes and norms of communication with speakers of English, both native and non-native, from different countries. The idea of 'intercultural communicative competence' (Alptekin, 2001; Corbett, 2003; Baker, 2012) has replaced Hymes' (1972) idea of 'communicative competence', which sets native speaker norm of communication, for example, RP as the model with standard British accent, stress and intonation, and the British or American style of speaking and writing.

Hymes' (1972) notion of communicative competence has a western cultural bias and instead of cultural accommodation, promotes the idea of enculturation into Anglo-American or western European culture and mode of communication, the sociolinguistic competence, a component of his 'Communicative Competence' refers to appropriate language use for native speakers only, which is imperialistic in design and overlooks appropriateness in the local and global contexts of language use, including non-native-non-native mode of communication. Alptekin (2001) and Baker (2012) argue that the present need is to produce multicultural individuals with intercultural communicative competence, as in the present globalized world learners are required to communicate with speakers of English from many different cultures and contexts for trade, commerce, diplomacy, technology and the like, and communication with speakers of English from diverse cultures and contexts does not require the cultural norms of the native speakers of English only.

Continuing this argument in the same direction, Warschauer (2000, p. 512, cited in Lamb, 2004) rightly points out that globalization has brought about "a new society", in which English is shared among many groups of non-native speakers rather than being dominated by the British or Americans". Lamb (2004, p.3) adds that "In the minds of the learners, English may not be associated with particular geographical or cultural but with a spreading international culture incorporating...business, technological innovation, consumer values, democracy, world travel, and the multifarious icons of fashion, sport and music." It is, therefore, necessary to learn culturally appropriate norms of communication and behaviour with other nationals that learners will have to interact with afterwards. This cannot be learnt from English literature only.

The Present Needs and Purposes of Learning English and the Role of Literature

There is no denying the fact that curriculum of any subject is meant to serve local needs and purposes, and to contribute to the growth of individuals and produce graduates as complete human beings with balanced development of head and heart that can develop their capabilities to contribute to the development, progress and prosperity of a country/nation.

Alumni records indicate that a large number of English graduates in Bangladesh join teaching profession; many, however, join various other jobs and professions like bankers, translators, managers, administrators and other cadre services; some others join the media and the corporate sectors, and for their professional activities in all these sectors they need to do good deal of reading, writing, speaking and listening activities with different nations , for example, writing projects and research proposals, writing reports, memos, notices, appointment letters, leave applications, for presentation, meetings, table talk, interviews and the like, but it is not the type of English-vocabulary, structures, styles, formats and modes of speaking and writing they can learn from their study of literature.

In the report of the national Curriculum Committee (1977), importance was given to the study of English as a language. According to Raqib,

> English should be related to the roles assigned to education in the National Development Plan, namely producing skilled manpower needed to increase productivity, and equipping students with tools necessary in higher education geared to technology manpower needs for Bangladesh today. More specifically, study of English at this level should develop and extend students' control of the four skills with greater emphasis on reading and writing and the fifth skill of using general reference works related to other subjects of study. (Raqib 1987, p.33)

Raqib (1987) recommends the study of English as a language and not as a literature to prepare students to study scientific subjects in higher education.

Arguments against Literature

Literature deals with 'imaginative' or 'poetic'(Halliday, 1973) function of language, which is an important function for the creative use of language, needed mostly for creative writing, and for communicating more effectively in everyday life on some occasions, but it is not the function needed by all, or for all types of communication. Hence putting too much emphasis on literature in language teaching-learning programmes is not justified; it can, however, be a part only.

Talking about students from overseas English Departments, Gilory-Scott (1983, p.1-2, cited in Zughaoul, 1989) says: "emphasis on literary knowledge disguised poor language attainments-'The maxi-coat of literature hiding the mini-skirt of language' (Arthur-King)." Similarly, Rodger (1983, p. 50-51), mentioned in Zughoul (1989), says that overseas literature syllabuses are   modelled on "archaic British ones," which do not provide continued training in the use of the "elementary linguistics and sociolinguistics of Modern English," and where the sole mode of instruction, in most cases, is information-loaded lecture and there is little critical engagement of students with the use of language in literature and exploring the different layers and dimensions of socio-cultural and philosophical or other types of meanings in a literary text. Knowledge of English literature and literary use of language are not directly relevant for use of English in different professions and for real life contexts, situations and purposes. Literature helps develop a literary, creative and flowery style of communication which is significantly different from real life English of everyday use for various functional-operational purposes, and in many occasions seem out of place.

Language in literature is fictional or imaginative; literature uses language in connotative or suggestive ways. It foregrounds and makes deviant use of language. According to Jakobson, (cited in Eagleton (1983), literature is "an organized violence committed on everyday speech". Literature transforms and intensifies ordinary language and deviates systematically from everyday speech. There is a disproportion between the signifiers and the signifieds in literary language (Eagleton, 1983). The formalist crtitics describe literature as a more or less arbitrary assemblage of devices, and only later came to see these devices are interrelated elements or functions within a total textual system. Devices included sound, imagery, rhythm, syntax, metre, rhyme, narrative technique, in fact the whole stock of formal literary elements and what all of these elements had in common was their 'estranging or defamiliarizing' effect. Literature 'deforms' ordinary language in various ways. "Under the pressure of literary devices ordinary language was intensified, condensed, twisted, telescoped, drawn out, and turned on its head. It was language made strange; and because of this estrangement, the everyday world was also suddenly made unfamiliar. In the routines of everyday speech, our perceptions of and responses to reality become stale, blunted, or as the formalists would say, 'automatized'. Language in literature is fictional or imaginative". (Eagleton, 1983)

According to Gokak (1963), the danger of studying English literature is that, "there is a likelihood that they (the local non-native students) may come under the spell of 'La belle Dame sans merci' and be held in the thraldom forever …They may surrender themselves utterly to a kind of colonialism in their intellectual and

aesthetic life in spite of their political emancipation. In that case they will be a lost generation, like the Indians in the fifties of the last century." The students studying English literature subconsciously submitted to and developed a liking for, Anglo-American culture, and an emotional distance was created with their own culture which seemed deficient to them, as it is presented by the west. Canagarajah (199, p.2) mentions this as a specific ideological orientation; he calls this the 'reproduction orientation' where the "subjects are passive, and lack agency to manage language and ideological conflicts to their best advantage; languages are seen as monolithic, abstract structures that come with a homogenous set of ideologies, and function to spread and sustain the interests of dominant groups".

It is argued that reading of literature does not really help the development of the kind of functional English needed in practical life, for business deal and correspondence, to get things done at the post office, street corner and other everyday situations. It is true that literary studies help develop literary and aesthetic sensibilities, liberal values, abilities to understand and appreciate literary texts, along with knowledge and skills of a special kind of English used in what Halliday (1973) describes as imaginative, not interactional, interpersonal, heuristic and other functions, a kind of jargon needed to talk and write about literature but not for everyday real life communication.

English literature cannot help with cultures of the non-native users of English from non-native English speaking countries, even with native speaker cultures from countries other than England.(e.g. Corbet, 2003, Alptekin, 2002,; Alptekin and Alptekin ,1984; Prodromou, 1992; Prodomou, 1988, among others). All learners do not need cultural competence of the native speakers of English, rather they need intercultural communicative competence, i.e. knowledge and awareness of the major cultures of the world without switching over to any one of them, but maintaining own cultural identity (e.g. Corbett 2003). However, English literature introduces learners mainly to the native speaker cultures and their ways of life and their values, which is not the desired goal of learning for most EFL/ESL learners.

Moreover, the language of everyday, real life communication is not the language used in literature. Many applied linguists argue that as literature is concerned mainly with 'deviant', and not with everyday matter-of-fact language in its denotative meetings, or imaginative functions (Halliday,1973), literary studies cannot help much with daily use of language for academic and various professional purposes. The style and format of all these different real-life use of English for practical purposes need special attention, and cannot be taught and learnt through the study of literature.

So, many people, especially in the professional sector now think that the present situations and needs of English demand a more real-life, professional and practical language oriented programme that can focus on different practical uses of language for various purposes. This is what all learners need, but people who has a bent of mind for creative writing can choose a purely literature progrmme. Some others who have a special interest in English history, culture and society may also choose to study English literature.

Everyday Communication and Literary Language

How well literature helps develop everyday English in our average graduates needs to be investigated. It is often noticed that the kind of English literature graduates attain through the study of literature, as many people argue, is not really the English used in everyday situation for real life communication. So when literature graduates of Bangladesh, with some exceptions of course, speak to foreigners, they sound literary, not really appropriate for the purpose, function and context of use.

Here is an example of an everyday communication:

Robin: Say, Ruma, how you doing?
Ruma: Robin!, Hey, how are you?
Robin: Not bad. Where you going?
Ruma: Over to Runu's. How about you?
Robin: I just got off work. Boy, I'm so hungry I could eat a horse!
Ruma: Where are you working now?
Robin: Janata Bank. It's a real pain. But I guess I shouldn't complain. Lots of guys are out of work these days.
Ruma: Yeah, that's the truth. Well, I better let you go get some supper.
Robin: Yeah. It was great seeing you again. Maybe we could get together sometime.
Ruma: Sounds good. I'll give you a call.
Robin: O.K. Great. Well I'll be seeing you.
Ruma: O.K. Robin. Enjoy your meal.
Robin: Thanks. Bye
Ruma: Bye
(Adapted from *Tillet and Bruder,* 1985)

The dialogue above looks far different from language in literature, for example drama or poetry. Let us look at the following dialogue from Shakespeare's Hamlet:

To be or not to be that is the question:
 Whether tis nobler in the mind to suffer
 The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
 or to take up arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them? (Act III, sc.1, lines 1-5),

or, the following monologue from *Macbeth:*

Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more. It is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury
Signifying nothing. (Act, 5, Sc.5, lines 22-28)

These are two of the most widely quoted monologues from the two famous Shakespearean plays.Language in both of them are far different from everyday language. Let us also look at a short poem by Ezra Pound:

"The apparition of these faces in a crowd;
 Petals on a wet, black bough"

The poem means a lot more than it seems on the surface, but even for the surface meaning people do not speak like that in real life.

Literature, except modern fiction, does not help much with English for everyday communication. Language programmes that directly relate to the practical needs of English including its various uses for different academic and professional purposes- for report writing, academic writing, such as essays, assignments, research articles, dissertations, writing project and research proposals, business letters, writing CV with covering letters, official letters, personal letters, writing for the media, minutes of meetings, notices and memos, for oral communication in conducting meeting and participating in meetings, interview skills, presentation skills, and even reading textbooks in different subjects are more in demand today, and the language and format used in these modes of communication are far different from literary use of language. These types of non-literary, practical use of English are more relevant for learners of English in EFL/ESL situations. Language, style and format of these modes of communication cannot be learnt through the study of literature.

What came to be known as ESP (English for Specific Purposes) (e.g. Hutchinson and Waters,1987; Robinson, 1993 among many others) includes (a) English for Academic Purposes (EAP) which again includes English for medicine, English for business, English for Engineering, English for law, English for Economics etc., and (b) English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) that includes

English for bankers, English for doctors, English for lawyers, English for teachers etc., but these dimensions of language use are mostly direct and straightforward and are far different from the ornamental, or suggestive and connotative use of language; language in all these modes of communication is not used in imaginative and poetic functions (e.g. Halliday 1973).

Is English Literature Essential for Values/Moral Education?

Another important question is whether it is essential to study English literature for 'liberal' values. I would argue that the answer is both yes and no; Bangla or any other literature can serve that purpose. This has already been realized and that is why English departments now offer courses on literature from different countries, for example Ibsen's A Doll's House (1879), Tolstoy's Ivan Illyich (1886), among others in English translation and the like, and even a course on Bangla literature is also taught in some English Departments in the country.   Study of subjects like history and philosophy, among others, help develop liberal values.

Arguments for Literature

That literature can play an important role in shaping attitude and values and can also stand guard against moral decay is well recognized. For example, Leavis and his followers such as David Holbrook and Peter Abbs hold that

> Literature is an effective measure to counteract "the debased exploitative commercial culture" and "x", at the same time it will fulfill the need for spiritualism in an age "demented in its pursuit for exact knowledge and verifiable answers". As the status of classics and the power of religion declined, English literature may be the answer to industrialism, rationalism and empiricism.

> (Quoted by Mathieson, 1975, cited in Zughoul 1989)

There is a serious moral degradation and corrosion of values in Bangladesh, like many other contexts; corruption is eating into the vitals of the nation; religious fundamentalism is on the rise, violence is spreading. It is believed that literary education can work as an antidote against all these. Literature is well recognized for its character building power. Mathieson 1975 (cited in Zughoul,1989) holds that literature has occupied "an assured place in the front rank of subjects providing a humane education at the university level". Holloway (1963) describes English as "a broad, flexible and liberal discipline, concerned with a literature which is not clearly excelled by any other." He adds that "there is no systematic study of literature which does not foster many qualities of mind-judgement (both intellectual and moral); cogency and flexibility of mind; maturity and understanding; and a sense of evidence, of detail, and of history being among them."

Literature is a core area of liberal humanist education; its main purpose is to refine and polish sensibilities of its graduates and inculcate in them liberal humanitarian values free from racism, sectarianism, extremism, militancy and discrimination. Victorian educators (e.g. Newman, 1952) believed in 'the character building power of the classical English literature curriculum'. Arnold describes literature as the 'greatest power in education' (cited in Mathieson 1975, cited in Zughoul, 1989). According to the Newbolt Committee, mentioned in Mathieson (1975, cited in Zughoul, 1989)), 'literature is not just a subject for academic study, but one of the chief temples of the human spirit, in which all should worship.' As the power of classics and the power of religion declined, English literature was thought to be the answer to industrialism, rationalism and empiricism.

Use of Literature for Language Teaching

Literature helps develop language skills too. It is argued that literary studies can foster the development of fluency and accuracy; literary texts, specially short, interesting texts of all literary genres prove useful tools for the development of English language skills (e.g. Ruiquing Du, 1986; Shabka, 1987; Stern, 1987; Tomlinson, 1986, Abbot, 1986, Tomalin, 1983, and many others). Literary studies familiarize students with a higher and most sophisticated level of creative use called 'imaginative function' of language (Halliday,1986), but some forms of literature, e.g. novels, short stories and modern dramas contain very lively, realistic dialogues, which are like everyday communication, though difficult to transfer to everyday contexts to suit one's real life purposes of communication. Zughoul (1989) rightly points out that 'literature ... would provide the learner with the "widest variety of syntax, the richest variation of vocabulary discriminations" and would provide examples of language "employed in its most effective, subtle and suggestive" use (Povey 1979, p. 62). This creative use of language is also a level of language use that learners should attempt to learn. However, sophisticated literary use of language should be dealt with at an advanced stage, much later into a language programme.

Literature scholars in the country may be referred to as examples; they are some of the best users of English; they speak and write English well for all purposes and in all situations including professional and business communication and for creative writing and research, but whether it was their study of literature; their background in talking and writing about literature, or something else that helped them attain that level of communicative competence has not been systematically examined. There is no denying the fact that reading both literary and non-literary discourses in English, and listening to English, provide the best kind of exposure to or immersion in English which is an important condition for subconscious language development or language acquisition (e.g. Wilkins 1976, Ellis, 1985, and Spolsky 1989). The literature scholars read widely, spoke

frequently, listened to lectures in English, and these actually helped them acquire vocabulary and expressions, grammar and style of writing subconsciously.

Overall Curriculum Objectives and English Studies

Any subject offered in a country should fit into the overall curriculum objectives of a country that seeks basically to produce good citizens for the country. Literature can help produce graduates with liberal values which is also an important need. The purpose of education cannot be for only "getting and spending", earning and spending, for profit and loss, but for producing good human beings. Literature can help attain this goal by cultivating their intellectual and critical capabilities, by inculcating ethical and cultural values. Literature graduates can contribute to transforming the moral and cultural values of a society.

The Ways Forward for English Studies in Bangladesh in the Present Context

In the present world, learning English for functional/operational purposes has become an important area of focus in education, as English has emerged as the leading language of international communication and promoting liberal, humanitarian values has emerged as another priority area in education, as the world is now experiencing an increasing spread of materialism, discrimination of all sorts including race, class and gender, and the growth of fundamentalism, extremism and militancy. In these realities of the present world, English Departments in EFL/ESL contexts should aim at producing graduates who would be good in all modes of communication in English, and they should also be equipped with liberal values , attitudes and moral strengths. Language-linguistics component of the curriculum can help students develop their language skills, but it can and must also help with forming liberal, humanitarian values, identity shaping and strengthening of the moral fabrics in a properly planned way and along with that literature component of the curriculum, as a time tested discipline, can help promote liberal, humanitarian values. Therefore, language and linguistics courses with a combination of literature will better help produce the kind of graduates needed now.

The present state of teaching and learning English is not satisfactory; the majority of our graduates cannot read, write, speak and listen English well these days. This being the reality, one of the important purposes of English Departments in Bangladesh now is to produce effective teachers of English for the college and university levels. The country badly needs theoretically informed, knowledgeable, trained, and skilled English teachers for all levels to produce graduates with excellent communication skills in English to cope with the demands of a globalized world. It also needs well-thought out, and well-planned

English curriculum designed with well defined goals ; learner-centred, task-based (e.g.Ellis 2003, and Willis (1996) and activities oriented materials development, selection and evaluation with main focus on skills training along with other major objectives such as shaping learners' values, identities and building their strong moral fabrics (e.g. Cunningsworth, 1984, Tomlinson, 1989, among many others), many others developed ideas for effective student centred, task-based, activities oriented, culture and context sensitive pedagogy with focus on engagements in creative and critical thinking for promoting Freirian (1972) goal of liberating pedagogy, as opposed to what he describes as 'banking pedagogy' , using 'appropriate pedagogy' (e.g. Holiday, 1994), or postmethods pedagogy (e.g. Kumaravadivelu, 2003; Critical Pedagogy (Girox, 2011), classroom teaching-learning practices or pedagogy with focus on and designing reliable, valid and practicable tests and assessments are very important for effective teaching and learning of English in the country. It is now imperative to improve the standard of English teaching and learning in the country to cope global demands. Along with the other areas of ELT mentioned above, training of teachers, who are described as agents of change, is very important for any meaningful change in English teaching-learning in the country. ELT, therefore, should be an important component of the English department syllabuses in Bangladesh.

Many people have been arguing for quite some time now for such a shift. Ahmed (1987), for example, says that "emphasis should be put in any attempt to reorganizing English studies on the linguistic, literary and cultural aspects of the discipline." We need as Daswani (1982;99) rightly holds "... the university departments of English would have to reform their curricula to meet the changing demands of the society ...traditional English literature courses would have to give way to more realistic courses in English as a language of inter-group and inter-country communication." We now need a shift from an 'acculturation' to an 'accommodation' model, or a shift from what Canagarajah (1999, p.22) describes as 'reproduction' approach to a 'resistance approach, or a shift from an uncritical acceptance or submission, to a critical response model.

The English department syllabuses should, therefore, combine language, linguistics, ELT and literature together instead of a purely literature, purely language-linguistics-ELT syllabuses.

Arguments for having only literature, or only language programme are extremist positions, and seem far removed from the realities of the present times. We must remember that education is basically meant to cater for the needs of the time, and our time demands a combination of language, literature and ELT.

Some people, however, may argue for two separate departments for two different areas, but for a developing country like Bangladesh, that will prove a luxury, and definitely, not a realistic goal. Both can, and should be combined into one, and offered under the fold of English studies. This has already been realized in Bangladesh, and a major shift in combining literature and language-linguistic-ELT is noticed in the BA Honours and Master's Syllabuses of the English Departments of public and private universities of the country. This combination is more pragmatic and realistic now, and hence language or literature debate should come to an end; they should be considered complimentary to each other and are necessary to cater for the needs and purposes of English education of the time in our country, like other EFL/ESL contexts.

I would conclude by completely agreeing with Alam (2005, p.5) that we need to "stress the importance of having both literature and language components in the English curriculum of Bangladesh universities" and we should "break free of artificial divides created between language and literature".

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Literary Awards and/or Lure of the Lucre: Assessing Recent South Asian Diasporic Fiction

Somdatta Mandal
Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, India

Abstract

It is a well-known fact that the recent novel in English in South Asia has been kept alive primarily by its diasporic writers, the number of literary prizes and awards they have received from the west provide ample evidence of the same. In "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall had mentioned that we have to create our own spaces and what the diasporic South Asian writers have been doing in their fiction is to go back to their 'homeland' to create a space they know very well. Thus, straddling a physical world that consists of an uneasy pull between two cultures, namely that of the homeland versus the hostland, most of the diasporic writers occupy a doubly liminal space where there is co-existence of several positions and identities. Apart from living in a world of exile, memory and desire, most of them prefer to live in a world of exclusion and ghettoization as trying to blend in the mainstream culture have not proved very successful for them as far as their creative writing is concerned. So in spite of Tahmima Anam giving a faulty rendition of the Bangladesh war of liberation in *A Golden Age*, or Kiran Desai angering the real people involved in the separatist Gorkhaland agitation in Bengal in *The Inheritance of Loss,* or Jhumpa Lahiri and Neel Mukherjee giving us watered down version of the Naxalite movement in Bengal in *The Lowland* and *The Lives of Others* respectively, or Akhil Sharma grabbing a prize for his novel *Family Life,* the tentacles of neocolonialism has spread everywhere in a significant way. Whether we like it or not, they have become the spokespersons of our country and our culture to the majority of readers.

A survey of recent fiction by South Asian diasporic writers shows that they have all started marketing exotica about their homeland in a very significant way -- be it a writer like Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni who gives us a story set in Kolkata in *Oleander Girl* or Prajwal Parajuly basking in glory after his debut work of fiction *The Gurkha's Daughter* bagged a significant award, - the list is endless. The moot point therefore for all these writers in the diaspora is not art or aesthetics but what sells well at the global marketplace. Once the final manuscript of a book is out of the writer's bag or file, it becomes just another multinational marketable product that can be controlled by publishing houses that are out there in a cut-throat competitive world and hell bent on reaping profits. In what follows I will highlight some of these issues in detail.

Before going on to discuss the case of some of these individual writer's position in detail, let me reiterate first the well-known fact that post 2000 when globalization and neo-liberalism as a process was slowly acquiring pace and trying to fight the postcolonial condition in the 1970s, 80's and 90's, the effort on the part of the diasporic south Asian writers to reach out to a global audience suddenly became ever more marked. A survey of recent fiction by these writers

shows that they have all started marketing exotica about their homeland in a very significant way, and whether they admit it or not, their neo-colonial agenda seems to be playing its part pretty well. Now the moot point for all these writers is not art or aesthetics but what sells well at the global marketplace. Also, we have to keep in mind that once the final manuscript of a book is out of the writer's bag or file, it becomes just another multinational marketable product, and therefore can be controlled by publishing houses who are out there in a cut-throat competitive world and hell bent on reaping profits. But first let me refer to a small tongue-in - cheek article titled "The True Nature of the Beast" published in the 30th Anniversary issue of *India Today* (December 26, 2005: 362-64).

We are told of a writer named Aloo who arrives in America and gets embroiled in the debate on whether to continue saying tomAAto, or join the locals in saying tomAEto, or say tomAEto to locals and tomAAto to fellow desis. When he is asked by the Americans as they always do, "Are you planning to stay?" he throws his inconvenient *sharam* (shame) down the drain and replies, "No…". "Why not?' "My subject is there in India…" But the market is here. There are tastes that will never be quenched. For example, like the pashmina shawl, the arranged marriage story will always be in season. After Aloo marries a pale creature and gets his green card, "he can safely begin to proclaim his heritage and feel nostalgic instead of terror while thinking about his motherland. He becomes a martyr forced to leave, which adds complexity to his character and creates the impression that he is not a drab immigrant like the rest, but an exile. Exile is a forlorn, literary feeling and allows him to indulge in moods of elegant grey."

Aloo then starts writing. Magic realism has become a dirty word, so Aloo has replaced an elephant with a dog and has removed a beggar, for it feeds the preconceived ideas of India as a land of beggars. He is boring, but boring is …authentic. In interviews he says that he does not read Indians and instead names Kawabata and Turgenev as his inspirations. "No Indians?" Pressed, he mentions the dead or dying, "I admire R.K. Narayan." "Rushdie?" Oh no. Condemning Rushdie harsher than the Ayatollah, Aloo immediately adopts the politically correct position and says Indian writers writing in regional languages are the best. Such as Mahasweta Devi. She does not write for the West. She is pure. Thus Aloo kills two birds with one stone: he does not help a competitor and comes off a patriot. He is just about to relax a little when Arundhati Roy with a love-across-caste-lines book does even better than Aloo did with his arranged marriage book, and goes on record to say that unlike the fancy fake pants that abound (like Aloo), she is the authentic product with an authentic Indian address, and without privilege - a claim that is hotly disputed.

> You are in the club.
> I'm not in the club.
> You ARE.
> No - you spoke English, ate macaroni and sold yourself to the West just
> like the rest of us.

I am not privileged - I grew up poor and alone, dark and female. (This is a mantra that unlocks many a door. Shout, "Brave Third World woman overcoming all odds," and you'll get to leap in the air and earn a million). Never was someone more adamantly invited to take a seat in the club. Never has it been so resisted. Aloo's wife can't understand the fight about who owns the Indian subject. Who owns India? The wife thinks everyone does. Aloo thinks all desis do. The desi writers writing in English in India think all desis living in India do. The writers writing in regional languages think they do, not the ones writing in English. On the BBC radio, they ask Aloo, Why are you writing of India while living in the West? Scared, Aloo answers that art has no address, look at James Joyce, Henry James, look at Rohinton Mistry, who has lived abroad and yet can exactly describe the bathroom problems of an ageing Parsi gentleman in Mumbai.

Aloo looks at the skeptical eyebrow of the BBC lady. It seemed that she would rather like him to return to India and solve the West's immigrant problem. As the farce continues, Aloo soon finds a real-life competitor again, this time in the form of an objective critic-turned-writer from the Indian cowbelt, someone who had hopped over the insurmountable barrier of the U.S. Embassy. Aloo runs to catch him, this man who has ruined his life, but he's a master at slipping away. He has gone in a flash into the western world he wished to save from Aloo and keep for himself. Desai concludes her piece thus:

> On the other side of the world, the sun rises on another young writer in
> India, who is getting really mad. He is going to pick up his pen and he's
> going to tell the world the true nature of the beast. We know the story.
> It's an old Indian story. One that has never been sold to the West (364).

I assume many of you have identified the author and it was none other than Kiran Desai who wrote it much before she had an inkling that she would be nominated for the Man Booker Prize a couple of years later. As the article makes it quite clear, the main debate surrounds the controversy between South Asian diasporic writers as well as their desi counterparts and also brings forth issues raised in relation to the nature of diasporic writing. Within the span of nine years that have elapsed after Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize, Indian writing in English has flourished further and we have to admit that a lot of it has been produced offshore. As Pamela Phillpose states: "The winner of the Man Booker is

also a heartening reminder that an India-on-the-10-percent-growth track is still capable of nudging the imagination of its children, resident and non." Such an image of a globally resurgent India in economic terms was surely absent earlier.

Though the status of all South Asian diasporic writers are not the same, (some claiming themselves to be part of the mainstream writing of the country in which they are settled in; some, usually second-generation immigrants of Indian origin have just the name to identify themselves as Indians or Bangladeshis or Sri Lankans,) the majority of these writers shuttle between different countries and continents and are actually instrumental in keeping the flag of the South Asian diasporic writing flying high. Yet when they write, questions are raised whether writers living outside their 'homeland' forfeit their right to comment on behalf of an entire nation or not. What is more important, the passport or the literature they produce?

So when Kiran Desai tells an interviewer that there is "a cosy community of Indian writers" now in New York - people like Suketu Mehta, Jhumpa Lahiri, Amitav Ghosh, Salman Rushdie - who "talk to each other very often" and "when [they] get tired or need a break, [they] meet up and cook together and go out for drinks together" (*India Today* 2006: 83), we feel tempted to ask whether they also discuss the ways and means of securing good publishers in the west, as well as the strategies of competing for various literary prizes. Desai takes her diasporic status as an advantageous position and ecstatically states: "The Indian diaspora is a wonderful place to write from and I am lucky to be part of it." Since she shares intimacy with Amitav Ghosh -- a writer who had refused the Commonwealth prize awarded to him because it smelt of colonialism - one cannot therefore help wondering whether Kiran Desai felt altogether comfortable accepting the Man Booker Prize. When Laura Barton of the *Guardian* asked her this seminal question on the day of the award, Kiran did not seriously contemplate of doing so and her reaction was as follows:

> Mmmm, I know. Someone said to me, 'Will you turn down the Booker prize because it is a commonwealth prize?' And I said 'I'm not crazy!' It's also a hedge fund, so you have big-business qualms about that. There's all kinds of reasons to turn it down. …NO! Because you can drag that ethical dilemma into every single aspect of your life - and that is very much what my book is about. You are unable to make any kind of rule, really, without it being messy and mixed up with the rest of the world, and mixed up with sad and difficult things. Would I buy this sweater? Where is this made? It's by someone poor in China and someone horrible is making money out of it. Am I going to eat this bit of fruit

picked by whom? It infects every single thing. But I stand by the book's ethical sense, and it's a book that certainly says the opposite of many things that flags stand for. ("A Passage from India", n.p. web)

Desai elsewhere also explains in the same interview with Laura Barton why she had to base her story in the India of the 1980s and how she realized that she would have to return to India only when she began writing about the immigrant experience in New York:

I find myself at a disadvantage because India has changed, moved on. I go every year, yet it belongs to Indian authors living in India. The subject belongs to them. So the only way I could put this book together was to go back to the India of the 1980s, when I left. (web)

A veteran writer like Bharati Mukherjee we all know, has an inherent distaste of being labelled a diasporic writer. She prefers to call herself simply 'an American writer' - with no strings attached. Yet unlike most of her earlier works of fiction we are surprised when the same Mukherjee leaves out cross-cultural American and Indian issues and writes her latest novel *Miss New India* (2011) that gives us an intimate glance of the newly globalized India, especially Bangalore. As the third and last novel of her stand-alone trilogy, *Desirable Daughters* and *The Tree Bride,* Mukherjee seems to have realized that she has to move along with the times in order to find adequate readers for her new novel.

Unlike Mukherjee, let me discuss the case of a new kid on the Indian diasporic block who has arrived in the United States. Ever since a new novel/memoir *Family Life* was published by W. W. Norton & Company in the U.S. and by Faber & Faber in the U.K. in April 2015, reviewers in the *New York Times,* the *Guardian* and other papers have been citing it with overwhelming praise and its author, Akhil Sharma, who is at present an assistant professor in the creative writing MFA program at Rutgers University-Newark, is already basking in the glory of his long-desired fame and popularity. Born in Delhi, Akhil Sharma immigrated to the United States along with his family when he was eight, and grew up in Edison, New Jersey. He studied at Princeton University, where he earned his B.A. in public policy, then won a Stegner Fellowship to the writing program at Stanford, where he won several O. Henry Prizes. He then attempted to become a screenwriter, but, disappointed with his fortunes, left to attend Harvard Law School. He worked as an investment banker in New York for some time when his debut novel *An Obedient Father,* was published to great acclaim in the US in 2001. So it is not difficult to assume that initially becoming a writer was the last item on his wish list. But narrating stories of the homeland sells!

An Obedient Father tells the story of Ram Karan, a lowly and corrupt functionary in the physical education department of the Delhi school system. He is a man of voracious appetites whose job consists primarily of extorting bribes for his political superiors. At home, he is haunted by the memory of sexually abusing his daughter, Anita; recently widowed, she and her eight-year-old daughter, Asha, now live with Karan in a Delhi slum. He is guilt-ridden by his rapaciousness, but persists nonetheless, molesting his granddaughter and betraying his political mentor to save his own skin in the aftermath of Rajiv Gandhi's assassination. Though Sharma managed to win the PEN/Hemingway Award, a Whiting Award, and praise from the likes of Jonathan Franzen and Joyce Carol Oates for this novel, it was a difficult book for the average Indian reader to digest. Sharma tried to give a slice of contemporary Indian life to his western readers, and tried to make the monstrosity of Ram Karan as a believable and down to earth reality in our contemporary lives. Thus the book became heavy towards the end when Sharma tried to keep his reader within the range of forgiveness and compassion as Ram awaits his overdue punishment. The western readers appreciated his book because they thought it was giving an authentic picture of globalized India where corruption, bribery, and sexual aberrations are rampant.

After a long gap of thirteen years, a really long gestation period for his second novel to see the light of day, Akhil Sharma has come in the news in a big way with the publication of his new book Family Life: A Novel and is receiving praises from all quarters. He is being hailed as a "supreme storyteller" (Philadelphia Inquirer); for his "cunning, dismaying and beautifully conceived" fiction (New York Times); he is said to be possessed of a narrative voice "as hypnotic as those found in the pages of Dostoevsky" (The Nation); he has written of the Indian immigrant experience with great empathy and complete lack of sentimentality. Some of his fellow novelists have also showered praises upon him. Kiran Desai calls him "most unsentimental writer [who] leaves the reader finally and surprisingly moved", Mohsin Hamid feels that his "unsentimentality has the effect of making his writing uncommonly touching" and Edmund White thinks it is "a nearly perfect novel." So what's the novel about?

Family Life is the story of an Indian family that immigrates to America in the late 1970s as part of the first large wave of Indian immigration to the US. At the beginning of the novel we meet the Mishra family in Delhi in 1978, where eight year old Ajay and his older brother Birju play cricket in the streets, waiting for the day when their plane tickets will arrive and they and their mother can fly across the world and join their father in America. They come for the opportunities that the country offers for the family's two children. America to the Mishra's is indeed, everything they could have imagined and more. At first everything they hope for

occurs but within a couple of years their extraordinary family suffers a tragedy: the older son Birju becomes severely brain damaged after a faulty dive in the swimming pool and remains this way for the rest of his life. The rest of the story takes a strange turn when Mr. Mishra turns alcoholic fighting legal tussles with the insurance companies. His wife, who believes in faith healing, is revered by streams of visitors as news of the mother's saintly blessing spreads across communities. This is the opportunity for Sharma to sell some exotica to the west.

Akhil Sharma's pre-determined and targeted readership becomes clearer towards the end of the novel when he makes Ajay resort to the typical Horatio Alger myth of the American Dream of Success. He is now an investment banker making seven hundred thousand dollars and finds it hard to spend the money. He even gifts a quarter million dollars to his mother on her sixtieth birthday. But apart from this make-believe ambience, the novel, written in lucid prose, is also a good coming of age story of an Indian immigrant in the west. Certain descriptions of incidents in Ajay's adolescent life are very touching and down to earth.

Though almost everything in this first person narrative is true and autobiographical, Sharma calls it a novel instead of a memoir because he believes that a memoir is nonfiction and non-fiction has to be absolutely true. In the novel, though, things do not occur in the order that he describe them as occurring in. As a novel, *Family Life* is definitely a marked improvement upon *An Obedient Father*. Sharma has stated that he found it very difficult to write the book and also feels as if he has 'shattered' his 'youth' on it. Now it is for us to judge the merits and demerits of this new novel and opine whether this Indian diasporic novelist is doing justice in the depiction of his motherland or whether the prodigal son is betraying her to earn a few dollars more.

Though we are all aware of what happened to a writer like Tahmima Anam, let me just reiterate some issues. Long before the book officially saw the light of day in March 2007, with excellent pre-publication excerpts (courtesy western publication strategies) and reports hailing her as the suitable rival of Monica Ali, Zadie Smith and Adib Khan, Anam made news by becoming a debut novelist from Bangladesh who has made London her home and how *A Golden Age* is born. Set against the background of the 'Muktijuddho' the novel is about an age of idealism, heroism and romance, and a people's struggle against oppression. It is perhaps the first novel in English to deal with this theme and hence touch the right chord in many people's lives.

Groomed in a creative writing course, Tahmina's language and narrative style is really appealing. The opening of the novel is startling in its stark simplicity - "Dear Husband, I lost our children today" as is its ending: "This war that has taken

so many sons has spared mine. This age that has burned so many daughters has not burned mine. I have not let it." Like most subcontinental writers in English, Anam instills the right amount of exotica and Bengali words into her writing to make everything seem very authentic. Characters therefore use the gamcha, eat jaobhaat or morog polao, move taratari, characters who salaamed and nomoskared each other, move with their jeeneesh-potro and see grass-green tiktikis. So much so good but when she describes Rehana sprinkling a few bokul seeds around her husband's grave and "a few weeks later the tiny white bokul flowers appeared, casting themselves resolutely upwards"; when someone covers her head with the *Calcutta Statesman;* or when she mentions the visit from no.8 Theatre Road to the refugee camps at Salt Lake and the route takes her across Howrah Bridge, driving into the wilderness by "leaving the perimeter of Calcutta" with barren landscape and "yellow with fields of drying hay", you can either call it poetic license, gross negligence, or the ignorance of the British editor whose "sheer editorial brilliance" is acknowledged profusely at the end of the book.

Let me come to Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's case. Ever since she started writing, she excelled in narrating cross-cultural stories - of ordinary Indian making it in America or returning as a misfit like poor Mrs Dutta, the protagonist of one of her short stories, who decides to come back to Kolkata, unable to adjust herself in her son and daughter-in-law's house there. America offers freedom to a young Bengali middle class wife who, with tacit support from her husband and in-laws, is forced to abort her foetus because the ultrasound report confirms it to be a girl. One is also reminded of the culture shock that another young Bengali protagonist from Kolkata faces on her first visit to America, where her dream country. supposed to have 'silver pavements and golden roofs', gives her the rudest shock in the form of racial abuse and humiliation in the suburbs of Chicago. After a certain point of time, she started writing children's fiction like *Neela's Song* or *The Conch Bearer* which contained Indian exotica, heritage and local myths about seeking the holy grail in the Himalayas, [where her own son Abhay becomes the protagonist]. Then she wrote *The Palace of Illusions* as a retelling of the *Mahabharata* story from a woman's point of view. Though her western readers were enamoured when they read about Draupadi asking all sorts of questions on gender, we did not find it unique.

Now after a gap of a several of years, Divakaruni's latest novel, *Oleander Girl* is capable of engrossing the readers who want to know "what happened next" and proceed at great speed. Like all her earlier works she treads on a ground she knows well - Calcutta (her own home town where she was born and grew up till her undergraduate years), and USA (where she went on for her graduate studies and has stayed on till date). This is the first novel perhaps where Kolkata becomes the topos or space where she builds up her plot, the primary locus of the story,

a city which is partly narrated from first-hand experiences, and partly through fictional stereotypes. For example, at one point in the narrative we even find Sonia, daughter of an extremely rich business tycoon and erstwhile girlfriend of Rajat, also driving among other expensive cars, a Porche in the streets of Calcutta!

The story and parts of the plot outline make it comparable to a very well-structured Bollywood movie- full of love triangles, mistaken identities, machinations by villainous characters, exotic locales and settings in snowstorm-struck Boston, long redwood forests of California, disreputable places in the underbelly of New York City, the promenade of the Hooghly River bank, the quick weekend getaway to Digha, the unravelling of mysteries, solving of all misunderstandings, change of hearts, till everything becomes right in the state of Denmark and the protagonists, after physical, mental, financial trials and tribulations, are united in a solemn wedding to 'live happily ever after.' All the masala needed for a commercial movie, a cinematic adaptation, or a serial soap opera is supplied readily by the author in this novel. Is this a survival strategy in the jungle of new books published every other day, one might ask. Incidentally, though we come across many academic articles on Divakaruni and also doctoral dissertations on her work in this part of the world, the average American reader is totally oblivious of her existence.

Jhumpa Lahiri does not write at an express speed. A few years after *Unaccustomed Earth,* was published, a very engrossing story entitled "Brotherly Love" appeared in the 10 June issue of *The New Yorker.* The story was located in a quiet enclave in Tollygunge which was full of narrow lanes and modest middle-class homes with tile or tin roofs, and with two ponds and a lowland spanning a few acres behind it, and it was later developed into the novel *The Lowland.* Shifting among the points of view of a wide range of richly drawn characters, the story moves from Tollygunge and North Calcutta into different locales of America -- from New England to California. It talks about two brothers diametrically opposite in nature, one who nourishes socialist ideologies and becomes a Naxalite, and the other who leaves the Indian shore to pursue doctoral research in America. But the most interesting part occurs when the younger brother decides to marry his brother's widow and takes her away to the new world.

Let us now move to another young diasporic writer from Kolkata. In spite of being shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize 2014 and getting high praises from novelists like Amitav Ghosh, A.S. Byatt, Anita Desai, Patrick Flannery and others, he missed it by a whisker. In *The Lives of Others,* Neel Mukherjee, the new kid on the British South Asian Diaspora block, has really toiled very hard to impress his readers with a story set in Kolkata and simultaneously in the different districts of West Bengal, and spanning a timeline of three years, 1967 to 1970 to be exact.

But all said and done, the neo-orientalist agenda of the author becomes very clear in this book. When Jhumpa Lahiri published *The Lowland* in 2013 devoting a major part of the novel to Kolkata of the 1960's and the Naxalite movement, she received criticism from several quarters for giving us a watered down version of the actual movement. Though she had mentioned several reference books, she was labelled as an outsider not conversant with the actual state of affairs. In Neel Mukherjee's case, as someone who grew up in Kolkata but is presently residing in London, the situation is a little different. Though he has done his homework better than Lahiri, and given much more elaborate details of the Naxalite movement, especially through the diary entries of the character called Supratik, reading through the details of those sections in the book also reminds us of the deliberate neo-Orientalist effort he has made to give his readers the history of the movement (something which he too did not witness first hand, as he was probably not even born or was too young to remember anything). The result is that the book with more than five hundred pages hangs under its own weight of too many details, losing the 'what-happened-next' spirit needed to sustain the readers' interest.

I want to conclude this section by citing the example of a recent South Asian diasporic writer called Prajwal Parajuly. Just two books old, and both of them shortlisted for the Dylan Thomas Prize, Parajuly is worth mentioning because apart from the writings of Manjushree Thapa (a Nepali writer residing in Canada), we are not much familiar with any work of the Nepalese diaspora. The son of an Indian father and a Nepalese mother, Parajuly divides his time between New York and Oxford, and as he describes himself in the book, he is one who often "disappears to Gangtok, his hometown in the Indian Himalayas, at every opportunity." In his debut collection of short stories entitled *The Gurkha's Daughter* (2013), he gives us eight stories that describe and dramatize the experiences of both the Nepalese people and the Nepalese diaspora -the people whose culture and language is Nepali, but who are dispersed in India, Bhutan and beyond. In his first novel entitled *Land Where I Flee,* (which was published almost simultaneously with his book of stories (an exclusive extract of which was appended at the end of the first book as a nice marketing gimmick), which is full of local Nepalese expressions, beliefs and concerns, Parajuly very clearly highlights the caste and class consciousness that permeates lives of South Asians in a significant manner. The story is based around a sort of home-coming to Gangtok for three of Chitralekha Nepauney's grandchildren from different parts of the western world, who having being reared by the woman in the absence of their parents, are going to celebrate her "Chaurasi" - her landmark eighty-fourth birthday. According to the author, the "Chaurasi" is a curious event-not many Nepali-speaking Hindus in India, especially the people of his generation, know much about, which could be partly because few people live to see their 84th birthday. A clear neo-orientalist agenda therefore surfaces once again.

Another interesting example is that of the prize-winning author Abha Dawesar, whose debut novel *Miniplanner/The Three of Us* (2003) is not what we usually expect from a 26- year-old immigrant Indian writer in the United States of America. In the novel she creates a story that shrewdly explores sexual dependency from the perspective of a white male investment banker in Manhattan, New York, whose affairs range from having sex with his boss as well as his wife, all neatly timed with the help of a miniplanner. Except for a rare introspection, when a confused Bernard "wanted the security of being something, of being definable and definite-in-short, a word", the first 200 pages of the novel (leaving just 53 more) are a rollicking sexual affair where everyone comes and goes but nothing happens. In an interview given to Charmy Harikishan on May 19, 2003, for *India Today,* Dawesar stated that though she was coy about her parents reading the book, she had to write it.

> My primary allegiance was to the work. I could not have been coy about the sexual details because Andre Bernard was not. Had the novel been set in India, it would have been different.

Further in an article called "India Away From Home," Dawesar explains her predicament and raises several pertinent questions that can be applied to many other writers as well:

> My novel was about and in the voice of a young man: Andre Bernard. A white man. A gay man. An American. The book was not of India in any sense of the term. Can I be considered an Indian writer by virtue of my birth alone? Do I remain an Indian writer if I write in the voice of a white American man? Is it my literature that makes me India or my passport? This class of questions will gain in significance as diasporic writing speaks in more and more tongues.

Marketing Strategies

Let me now focus a little upon publication strategies. For every aspiring writer at the 'periphery,' there is a publisher at the 'center,' eager to seize upon their work as a source of marketable "otherness" says Graham Huggan ("The Postcolonial Exotic"1994). Though it does not directly mean that an author composes a novel as per the dictates of the publisher, yet it becomes quite clear that writing exotica by the marginalized diasporic writer is definitely a plus point.

In this age of globalization, it seems that the age-old saying "Don't judge a book by its cover" is pass. Once a book's manuscript leaves the author's bag, it becomes a marketable product, similar to many other multinational consumer products. The publisher then works out different strategies to aggressively market

the product with special book launch programmes, publicity stunts and extensive reading sessions by the author at different locales where he/she also becomes a performer and salesman, copiously signing out copies for dedicated readers and listeners. As several Culture Studies critics point out[2], in postcolonial literature in the global late-capitalism system, the book is also commodified as an object of consumption. Thus its production, selection and consumption are regulated by the influence of the publishing houses and academic institutions. But how much the author himself has a role to play in the process remains a debatable point. Going through the various avatars of some of their texts, and the different kinds of covers specifically manufactured for a niche market, we can see how all this talk about uniformity, transnationality, and multinational publishing policies has embedded in it deeper meaning through which we now have to judge a book by its cover, but also judge it by its covers.

I here focus on only two aspects of the entire publication process, namely the pictures on the cover of the book and the dust-jacket storyline that it offers. So, though a book is now launched worldwide on the same day, it comes in different forms custom-made according to the sensibilities and interest of the regional readers. In other words, the language, the coded and the non-coded signifiers all add up to the understanding of the visual impact disseminated through the cover of the book. Though seeming apparently trivial, the marketing strategy is clearly exposed when we go through the absolutely different story outlines presented in different dust jacket editions of the same book. Take the example of Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. By June 1997 the readers of *The New Yorker* were introduced to a full page picture of Arundhati Roy with the following caption: "A novelist who works as hard to avoid as to reach her destination of forbidden sex and atrocious violence" and so the dust jacket story outline for the Random House edition published from New York was totally different from its Indian counterpart. According to Padmini Mongia, "the tropes used in the aestheticization of the book are worth remarking on, especially since the work is clearly very skilfully put together and an enormous effort was expended for its construction and

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[2]Here I include critics like Walter Benjamin whose 1935 essay, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction" has become a standard reference work for any attempts to analyze and understand the interrelation of political, technological and artistic development under capitalism; Anthony Appiah, who talks of postcoloniality to be best understood as a condition of a "comprador intelligentsia"; of a relatively small, Western-style, Western trained group of writers and thinkers who mediate the trade in cultural commodities of world capitalism at the periphery; Graham Huggan, who believes that postcolonial writers are adept at manipulating the commercial codes of the international open market. They recognize that the value of their writing as an international commodity depends, to a large extent, on the exotic appeal it holds to an unfamiliar metropolitan audience. See ("The Postcolonial Exotic" *Transition* :24)

marketing."[3] In an interview given by Indian expatriate women writers in Britain after Arundhati Roy won the Booker Prize, most of them reiterated that finding good and mainstream publishers for their writing was well nigh impossible. As a result, they have to remain satisfied by getting published from small, alternative publishing houses. Meera Syal categorically mentioned that exoticism and distance are two key elements that sell well. Leena Dhingra complained that she has to sustain herself as a writer by acting in television soaps and most of the time, her character roles are of the stereotyped *aunty-ji* kind.

Closely associated with this phenomenon is media hype. Aggressive marketing blitz, huge advances, book launch parties, rave reviews and other frills have no doubt helped diasporic South Asian writing in English to hit the market. This hype and media blitzkrieg created by publishers for a writer making it big in the West is rarely witnessed in the case of vernacular translations. Here we are reminded of the media hype that accompanied *The God of Small Things* after it won the Booker Prize. When Vikram Seth received more than 3.1 crore rupees in advance for the U.S., British, and Indian rights of *A Suitable Boy*, it trumpeted the arrival of a literary cult - the idolization of writers who had gained recognition in the West. Along with their astronomical advance amounts they all seem to try out their luck in this Cinderella syndrome. As Bill Buford wryly comments:

…. It showed publishers in the West that books by an Indian writer could sell. (In understanding what motivates the makers of literature, as Dr. Johnson knew, it pays to think about pay.)

In her book *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, Gillian Rose introduces the idea that we need methodologies to interpret the plethora of visual stimuli surrounding us. According to her, we can understand our culture through various visual representations and there are multiple ways of doing that[4]. Such studies and examples might go on endlessly.

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[3]Several other critics also point out to the new phenomenon of the marketing of The God of Small Things. For example, Sadia Toor in her article, "Indo-Chic: The Cultural Politics of Consumption in Post-Liberalization India" states:

> Marketing for the book [GOST] has been dominated by glossy photographs of a very photogenic Roy, wispy tendrils of hair framing eyes that stare dreamily out. One publicity poster for the book has a four-foot image of Roy's face, beneath which is the caption 'Set to be the publishing sensation of the year', leaving much ambiguity as to whether the reference is Roy or her book, which is not mentioned even by name. The strategy is clearly one which plays into the Indian beauty myth. (2000:13)

[4]Rose specifies different approaches for analyzing visual materials namely semiology, psychoanalysis, discourse analysis and content analysis.

However two interesting reasons for such changes need to be mentioned. First, when a particular novel wins a prize, say a Booker or a Pulitzer, an additional logo mentioning the fact is usually added on to the cover without any major changes of the picture or design. This definitely raises the salability of the book. Again, interesting additions or changes to the cover occur when a film adaptation is made from a particular novel and the picture of the film star usually performing the lead role then contributes his or her share to the marketability of the book. The image of a crouching Amir Khan in grayish sepia tone, waiting with his eyes closed for the train full of refugees from Amritsar to arrive in the post-partition scenario of Lahore that adorns the cover of the Penguin India edition of Bapsi Sidhwa's *Ice Candy Man* or Kal Penn as Gogol Ganguly walking on the streets of New York that adorns the very colourful red and yellow cover of Jhumpa Lahiri's novel *The Namesake* after the 2006 film adaption by Mira Nair, are such cases in point. The transformation from the two earlier covers of The Namesake is so stark and powerful that one cannot but overemphasize the visual impact the new cover creates[5]. Thus, taking a cue from Roland Barthes we can say that the linguistic message -- contained in the titles, the slogans and captions -- juxtaposed with the advertising image, enhances the attraction of the book as a consumer product. Barthes distinguished the image from language and defined the relationship between the two[6]. His theory, granting responsibility to the image maker and enhancing their ability to communicate, gains greater acceptability in this analysis.

I now want to focus on another interesting phenomenon that accompanied the February 2008 release of two different editions of Manil Suri's novel *The Age of Shiva.* In both the US edition published by Norton, and the UK edition by Bloomsbury there is the picture of a sari-clad Indian woman along with her son facing backwards, but the similarity ends there. The cover of the Norton edition is done in black and white, almost verging into sepia. The picture of a woman with a child in her arms covers 80% of the space.The way she wears her sari, does her

[5]The first US edition has a cover with three different segments. The top panel is big with a bright blue background with the name of the author Jhumpa Lahiri written in big fonts with the words 'WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE' added below it to add weight. The title of the book is then artistically printed in white letters in the central panel which has a deep crimson background. The third and the lowest panel is the most artistic. On the left is an image of the American flag and on a blackboard on the right hand side the picture of a typical American mailbox is sketched (the significance of which in the novel is immense). By the time we come to the second edition, the cover has become more sober - the bright colours giving way to an off-white background with a simple branch of a tree with two multi-coloured leaves adoring it. What it most boldly announces at the top is that it is 'THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER.'

[6]After articulating the three levels of signification, Barthes pursues another question: "What are the functions of the linguistic image with regard to the (twofold) iconic message?" (38); and he comes up with two such functions: anchorage and relay. With anchorage, "the text directs the reader through the signifieds of the image…remote-control[ing] him towards a meaning chosen in advance" (39-40, italics in text). In a system of relay, "text…and image stand in a complementary relationship…(41)"

hair, and clutches her child around her waist, makes her a stereotypical northern Indian woman of the kind, usually seen in semi-urban settings. She is facing the sea. In the Bloomsbury edition (the same one distributed and sold in India), a pink/mauve tinge covers the entire background. Here the woman is also facing the sea but the child is no longer in her arms. He has grown up and is walking with his mother holding his hands. The mother is wearing a bright orange sari that covers her head like a veil. On the left hand side of the cover is the bark of a tall coconut tree whose leaves drop artistically from the top. Interestingly, the woman is reduced considerably in size and appears in the distance almost as if in a long shot. We all know that the *woman in sari* (conjuring up to represent the image of the typical *Bharatiyanari*) has become a sort of trademark, where we can once more identify the old nationalist trope of woman as the embodiment of motherhood and the motherland. In his analysis on "Consuming India" Graham Huggan has already drawn our attention to the fact that 'Indo-Chic' and Arundhati Roy's contribution to it, are not simply to be seen as naïve western constructs; they are products of the globalization of Western capitalist consumer culture, in which 'India' functions not just as a polyvalent cultural sign but as a highly mobile capital good"(2001: 67). In the case of Suri's novel, the publishers on both sides of the Atlantic take recourse to Orientalist marketing tactics that exoticize 'ethnic' literature in the international markets in order to raise their economic value while devaluating their political ones. The emphasis is now more on mass-market consumption than on aesthetic perception.

To conclude, we can say that whether we analyze the strategies of cover designing through the serious and academically inclined Barthesian formula or reinterpret Walter Benjamin's use of the word 'aura' that he used to refer to the sense of awe and reverence one presumably experienced in the presence of unique works of art and apply it to commercial book production and show how in the present context his fear is baseless; or agree with Graham Huggan that "[e]xotist spectacle, commodity fetishism and the aesthetics of decontextualizaion are all at work, in different combinations and to varying degrees, in the production, transmission and consumption of postcolonial literary/cultural texts"(20); or simply try to understand it from a layman's point of view; one thing remains clear; in today's globalized world, publishers are offering uniformity on the one hand and discreetly offering glocalization on the other. For this blending of the global and the local -- whether it is a book or a multinational brand of jeans, shampoo, or soap -- the first priority remains marketability and not intellectual stimulation.

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Confronting Issues and Challenges in the Literary Marketplace: Contemporary Sri Lankan Fiction in English

Senath Walter Perera
University of Peradeniya

Abstract

When the ACLALS (Association for Commonwealth Literature and Language Studies) triennial was held in Sri Lanka during the height of the ethnic conflict in 1995 many in the island nation saw in it an opportunity to showcase local writing in English which had been pushed to the margins in those beleaguered times. As was customary during a triennial in the halcyon days of ACLALS, the British Council and similar institutes would align themselves with the international organization and hold other events after, or parallel to, the conference sessions. On one of these evenings the Council hosted a gala reception to launch the novel of a Sri Lankan living in Australia. The launch was open to all conference delegates and many celebrities also received special invitations. The next morning, some local Sri Lankan writers, including James Goonewardene, Sri Lanka's most senior novelist, were slotted into the conference programme. Before he read from his work, James made an impassioned declaration[7] in which he claimed *inter alia* that he had pioneered Sri Lankan writing in English in post-Independent Sri Lanka and produced fiction when many others were scared to do so because it was deemed anti-national to use this alien language at the time. He then proceeded to enquire whether he, the first resident Sri Lankan novelist to be published by Penguin, had to emigrate and publish a novel from afar to be recognized in his own country and given a launch by the British Council with wine and hors d'oeu·vres[8]. His tirade embarrassed the organisers and many of the participants but highlighted some of the frustrations felt by local writers then and now, because, and as Lisa Lau declares in an article published in *South Asia,* "diasporic output has also had the lion's share of world attention paid to SLWE [Sri Lankan Writing in English]."

To fully understand James Goonewardene's irritation and that of his contemporaries and successors, one has to go back even further in time. When Britain left its shores in 1948, the island's coffers were full. It had achieved Universal Adult Franchise in 1931 (that is, 16 years before India) and rule was handed over to an English speaking, upper middle class elite of Sinhalese, Tamils, Muslims and Burghers, with shared values and assumptions, and there was little sign of major ethnic discord. The country's stock was so high that Lee Kuan Yew famously asserted, Ceylon was Britain's model Commonwealth country.

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[7]Although I was present on the occasion that Goonewardene made these comments, I did not actually take down his exact words. I doubt that anyone did. What has been provided is the gist of what he said.

[8]James Goonewardene's novel One Mad Bid for Freedom was published by Penguin in 1990 and The Tribal Hangover by the same publisher the year the conference was held.

It had been carefully prepared for independence. After the war, it was a good middle-size country with fewer than 10 million people. . . . When Ceylon gained independence in 1948, it was the classic model of gradual evolution to independence. (414)

As is well known, he modelled Singapore on the Sri Lanka of the early 1950s. What changed the equilibrium is something that has plagued many countries in the region since independence-the desire for dynastic rule. Although S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike was the next-in-line as leader of the United National Party, it became apparent to him that the ageing PM was grooming his son for the job. As a result, Bandaranaike, a former secretary of the Oxford Union, and emphatically a member of the westernized elite, realized that the only way to secure power was to break away from the establishment, form another party, and promote (some would say pander to) the aspirations of the masses. To this end, he made a pact with other socialist parties and embraced Sinhala Buddhist nationalism, a strategy which succeeded beyond his expectations, as he won the 1956 election with a landslide majority. The most controversial policy that he implemented and for which he is universally known was to honour his election pledge to make Sinhala the only official language in 24 hours, a measure which effectively downgraded English and Tamil. It was, as Michael Roberts et al assert, a "nativist, populist upsurge . . . directed at the English-speaking elites within the middle class" (132).

The policies of this government were not all bad. They provided for a more egalitarian society with some of the lowest classes in Sri Lanka being given significant recognition, but the language bill in particular, and the manner of its implementation, had a devastating effect on the island culturally, socially, and politically. Two years after the government was formed, the first riots took place between Sinhalese and Tamils. This led to the exodus of Tamils and Burghers from the island to other shores and the ethnic tensions that remain to date, despite the cessation of the war between the Sri Lankan forces and the LTTE in 2009[9].

What is most relevant to this paper, obviously, is the language bill which had far-reaching repercussions on creative writing in English and even in the use of English as a medium of exchange. The middle class was made to feel guilty for employing English soon after the socio-political upheavals of 1956. They would castigate themselves in public fora for having used the oppressor's language and for being so insensitive to the needs of the masses. The hostility to English and to

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[9]There were many other reasons for the exodus of these communities and the disgruntlement of the Tamil populace in particular in subsequent years (the "standardization" scheme introduced years later, which meant that fewer Tamils would enter the Universities. for instance) but this summary is adequate for an essay which is on the literary marketplace vis-à-vis Sri Lankan fiction in English.

what it represented was such that only grovelling gestures of this kind would seemingly allow some members of the former elite to secure for themselves a place in the new dispensation. Therefore, when writers first ventured into fiction in English after these transformations had lost their volatility and it was deemed not politically incorrect to communicate in English, they predictably indulged in the Sri Lankan version of "the pastoral of the peasant" (19) that Derek Walcott once identified in some Caribbean writing. Fiction which was overly romantic and hyper-sentimental privileged the country over the town, which once again was symptomatic of the prevailing guilt among the middle class that it was responsible for suppressing the voice of the peasantry and the lower classes. James Goonewardene's *The Call of the Kirala* and *A Quiet Place,* novels in which male protagonists, disenchanted with their lot in soul-destroying towns seek solace in the embalming environment of a village (and frequently on the bosom of a village belle), are pertinent examples. Although Punyakante Wijenaike, a contemporary of Goonewardene, did not valorize the rural scene to the same extent, she too scoured the hinterland for motifs in *The Third Woman and Other Stories* and *The Waiting Earth.* To some, these tendencies confirmed a view prevailing among critics at the time that the lives of the English-speaking middle class were so drab, dreary and complacent that they had to seek creative inspiration from a domain they knew little about, the net result was a work that was fraught.

To compound matters, influential international critics, like Alastair Niven, while claiming that Punyakante Wijenaike was an underestimated writer in an article in *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*[10]*,* adds that "talismans, horoscopes, spells and exorcism ceremonies play an integral and unsatirized part in the events" (58). In sum, he accuses her here of indulging in a version of Orientalism and exoticism before Said's work was even published. Since local critics were equally severe in disparaging local writers (because they felt that these novelists had not found the proper idiom to express a Sri Lankan sensibility), James Goonewardene and others had to do battle in several fronts in trying to create a niche for themselves as writers. However, by dint of hard work and perseverance they eventually prevailed. Goonewardene's *One Mad Bid for Freedom,* as previously noted, was the first Sri Lankan novel to be published by Penguin. It was, according to D.C.R.A Goonetilleke, a work that "is innovative in both form (semi-realistic, parable-like) and language (copious, hard-hitting, satirical)" (266) While Goonetilleke asserts that Goonewardene's "view of contemporary Sri Lankan history may be questioned," he is in no doubt that the novelist's "satire on the Anglicized middle-class and the neo-nationalistic authoritarianism at the time" was extremely convincing and effective (266). It was

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[10]Subsequently referred to as JCL.

overall a major advance from the shallow escapism of his previous work.

The careers of many Sri Lankan writers began to flourish as literature in English became trendy. Their work was incorporated into courses offered by university English Departments in the island (courses that were formerly restricted to English and American literature), and some of the more visible writers were invited to symposia and readings abroad[11]. Furthermore, the insurrections of 1971 and the late 80s, the pogrom against the Tamil community in 1983, the ethnic conflict that followed, and the major transitions taking place in politics and society became fertile fields for writers to explore. But their success was stillborn because of what could be called the expatriate invasion. Books by Michael Ondaatje, Romesh Gunesekera, Shyam Selvadurai, Michelle de Kretser, Karel Roberts, Chandani Lokugé, and a host of other meritorious/mediocre writers flooded the market. The novelty they provided meant that the locals were neglected once again. To cite Lisa Lau, "the most authentic writings, nativists claim, are those writing from within Sri Lanka-sometimes referred to as 'resident' writers-but whose writings are seldom accessible outside Sri Lanka, and so largely go unheard on the world stage."

One could extend Lau's comment to say that both the "world stage" and the local stage were affected by the phenomenon. Readers in Sri Lanka were captivated by expatriate novels like *Running in the Family, Reef,* and *Funny Boy* that brought in local experiences that they could identify with and happenings situated abroad which were unfamiliar, and engaging their curiosity and therefore prompting further perusal. To their counterparts overseas, reading such books written by those living in their midst provided a window to a fascinating new culture. These books were heavily marketed and had the advantage of being honed by professional editors, copy editors and publishers. While not disputing Sarah Brouillette's point that "being apparently inside or outside of a particular locale, linguistic formation, or class category should not demarcate what constitutes authentic engagement with the politics of South Asian literature's globalisation (38)," the fact remains that products produced locally at the time, though rendered by equally talented writers, were crude by comparison with misprints and poor quality paper that vitiated their content. Readers overseas could only make an "authentic engagement" with books published in the West because those brought out in Sri Lanka was out of their reach. As Minoli Salgado suggests in an article published in *JCL,* "Their [Sri Lankan expatriate writers] residence in metropolitan

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[11]It should be noted that James Goonewardene was the only Sri Lankan to be invited to the 1964 Conference in Leeds which led to the formation of ACLALS. Jean Arasanayagam was also given an exclusive slot at the ACLALS Conference held in Hyderabad although many other writers invited to the conference had to share sessions.

centres and access to Western publishers gives them an international readership and the potential for publicity that is the envy of their counterparts in Sri Lanka" (6). Furthermore, while some of these Sri Lankan expatriate novelists would secure huge grants and spend considerable time in the island researching for a book, their resident Sri Lankan counterparts who were not always full time writers had to make do with writing in their spare time. This has led expatriate critics like Maryse Jayasuriya to make the misleading claim that "due to the dearth of publishing and other opportunities, most writers resident in Sri Lanka tend to write short stories and novellas, as opposed to the diasporics, who more frequently produce novels (13)." Substantial, good quality novels were written by local writers but they were largely self-published, not available in all book stores, restricted to a single print run on occasions, or fated to remain as manuscripts because these authors did not have the wherewithal to have them published. This is why some of these local novels produced, say, just twenty years ago, have become rare books while those by expatriate writers are still available in book stores.

The promotion of local authors faced further challenges just before and just after the millennium when literary critics like the late Chelva Kanaganayakam and Salgado among others suggested that some Sri Lankan academics and critics were incapable of doing justice to the study of Sri Lankan writing. Kanaganayakam declares,

> Instead of a dynamic engagement with literature from a very different perspective, literary criticism about Sri Lanka is determined by personal biases and subjective attitudes; the result could well be the creation of a canon that has neither the energy nor the complexity to hold its own against the literature of other postcolonial nations. (64)

Salgado, who often cites Kanaganayakam in her book *Writing Sri Lanka,* actually names the chief culprits: DCRA Goonetilleke, Thiru Kandiah and S.W. Perera. The first is one whom she terms a "patrician" critic and the other two "nativist" critics. In her view, patrician critics are known for "drawing both implicitly and explicitly from European models of literary culture in their evaluation of textual products from a postcolonial location, their authentication of national culture is based upon a borrowed aestheticism that destabilises the boundary of the 'national' that they seek to protect" (28). That said, "Nativist critics . . . follow a centripetal logic in which cultural boundaries are determined by a putative national centre and appeal to a notion of the 'authentic' Sri Lankan

voice" (29)[12]. These are but two examples of the kind of disparagement levelled at Sri Lankan critics during this period. A Sri Lanka-based academic would critique a book by a Sri Lankan based overseas and their counterparts in the West would immediately take up cudgels on behalf of these writers[13]. No doubt, the manner in which battle-lines were drawn between local and expatriate/foreign critics merits an altogether different paper. Suffice to say for the present that the only people who benefited from this exercise of scoring debating points were expatriate writers who were given even more exposure in the market. Since Sri Lankan readers have little access to academic journals which carry these critical debates, they are often not even aware that such issues exist; conversely, as suggested previously, readers in the West, though intrigued by such discussions, especially when local writers are included in the same, are left frustrated because books originating in Sri Lanka are not readily available, an exasperating situation that remains unresolved.

What all this means is that for people in most parts of the world, Sri Lankan writing in English constitutes books written by Sri Lankans based overseas.   A comment made by William Dalrymple on Indian writing in English in *The Observer* in the UK is equally valid for the Sri Lankan variety. He says, "As far as writing in English is concerned, not one of the Indian literary A-list actually lives in India, except Arundhati Roy, and she seems to have given up writing fiction. It is not just that the diaspora tail is wagging the Indian dog. As far as the A-list is concerned, the diaspora tail is the dog." This fact was brought home to the author of this essay in no uncertain terms when he was invited as keynote speaker to a three day seminar on Sri Lankan writing in English conducted in Gauhati University in 2012 and discovered there that Sri Lankan writing for the purpose of the seminar was about ninety percent expatriate writing. The organisers should not be faulted because India places a substantial tax on books being imported from some countries, and the indifferent distribution of such books in India, even when these books are available, means that the only recourse for academics and teachers is to focus on works by Sri Lankans based overseas.

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[12]What is unfortunate is that unlike a regular debate, the "audience" gets to hear only one side of this "discussion." Salgado's views have been challenged by Nihal Fernando, the most senior English academic in Sri Lankan Universities today, in his review article of Salgado's book. But this journal in which his review appears is published in the University of Peradeniya and therefore not readily available unlike Salgado's book which was published by Routledge. It would appear that the problem of visibility faced by Sri Lankan creative writers is also the lot of its academics.

[13]See Perera's article which was critiqued by Burnett, Salgado in Writing Sri Lanka, and Davis. Also Kandiah's which was countered by Salgado in Writing Sri Lanka. These are but a few of the many instances in which critical essays and reviews by Sri Lankan critics on Sri Lankan writing have been rebutted by their counterparts in the West.

For critics like Salgado who feel that local critics were guilty of "ex-patriating" (2007; 12) Sri Lankan writing from overseas, such a situation would not be an issue since they believe there is not much difference in the fiction produced by Sri Lankans resident abroad or within. They consider both part of a single taxonomy. What cannot be denied is that this scenario does not help writers based in Sri Lanka who crave a substantial readership but are denied the same for reasons beyond their control.

Ironically, local writers were saved from this perilous situation, if not from extinction, because of the thoughtfulness and generosity of Sri Lanka's most celebrated expatriate writer. In 1992, at a simple ceremony in Colombo, Michael Ondaatje announced that he would use the Booker Prize Money he received for The English Patient to create a prize solely for English writing emerging from within Sri Lanka, a prize which would be called the Gratiaen Prize after his mother Doris Gratiaen. The impact was instantaneous.   Muller's controversial *The Jam Fruit Tree,* which won the initial award, was hailed as a breath of fresh air in Sri Lankan writing for jettisoning the jaded, stilted language favoured by his predecessors, and for replacing it with one that actually reflected the speech of Sri Lankans and also for depicting sex in a frank manner; in other words, he was feted for being unlike previous writers who had hitherto been coy when dealing with the subject. Then again, and as Nihal Fernando asserts in his review "Representing the Burghers":

> [t]he stress on feasting and sexuality may invest Muller's portrait of the Burghers with a trace of a stock perception of this race, but his account of their life includes, too, a darker dimension that saves it from being crudely stereotypical. The fun and conviviality that figure prominently in the lives of Muller's Burghers are balanced by loss, suffering, brutality, and socio-cultural displacement and fracture. (137)

The novel went into several print runs and remains hugely popular within and without the island. Another winning entry that led to more exposure for Sri Lankan writers was Nihal de Silva's *The Road from Elephant Pass* which was subsequently made into a film entitled *Elimankada*. Structured on the growing intimacy between Wasantha, a Sinhala captain in the Sri Lankan army whose task it is to safely convey the Tamil LTTE cadre-turned-informer Kamala to Colombo from Jaffna, the novel plays on the reader's expectations of what could happen when two individuals holding fiercely opposing political beliefs associate with each other for a long time and then exceeds those expectations. To Jayasuriya one reason for its success is that it is directed at a "wider audience." She adds,

He assumes nothing about the reader's knowledge concerning the country or the ethnic conflict. For instance, if any of the characters speak in Sinhala or Tamil, the Sinhala or Tamil words are given in Roman letters and then translated in English in the very next line. Every historico-political event referred to in the novel is glossed within the text. . . (89).

Although some commentators have taken issue with such glosses because they interrupt the flow of the narrative, there can be no doubt that the practice allowed a greater international readership to understand the background and intricacies of the novel. That Vijitha Yapa, the Sri Lankan publisher with the largest distribution network, brought out the book was pivotal in cementing de Silva's reputation. But the successes of Muller, de Silva and others post-winning the Gratiaen Prize were nothing compared to what followed when Shehan Karunatilaka carried away the Gratiaen for his unpublished manuscript "Chinaman: The Legend of Pradeep Mathew.[14]" On the strength of his triumph, he was invited to the Galle Literary Festival. His participation at talk-shows there attracted the attention of a Random House India agent. The version of the book published by this company subsequently won the DSC Prize, the Commonwealth Book Prize, made the Booker long list, and was published separately in the US and UK. Karunatilaka secured thereby more celebrity status as a Sri Lankan writer in English than has any other writer before or since. He promoted the book at launches in the US and the UK and was invited to participate in many conferences as a panelist because of his book.

Karunatilaka's success has had a snowball effect. Publishers in the island who had paid scant attention to English writing before because the local readership was small (they make their money through Sinhala and Tamil publications), suddenly became alive to the fact that international recognition on the coattails of English publications brings its own rewards. Till 2015 the Gratiaen Prize main event was sponsored by Standard Chartered Bank but in 2016 Sarasavi, one of Sri Lanka's major publishers, not only offered to sign a long term agreement to sponsor the prize event but also volunteered to publish the winning entries that were submitted as manuscripts. Since Sarasavi participates in many International Book Fairs, the organization will no doubt promote their publications on such occasions.

[14]Although only published books were initially accepted for the competition, the Gratiaen Trust which administers the prize subsequently allowed manuscripts as well since it became patent that many writers could not afford to publish their work.

Other developments, though not spectacular are important in their own ways. It is somewhat ironic that a few expatriate writers have now opted to have their work published in Sri Lanka because they realize that printing and publishing have become more sophisticated in the island, the cost significantly less, and these developments provide the Sri Lankan reading public greater access to their work. Nayomi Munaweera's first novel *Island of a Thousand Mirrors* and Chandani Lokugé's *Softly as I Leave You* were published by Perera-Hussein and Bay Owl (an imprint of Perera-Hussein), respectively. Some regard the publication of such expatriate authors in Sri Lanka the literary equivalent of medical tourism. Once again these authors constituted a marginal challenge to local writers because expatriate writers were able to use their spending power to organize expensive book launches and buy columns of space in newspapers, strategies which their local counterparts were not able to always afford. Then again, some overseas-based writers and their publishers have begun to make cautious approaches to those who run prize competitions in the island to change the rules and allow books published outside to be accepted as well. The Trustees of the Gratiaen Prize have resisted such overtures because, while recognizing that in an ideal literary marketplace Sri Lankans based in the island and abroad should be able to compete on an equal footing, they are equally aware that, as yet, the latter have an unfair advantage in the self-same market place[15].

Then again, the success of writers based in Sri Lanka, the longevity of the Gratiaen Prize which is closing in on its 25th year, and the popularity of the Galle Literary Festival prompted the Indian organizers to hold the DSC prize announcement in Sri Lanka this year. Furthermore, the Fairway company, the new sponsor of the Galle Literary Festival, has also set up a prize along the lines of the Gratiaen and announced a huge purse for the winner-worth more than twice the value of the Gratiaen-and had given it the all-encompassing title The Fairway National Literary Award. The winner of the inaugural Fairway prize which was announced in January 2016 was Ayathurai Santhan for *Rails Run Parallel,* a novel that had already been shortlisted for the Gratiaen prize. It will obviously take a while for the new prize to gain the respectability of existing prizes. It was marketed in a crass way as the richest literary prize in Sri Lanka. In addition it was labelled the National Literary Award, although the Sri Lankan government has its own State Literary Awards. An even greater cause for concern is that along with the Fairway Award there is another prize for the most promising young

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[15]It should also be noted that Michael Ondaatje had included a clause in the Trust Deed that only those resident in Sri Lanka could apply for the prize.

writer which is given at the discretion of the owner of the company whose credentials as a literary critic are not known. Indeed, there is a worry in Sri Lankan literary circles that some authors could produce works with just these literary prizes in mind.

There is no gainsaying that Sri Lankan Writers in English in Sri Lanka have not reached the kind of stability and popularity enjoyed by their counterparts in Sinhala and Tamil; in fact, the latter would be mystified that there is an ongoing debate about readership, distribution and the like in English letters because if their work is good, they are usually guaranteed a measure of success in reception and sales. Despite some positive developments in the recent past, Sri Lankan writers in English will continue to face many more challenges and obstacles before they can find a place in the sun. But those of us who grew up at a time when the idea of a literary market place for English was a pipe dream, novelists in English vilified, and the only reason for them to write was the desire to find an outlet for their creative urges, can now at least find solace in the lines of a slave preacher that were made famous by Martin Luther King when he was invited to speak at a Civil War Centennial in 1962:

Lord, we ain't what we oughta be. We ain't what we want to be. We ain't what we gonna be. But, thank God, we ain't what we was.

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"Exoticization and the Problem of Representation: Race and Sexuality in Banana Bottom, Minty Alley and the Mystic Masseur"

Hasan al Zayed
University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh

Abstract

Is exoticism an attribute inscribed in the otherized body of the culturally different or is it a process of production of that which seeks to reproduce, for consumption, what remains manifestly different in the other? In her essay titled "V.S. Naipaul" Sue Thomas mentions that the Indo-Trinidadian mandarin's early writings resisted the temptation of feeding the imperial Britain's desire to consume the racialized, sexualized and exoticized other. Unlike many other West Indian novelists of his time, Thomas informs us, Naipaul was conscious about the consequences of self-exoticization and staging of marginality, and deliberately attempted to resist self-exoticization by refraining from stereotyping race and sexuality. Partly because Thomas' valorization of Naipaul comes at the cost of deprecation of other writers who have chosen to be explicit about race and sexuality, and also because Naipaul's participation in exoticization has been specifically pointed out by Graham Huggan in *The Postcolonial Exotic,* I propose to explore the problematic relation between exoticism, race and sexuality in early 20th century Caribbean fictions. I wish to ask questions about *Banana Bottom, Minty Alley* and *The Mystic Masseur's* participation in exoticization and see where these three novels fit in within the conclusions that Sue Thomas and Graham Huggan have proposed. My argument hinges on the idea that Naipaul, MacKay and James' representation of race and gender are more dialectical and complex than both Thomas and Huggan seem to assume. While traces of stereotyping and exoticization can be teased out in these three novels that I have chosen to explore, resistance to racial, sexual and cultural stereotypes can be also traced in them. Thus, the objective of my final paper would be to lay bare the layers of complexities pertaining to the idea of exoticiation and challenge the reductive conclusions proposed by both Graham and Thomas on the basis of my reading of *Banana Bottom, Minty Alley* and *The Mystic Masseur.*

Introduction

Between exoticism as a system and exoticism as a definitional category lies a subtle difference that can neither be flattened out nor be erased. Exoticism as system presupposes a productive logic, structural permeation and saturation; no system can exist unless reproduction becomes systemic and traces of internalization remain veiled to the extent to which it is difficult to find traces of such internalization. A quotidian understanding of exoticism often precludes exoticism's commodity[16] character: an overvalorization of cultural difference often eclipses the valuation of the exotic in the market place, thus masking how what is stipulated as the exotic gains a handsome exchange value in today's late capitalist system of production. What is proposed in Sue Thomas' reading of Naipaul as a writer resisting exoticization is predominantly a culturalist interpretation of exoticism-one that does not adequately engage with the historical specificity of its systemic reproduction.

Although I take as my departure point Thomas' sophisticated reading of Naipaul's work, my objective in this essay is to probe deeply into the idea of racial and sexual exoticization in early twentieth century Anglophone Caribbean literature. What I propose here is a re-reading of three masterful early works by Claude McKay, C. L. R. James and V. S. Naipaul. By looking into *Banana Bottom, Minty Alley* and *The Mystic Masseur's* representation of race and sexuality, I ask: How does McKay, James and Naipaul's representation of race and sexuality facilitate/resist exoticization? Did they willy-nilly participate-an accusation Huggan levels against some celebrated postcolonial writers, especially against Naipaul-in the systemic production of the other as exotic? Or, as it appears, is exoticism a byproduct of their representation of a society interlocked in an unequal exchange with the empire? What I wish to forestall from the beginning is the temptation of considering exoticism as a transhistorical phenomenon-the consumption of the other who is "almost the same but not quite" (Bhabha 131). The line of demarcation between the desire to consume culturally different artifacts and the systemic production of the different/exotic for mass consumption is so well pronounced that the conflation of the two results in drowning both into an abyss from which neither is recuperable. Thus my discussion on the exotic will consider exoticism in its historical specificity, as a system operating within today's globalized capitalist order as an expression of the multicultural world market in which the consumption of the manifestly different other (the exoticized other) has become a part of our habitation. As I argue in this paper, if a clear separation between the transhistorical phenomenon of the production and consumption of the exotic and the historically mediated globalist consumption of the exotic is not maintained, production and consumption of the exotic would seem like a transhistorical phenomenon, and the history of an intensified production and consumption of the exotic in this globalized era will get lost in the chaotic theoretical overtotalization.

In her compassionate and engaging evaluation of Naipaul's work, Sue Thomas mentions how Naipaul, from the early stage of his writing career, tried to resist the temptation of simplifying relations of race and sexuality in the West Indies, thus making an effort to disrupt the systemic production and exoticization of race narratives for their consumption by imperial Great Britain. Well aware of the pitfalls of simplified notions about race and sexuality, Naipaul "deals with race in most detail", blurring the boundaries between 'clear oppressors and clear oppressed' (230). The deeply suggestive idea that Naipaul seeks to transcend, through his early works, the clear demarcation between the oppressor and the oppressed is then succeeded by Thomas' observation about Naipaul's will to resist commodification of race and sexuality. She writes,

In the early stages of his career Naipaul is resistant to his sense of how the "West Indian Writer" is recognized in Britain and restrictive expectations of his or her work and approaches to sex, the exotic, and race relations. He refuses to commodify his writing to meet these expectations, grounded as they are in porno-tropic fantasies of the colonial and the ex-colonial world as a site on which 'forbidden sexual desires and fantasies might be projected', and as he strives to demonstrate, in reductive understandings of the complexity of race relations and of the humanity of the victims of racism. (231)

The stipulated relation between Naipaul's reluctance to be categorized as a "West Indian Writer" and his intention to disappoint the imperial Britain's expectations from him as a "West Indian Writer" maps onto the common sphere of West Indian writing as commodity. What is also articulated here, perhaps slyly, is the distinction between Naipaul's "most detailed" representation of race in his early works and the uncomplicated presentations of race and sexuality in the works of those who did not relinquish their West Indian identity. This very distinction between Naipaul as a figure of resistance-a novelist who "refuses to commodify his writing"-and the supine West Indian writers who fall naive victim to the imperialist desire to consume the racialized and sexualized other, is predicated upon two reductive premises: a) an overestimation of imperial Great Britain's ability to consume and thus internalize the other, and b) an undialectical and reductive reading of West Indian novels' writing/re-writing of race and sexuality. This surgical separation between Naipaul and other West Indian writers, the idea that Naipaul's work marks a rupture with the early West Indian novel in terms of representation of race and sexuality, needs to be examined carefully. As I will explain in this paper, representation of race and sexuality-also sexual stereotyping-remains too complex in novels like *Banana Bottom* and *Minty Alley* to be reduced to easy-to-consume exotic narratives.

One offhand example can be employed to question the veracity of Naipaul's fear that by explicitly dealing with sex the West Indian novelist will turn her/his novel into a site of "porno-tropic" fantasy (Thomas 231). That *Minty Alley* remained relatively unknown and unread until recently-between 1936, when it was first published, and 1971, when a small publishing house called New Beacon Books Ltd. brought it back to sight, this Jamesian novel was hardly ever discussed by readers and academics outside the West Indies-speaks volumes about the British readership's relative indifference towards Caribbean fictions in general. Indeed, other than Naipaul himself, none of the West Indian fiction writers have attained the kind of literary superstardom that can allow for an anxiety about consumption to set in. Yet, as we look into their works, we discover that the novels

themselves speak to a West Indian audience much more directly that they do to a British one. Neither the race relation nor the sexual encounters in *Banana Bottom* make immediate sense outside the culture in which it is embedded. The spatial peculiarity of the barrack yard with its voyeuristic composition thwarts the progression of "porno-tropic fantasy", because the gaze itself resists intersubjective identification: The relative unpopularity of *Minty Alley* can be attributed to its formal and linguistic challenges that stubbornly resist easy internalization. But this refusal and challenge, should not be construed as a pure gesture of complete resistance to commodification. On the other side of the lack of responsiveness lies rarefied canonization and celebration of these novels within postcolonial literature, exposing a gap between the moment of their arrival which was succeeded by 50 long years of silence, and the moment of their canonization, which brought them back to the center of attention. That *Minty Alley* is now co-published by New Beacon Books and University Press of Mississippi and is taught in many Asian, African, North American and European universities in itself bears the proof of its internalization. Nevertheless, my argument here hinges on the idea that the texts themselves cannot be reduced to pure articulation of exotic fantasy on the one hand, and of refusal to be commodified on the other. As a close reading of the novels here reveals, both elements can be teased out when read from a predermined conclusive position. Rather than identifying elements of exoticism in the novels themselves, one needs to take into account the transformations in the content of the capitalist mode of production which, at a particular moment of history, makes exoticism the norm of exchangeability by attaching more value to otherness.

Minty Alley and the Question of Race

Minty Alley's narrative structure develops around the visual and auditory infringements of a twenty-year old middle-class Afro-Trinidadian living among working class inhabitants of a barrack yard located in Port of Spain. Haynes, whose mother's death and debt force him to find him a cheaper accommodation at No. 2 Minty Alley, transforms from a passive observer to a participant by noticing other inhabitants of the yard from his one bedroom apartment, though it is not clear how much he transforms by watching the inhabitants from a hole in the wall because his transformation remains ambiguous and clad in ambiguity. No. 2 is populated by characters of diverse racial and cultural heritage. Thus we have Mrs. Rouse of mixed racial feature described here as a woman in the forties with "smooth light-brown" face "with fine aquiline nose and well-cut firm lips" (25); Maisie, a "good-looking" seventeen year-old girl who is not as "light in colour as her aunt [Mrs. Rouse]" but "smooth-skinned and brown" (26); Mr. Benoit, "neither handsome nor ugly" with "very dark skin and curly hair" showing traces

of "Indian blood" (30); Philomen "the Indian servant", described as "fat and brown and pleasant-looking" (32); and, the Nurse, who is "very thin", "to all appearances white," but with "the tell-tale finger-nails" showing signs of "coloured blood" (48). The narrator's description of the characters of No 2 Minty Alley clearly puts on display sufficient information about their racial difference. Yet, when read closely, the qualifying clauses and sentences which function almost like footnotes in the text reveal the narrator's investments in the logic of difference.

The paragraph describing Mrs. Rouse, for instance, puts a lot of weight not only on her appearance but also on the racial interpretation of her body and beauty. The gaze that reads and interprets her body is certainly a patriarchal gaze, decoding socially inscribed meanings of that body. Thus when Heynes is introduced to Mrs. Rouse and she expresses her apologies for her dishevelled appearance, the narrator comments:

> She had no need to apologise for her appearance. She was a woman somewhere in the forties, fat, yet with a firmness and shapeliness of figure which prevented her from looking gross. Her face was a smooth light-brown with a fine aquiline nose and well-cut firm lips. The strain of white ancestry responsible for the nose was not recent, for her hair was coarse and essentially negroid. Her apron was dirty, but the dress below was clean. (25-26)

The gaze that interprets the appearance of the woman "in the forties" notices the shape of her body and its "firmness and shapeliness". What is interesting, however, is how defining nouns like "firmness and shapeliness" have been employed to suggest her distance "from looking gross". Nevertheless, it is the second last sentence of the paragraph that takes us close to the core of the racial interpretation of the body, making apparent the connection between blackness and coarseness. What goes into informing the expression "for her hair was coarse and essentially negroid" is the colonial narrative of the body and its beauty that permeated social discourse of the early twentieth century Trinidad and finally made its way into the text through the narrator's consciousness. It is not clear who is speaking here: Heynes, the protagonist, the unknown narrator and the author get merged into one voice of consciousness and it is difficult to separate one from the other.

The sexualization of Mrs. Rouse's body echoes in the representation of Benoit as well. Benoit is presented as a crude and cruel man, devoid of sensibility, with brashness embodied in his body. In the narrator's account:

He was rather a big man with a slight paunch. His very black face was undistinguished-looking, neither handsome nor ugly. The very dark skin and curly hair showed traces of Indian blood. The only thing one might have noticed was a rather cruel mouth below the sparse moustache. He might have been anything between thirty-five and fifty, perhaps somewhere in the forties. (30)

After being described this way, Benoit is further introduced through his comments about women, especially through his quirky, sexual remark about Haynes' "servant" Ella:

You have a nice, fat cook, man. The first day she came here to ask about the room I like her, though I didn't know who she was. Mrs. Rouse tell me you say she does everything for you, and you wouldn't let her go. … Anyway, guard your property. I am a man girls like, you know. If she fall in my garden I wouldn't have to lock the gate to keep her in. (31)

That Benoit is a 'dougla' or a racially mixed person with "very dark skin and curly hair" showing traces of Indian blood, complicates his representation as a desire-driven lout. The reduction of Benoit to a phallic symbol - a dark skinned man whose sexual appetite is immense - indexes towards the pathologies of racial stereotypes whose effect is deep in the consciousness. Such is the prevalence of the sexualization of the body of the "black man" that the man himself valorizes the production of his identity as such. It is difficult to attribute the production of the "black man" as a sexual predator to the narrator or the writer only. What is also in question here is the social production of the "black male" as a phallic symbol[17]. While, on the one hand, such representation suggests the novel's production of racial stereotypes, on the other, it forcefully grounds the presence of racial stereotypes in society. No distinct claims can be made in favour of the idea that *Minty Alley* directly participates in the production of racial stereotypes, though traces of social production of stereotypes is exemplified not only through Benoit and Mrs. Rouse, but also through the characters of the Nurse and Philomen.

The problem of race is hardly ever dealt with separately in *Minty Alley;* race remains complexly bound to questions of class and gender, with colonial relation of power working at the background. When, for instance, Haynes' mother reveals to him her plans for his future, she does so by reminding him of both racial and class marginality, saying: "You are black my boy. I want you to be independent, and in these little islands for a black man to be independent means he must have money or a profession" (22). Then, we are told in the next paragraph that in the West Indies to have a profession meant going to England or America. What is not clearly enunciated here but is strongly present nonetheless is the connection between race and class. Haynes' mother, it appears, is well aware of the limits of being black in an island ruled by white colonizers. Her desire to send her son abroad for education thus is tied to the wish of seeing him climb up the class position. Thus the presence of Haynes, the black middle-class protagonist, amidst racially mixed underclass men and women, perhaps complicates and - not simplifies - the production of racial stereotypes, showcasing the novel's ability to deal with the question of race more subtly and sophisticatedly than is stipulated by Naipaul.

Sexuality in *Banana Bottom* and *The Mystic Masseur*

If *Banana Bottom* remains open to the question of sexuality, exploring not only heterosexuality but also socially aberrant forms of sexual practices such as bestiality and rape, *The Mystic Masseur* remains unusually taciturn about sexual relations, divulging very little, and reducing it to a pleasureless mechanism of procreation and no more. Their distance from each other in relation to sexuality is as acute as their difference in tone. *Banana Bottom's* serious social realist technique explores the complicated composition of Jamaica's rural society at the turn of the twentieth century, whereas *The Mystic Masseur's* comic undertone captures the corrupt practices and trivialities of Trinidad's rural Hindu communities in the middle of the twentieth century.

Banana Bottom is the story of its protagonist Bita Plant's return. After the tragic incident of rape that results in Bita's adoption by Priscilla and Malcolm Craig, she is sent to England for education and "refinement". Mrs. Craig expects Bita to return as a "redeemed" being, "appearing in everything but the colour of her skin" (31). The apparent social amorality - the protruding excess of Afro-Jamaican sexuality - that Priscilla Craig construes as threatening to her evangelical Victorian morality is projected onto Bita as well. For Mrs. Craig, Bita is a threatening sexual being who must be straitjacketed through colonial education so that her sexual desire remains in check. The dichotomy between the oversexed, amoral native and the virtuous, the restrained European plays out and keep feeding Mrs. Craig's mind as she gradually comes to realize that her experimentation with Bita will end up in nothingness.

The contrast between Bita and Mrs. Craig is also the contrast between two different perceptions about sexuality. While Mrs. Craig is ashamed of her own body and desire, so much so that after many years of marriage she still tries to hide the signs of fornications from Rosyanna, her housemaid for many years, Bita is comfortable with it to the extent to which she is able to embrace premarital parenthood. Bita's first lovemaking with Jubban right next to her father's coffin is as much as a reflection of her unabashed acceptance of her desire as it is a challenge to Mrs. Craig's Victorian vision of sex as the ultimate private act which can take place only in the most private corner of the house, in an ascribed location hidden from the scrutinizing gaze of curious people. What is also challenged through Bita's encounters with Crazy Bow and Marse Arthur is the Eurocentric notion of rape. By turning rape into a contingental, cultural phenomenon, *Banana Bottom* not only questions the universal definition of rape but also turns it into a local affair, graspable only within the local context. The uncertainty surrounding Bita's rape, that it takes place amidst confusion and mad passion provoked by music, turns into a punishable judiciary offence only when Mrs. Craig attaches to this event her own interpretation.

With its explicit treatment of sexuality, is then *Banana Bottom* the kind of novel that has the potential to stimulate the "porno-tropic fantasies" of a western audience? Does McKay's *Banana Bottom* willy-nilly take part in the self-exoticizing mission that Naipaul so ardently avoids in his early works? While it is difficult to ignore *Banana Bottom's* explicitness about the customs and desires of its characters, it is still important to consider it as an exploration of the social realist tradition. The merit of *Banana Bottom's* representation of race and sexuality lies in its readiness to delve deep inside the political economy of desire and sexuality of the space - No.2 *Minty Alley* - whose story it narrates. The sexuality explored through different characters in *Banana Bottom* is reflective of the social reality that shapes and gets shaped by the sexual practices of these characters. The numerous concubines of Busha Glengly and Marse Arthur, the tea parties, pre-marital sex and parenthood, dubious life of the church members, Herald Newton's puzzling sexual assault on a goat, the Victorian mores of sex - all work together to contour the reality contained in the novel. The multiplicity of sexual practices and cultures represented in *Banana Bottom* has less to do with exoticization than it may appear because some of the elements that this novel deals with (rape, bestiality and so on) are not compatible with the dominant features of western rationalism.

The distinct difference between *Banana Bottom* and *The Mystic Masseur* lies in the latter's reluctance to divulge information about race relations and sexual practices of the society it portrays in its narrative space. *The Mystic Masseur* tells

the story of Ganesh, a school teacher who turns into a masseur after leaving his job. Although the initial period of his career is full of humiliations and failure, Ganesh's rise to fame is sudden and surprising. Ganesh's avid interest in the outside world, however, is counterbalanced by his lack of interest in the inside - his wife and home. Indeed, the dynamic of Ganesh's relation to Leela, his wife, changes after a year when they discover that she is unable to give birth. With wry humour Naipaul writes: "After a year it was clear that Leela couldn't have children. He lost interest in her as a wife and stopped beating her" (63). The innuendo that Ganesh and Leela's sexual life dries up after a year of marriage is extremely important because in a sense it rehearses the cultural stereotype of the emasculated Indo-Trinidadian men[18], whose sexual drive - as opposed to their Afro-Trinidadian counterpart - remains precarious and scanty.

Although *The Mystic Masseur* does not deal with sex explicitly, it gives off enough information about race and sexuality through witty sarcasms and innuendoes. Its portrayal of the "lover boy", in particular, is an interesting foray into fetishism, albeit the sense that it has to be cured, complicates the issue by impressing on it the social stigma that seeks to get rid of it. Particularly interesting is Naipaul's restraint and humour. He narrates the incident in short but suggestive sentences, connecting the quirkiness of the habit with the social reaction that not only stigmatizes it but also celebrates and inhabits it. The story of the "lover boy" presents itself as a space where the personal aberration maps onto the social excess. This is how the narrator tells it:

> And there was Lover Boy. Lover Boy was a Trinidad character. Racehorses and race-pigeons were named after him. But it was an embarrassment to his friends and relations that a successful racing-cyclist should fall in love with his cycle and make love to it openly in a curious way. He cured him too. (127)

If the Lover Boy's fetishistic relation to his cycle is a proof of sexual anomaly that Ganesh has to deal with, the social excess of naming racehorses and pigeons after him is perhaps indicative of the aberration of those who enjoy vicariously through his aberration. Naipaul's success lies in his ability to capture the absurdity of both actions, where both the individual and the society gets implicated and so does the protagonist with his scam of relieving people of their agonies.

Naipaul's ingenuity in *The Mystic Masseur* resides, among other things, in his ability to expose the underside of racial stereotypes by stripping them to their vilest, though, often, his moralizing undertone leaves a ghastly trace on the same sentences that mirror his lustrous skill. Thus, *The Mystic Masseur's* depiction of the "Christian Indian" member of the legislative council is not a social realist

defence of parenthood out of wedlock but is a caricature of it: "An elderly Christian Indian member didn't bring a wife because he said he never had one; instead he brought along a daughter, a bright little thing of four" (195). Somewhat similar caricature of manner and social customs can be traced in the description of the "blackest M.L.C." Mr. Primrose who arrives at the dinner in a "three-piece blue suit"(194). But what is more telling is the Governor's wife's embarrassing encounter with the M.L.C.'s wife. This is how the narrator describes the scene:

> 'Why, Mrs Primrose,' she said brightly to the wife of the blackest M. L. C. 'You look so different today.'
>
> Mrs Primrose, all of her squeezed into floriferous print frock, adjusted her hat with the floral design. 'Ah ma'am. It ain't the same me. The other one, the one you did see at the Mothers' Union in Granadina, she at home. Making baby.' (195)

In *The Mystic Masseur* as well, we come across sexual aberration, parenthood out of wedlock and polygamy, but unlike *Banana Bottom* where such themes are explored without authorial intervention as social customs specific to a society in the former they appear without their indemnity, as caricatures and excesses.

Conclusion: Towards a Historically Informed Analysis of Exoticism

Otherness and cultural difference cannot be elevated to exoticism. *The Mystic Masseur*'s Mr. Stuart and *Banana Bottom*'s Squire Gensir both generate a lot of interest in the communities they live in because of their outlandishness and difference. Yet, the culturalist understanding of exoticism that Sue Thomas and V. S. Naipaul subscribe to attaches no value to their embodied otherness. It is important to differentiate between the otherness that is produced as commodity and the otherness that is naturally inscribed in the body. That such difference is flattened out so as to produce a monolithic vision of exoticism is symptomatic of the tendency to reduce what is exotic into a property of the colonized. It appears that Sue Thomas and Naipaul turn exoticism into an essential property of the less powerful, thus forgetting about innumerable white colonizers who strategically used their whiteness to wield both power and economic leverage. Whiteness in the colony, Naipaul and Thomas comfortably forget, has been the bearer of exchange value and was not only exoticized but also sexualized. Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* brilliantly narrativizes the other history of exoticism in which the unnamed narrator of the second part of the novel, Rochester, marries the protagonist of the book Antoinette by using his pure Britishness to his advantage. As is clear from the discussion I have advanced so far, embodied difference cannot be the only normative standard for measuring exoticism, nor can difference be a definitive

essence of the less powerful. In order to understand the fictional representation of the exotic we ought to take into account not only racial and cultural differences that underwrites exoticization but also political economic processes that produce and reproduce the exotic and the otherized for consumption. This is where Graham Huggan's exploration of the idea of exoticism in *The Postcolonial Exotic* presents itself as a useful theoretical contribution.

Huggan, in his book *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (2001) seeks to understand exoticism as a system operating in the marketplace. His analysis precludes, from the beginning, the idea that exoticism is an inherent quality embodied in the body or the cultural artifacts of people of colour. For him, exoticism is a "particular mode of aesthetic perception" that "renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them … and manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery" (13). Three strains of thought emerge from this definition: a) that exoticism is a particular kind of aesthetic perception; b) that it simultaneously renders people and places strange and domesticates them; and, c) that it is a productive process that manufactures otherness as commodity. For Huggan exoticism therefore is not a product but a process that is both dialectical and contingent. The production of otherness as commodity may partake different characteristics in different parts of the globe but the very idea of it being a commodity entails an organized systemic production for exchange and profit. This is where all three novels reach a common surface. Although their canonization within the postcolonial circuit can be seen as a kind of valuation of their otherness, as aesthetic productions they themselves contain no exotic properties. It is the peculiarity of our time, that we live in an era of global capitalism in which the manifestly different has attained exchange value, that facilitates the commodification of these novels. It is because of this that at the moment of their arrival they were neither popular nor immediately apprehended as culturally consumable exotic novels. These novels themselves were written for a local audience for which none of the thematic content would seem outlandish and, least of all, exotic. Thomas and Naipaul's essentialist fallacy was to imagine that Caribbean novels were guilty of exoticizing and sexualizing the life and struggles of the Caribbean people for the consumption of their European readers. My contention has been this that the conditions for exoticization and its widespread consumption did not exist before the 1990s. It is the era of globalization and the rise of postcolonial literature as sought after commodity in the literary marketplace (Ahmad 1-2) that created conditions for revaluations of many of these early, half-forgotten novels written by Caribbean novelists.

Notes

[16] For Marx, commodity production is the principal mode of expression of the capitalist system. Marx begins his Capital with a discussion on commodity because, according to Marx, capitalism is distinguishable from other productive systems by the former's inclinations to express itself through "immense collection of commodities" (125). Commodities satisfy needs, be they material or imagined, but what gives commodity its peculiarity is its exchange value-that commodities are supposed to be exchanged in the market. My central argument in this paper is that exoticism cannot be understood simply as a cultural expression of the desire to consume the other. The desire to consume the other is both produced and manufactured under capitalist globalization and it is because of this that our fundamental understanding of exoticism needs to be informed by the process through which embodied difference (the exotic property) is given commodity form and reproduced for consumption.

[17] Frantz Fanon has elaborately discussed the social production of the sexualized male body in his compelling work Black Skins, White Masks. In the third chapter of the book he explains how the black man is reduced to a sexual symbol and is imprisoned in the body he carries. As the black man's sexuality is overvalorized, the discourse that mediates the content of the fetishization of black man's sexuality attains mythical structure, elevating the black man to a purely phallic organism. See the third chapter of Black Skins, White Masks titled "The Man of Color and the White Woman" for further elaboration of this idea.

[18] The idea of anxiety about the sexuality and sexual appetite of the Indian men has been explored elaborately in Shalini Puri's incisive analysis of Trinidadian discourse about race and sexuality in The Caribbean Postcolonial. For further understanding of the idea see the Chapter Seven and Eight of the book.

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From Classroom Discourse to a Business Product: The Commercialization of English in Bangladesh

Tasneem Siraj Mahboob
University of Dhaka
&
Md. Shazed Ul Hoq Khan Abir
University of Asia Pacific

Abstract

In a world where almost 60 percent of the people are multilingual, English is creating the bridge among people with different cultural background, ethnicity and business. The history of teaching and learning English can be traced back to centuries. With in the span of time, its role changed along with its functions. Its early treatment as a subject, where only students passionate of reading literature used to prevail, has been replaced by its practical usages in the era of globalisation. This paper tries to find whether these uprising diverse functions of English is modulating the career preferences of current tertiary level students of Bangladesh. It also explores the career options that a degree in English offers to its graduates. The study follows a mixed-methods approach. Quantitative data analysis will show how the relationship between the multifaceted functions of English has motivated the students to opt for a degree in English. Then, based on discussions both with students and teachers, this paper will try to find out why and how these changes are happening in Bangladesh. There will also be some suggestions for policy makers, material designers and other stakeholders about managing the current situation with the modulated reality behind the teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh.

Introduction

English is a language that has come along with a nation which has ruled almost half of the world for about two hundred years. English was and still is the language of people in power. To a large extent, the real scenario is people belonging to higher classes, holding higher social statuses, with higher educational degrees often use this language in their personal and professional domains. However, with the rise of the middle class in Bangladesh, with their easier access to higher education, use of English has become more widespread. English is not only the language of higher studies, it is the language that job providers expect the candidates to be fluent in. In this era of globalization, English has become the 'lingua franca'. Under these circumstances stated above, it is necessary to reexamine students' intention behind pursuing a degree in English. English, being a prestigious language in today's world, provides a sense of intellectual superiority among its graduates. It is presumed that those who study English literature are serious thinkers, and reflective people and this sense of separation and superiority from other disciplines usually work in them. Nevertheless, there has been a change in the scenario now. With advancement in technology, education and

commerce becoming globalized through the use of internet, the communicative function of English has become more relevant. Proficiency in English is perceived as the key to success for getting a good job. Whether this intention to use English as a tool to get a good job has changed the motive of pursuing a degree in English is something that needs to be studied closely. As a natural outcome of this research, the necessity of bringing changes in curriculum and syllabus will become apparent and thus a few suggestions will be proposed.

English Studies in Bangladesh

To understand the development of English language uses in Bangladesh, let us start with a historical overview of this language. Before East India Company started its rule back in 1757, Persian was the official language of the court in the Indian subcontinent. The Christian missionaries came in 1813 and established some primary schools where instruction was given in the native language. Later, they built high schools where English was the medium of instruction. The British rulers started building universities for local Indians in 1857 and English became the first language in Indian education (Vijayalakshmi & Babu, 2014, p. 1). Pennycook (1954) notes that the intention of the British people behind educating the natives was to produce "brown sahibs" from the high caste Hindus, who could help the Raj in administrating India (as cited in Shahidullah, 2015, p. 26). According to Macaulay (cited in Shahidullah, 2015, p. 26), "They wanted to produce a class of local people like the "young Bengal' in India, who would be local in blood and colour but European in mentality, thought and opinion." However, there were a few Bangalies who believed that learning the language of the colonisers could be a better way of expressing the legal demands of the colonised people. "They took western rationalism as the guide for modern Indians. That is why people like Raja Ram Mohan Roy and Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar, among many others, welcomed the move to introduce English education in India, which afterwards came to be regarded as the beginnging of the Bengal renaissance brought about by the 'Young Bengal'." (Shahidullah, 2015, p. 26)

After the partition of India in 1947, Urdu was chosen as the national language of Pakistan. Liaquat Ali Khan, the then prime minister of Pakistan said,"Pakistan has been created because of the demand of 100 million Muslims in this subcontinent and the language of a hundred million Muslims is Urdu. Pakistan is a Muslim state and it must have as its lingua franca the language of the Muslim nations." (as cited in Islam, 2011, p. 49). However, the people of Bangladesh were not ready to take this stance of the rulers from West Pakistan. As Thompson (2007) observed, "The Bengali response to this was equally emotive. Even though the vast majority of Bengali Muslims had strongly welcomed the idea of a Muslim state, disillusionment now quickly set in with Khan's dictatorial response"

(Thompson , 2007)). The movement achieved its success as Pakistan constituent assembly had to adopt both Bangla and Urdu as its state language. Bangladesh won its independence after a sanguinary war as a continuation of the struggle (Thompson , 2007).

Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, our country has never had a steady language policy. Just after our independence, education got the highest priority. Keeping this objective in mind, the government of Bangladesh established several Education Commissions and Committees since the independence of the country (Shahidullah, 2015). The first education commission was formed in 1972 was headed by the leading educationist and scientist Dr. Qudrat-e-Khuda. The Commission report submitted in May 1974 to the government, it is proposed that Bangla, the mother tongue of most of the people in Bangladesh, has many advantages as the medium of instruction, particularly its value in developing students' natural intelligence, original thinking, and imagination (Ministry of Education, 1974, p. 14). However, the commission also argued that English should remain the language of higher education until the colonial educational system could be reformed. According to Hossain and Tollefson (2003), the commission also recommended that second language instruction should begin in Grade VI. Later education commissions also (issuing reports in 1987, 1997, and 2000) continued with these two languages. As the years passed, the commissions kept on extending the teaching of English. For example, the report that was issued in 2000, English was made an optional subject in Grades 1 to 2 and compulsory from Grade 3. From 2003, English was made compulsory subject from Grade 1 (Shahidullah, 2015).

Why People Major in English

Why people study English or, why people opt for a degree in English is a question with no definite answer. This is because people's choice and interest vary from person to person, from places to places and these reasons should be worth investigating. In Bangladesh, English departments offer courses mostly on literature but a few also on linguistics and English Language Teaching (ELT) at the undergraduate level. Logically, it can be presumed that only the people who have interest in and passion for English language and literature would like to study it. However, any substantial evidence supporting this hypothetical assumption is yet to be explored. In other words, there is a minimal scope for questioning whether students study English only because they really enjoy reading the English language and its literature.

At the very beginning we can divide the whole community of people who study English into two groups from a single perspective - one, students who use English as their mother tongue (L1) and two, students who learn English as a second/ foreign language (L2). The answers we are searching for would be different between these two groups, as there are definitely two different approaches they have towards English.

L1 learners must have a unique way to ponder on this language since they have some responsibilities to read some of its literature and be aware of the heritage it represents to be considered as 'cultured'. Stewart (1990, p. 129) says, "I strongly believe that any educated person whose native tongue is English has no right not to know Shakespeare and a lot of other writers besides." So, there is a sense of cultural belongingness that for some scholars is necessary to bear on by the native speakers of English, whether they are studying the language or literature of it or not. On the same note, Stewart added, "We have one of the richest literary heritages in the world and it is shameful that more does not know it." Lots of interpretations of this statement can be done from different angles but from whichever angle we judge it, a student who does not have English as his/her mother tongue would never learn English language or read its literature with due devotion and passion. Rather this passion that Stewart (1990) is trying to impose on students may seem a brand new form of colonialism.

For a student of a third world country like Bangladesh, being able to communicate in English adds to his/her status quo. It also opens the door to world literature for him/her. In addition, for a student with English as L2, obtaining a degree in English is the last chance at cultural enrichment before they settle into their chosen careers, according to Stewart (1990). This statement is controversial and some may find it very offensive. A student who does not have English as his/her L1 has all the rights to ask - who sets the criteria to call someone a 'cultured person' because he/she is learning English?

Another researcher, D. Pope (2002, p. 503) says, "The study of literature provides a superb way to think about the world; to study societies, one's own and others; to improve one's capacity to express ideas concisely and effectively; and to gain access to a shared knowledge that is constantly used in every field of daily life." Pope suggests that universities and colleges offering degrees in English must clearly state what studying English offers to the students in real life. He also believes that only people with deep passion for the English language and literature should enroll their name in this subject - "Study literature if you love it, because for those who do, nothing compares with the pleasure of reading a good book", and, "…reading literature and discussing it are among the greatest pleasures in life" (D. Pope, 2002, p. 504).

Stewart (1990, p. 129) mentions that English cannot, or at least should not be studied only for financial solvency if someone has no passion at all for this subject. Something like 'Shakespeare for the potential businessman' does not sound very useful or convincing to him. Pope (2002, p. 506) affirms the same logic -"...ultimately literature is not a professional commodity and it resists becoming one more object of study."

However, there are scholars with opposite beliefs and opposite logic as well, who consider the changing function of the English language and literature seriously. Hamid, Sussex and Khan (2009, p. 282) say, "Family investment in private tutoring in wealthier East Asian countries like Korea, Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan amounts to billions of dollars annually". Their research also shows that the expenditure for receiving private tuition is increasing in South Asian countries like Bangladesh, India and Pakistan. This is an indication of the fact that, English is not only studied as a subject by people who love to read English literature. It has strong market value and offers a wide range of career opportunities. That is why they are ready to spend huge amount of money to get private tutors who they expect will help their children to learn it better.

Beidler (2003, p. 144, 146) conducted a research on 477 students from a particular university who completed their graduation in English over a period of 20 years. Less than 6% of these graduate students did their MA in English literature while others opted for a degree which is "practically" more useful, such as MBA. The situation is almost the same in Bangladesh, where students after obtaining a degree in English, instead of measuring how much they have developed culturally, opt for a job in multinational companies or in private banks or organizations with high salaries. Most of them try to obtain an MBA as a professional degree for career advancement.

Moreover, most of the participants in Beidler's (2003, p. 148) research marked their development in writing capability as something they consider as a substantial achievement from studying English which is an applied side of the subject. So, we can conclude that there may be some logic behind not considering English merely as a commodity. There is likely to be some people who study English to become a cultured person. However, most people study English today with the dream of a secure career and to be well-off a life.

Data Analysis: Student Perspective

Participants and Instruments

The main study was conducted in 5 different universities of Dhaka, Bangladesh. One of them was public and four private universities. The sample for the quantitative phase of this study consisted of 100 (one hundred) random participants from those universities. They were students and ranged from university freshmen to Master's final semester (age ranging from18-27 years). In the quantitative phase, only a survey questionnaire form was used that the students were asked to fill up. The questionnaire had 20 (twenty) questions, 3 (three) of which were open-ended, where the participants could reflect on their previous experience of learning English.

Design of Survey Questionnaire

The questionnaire collected data about students' gender, age, educational background, where they were born and brought up etc. Then, there was a set of questions designed to find out the reasons why they wanted to study English, their preferences for job, whether they are happy with their degree in English and whether they would recommend others to pursue a degree in English or not. We tried to find out whether they believe that a degree in English would provide them with sufficient job opportunities once they graduated. We also tried to find out whether studying English was helping them financially during their student life. The questionnaire was administered in some universities during December 2015. Appointments were made with course teachers who voluntarily agreed to help in circulating the questionnaire among students currently obtaining a degree in English after regular class hours.

Quantitative Data Analysis

After collecting through in survey questionnaire, data was analyzed using Google survey forms. The number of research participants was 100. In the following table the quantitative data findings are presented.

Questions	Analysis				
1. Gender	Male (37%)	Female (63%)			
2. Age	18-23 (76%)	24-27 (22%)	28 or more (2%)		
3. Educational background	Bangla medium (91%)	English medium (7%)	English Version (NCTB) (0%)	Madrasa (2%)	
4. Grew up in	Village (31%)	Small town/ Suburb (25%)	City (35%)	Mixed (9%)	
5. What are you studying now?	Honours/Under graduate in English (67%)	MA in English (33%)			
6. When did you decide that you want to study English?	Before my SSC exam (21%)	After SSC exam (14%)	After HSC exam (36%)	Actually I wanted to study something else (29%)	
7. Do you want to continue/ Are you continuing studying English for your MA?	Yes (95%)	No (5%)			
8. If your answer is yes, which stream would you like to select?	English literature (53%)	Applied linguistics and ELT (47%)			
9. Given a chance, in which field would you like to obtain a second MA?	MBA (45%)	MSC in journalism (10%)	MSC in sociology/ anthropology/ development studies (15%)	Others (18%)	I do not want to obtain a second MA (12%)
10. What is the most significant benefit of a degree in English?	It is prestigious And adds to my status. (21%)	It helps me to think critically. (36%)	It offers prospects of good jobs. (34%)	I simply love reading English literature. (9%)	

11. How is studying English helping you as a student?	Through part time jobs (11%)	Through free-lance writing and translation works (21%)	Through private tuition and teaching at coaching centers (48%)	Through creative works like -working in ad agencies (16%)	Not helping me right now (4%)
12. What job would you prefer after getting your degree in English?	Working as a BCS (Bangladesh Civil Service) officer (46%)	Working in a bank/ multinational company (12%)	Working as a teacher (30%)	Working as a journalist/ writer/ creative personnel (9%)	Other (3%)
13. Do you believe a degree in English will help you to get a good job?	Yes (98%)	No (2%)			
14. If yes, why so?	Because English develops our social skills. (42%)	Because a sound knowledge of English is a necessary prerequisite for any job. (15%)	Because it helps with our personal growth which is important for any job. (6%)	Because it helps to develop our creative instinct and prepares for job in creative fields. (37%)	
15. If you get another chance to study a subject of your choice, would you study English?	Yes (73%)	No (37%)			
16. Would you suggest someone to study English?	Yes (90%)	No (10%)			

Most of the research participants were female (73 %), under the age group of 18-23 (76%); and the highest number of them were from Bangla medium (91%) backgrounds. There was almost a tie between those who were from villages (31%) and from cities (35%) before they had joined the undergraduate program. Rest of the participants was from suburb (25%) and with a history of mixed growing up (9%).

Some questions were designed to find out about participants' current educational affiliation. 67% of the students were undergraduate students majoring in English and 33% of them were doing their MA in the same subject. Most (36%) decided to pursue a degree in English after their HSC exam. 95% of them wanted to continue or would be continuing their MA in this subject. Higher number of the participants (53%) opted for doing their MA in English literature. A significant number of the participants (45%) said that they would do an MBA if they were given a chance to do a second MA in another subject.

Then we tried to find out what they consider as a significant benefit of studying English. 36% of them said it made them insightful human being, closely followed by participants (34%) who believed the best benefit of studying English

was the prospect of a good job. Studying English was helping them financially in their student life, as a large number (48%) of the students earned their pocket-money through providing private tuitions, or tuitions at coaching centres. Most of the participants (46%) said they would prefer a job in Bangladesh Civil Service, since 98% of them said studying English helps to get a good job as English helps to develop their social skill which is a necessary pre-requisite for any good job. Again73% of the participants said if they were send back to their higher secondary level, they would take English again and 90% of the participants would suggest others to pursue a degree in English.

Open-ended Questions

There were three open-ended questions in the questionnaire. The first question was intended to find out the students' reasons behind doing an MA either in English literature or in ELT; the second question was intended to know - whether they would study English if they were given a chance to start their tertiary level education once again, and the last question was intended to find out what they thought about the current status of English worldwide, as well as in Bangladesh.

Since MA is a professional degree, which usually shapes the career of the person who obtains it, the subject of MA needs to be chosen very carefully. This is the reason behind the first open-ended question - why they would do their MA either in literature or Applied Linguistics and ELT. We wanted to find out whether the student participants are aware of what an MA degree, either in Literature or in ELT, would provide them once they obtain it.

As answer to the first question, students opting for either literature or ELT stated their separate reasons for choosing so. Passion, obsession and attraction towards literature was the driving force for most of them in choosing literature. They thought that studying English literature would develop their critical and creative mind, and turn them into reflective human beings. Some of them wrote that they found the courses and curriculum of literature more interesting than that of ELT. Some of them were interested in creative writing and believed that an MA degree in literature would help them in this regard. Some of them also said that they found the courses and syllabuses of Applied Linguistics and ELT difficult.

Students who opted for Applied Linguistics and ELT showed reasons which are more practical and career-oriented. They said that ELT teaches English language in a more scientific way; it offers courses on language learning, pedagogy and teacher improvement. There are more scholarship opportunities in foreign universities for ELT graduates than for those in literature. They also mentioned that ELT teaches how to teach language and thus develops the

communication skills of a student. Students with a degree in and ELT are good in focus group discussions and presentations, which are very essential for today's competitive job market. They said they do not like to study literature for examination purposes. Some of them also believed that studying literature is not suitable for today's competitive world. The most practical answer from them was- they got good grades in their courses of Applied Linguistics and ELT during their undergraduate studies which influenced them to choose ELT at the graduate level.

As answer to question number two, which intended to find out whether the students would study English language and literature or not if they were given a chance to start their tertiary level education in University, the participants who said that they would study English again mentioned reasons like - prestige associated with studying English, better career opportunities that studying English provides, effective communication skills that they get to learn while studying English and also their passion and enthusiasm for literature in general which helped them to become insightful human beings. The reasons they mentioned were sufficiently important for a student of third world country like Bangladesh to study English.

On the other hand, students who said they would not study English had their reasons too. They would rather choose a subject, which had more demand in the job market like Business Administration, Economics, Law or Social Science. Among the students who were reluctant to study English, there was a sub group who pointed out that English was not the subject of choice either for them or their parents. However, as they failed to score high enough to qualify for admission in those departments, they chose English because it was the "best" among the choices that they had. Another sub group of students who were reluctant to study English expected that being a student of English would develop job related skills which would ensure a better future. Later, they realized that they were mistaken, because studying English at tertiary level was mainly centred on studying literature. For the last group of respondents, studying English literature was difficult as they were required to "dissect" different types of literary genres and it was difficult to obtain high scores by doing so. Their realization was that literature is something to be felt and enjoyed.

The last open-ended question was about the current status of English in Bangladesh and what they thought about it. Almost all of them agreed that English is a very 'prestigious' and 'demanding' subject now because of its status as 'the global language'. They know that a sound knowledge of English is necessary to succeed in this competitive world but at the same time they realized that their knowledge of English was still not up to the mark. They held the education policy of Bangladesh responsible for their poor knowledge of English though they did not elaborate on this issue. The most significant number of the participants

suggested that the status of English in Bangladesh should be changed from a 'foreign language' to 'second language' with an official declaration, which they thought could bring positive changes to the aforementioned situation.

Data Analysis: Teachers' Perspective

We contacted 18 (eighteen) tertiary-level English teachers from home and abroad. While choosing teacher participants, we tried to ensure variety in their age and lengths of teaching. The variety was important in this study in order to receive responses from teachers with different levels of experiences, which would add to the validity of our study. So, the graduating year of the participants was from 1965 to 2015. They had started to teach English right after their graduation. So the teaching experience of the participating teachers ranged from 1 to more 50 years. We tried to find out the reasons behind their decision of studying English and they were requested to mention at least two reasons.

Half of the teachers mentioned their love for literature- their passion and fascination for the subject as the main reason behind studying English. One of the teacher participants' responses is worth mentioning here. He said "This discipline, to me, is the best way to understand life, as it empowers us to see everything from a necessarily unique as well as multidisciplinary perspective". He believed a 'formal orientation' in English literature and language could help him in this respect.

The second most frequently mentioned reason was their comfort level with the subject. They were good at it and they used to score high in this subject since their childhood.

Some of the other respondents mentioned prospects of getting a good job, opportunity of earning money even during student life, and their wish to teach at the university as their reason for studying English. Interestingly, there were a few participants who wanted to get into civil service and studied English thinking it would help them to do well in BCS examinations. For some of the participants, motivation from their family members and their English teachers inspired them to study English. One of the respondents mentioned that it was not a planned, but more of an emotional decision.

So if we compare the students' responses with those of the teachers, we can see both similarities and differences. The most significant similarity is the prospect of getting a good job while the most important dissimilarity is whether they had a passion for English or not.

Our quantitative and qualitative data analysis shows that students' intention behind studying English has changed over time. In the past people used to study English mostly out of their passion for English, but the new generation has an obvious motive for studying it. For them, a degree in English would be the key to success and result in financial solvency. Some of them feel that the current syllabus for bachelors and masters in English is not helpful to prepare them to meet the challenges of the real world. They also think that their syllabus should have more language courses instead of putting emphasis mostly on literature which, they think, would help them to become proficient users of the language.

Recommendations

After analyzing the findings of the survey, we have come to the decision that the following ideas may be incorporated into the existing system:

● Students should have a clear idea about the prospects of studying English prior to their enrollment in the English department in order to ensure this detailed course outlines along with a list of text books should be made available for the prospective students.
● The alumni of the English departments can play a significant role in this respect. If prospective students get a chance to talk to a member of the alumni society before admission, they can get a realistic picture about the different options s/he may have in the future.
● In order to offer more option of courses to students, English department needs to have infrastructural facilities like dedicated classrooms with multimedia facilities and internet connections, teachers with specialization in different areas of English studies, availability of latest books etc.
● Students should have the freedom to choose courses they want to study. Along with some core courses, a variety of optional courses should be offered so that they can meet the need of students with varied interest. In a nutshell, students should have more options to choose from.
● Policy makers, syllabus and material designers, teacher trainers, teachers and administrators - all should be involved in this process. First, they should be made aware of the needs and demands of the current students. Then they should take decision about updating the present courses and curriculum to address such needs.

Conclusion

This paper tries to showcase the fact that the context of studying English has changed over time in Bangladesh. While roughly till the end of twentieth century people studied the English mainly to fulfil their desire for intellectual enlightment, with the emergence of new century the goal of studying English has evolved in a more practical way. The status of studying English has changed from a classroom discourse to a business product. An alteration is needed in the field of English teaching, taking this change of focus into consideration. In order to do so, a balance between courses in English language and literature should be carefully maintained.

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Addressing Students' Needs in Foundation Level English Courses at Private Universities in Bangladesh

Mithila Mahfuz
&
Shaila Shams
Independent University, Bangladesh

Abstract

Due to the colonial legacy, English language has always been an integral part of Bangladeshi education. Now, in the throes of globalization, it has gained even more importance as a criterion for the evaluation of an individual's success in the current job market. Recognition of this fact is the mandatory teaching of English for twelve years in primary and secondary education levels, which however has proven to be inadequately effective for various reasons. Private universities, which exist to shoulder the burden of educating the increasing number of potential university goers that public educational institutions fail to accommodate, therefore run English language foundation courses to increase students' communicative proficiency in their everyday academic and professional lives. But how are these courses designed? Who designs them? How are students' needs assessed? And how do course designers and teachers match the needs of the students with the needs of the market? This paper deals with these questions while mapping the process of setting course goals in foundation level English courses at some of the leading private universities in Bangladesh. Through needs analysis surveys and interviews, the study aims to gain wider understanding on both students' needs and perceptions and the teachers' awareness about the English language courses offered. The paper concludes with some suggestions on building more reflective course content that effectively addresses students' needs.

Introduction

With the frantic pace of globalization and technological advancement, the English language has secured its position even more strongly in those countries where it has the official status of a second or foreign language. English is undoubtedly the lingua franca of today's world, and it is not just a means of communication in the post-colonial countries but also is the 'language of the elite' in these societies (Annamalai 179). Bangladesh, a fast developing post-colonial country in South Asia with its own share of the legacy of English elitism, gives particular importance to the English language in its education and society in order to keep up with the global economy. As Hossain and Tollefson confirm, the English language has deep roots in the education system of Bangladesh; most significantly because in this country an entire English schooling system runs parallel with the mainstream Bangla medium education. Consequently, the two socially distinct streams of secondary and higher secondary education system in the country cause further confusion in students who already lack adequate understanding of the role

of English language in their lives, resulting in a wide range of proficiency in English among these tertiary students. So, while some students at this level display very good command of the language largely due to their schooling, others in contrast fail to even fulfil the minimum English language requirements to function in academic settings. This is a problem at the tertiary level for teachers and learners of English alike, because courses in private universities are designed with a uniform goal in mind, but such heterogeneity puts the language courses at risk of becoming ineffective for the majority of students. It is not that private universities are unaware of this problem of English. As the medium of instruction there is English, and as they have been offering mandatory English language courses ever since their inception, they have the experience of the problems of dealing with disparate levels of student proficiency. However, since these courses were designed quite a long time ago and a new generation of students now occupy the language classrooms - a technology savvy group - this study aims to analyze the students' needs for learning English with the hope of incorporating the students' perceptions and requirements to make language teaching more effective.

Rationale for the Research

The relevance and necessity of English language courses in higher education largely depends on the status of English in Bangladesh. English proficiency is a much sought after skill in this country where this language has the power and privilege to enable its proficient user to climb up the social and professional ladder (Hossain and Tollefson, "Language Policy in Education in Bangladesh"). As an essential component in the education system of Bangladesh, English is being taught from grade 1 to 12. Moreover, the success rate in national secondary and higher secondary examinations and university admission tests is determined to a great extent by English competency (Khan, "No Improvement in English, Maths"). However, as Chowdhury and Kamal report in a book chapter "Balancing Conformity and Empowerment: the Challenges of Critical Needs Analysis in an EAP Course at Dhaka University", even though the English is so pervasive in Bangladeshi society, where students learn the language for 12 years, the competence they display, in contrast, is still found to be very low (cited in Chowdhury and Haider in their article "Language Wars: English Education Policy and Practice in Bangladesh"). When these students enter university, their lack of proficiency in English creates hurdles for them as well as for the English medium higher education institutions. To address this issue, private universities offer mandatory foundation level English language courses for their students. This research therefore particularly focuses on private universities in Bangladesh and the effectiveness of the English courses offered by these universities.

Private universities were founded with the goal of producing a capable work force equipped to fulfil the demands of a growing economy. Initially, 'market oriented' academic disciplines such as Business Administration (BBA or MBA), Computer Science/Engineering, etc. were their high priority offers. Recently, private universities have also started offering Arts and Humanities subjects.

In order to understand the pedagogical dimensions and academic cultures of private universities, it is essential to understand which part of the society students in these universities come from. Though debatable, Banu and Sussex (31) feel that private universities were established to continue the education of English medium students of Bangladesh. In reality, though, students from both backgrounds-Bangla or English-enter private universities because of a variety of reasons. This entails that irrespective of demographic backgrounds, students need to meet a minimum proficiency level in English, decided upon by these universities, to continue their studies there. The numerous affiliations with foreign universities for student exchange programmes that private universities have, provide another reason to students of these universities to be better proficient in English. And the onus of providing all necessary support to students struggling with low proficiency falls on the foundation level English courses offered by the universities.

At present, as per the 39th Annual UGC Report of 2012 listed on the University Grants Commission (UGC) website, there are 91 private universities in Bangladesh, with a total enrolment of 3,14,640 students, including 1642 foreign students (cited in Rahman in his article "International students in private universities" published in the Daily Star online version). This again proves that private universities share a heavy load of accommodating the increasing number of prospective university students not only from Bangladesh but also from foreign countries.

In the Bangladeshi job market, competency in English is viewed as a compulsory requirement, regardless of the nature of the job. Globally also, irrespective of profession, the dependence on international communication and growth of the global media have accelerated the demand for English at the workplace (Chaudhury). Thus, to address this need for knowledge of English that is aligned with social and professional goals, private universities offer mandatory foundation courses of English. This demand for English has, in fact, added more importance to, and expectations from, the existing English language courses at private universities.

After a review of the numerous factors that make English language skills a must for future Bangladeshis, this paper will examine whether these language

courses are indeed reflective of the needs of students that they intend to improve. Therefore, the research described in this paper investigates students' perceptions about their needs and learning objectives, and uses the findings to evaluate the relevance and effectiveness of the existing language courses at some of the top private universities of Bangladesh.

Global Research on Needs Analysis

Studies on needs analysis establish that it provides insight about students which in turn, makes language teaching and learning more effective. Ferris (290) in her study conducted among tertiary students at three higher education institutes in the USA showed that students' perceptions differ significantly from the their teachers about their course requirements, learning difficulties and style. Ferris suggested including students' views while designing language courses.

Bosher and Smalkoski (57), in a study conducted among adult immigrant ESL learners of a nursing programme in the USA, showed that implementing the findings of needs analysis of students rendered the course more effective and successful.

Fatihi (58) also reported in her article about the implications of the first ever needs analysis survey conducted among students at the Institute of Technology, Kanpur, India. The survey revealed significant differences between the perceptions of teachers and students regarding students' language learning needs and preferences. This study was the first of its kind in India that attempted to assimilate both teachers' and students' perceptions regarding English language teaching and learning. It concluded with the emphasis on having a more comprehensive language curriculum reflective of students' needs.

Eslami (7) conducted a needs analysis survey among college level EAP (English for Academic Purposes) students in Iran. Her findings led her to conclude that learners and instructors have contradictory perceptions not just regarding the EAP areas that need attention but also about types of classroom activities. She recommended evaluation and redesigning of EAP courses based on students' insights who usually are the unheard voices in education systems.

Needs Analysis in Bangladesh

As we have seen, needs analysis, therefore, is essential for designing effective language courses as it provides valuable information about the target learners of the course. Despite the abundance of available opportunities for gaining information on students, about their learning goals and objectives, very little

research has been done on the needs of Bangladeshi English language learners, especially of those at the tertiary level (Chaudhury 61). A few small scale research studies that have been done on needs analysis at the tertiary level is not very representative of the entire higher education sector of Bangladesh. For example, Tazin Aziz Chaudhury conducted a needs analysis survey on the students of the Faculty of Arts at Dhaka University, the largest public university in Bangladesh. Takad Ahmed Chowdhury and Md. Zulfeqar Haider also conducted needs analysis on students studying Pharmacy at Asia Pacific University - a private university in Bangladesh. And not surprisingly, as both studies targeted analyzing the needs of different groups of students, all the researchers suggested the need for further evaluation and the redesigning of present courses to incorporate those needs. Furthermore, Chowdhury and Haider indicate that needs change over time by observing that while students placed moderate emphasis on reading and writing skills during their study, they placed more importance on speaking skills as their professional need once they stepped into their careers.

Since Bangladeshi private universities place primary importance on the need for English to continue higher education, this research aims to examine students' perception of the effectiveness of foundation level English language courses at private universities. The research also analyses students' opinions about the relevance of the existing language courses in meeting their needs for language learning. And since needs change over time due to varying demands of the job market, increased competition, changing perceptions, etc., this study also aims to evaluate the validity of the existing courses in meeting the felt requirements of a new generation of students.

Defining Needs Analysis

Private universities in Bangladesh function in the society based on their promise of offering courses which will cater to the students' communication needs in the university and at work, so that the returns on investment which families make in their children's education are tangible in the form of students' financial success in the job market.

But what do our students believe their needs for learning English are? Until we investigate the answer to this question, it will be impossible to develop effective language courses and teach them. And in order to make our courses relevant by equipping students with skills that they will need in their real lives, apart from teachers, learners must also be involved in adding input to what should or should not be part of a language curriculum. Students, as much as teachers, must have their say about the "roles and power dynamics" of the classroom. (Graves 99)

With this view of focusing on the students' side of the story, Hutchinson and Waters categorized needs into "target needs" and "learning needs" (54), as "what the learner needs to do in the target situation" and "what the learner needs to do in order to learn", respectively (54). Understanding these needs requires a comprehensive study of what students already know vis-a-vis what else they need to know for the specific lives that they anticipate lie ahead of them. Needs analysis, in fact, "makes sure that the course will contain relevant and useful things to learn", claim Nation and McAlister (24). Therefore, without asking the right questions in the right environments and acting on that data, the courses we teach will become static and will not evolve in sync with the needs of the market in which each student has to compete and survive.

Thus needs analysis, which involves the what, why and how of teaching a language, is an important tool for both teachers and administrators in the sense that it not only helps locate and identify our students, it also helps us to identify and work with processes that align the educational institutions' interests with that of the market. Then, to undertake needs analysis means to painstakingly collect and analyze data that will enable the contextualization of learning in terms of the learning needs of students as well as the needs of the relevant institutions they are affiliated to. The "context" where students' needs are generated is given special importance by Brown in his definition of needs analysis as a

> …systematic collection and analysis of all subjective and objective information necessary to define and validate defensible curriculum processes that satisfy the language learning requirements of students within the context of particular institutions that influence the learning and teaching situation." (36)

Warrington, on the other hand, stresses on the significance of understanding the processes involving the learner's existing and target skill acquisition, thereby explaining needs analysis as

> …a tool that examines, from the perspective of the learner, what kinds of English, native language, and literacy skills the learner already believes he or she has; the literacy contexts in which the learner lives and works; what the learner wants and needs to know to function in those contexts; and what the learner expects to gain from the instructional programme. (10)

Emphasizing, as Brown did on gathering information on learners within a particular context, David Nunan speaks of the assessment of learner needs more succinctly as "…a family of procedures for gathering information about learners and about communicative tasks…" (75). It thus becomes clear that needs analysis of language learners is not an isolated process that should take place informally inside the confines of the teacher's mind (West 13), but is a larger, ongoing, complex, collaborative process - involving students, teachers, administrators, employers, families, etc. - that is "defensible" and can be "validated".

This concept of involving all stakeholders was proposed as far back as 1978 by Richterich and Chanceril working for the Council of Europe's Modern Language Project (cited in Richards 33). Pauline Robinson, Dudley-Evans and St. John, and Flowerdew and Peacock have also expressed agreement on this, explicitly stating that needs analysis should be participatory and continuous. This exercise of mutual benefit, these linguists unanimously assert, should fundamentally encompass collecting information regarding learners' present status including their subjective, affective, and target language needs.

This paper focuses on one of the wheels of this entire clockwork of needs analysis: understanding students' perception of their own needs both in terms of the usability, or in other words, the potential of English language in their lives, and in terms of their current proficiency and learning practices. Since the courses that are taught in private universities are intended to cater to students' professional communicative needs, one of the areas of investigation in this study is whether students' understanding of their own needs are in line with the objectives of the English courses that they have to take when they enter a private university. The questions that have driven the needs analysis undertaken for this study were posited by David Nunan in "Syllabus Design": "For what purpose or purposes is the learner learning the language?" and "what are the subordinate skills and knowledge required by the learner in order to carry out real world communicative tasks?" (17 and 22).

Methodology

This research combined the use of a questionnaire and personal interview (see Appendix 1 and 2). These data collection tools were designed based on the necessity of needs analysis outlined by Graves, according to whom, collecting information about "learners' abilities, attitudes, preferences" must be done in order to "make progress toward desired abilities" by the end of a language course (101).

The questionnaire used for the student survey was adapted from the needs analysis form provided by Nunan and Burton, cited in the book, Syllabus Design by David Nunan (76) (See Appendix 3), with categories based on the socio-economic and cultural realities of private university students in Bangladesh. The questionnaire contained twelve questions of both open and closed types (Likert Scale, multiple choice, specific clarification, etc.) and aimed to cover the three broad categories of information on the learners - factual, behavioural, attitudinal - outlined by Zoltan Dornyei in "Research Methods in Applied Linguistics" (102). The needs analysis framework proposed by Dudley-Evans and St. John (125) inspired the division of the questionnaire in three specific sections on -

- specific and general personal information about the student,
- the present use or relevance of the English learned in the course, and
- self-assessment, i.e., students' own perception of their competencies, which shapes their target needs and expectations from the course.

The questionnaire was administered on 60 freshmen students from Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB), 20 from University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh (ULAB) and 20 from Eastern University (EU) - a total of hundred students in Dhaka, Bangladesh. About 120 questionnaires were distributed in foundation level English classes among students in the aforementioned universities, out of which 100 were completed fully and hence suitable for analysis. While each student was handed her/his copy of the questionnaire in English class, the teacher briefly explained the instructions to the class and then gave students approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire form and return it to the teacher.

Structured, single session personal interviews were conducted of seven English language teachers from IUB, two from ULAB, one from North South University (NSU), one from BRAC University, and lastly, one teacher from Eastern University (EU), to understand their opinions on and attitudes towards the need for needs analysis. The interviews of the teachers outside IUB were taken over the phone.

As a gesture of fairness towards students who are never asked about their perspectives, and because of the much felt absence of exercises to engage students in critical self-enquiry, discussions with teachers have not been considered of primary consideration for this research.

Findings

Students' responses to each question of the needs analysis questionnaire, along with the percentage of students responding to the various aspects of the questions, have been statistically analysed for this study. The results and findings are presented below under headings that arein line with the questionnaire.

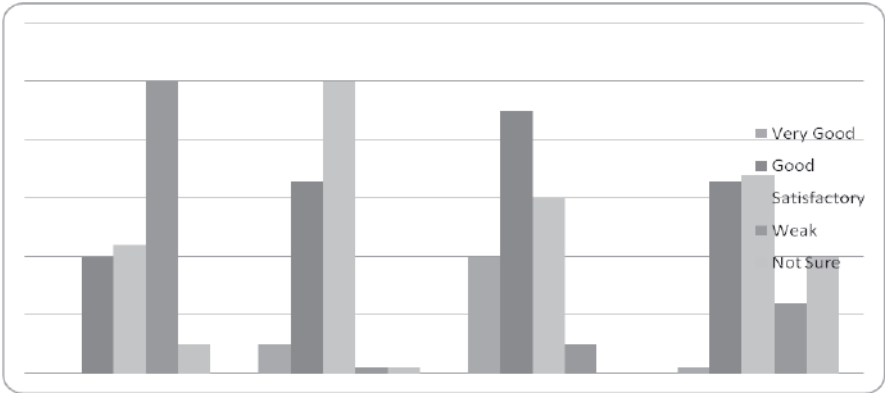## 1. Students' Own Perception of Their Language Proficiency Levels

In answer to question 7 in the self-assessment section of the questionnaire (Appendix 1) "In your opinion, how good is your English?, students filled out a Likert Scale indicating different proficiency levels ("Very Good", "Good", "Satisfactory", "Weak", "Not Sure") of four skills - speaking, listening, reading and writing (See Graph 1).

Reading topped the list of skills that students believed themselves to be good at, followed by listening and lastly, writing. Twenty percent of students claimed to be very good at this. Only about thirty percent were just satisfied.

Sixty percent of students expressed satisfaction with their listening skills, while the other thirty-three percent assessed themselves as merely good. A meagre five percent believed themselves to be very good listeners.

Students were equally divided in choosing "Good" and "Satisfactory" as their proficiency levels in writing. While a not so insignificant twelve percent claimed to be weak in it, a whopping twenty percent reported that they were not sure about their writing skills, i.e., they were unable to adequately assess their own writing proficiency.

Half of the students surveyed considered themselves weak in speaking. And while there were none who considered themselves as very good, about one-fifth of them claimed to be good at speaking English. Only five percent were not sure about their speaking proficiency. Overall students reported that they are satisfied with their listening, writing, reading and speaking, in that order.

Graph 1: Students' Own Perception of Their Language Proficiency Levels

## 2. What Students Expect to Learn from Their English Course

In response to the multiple-choice question number 8 "What do you expect to learn from this course?", students indicated that improvements in speaking and listening skills were their main expectations from foundation level (also called General English in some universities) English courses (See Chart 2). Twenty-seven percent of students looked forward to a betterment of their speaking fluency while twenty percent believed that their listening would improve by taking the course. Skills that are crucial for fluent speaking and listening were next in priority among students' expectations - twenty percent believed their vocabulary would improve and thirteen percent expected to get equipped with better grammar. Only seven percent students reported as expecting to write essays in the course. Fast reading skills were also demanded by the same small percentage of students.
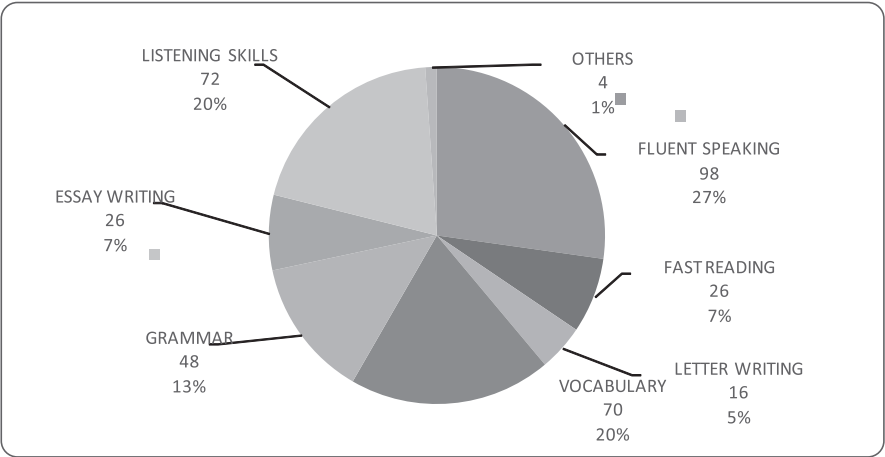
Chart 2: What Students Expect to Learn from Their English Course?

3. How Did Students Predominantly Learn English?

In response to the multiple-choice question number 9 "How did you learn English until now?", most students, i.e., nineteen percent, reported to have learned English at their formal educational institutions - schools and colleges (See Chart 3). Very closely following as another influential means for learning English was the entertainment media - television, FM radio channels, films, music, etc., claimed eighteen percent of the students. Fifteen percent also attributed their English skills to online social media like Facebook, Twitter, Google, Youtube, etc. Eleven percent of students learned English from the print media - books, magazines, newspapers, etc., and another eleven percent believed that they learned the language themselves without help from others. Virtual games were voted by seven percent of students as having helped them with the language. Seven percent of students claimed that they had found their home tutors useful, while another seven percent reported that friends and family were responsible for teaching them English. Only four percent learned the language at coaching centres, and one percent learned it at a job or while running a business.
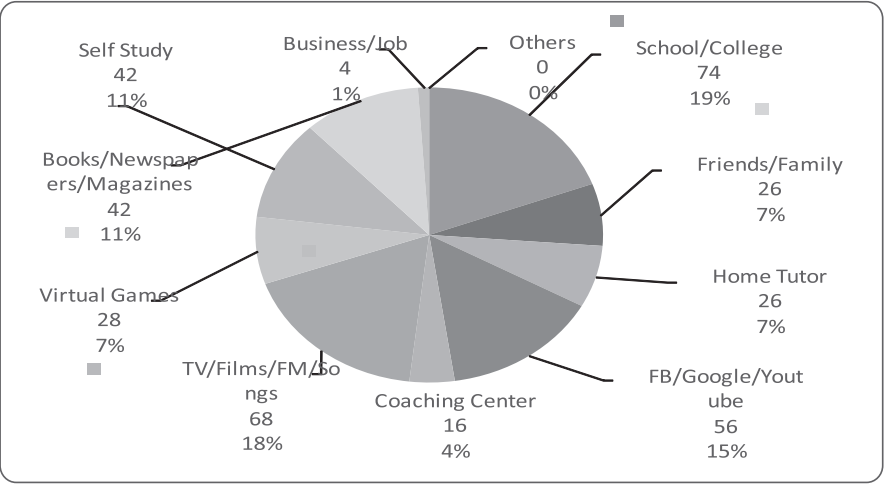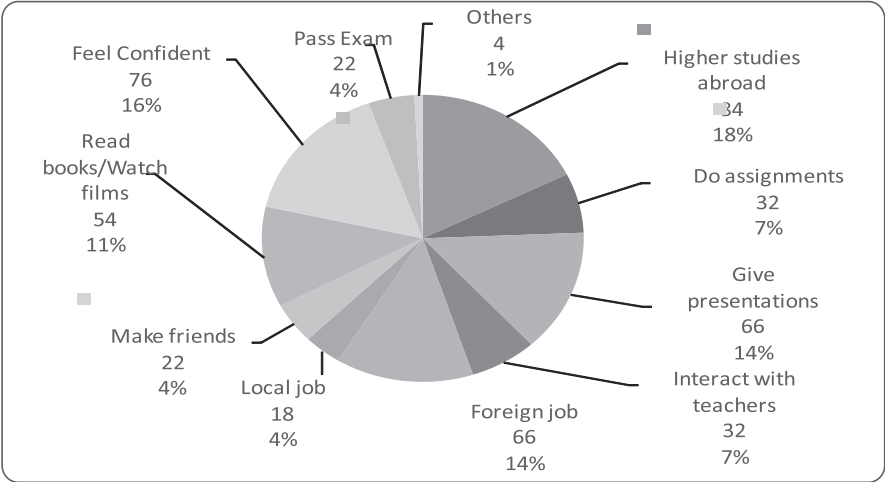

Chart 3: Students' predominant means for learning English

4. Areas Where Students Want to Use Their English Skills

To multiple-choice question number 10 "Where do you want to use your English skills?", a surprising eighteen percent of students responded that they needed English because they wished to pursue higher education opportunities in foreign countries (See Chart 4). Foreign jobs also came out as another area of aspiration of the youth as fourteen percent reported that that is where they believe they will

need English. In contrast, only four percent students indicated their need to use the language in local jobs. A large number of students - sixteen percent - believed English would make them more confident, and fourteen percent asserted that knowing English would help them become better presenters. Eleven percent wanted to read more English books and watch English movies. Not many students believed English to be important for doing assignments and interacting with teachers, as each category separately received seven percent votes from students. Only four percent students believed that English helped them pass examinations, and another four percent claimed that knowing English helped them make friends.

Chart 4: Areas Where Students Want to Use Their English Skills

## 5. Students' Preferences for Learning Activities

To multiple-choice question number 11 "What kind of learning activities do you prefer?", the majority, with eighteen percent of the students, indicated their preference for learning English by practising giving presentations (See Chart 5). Seventeen percent demanded that they be made to do more grammar exercises, but only eleven percent found lectures helpful. Learning English through reading and writing was favoured by thirteen percent of students. Fifteen percent expressed their belief that watching videos helped them learn English best. Both individual and group discussions were preferred by students - nine percent preferred class discussions and/or debates while eight percent preferred personal discussions and/or interviews. Role plays were found to be popular among seven percent of students. However, only two percent of the students found other tasks done in pairs or groups helpful for learning English.
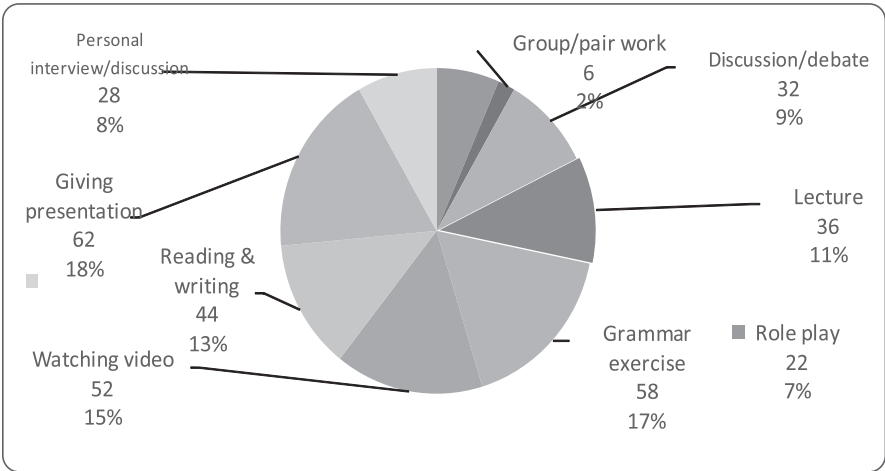
Chart 5: Students' Preferences for Learning Activities

6. Students' Motivations for Learning English

In answer to multiple-choice question number 12 "What or who motivate(s) you to learn English?", most students, i.e., twenty seven percent, reported that their teachers have been their major source of motivation (See Chart 6). Prospects for higher studies abroad motivated twenty four percent of students. Family with eighteen percent's votes, and friends with thirteen percent's votes, were next in the list of motivating factors. Encouragement for learning English also came from the desire to learn about western culture, reported nine percent of the students. Six percent expressed their wish to expand their family businesses with the help of good English skills. And only two percent of students were motivated to learn the language because they wanted to become teachers.
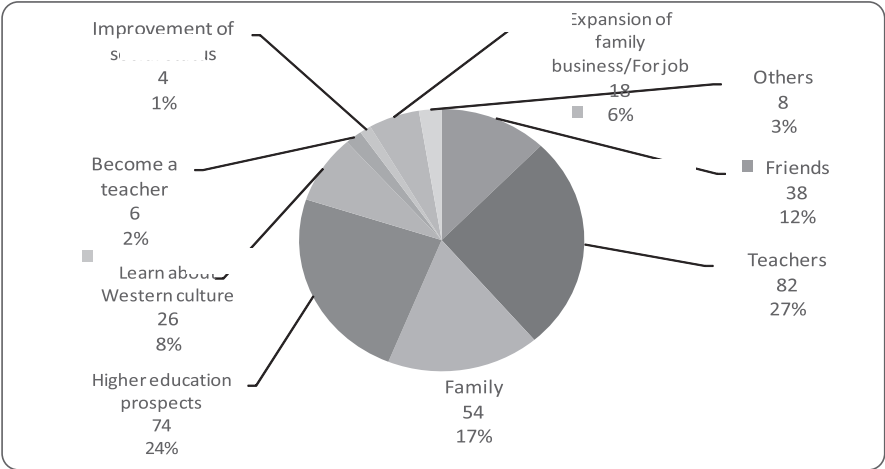
Chart 6: Students' Motivations for Learning English

7. Teachers' Comments and Suggestions

The ten teachers interviewed unanimously acknowledged the need for making revisions in the language courses that they teach. They confirmed that student needs change over time, and both the university and teachers must work together to design, evaluate and implement needs assessment tools in order for students' language education to be more tangible and fruitful. They also reported that students' writing skills are becoming poor due to lack of practice. In addition, they expressed concern over the deplorable state of students' reading habits, indicating that only a handful of their students read for pleasure.

Below is a summary of comments and suggestions made by the teachers.

- Materials should be revised once annually because needs and type of students change.
- The existing material used to teach English in private universities which is being borrowed from western text-books must be adapted to local contexts before teachers use them in their classrooms.
- Classrooms should be more homogenous, i.e., students should be grouped in classrooms with other students of the same or similar proficiency level. This makes instructions more targeted and effective.
- Teachers must design and use materials and activities that push students out of their comfort zones, i.e., that challenge their minds and motivate them.

- Tasks should be designed with real life situations and practical applicability of the language taught in mind. Thus, activities in the classroom should be adequate simulations of real life activities outside the classroom - for example, some activities may take place outside the physical confines of the class.
- More writing practice should be given to students according to their proficiency needs. These should include extensive grammar work.
- Students should be given more critical reading activities on issues relevant to their lives.
- Weaker students should be given more listening practice.
- Teachers should aim to cultivate autonomy in their learners, i.e., learners who will be motivated enough to continue learning on her/his own outside the classroom.

Analysis of the Findings

It is apparent from the data on the assessment of their own proficiencies that a significant proportion of tertiary level Bangladeshi students are not conscious about the condition of their current language competencies. Their assessment of their own skills are in contrast with their teachers' assessments, raising doubts as to whether or not these students have at all developed the ability to perceive and assess themselves clearly and effectively. Perhaps what makes the situation foggier for them is the false confidence they gain through their previous academic achievements, i.e., board examinations. Since the majority of Bangladeshi students at school and college level need to pass a formulaic examination in English, just as in any another school subject (the design of which was done without consideration for student involvement), they rely on these board examinations to measure and qualify their language abilities. So, an A grade in English at the higher secondary examination assures them that they know English well enough for tertiary studies, which is often not the case.

A significant and interesting finding of the study was that despite their confidence in speaking English, many students from English medium schools and colleges felt that they needed more grammar practice. This seems to indicate a felt lack of confidence in writing proficiency that these students have carried over from their previous learning environments, and allows for the conclusion that English medium schools and colleges are not sufficiently fulfilling the language needs of their students.

From the number of students who expressed their desire to use English for foreign jobs or higher education, it is evident that today's students are not only ambitious but are also cautious about the fact that, in order tocompete in the global marketplace, they need to improve their communication skills.

Their learning preferences and means reflected this desire to communicate better in English. And a new development can be observed in the ways in which students learn English. That is, apart from traditional means, a large number of students use the virtual and social media to learn the language. What is remarkable is that in order to learn English better, this generation of students tend to prefer videos, presentations, etc. - interactive media which will allow their creative inputs and experiments with the language. This means that students nowadays learn in more technology-driven ways than the previous generation of learners did, which in turn indicates that they understand that language learning and teaching are processes where interaction is a must. This finding holds particular significance in guiding future curriculum designers and materials developers.

Recommendations and Conclusion

There is no doubt that needs analysis is the life blood of English courses at private universities because these educational institutions have entered the market to train and prepare students for their careers. Students, therefore, cannot be left out of the process of evaluating their needs and giving input for the courses designed to help them succeed. With the help of proper assessment tools designed by educators, therefore, it is possible to make English courses more targeted and student need oriented.

It thus becomes imperative to propose that private universities should aim to design more needs based English for Specific Purposes (ESP) courses for students from different disciplines. This will ensure homogeneity in the classroom student population, and lead to more goal-oriented teaching and learning. For course designers and teachers, narrowing down the scope of English courses also means creating and using more focused activities and resources to deal with the challenges of their varied student body. The reliability and validity of a course, in fact, of every lesson plan, can be measured more concretely when teachers know exactly what linguistic and communicative skill to teach and students know exactly why they are learning the skills, how to employ these effectively, and to what end. This way, just as learners are able to do self-assessments, teachers can also test students' knowledge more efficiently.

Furthermore, needs analysis from the students' perspective engages students in thinking critically about themselves, taking stock of their abilities and lacks, and promotes a more participatory culture where decisions about courses are negotiated with students and the processes of teaching and learning are more democratic.

This exercise requires, first and foremost, that teachers educate themselves and cultivate the self-awareness that allows them to become more flexible and accommodating toward students' needs.   This also entails teachers educating themselves about their students by increasing contact time with them outside class hours. Another crucial step in the direction of more targeted teaching involves teachers becoming more informed about the needs of those specific markets where their students are most likely to be engaged in.

Because it was felt that students struggle to clearly identify and express their needs, and since self-assessment is a key skill for professional life, it becomes the duty of the university and the teachers to orient students to approaches to, and activities for, needs assessment. Teachers and administrators can hold open discussions with students about ways in which students can understand and create professional objectives and participate in the training for future jobs in the international market.

However, this enormous task cannot be productive if it is not carried outcontinuously. Brown points out that "... needs are not absolute, that is, once they are identified,they continually need to be examined for validity to ensure that they remain real needs for the students involved" (36). Hence, students' proficiency and communicative needs must be evaluated and measured at regular intervals. This should be done before and after each course, every year, and it should be compared with the ever-changing needs of the market. This calls for proactive support and facilitation by administrative bodies such as university management, funders, policy makers and the government.

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Appendix 1

1. NAME: _____

2. AGE: _____ years

3. SEMESTER: _____

4. HOMETOWN: _____

5. CITY WHERE YOU ATTENDED SCHOOL & COLLEGE: _____

6. PAST EDUCATION (circle any one):

a) O/A Levels   b) SSC/HSC   c) GED   d) Madrassa   e)   Private

f) Others. Please specify _____

7. In your opinion, how good is your English? (Tick ✓ one box in every row):

SKILL	Very good	Good	Weak	Satisfactory	Not sure
SPEAKING					
LISTENING					
READING					
WRITING					

8. What do you expect to learn from this course? (You may tick ✓ more than one option):

a) Fluent speaking	b) Fast reading	c) Letter writing	d) Vocabulary
e) Grammar	f) Essay writing	g) To pass the examnination	h) Others. Please specify: _____ _____

9. How did you learn English until now? (You may tick ✓ more than one option):

a)School/College	b) Friends & family	c) Home tutor	d) Facebook/ Google/Youtube	e) Coaching centre	f) TV/films/ radio/songs
g) Virtual games	h) Self study	i) Books/ newspapers/ magazines	j) Business	k) Others. Please specify: _____ _____	

10. Where do you want to use your English skills? (You may tick ✓ more than one option):

a) For higher studies abroad	b) To do assignments	c) To give presentations	d) To interact with teachers	e) For foreign job	f) For local job
g) To make friends	h) To read English books/ watch English films/ etc.	i) To feel confident	j) To pass examination	k) Others. Please specify: _____ _____	

11. What kind of learning activities do you prefer? (You may tick ✓ more than one option):

a) Role plays	b) Group/pair work	c) Discussions/ debates	d) Lectures	e) Grammar exercises
f) Watching videos	g) Reading & writing	h) Giving presentations	i) One-to-one interview/discussion	

12. What or who motivate(s) you to learn English? (You may tick ✓ more than one option):

a) Friends	b) Teachers	c) Family members	d) Higher education prospects	e) Learning about Western culture
f)Ambition to become a teacher	g) Improvement of social status	h) Need to expand family business	i) Others. Please specify: _____ _____	

Appendix 2

```
Name: (Deleted)
Age: 26
Time in target country: 18 months
Nationality: Vietnamese
Education: Completed primary education
Occupation: Dressmaker
Proficiency: Elementary
Communicative needs: Basic oral communication skills; form filling;
    timetables; reading signs and short public notices
L1 Resources: Family; home tutor
Learning goals: Communicate with parents of children's friends
Preferred learning activities: Traditional, teacher-directed classroom
    instruction
Availability: 2–3 × week (mornings only)
Motivation: Brought in by family
Pace: Average
```

(Adapted from Nunan and Burton 1985)

Appendix 3

NEEDS ANALYSIS OF FOUNDATION LEVEL ENGLISH COURSES IN PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

TEACHERS' INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCHERS: Shaila Shams and Mithila Mahfuz, Lecturers

INSTITUTION: Independent University, Bangladesh
YEAR: 2016

1. Greeting and introduction to the research.
2. Do you see a reflection of the syllabus goals in your student needs?
3. Do you believe that the materials used are congruent with students' needs?
4. Do standardized tests and materials help achieve course objectives?
5. Does a functional syllabus work in achieving learning goals?
6. Do your students have homogenous language needs?
7. Roughly, what proportion of your class displays different needs from the rest of the class? Do you use other materials to address these needs? If yes, where do you get the materials from? What type of materials are they?
8. Any other comments about these courses and their students.

Prospects of Facebooking to Extend Genre Based Writing Skills of Bangladeshi EFL Learners: A Study of Undergraduate Students in a University

Mohammad Rejaul Karim
East West University
Md. Abu Sufian
&
Md. Mahbubul Islam
BRAC University

Abstract

This research reports to what extent facebooking helps the Bangladeshi undergraduate level EFL learners to enhance their genre-based writing proficiency. Using Facebook to serve various academic and non-academic purposes among undergraduate students is a common phenomenon in the academia of Bangladesh. This research has found that guided instructions and activities using free writing space like Facebook help the students develop their genre-based writing skills. The findings from 25 questionnaires and 2 semi-structured interviews indicate that Facebook, as a Social Networking Site, helped students develop their genre-based writing skills significantly at the end of a semester. Moreover, the students have reported that the learning experience of guided writing activities in Facebook motivated them to be involved in using the free writing space to extend their genre-based writing skills.

Introduction

Technology and education are two such phenomena that are traditionally and historically associated with each other. They have proven potentials to mould each other. From simple chalk and board, the so-called educational technology has reached computer mediated and internet based online courses in recent times (Vargas &Tian, 2013). As a result, educationists and practitioners are having unprecedented opportunities to experiment with various ideas to enhance learning not only in the classrooms but also out of the classrooms with much flexibility of both time and space among closed learner communities (VanDoorn&Eklund, 2013). Information and communication technologies (ICTs) and especially, social networking sites have brought about these opportunities to the teachers to extend their instructions on virtual spaces to involve learners in academic activities outside the classroom. Among all other social networking sites, Facebook has the privilege of involving the highest number of users, who are predominantly teenagers. They use Facebook for various academic and non-academic purposes which can be used to develop genre-based writing skills (Sufian& Islam, 2015). Froma recent statistic of Facebook, we learn that daily 1.18 billion active users are using this site (Facebook Newsroom, 2017). This huge involvement can be exploited by educators to motivate EFL learners to enhance their writing skills in general, and academic writing skills specifically (Sufian& Islam, 2015; Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh& Abu-Melhim, 2014; Yunus&Salehi, 2012).

Genre-based writing is an integral part of English language teaching and learning which plays a vital role in the education of tertiary level/ higher education globally. Knowing the fact, different institutions have been running different courses to improve undergraduate students' skills in the English language. Among them, writing skills have a real impact in their academic write-ups. To improve their writing skills, different institutions facilitate students to learn different genres of writing like narrative, descriptive, argumentative, compare and contrast, process writing, etc. by offering different basic English courses. However, it is observed that due to lack of practice and one to one interaction with the faculty members, students face difficulties in improving their skills in different genres of writing. To support students in practising those genres of writing, the free writing space of Facebook is used in this study.

Objectives of the Study

The present study has been conducted with the following objectives in mind:

1. To extend the undergraduate EFL learners' academic writing skills by reaching them through virtual support when they are not in the class,
2. To examine how far supervised facebooking helps learners in developing their academic writing skills.

Research Questions

The study tried to answer the following questions:
1. To what extent facebooking helps develop academic writing skills of the undergraduate EFL learners of Bangladesh?
2. What are the challenges of blending Facebook with traditional academic activities?
3. How can those challenges be overcome?

Significance of the Study

The significance of the study lies in the fact that the major portion of the Facebook users includes the age group of 18-24 who are primarily undergraduate EFL learners in Bangladesh (Kabir, 2012 as cited in Sufian& Islam, 2015). This number is approximately 1.37 million (Business Habit, 2017). With such a huge number of active users, it is reasonable to look into the implementation potential of Facebook in developing academic writing skills with a well-organised action plan (Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh& Abu-Melhim, 2014). Successful implementation of Facebook in academic settings will lead to develop a learner-centred model in higher education (Veglis, 2014). Such learner-centred models bring about constructive changes in the mindset of the EFL learners and their relationships with the instructors (Cummings, 2004).

Literature Review

The existing body of literature suggests that Facebook has been used in different educational contexts with a view to enhancing opportunities of academic practices (Vargas &Tian, 2013; Mok, 2012; Roblyer et al., 2010).

In a study Bani-Hani, Al-Sobh and Abu-Melhim (2014) explored the perceptions and attitudes of Jordanian EFL students and found that Facebook groups are very interactive in developing writing; learners naturally build vocabulary as a result of frequent interaction with their partners in the group with correct spelling. They focused on developing vocabulary by some Jordanian EFL students at a university whose competence and context are not the same as those of Bangladeshi EFL learners at universities. Yunus & Salehi (2012) conducted a similar study among a group of undergraduate ESL students in a Malaysian university which showed similar results along with effectiveness of Facebook groups in brainstorming and discussion in prewriting stages. Susilo (2008) discussed the implications of integrating Facebook in facilitating distance education and drew on the collaborative learning environment of Facebook and involvement of more teenagers and young adults in such social networking sites. The design recommended in the study highlights technological, social and pedagogical factors in maximizing the possibilities of collaborative learning through facebooking which are inadequate in Bangladeshi setting. Mitchell (2012) studied cases on the motivation of seven ESOL learners in the United States to look into the reasons behind their joining Facebook groups. The interview data showed clearly that they communicated with their fellow learners in English with confidence, and learned about the target culture with much ease. She found that the participants basically joined Facebook to attain social competence and communication. However, the study did not clearly show how learning a culture could be beneficial for developing academic writing skills.

Educators often complain about the distracting nature of social networking sites in educational settings and lack of learning opportunities of authentic interactions (Lederer, 2012). Nevertheless, Facebook has provided teachers and learners exciting scopes of interaction (VanDoorn & Eklund, 2013). According to Mok, learning is a "social activity" (2012, p. 40). As students' engagement in Facebook is significant, it is quite pertinent to educate them, using the virtual platform, especially those learners who rely on socialising over the internet (Sufian& Islam, 2015; Mok 2012).

As the existing literature does not demonstrate any substantial study on the use of Facebook to develop genre-based writing of undergraduate EFL learners of Bangladesh, Sufian and Islam (2015) conducted a study to examine the feasibility

of using Facebook in developing academic writing skills of Bangladeshi EFL learners at the undergraduate level, and they found apositive attitude and motivation among the learners. The recommendation of the study suggested a further study to crosscheck the prospects of using Facebook as an educational tool in academic settings.

Methodology

In this study the researchers followed mixed method approach to collect the data. By using this research approach researchers can obtain both qualitative and quantitative data which canmake the research more concrete. In the firstplace, it canhelp researchers get into the depth of the research and focus ondifferent perspectives. It can also help overcome the deficiencies ofa single method (Dornyei, 2007). Additionally, it can effectively collect data from the target populations who have limited language proficiency.

A total of twenty-five participants from various disciplines, such as English, LLB, CSE and Business Studies at undergraduate level took part in the study. They all belonged to the same section; 25 is the typical number of each section of this course. The researchers choose this section since they planned to conduct a small-scaleresearch. It is worth noting that the course is compulsory for all learners of all academic disciplines and the title of the course is "Composition and Communication Skills" (ENG 102). The process started with a diagnostic test, based on a writing strand and taken in the first class of the semester. All the students were supplied with an open-endedtopic, 'Parents should not interfere in children's life decisions' and asked to write about their opinions and reaction or whatever they felt regarding that topic. They were given twenty minutes time to complete the task. To make them feel at home, they were told that it was a freehand writing task which would not be marked and as a result, it would not have any impact on their grades.

While checking students' write ups, it was found that many of them faced problems to write a topic sentence with a controlling idea. Also, most of them could not write a thesis statement in the introductory paragraph. In addition, problems like subject-verb agreement, spelling mistakes, organization of ideas etc were found in their writing. In this study, five students who were abler than their peers were selected to deal with the aforementioned aspects of writing in their composition. Only those five students were informed that they had been selected to give feedback to their peers on the facebook groups during the discussion. To make it more convenient for them, the participants (students) were divided into five sub-groups and each group was tagged with an abler student so that he/she knows who he/she is going to help in the group. Apart from these five abler students, two teachers were constantly on vigilance and supported the group activities to make sure that those activities went on uninterrupted. 122 | P a g e

As for the topic of discussion, it is worth mentioning that the researchers used the virtual platform of Facebook as an extended classroom. So, whatever discussion was carried out in the groups was an extension to what went on in the class. The groups were kept active for discussion for consecutive four weeks. During that period the participants took part in discussion on three essays, and finally, produced one on their own, and submitted to the teachers at the end of the fourth week.

For case of the group discussion and feedback, it was mandatory for all students to take part in all three essays, and discussion was built on gradually, block after block. For example, the teacher talked about framing a thesis statement and then gradually moved onto the body paragraphs of the essays. To guide participating students in the group, a rubric was posted so that they could refer to it every now and then before they coming up with any specific feedback for their peers in the group.

To collect data from participants, a questionnaire survey was done at the end of the fourth week so that participating students could give their opinions on their roles and learning experience in the facebook groups. The questionnaire included 9 closed and 1 open-ended questions. To present the quantitative data from the questionnaire in a convenient way, researchers put the first 9 questions into four categories; the results (qualitative data) of question number 10 were presented separately. Besides, two participating teachers were interviewed several times during and after the aforementioned period to get teachers' views and opinions on various issues regarding the total process of teaching-learning using Facebook.

Results and Findings

To illustrate the quantitative data collected from the students' questionnaire in a convenient way, the researchers put them under four different headings. An open-ended question was also given in the questionnaire. The results are included to present qualitative data. In addition, the results of teachers' interviews are included to exhibit teachers' perspectives regarding the study.

Questionnaire for Students

Data was collected from twenty-five students through a questionnaire (see Appendix). According to the questionnaire, the results of 'Students' opinion regarding usefulness of facebooking in developing genre-based writing skills', 'Students' view on giving and receiving peer feedback on the postings', 'Students' opinion regarding teacher's supervision' and 'Students' view about facebooking as supplementary activity' have been shown here through the following tables and charts.

Category 1: Students' Opinion Regarding Usefulness of Facebooking in Developing Genre-Based Writing Skills
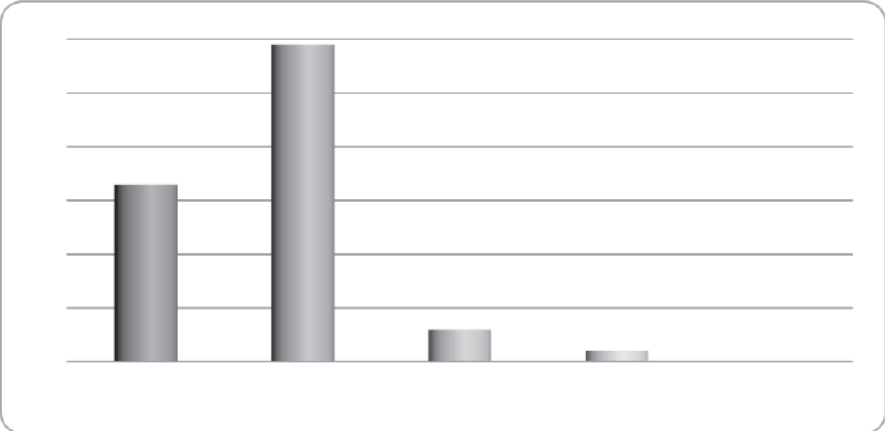
In this category, 53% students answered strongly agree, 41% answered agree, 6% answered neutral and nobody answered disagree and strongly disagree.
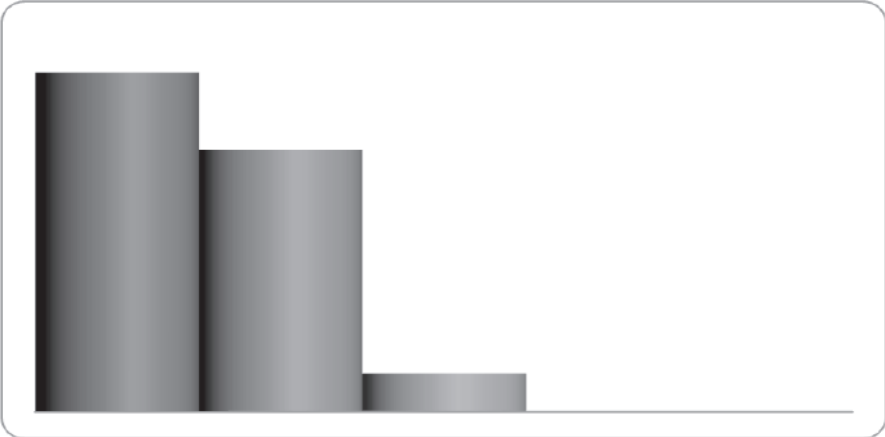
Figure 1: Students' Opinion Regarding Usefulness of Facebooking in Developing Genre Based Writing Skills

Category 2: Students' View on Giving and Receiving Peer Feedback on the Postings

In this category, 33% students answered strongly agree, 59% answered agree, 6% students answered neutral, 2% answered disagree and nobody answered strongly disagree.

Figure 2: Students' View on Giving and Receiving Peer Feedback on the Postings

Category 3: Students' Opinion Regarding Teacher's Supervision

In this category, 53% students answered strongly agree, 41% answered agree, 4% students answered neutral, 4% answered disagree and no one answered strongly disagree.
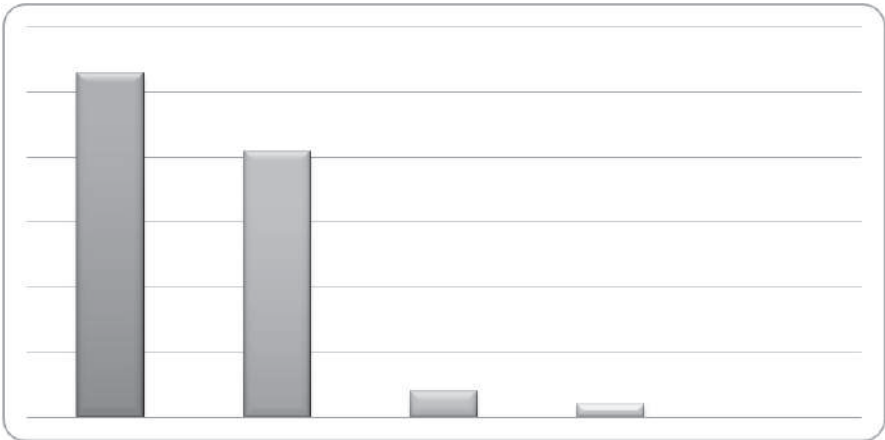

Figure 3: Students' opinion Regarding Teacher's Supervision

Category 4: Students' View about Facebooking as a Supplementary Activity

Under this category, 56% students answered strongly agree, 36% answered agree, 8% answered neutral, and nobody answered disagree and strongly disagree.
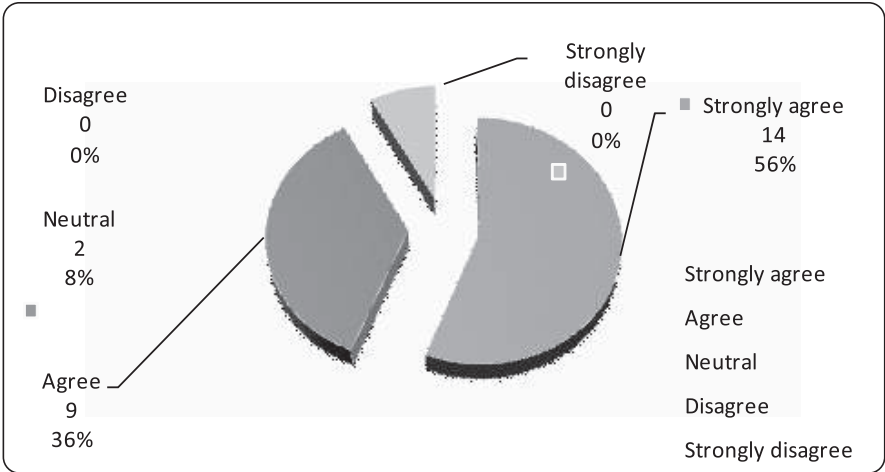

Figure 4: Students' View about Facebooking as a Supplementary Activity

Responses from Open-ended Question

In response to question number 10 in the questionnaire (see Appendix), the researchers have found a variety of data. Hence, a list of responses regarding the prospects of facebooking in developing academic writing skills is given below:

It helped me to express my ideas freely and easily.
It developed our skills of communication.
It helped us to improve our creative thinking and improve in using technology.
This activity helped us to improve our writing skills.
This (free writing space) was a very comfortable place to write in and it helped to improve my writing skills tremendously.
It was really a good idea to keepa Facebook group for study purpose where everybody could express their ideas in their way.
Writing in the free writing space helped meto communicate easily.
It gave us a platform to show our views or thinking through technology.
Different ideas could be expressed easily.
I could write freely and confidently.
I gathered some knowledge from the virtual groups regarding writing.
It broadened our outlook and vision regarding writing skills.
It helped me to improve my language skills and those who did not use this they would miss a proper way to improve their language skills.
It increased our knowledge and helped us to improve our freehand writing skills.
It helped the students to extend their creativity in academic writing.
It was the easiest way to learn and teach essay writing.
It improved our writing and thinking skills.
It was a very effective way to express our thoughts to others.
It would be better if we could continue the activity for a longer time.

Again, a list of responses regarding the challenges of facebooking in developing academic writing skills is given below:

Sometimes my thinking was not like others.
Sometimes it gave us negative impact.
Topics could be based on the current social or national issues.
Sometimes it was difficult to post the comment due to slow internet connections.
Internet is still not available for all.
It was challenging to give counter argument towards other friends' comments.

Free writing space was supposed to be user friendly.

Grammatical errors were not checked.

It needed Internet which was costly.

If it was not used properly, it would kill our valuable time.

Everyone did not have own computer or android phone to contribute by writing regularly.

Sometimes it was awkward to say something in front of others in the group.

Interviewing the Teachers

Teachers were interviewed to know about their experience and feedback regarding the use of Facebook in developing students' academic writing skills. A list of opinions from the teachers is given below.

It was a new technique to help students in developing their academic writing skills; especially by using the well-known SNS (Facebook).

Teacher could have a one to one interaction with a student outside the class at his/her convenience and that is why teacher should be tech savvy.

Teacher could easily track the students' progress.

Sometimes few students were found reluctant to upload their regular posting. Students enjoyed the activity since maximum students are already in the SNS.

Students liked it because they could post their writing any time they wanted to after thinking or discussing with others on the topic.

It is true that teachers had to remind them to post their write up before the dead line.

Discussion and Analysis

Questionnaire for Students

After analyzing the questionnaire, it became clear that the activities on Facebook helped EFL learners develop their academic writing skillsbetter. It is observed that in table 1, about 53% students answered the category 'Strongly agree',indicating that facebooking activities in developing academic writing skills helped them a lot; 41% students answered the category 'Agree' showing that students got some sort of help from the activity to develop their academic writing skills. Therefore, from Table 1, it can be summed up that facebooking activities helped target students enrich their knowledge of academic writing skills. It is noteworthy that not one of the target students answered the categories 'Disagree' or 'Strongly disagree', which means that it was really a useful activity for students in extending their academic writing skills.

According to the Table 2, it can be said that students did not face any problem ingiving and receiving feedback during the activity in the free writing space. Here 33% students answered 'Strongly agree' and 59% answered 'Agree'. This implies that most of the students enjoyed the activities to develop genre-based writing skills.

In Table 3, 53% students answered 'Strongly Agree' and 41% answered 'Agree'. This signifies that most of students did not have any problem with teacher's supervision of the activities on Facebook, rather, they felt secure.

From the Table 4, it can be said that most students liked the supplementary activities to develop genre-based writing skills. From the table, it was clear that about 56% students strongly agreed and 36% agreed that facebooking as a supplementary activity helped them learn different aspects of academic writing skills. Therefore, it can be said that students benefited from facebooking activities and were able toextend their knowledge in genre-based writing skills, which is precisely reflected in the responses of the students to the first 9 closed questions (see Appendix) of the questionnaire.

After analysing the responses of question number 10, an open-ended question (see Appendix), researchers summed up that facebooking really helped students enrich their knowledge regarding academic writing skills. In addition, a good number of students have recommended keeping the activities for a longer period of time. However, some of the students were concerned about the slow and costly internet connections in Bangladesh.

Interviewing Teachers

In the study, the researchers interviewed (semi structured face to face) two teachers who were directly involved with the groups and responsible in supervising the activity on the free writing space. The teachers were asked about the strengths and weaknesses of using free writing space to extend students' academic writing skills parallel to the regular classroom. The teachers opined that it is a new but useful technique tool engaging students in academic writing activities. According to them, it really gave teachers the opportunity to interact one to one which is not always possible in the class room. They further said that students liked the activity since they could post their write-up any time they wanted to after thinking and discussing the topic with others. According to them, this kind of activity supported students and boosted their confidence in academic writing. One of the teachers said that mentors (abler students) played a vital role in the whole activity. Therefore, selecting mentors and their contribution to the activities are important factors that can affect the process and also the success of

learning. However, one of the teachers said that some of the students posted very short write-ups at the beginning and only elaborated their write-ups after getting teachers instructions. He further added that few others faced problems for slow internet connections though this problem was also solved after a few days.

Limitations

The present study is not an exhaustive examination of the aforementioned research questions, rather it isa limited inquiry onthe scope of using Facebook in aacademic context to develop writing of some undergraduate Bangladeshi EFL learners at a university. This was a small-scale case study. Though the study sheds some positive light on the prospects of using Facebook in the development of writing at tertiary level, it has got some limitations in terms of number of participants, assessment and duration. Being conducted with only one section of students (25), the findings might not give a comprehensive view of theoverall scenario of all the tertiary educational institutions in Bangladesh. Besides, taken under assessment, the participation and level of motivation of the students could have been better. In addition, the duration of the experiment could have been extended to another semester.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The study has tried to bring forth the potentials of facebooking in developing tertiary level students' genre-based writing skills. Since the world is now advancing tremendously on board the ship of technology, researchers have tried to see how Facebook, a very famous tool of communication, can be used for teaching and learning purposes. It has been observed that nowadays Facebook is being used in Bangladesh massively, especially, by young adults as in other parts of the world. Hence, the researchers thought of using the tendency of undergraduate students to extend their genre-based writing skills. In this regard, Sufian& Islam (2015) found that about 80% students are ready to use Facebook to develop their genre-based writing skills in Bangladesh. This is actually proved in this study where the researchers found that most of the target students agreed that they benefited from the facebooking activities in developing their academic writing skills. The study also found out that blended learning really helped target learners to achieve academic success. The study further showed that the target students really enjoyed the activities since they were very much learner centred and the contribution to the activities was not restricted to any time and space. Therefore, it is appropriate to use the free writing space, Facebook, in the teaching and learning process of academic writing skills and tomake the learning more enjoyable for EFL learners.

To utilize the prospects of facebooking in developing the academic writing skills of EFL learners, researchers have followed the steps in the current research suggested in the study of Sufian and Islam (2015). The researchers there strongly recommend that if any ELT practitioner wants to use Facebook to extend the students' academic writing skills he/she should maintain the following steps to replicate the ideas.

    a) Make a facebook group
    b) Divide the facebook group into few more sub groups
    c) Select mentors to help each sub groups
    d) Groom the mentors
    e) Post a topic or image(s) (along with sample write-up) after each class on
       genre-based writing
    f) Supervise the process by monitoring students' posts and comments
    g) Allocate some marks
    h) Upload marking rubric in the facebook group

Since in this study researchers have received positive feedback from both students and teachers regarding the use of Facebook in developing academic writing skills, they suggest applying this technique on a large scale. To sum up, it can be said that Facebook has great appeal forstudents in extending the genre-based writing skills since it is a leaner friendly virtual platform of communication.

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Appendix
Questionnaire for Students

☐ Male / ☐ Female

1. Writing in Facebook (free writing space) helped me a lot to improve my genre (Ex. argumentative, etc.) based writing skills.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

2. I feel that it's an interesting way to express my ideas as well as to extend my writing skills.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

3. Comments and feedback on my postings in the free writing space Facebook helped me to mould my idea and writing.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

4. Writing on the specific topics was certainly helpful to keep me focused on regarding argumentative writing.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

5. Commenting freely on peers' writing gave me confidence and helped me to refute and explore different arguments.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

6. Feedback or comments from my peers filled the gaps in my understanding regarding argumentative writing.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

7. The free writing space (Facebook), under the supervision of your teacher, had a healthy non-threatening atmosphere to explore the mechanism of argumentation freely.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

8. Writing in Facebook can be used as a supplementary activity to boost up a student's genre based writing skills since such virtual space provides comfortable atmosphere for students to write comments and feedback spontaneously which is not always possible in a class.

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

9. Now, I can say that writing in the Facebook under the supervision of a teacher really helps a student to improve his /her genre based writing skills tremendously. (descriptive, narrative, argumentative, compare and contrast, cause and effect, etc.)

a) strongly agree b) agree c) neutral d) disagree e) strongly disagree

10. Please write one prospect and one challenge of using Facebook (free writing space) to extend the genre based writing skills.

Prospect: ……………………………………………………………………………

Challenge: …………………………………………………………………………..

Literature in the Pieces: Keeping Calm in a World of Quote Cards, Quick Facts and One-liners

Mehnaz Tabassum
East West University

Abstract

The world and the lived experiences today have at least two sides to them - a physical one and a virtual one. One might often find the virtual self, present and active in several social media platforms. It is there trying to find peace by pressing "likes" mostly to certain literary, philosophical and/or inspirational "posts" that qualify for one to relate to. The posts often contain beautiful, motivational messages to inspire and encourage the audience, to keep them under the impression that life in the virtual world is not as chaotic as the physical one. These soulful messages do not come in the form of a book or any other usual literary compilations. These appear as single, 2D pictures, often accompanied by a relevant photograph in the background with attractive fonts to grab the attention of the followers. These customized picture-posts with famous quotes, quick facts and witty one-liners keep circulating inside the wonder dome of the online world. These go from feeds to tweets, grams and pins! Often these are transformed into merchandises like posters, t-shirts, mugs and what not! The tiny pieces of literature, philosophy, life-lessons here and there are not always derived from "famous" sources, like Emerson or Maya Angelou. These can also include thoughts of anonymous, budding writers, who are "quoted" without being "credited" for that. They might even have fallen victims to the gaps in copyright laws along with the infectious practice of over-sharing, which the online world calls "viral posts".While living amid the emerging concepts of new media and digital humanities, today's bibliophile mind is trying to find its Zen; its peace in the pint-sized doses of literary delicacies, while chanting inaudibly, "This is enough!" "This is good!" "Who needs an entire book?" The concern is how, when and why this became enough? A practice has been developed to be pleased with only the tasting of great literary pieces, without an appetite for the entire masterpiece. Even when those are just one touch away, the books remain unattended. So it probably is time to explore the psyche, politics, popular myths and means behind it all.

Reading "Keep Calm and Carry On"

The British government circulated a series of "Keep Calm and Carry On" posters in 1939 as the fear and panic surrounding the WWII broke out among the people. The posters literally suggested the people to keep it together in the midst of tough times. The bright red background had visible and hard to ignore white font, to remind the terrified public of the monarchy and its perseverance. The posters had other counterparts, with more informative and/or instructive messages. One was set in a bottle green background, titled "Freedom Is in Peril /Defend It With All Your Might" and the other in navy blue, titled, "Your Courage, Your Cheerfulness, Your Resolution Will Bring Us Victory." Though all three had very encouraging and accurate messages for the mass, the first one survived time, and received a whole new dimension of meaning with the inception of social

media networking. The posters inherently represent a sense of panic and chaos, in a situation when it might be quite difficult to stay put on one's own. Hence the involvement of Monarchy itself (note the Tudor Crown's image in the posters) takes place, to calm the panicked people.

From tarot reading to playing card idioms, the culture of reading and decoding from illustrated cards has been in practice for centuries. The thorough use of tarot dates back to the mid-15th century. Evidence of games that involve playing and reading from a deck of cards in the 14th century has also been found. Most of us know tarot cards as a way of guessing the past and future of a person. Tarotology is the practice of a pseudoscientific approach where a reader asks someone to pick a card and then tries to tell the person about his life or future, as a profession or expertise. The practitioners claim that the chosen cards possess spiritual guidance. The person who picks it does not just do it randomly. It is actually his/her unconscious or subconscious choice. That is why the picked card might/must have things to fortell the future of the person who picked it out. In most cases, the tarot readers create an ambiance with their mystic and unconventional behavior to convince visitors of their spiritual connections. They are just like the gypsies, who read or see visions through a magic crystal ball andare proficient in hypnotic skills to persuade their clients or visitors in believing whatever they say. It is a common belief that fortune tellers usually have very sharp observation skills. With the help of such skills they manage to make many common guesses, using certain vocabulary, terms and patterns of speech, which most people can relate to. Moreover, people who decide to visit fortune tellers are often in a mental state to agree to what the teller says, and that also helps the tellers in their guesses. This practice of playing with the psyche of the people has long been there. In fact, in many carnivals, some groups use narcotizing elements, such as smoke or a complimentary holy drink, to create both a mysterious appeal and a state of delusion to convince and manipulate clients. There are numerous instances where a client had been robbed while s/he was under the effects of the drug inducement.

Interestingly, both the tarot cards and motivational posters used by the British monarchy served a similar purpose-a rendition of hope even in a difficult time. While the tarot cards were designed and presented with intricate and fantastical images, and often included European mythological creatures that create an aura of suspense and magic, the posters are rather straightforward, guiding or ordering people to do what those say or illustrate. Both kinds have their own discourses, which involve basic and even extraordinary human insecurities, to play with their vulnerable state, and establish control over them. Let us put a pause to this discussion here, for now, to introduce other basic ideas.

Literature and the Social Media

While George Eliot in 1871, in *Letter to Alex Main,* was not too impressed with the excessive production of literature, the world we live in has already managed to do that task. We have been witnessing times where literary works are everywhere; sometimes even for commercial purposes too. Up to a point, andbefore the invention of the internet and mass accessibility to it, literature had been one of the major recreational sources for many. The internet alone did not actually ruin people's literary desires; that was a mixed effect of social media, smart devices and endless contents available online for theheart's content. A quote card is usually a digital picture with a natural image as background, on which a motivational "quote" from either credited famous sources like authors, leaders, actors and other past and present influential public figures or an anonymous source is imprinted. Such quote cards are shared as "posts" and are then circulated around the web, often as viral posts. A quick-fact is a similar content, but these usually have neutral and/or solid color or patterned backgrounds, with a fact written on them, instead of a quotation. Often the quick fact cards lack mention of a valid source of the information shared. For example, a Facebook page might share a quick fact that says, *"Most consumed items during finals week- Coffee, Ramen, Adderall",* without a mention of the source of this claim/study, although they preach it as a "fact".

At this point, it would also be better to take a look at the question that many have in their minds, "Why do we need literature?" Well, it was never a simple question to answer, if not the trickiest one! There have been debates. Some say it is a criticism of life and some argue that it is rather the documentation of lived experiences. Whatever purpose it may serve, it indeed is there for us, contributed to thousands of people, since the beginning of time, or at least conscience. It teaches us, heals us, directs us, angers us, pleases us, disgusts us or even derails us - we are sure to get something out of the time and attraction we invest in any piece of literature we go through, depending on our own inclinations.

So, have we been "consuming" literature?

It is indeed a time when everyone wants everything, all at once, in bite sizes, thanks to the internet and smart screens. Following the practice of being busy or occupied all the time, literature has also become "contents" of "pages" that are not made of paper anymore! With the need for continuous (not really spontaneous) overflow of "content", which is mostly entertaining, everything is shorter. One can just stop by for a second in between hurried browsing throughout feeds and pages, restlessly searching for something new, fresh, unique, or to the least, entertaining to stick to. The occupied mind anywhere meansthe internet arena looks for an excuse to be there, to be plugged in; it asks administrators and moderators of sites they frequently visit to let them stay there and away from the physical, chaotic world. Indeed, calling the physical world the "real" one might not be an appropriate move anymore. The chaos of mind and /or world can be or assumed to be tamed with the simulation of "content" today, where literature dwells in pieces.

So, is this the post-literature era? Or a post-book one? Books made of pages are already facing multiple replacements, particularly the "smart" ones, where swiping takes one to a new page. Or is it a take-out version of literature where one can read at one's cost and convenience on the go? Digital quote cards, pictures, one-liners and quick facts are the most shared type of social media "posts", which people can easily relate to. It is more like the quick sip of a favourite drink, where we are in the notion that too much of it can leave us drunk. We are, in fact, trying to project the idea that we do not have the time for such things! In a way, this is feeding on the idea of letting people think and conform to the "too busy to do anything (serious/ productive/ proactive)" practice. First, the book is converted to one sleek device, somethingto hold and look at, and then one hasthe satisfaction of reading a striking line or quote, or even identifying one as something "quote worthy."

There is often little or no way to verify if the quotes are actually from the sources as mentioned. Also, there are instances where the pictures that this paper is trying to label "quote cards" circulate around popular social media pages, with thousands of "likes" and hundreds of "shares", although theyoftenhave no credit given to the person or source it came from. There is obviously a mind behind every single sentence that has ever been formed; then why not just give proper credit to the creativity of the person who developed such a "quote-worthy" item, a life-lesson perhaps? For example, on February 20, 2016, a popular Facebook page called "The Idealist" posted a black and white image of a man standing on the deck, facing a lake, with the quote, *"Choose your relationships wisely. Being alone will never cause as much loneliness as being in a wrong relationship".* In 4 hours, this single quote-card found 5653 'likeminded" people who somehow

experienced it, or agreed with it, and another, or among them, 1280 people decided to "share" it as a token of agreement and gesture of letting and inviting other "likeminded" people to know about it, and agree (or disagree) with it. If the picture is read, the inclusion of a serene setting should obviously be noticed. A black and white setting and a lonely man suggests how the quote is directed to men, approximately within their 30's, fit, rich and successful enough to travel to a picturesque, serene lakeside all alone, who could get the facility of "choosing" their relationships "wisely". The setting of the picture used there (which also lacks the credit due to its original photographer, say the least), is to be taken as a proof to establish the point being made that being alone can let one enjoy the life in a larger scale.

Such "motivational" or "realistic" quotations find the demographic that would agree with the idea and spread it afterwards. The option to share posts made by such pages might seem just an act of spreading some motivational messages for general users, but for the pages, such quote-cards are pure sources of promotional activities. This way, the name of the pages are spread everywhere without any massive efforts. Often, these seemingly "non-profit" or "just for entertainment" pages and websites are fronts for businesses. Even if they are not, they are funded and sponsored by corporate giants to establish the names of their brands in a positive and harmless light. In the example for quick facts above, the mention of "Adderall" might seem innocent and funny, but it can also be a subtle promotional call by the manufacturing entities for a recreational drug that people might have forgotten about or had no idea about, to lure them to it. Also, the post might also give the people who actually use Adderall a confidence boost since it had been shared and liked in social media, which could lead them to continue this harmful practice.

Now, let's consider the example of the quote card again, with a lonely man in it, to complement the message. Among the comments made to that post, there were mostly white men, with Christian names, who seemed to be agreeing with it. Interestingly, the quote in the picture did not just talk about the relationship of men. However, the accompanying picture was manipulative enough to target a certain demographic, white men in this case, who could relate to it, and thus who responded. There were comments of men who look like and have Asian names, but they did not seem very approving of the quote. Also, they were very few in number. Can we call it a "representation" then? If so, then the question will arise- of who, what or how? According to Stuart Hall, "representation"is.

> … a complex business and, especially when dealing with 'difference,' it engages feelings, attitudes and emotions, and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewer, at adeeper level than we can explain in a simple, common sense way. (Hall 226)

This can be the fear and anxiety of people who are abruptly put out of the context in this picture-quote, and the ones of its kind. The picture seems to be set in a location in the Global North (probably because the Global South is not very picturesque?) The setting is serene, well-organized, empty, and not as over-populated and messy as the ones in the southern regions of the world. The comments of the users could also attract the target audience. While the South Asians were being superficial about the issue, the Caucasian male was straightforward about the experience, as he has already faced that. Again, the representative of the North "gets it", as what is "real" for him, as he can relate to the situation better than the other people who had commented.

At this point, could we call the entire post simply copying and/or copied since the author, designer and overall "creator" of the post remains unknown? The function of these mini-doses of literary delicacies deserve an elaborate, extensive discussion of its own.

Credit vs. Curation/Creation

Redbook Magazine, an US based tabloid that focuses on women's choices, occasionally shares quote cards with quotes by famous people, with mostly floral or feminine background, and a bright texture. One of those visually pleasant and intentionally positive, neutral (or natural) pictures once included the followingquote from T.S. Eliot, *"Only those who can risk going too far can possibly find out just how far one can go".* The excerpt itself is a well-known one. The purpose it serves to an online page such as Redbook Magazine can be debatable. From my perspective, for an online magazine like Redbook.com, such a picture is an attempt to display how well-versed they are, no matter how insincere their content is. Such pages are fuelled by the power of copying. Everything they share on social media or put on their official website is borrowed/copied mostly without credit from other sources. The sources range from other websites, people, news portals and even poets like T.S. Eliot! Such posts, with a "touch" of literature, work as their detox drink, which indicates to the followers how high their taste is and how cultured they are. The followers, on the other hand, get a daily dose of literature, and convince themselves with that doseto be enough, as they are too busy for the entire thing! Interestingly, the odds are that both the uploader and the followers are not sure if it is a part of a poem or a prose by T.S. Eliot. Even worse, they cannot attest if it hadbeen truly written by T.S.

Eliot or not! When someone uses Google for searching "inspiring quotes", many quotes with reference to famous people appear as a result. Chances are that the unknown, uncredited uploader or creator of this "content" did the same, and joined these together to form a nice post to convince the page's audience.

The entirety of a piece of literature thus gets replaced by trimmed and tossed pieces. The verses become one-liners to fit perfectly to attention grabbers, as "contents". If we include the inspiring things developed by the creative minds who are anonymously contributing, the number of such work can easily have a healthy volume. So, can it be called a genre then? A new genre inspired by over-occupied, busy people who have only too little time for an entire literary work? In fact, there is a new popular way of expressing minuscule stories through one-liners (which are technically formed with two or three lines, but are still called "one-liners"). The only difference that such stories, popularly known as "Tiny Tales", come with is that these are submitted by users in the social media, and the pages in concern also provide them with credits. One of the most popular ones among such pages would be the India-based Facebook page "Terribly Tiny Tales". In one of their "tiny tales", a user named JenaiDalal from Mumbai, shared the following story, *"'Using a metaphor, describe life in a sentence.' 'Life is a sentence.'"*

There is another vastly popular Berlin-based Facebook page, that moves back and forth between credited and non-credited works. The page is called "berlin-artparasites". The name itself is significant. The page declares that the group members are surviving as "artparasites". The "About" section of the page says, "berlin-artparasites shares compelling artwork that alters the way we live, love, work, play, think and feel." The profile picture of the page is an illustrated mosquito; symbol of somethingthat sucks blood or life juice from other living beings, mainly for reproduction. In a way the overly popular page which is often tagged as the hub of post-modern, contemporary ideology, is working as a maternal figure to reproduce analready available artwork. The newborn piece is often an intense and relatable "content" that reaches the cores of social media followers with a liking for arts. The viewers and their responses as comments to the posts display how they might be dealing with the sense of chaos and panic inside. They still somehow keep calm and composed on the outside and in their virtual presence. The underlying psychological attachments to such posts with "depth" could be taken as an example of the insecurity the digital era has initiated. Their profile picture emphasizes a new word in the discussion, "curation". Today, art is being "curated" more than being "created". The nature of the times we live in comes forward in the use of this single word. Everything is on display now. The world is more like one giant museum where a representative of something is

displayed to give others the "idea" or sneak peek of its origin or type, rather than including the entire lot! The quote-cards, quick-facts and one-liners thus become places where art is created by one or a number of people, mostly anonymous, to be openly displayed for the entire world's pair of eyes to witness, observe, critique and move on. The stimulation of this consumption might last for a few minutes, a day, or even longer. However, the impact does not last for a longer time, or is not allowed to, since a new one, a fresh item comes in less than an hour to meet our eyes, to reach our souls, and to touch our brains, to keep escaping the physical reality going on for longer hours.

Another point to be noted here could be the underlying message of being an elite when it comes to literary taste, that is preached by the page, as it only shares quotes, excerpts and pictures with a depth and critical approach, which might not be quite like the normal or popular ones. The posts carry some weight and sophistication, like high culture, and one has to have a certain background or intellectual practices, to understand and enjoy their posts. This leads us back to Matthew Arnold, who in his Culture and Anarchy (1869) hadsaid,

> … if culture, which simply means trying to perfect oneself, and one's mind as part of oneself, brings us light, and if light shows us that there is nothing so very blessed in merely doing as one likes, that the worship of the mere freedom to do as one likes is worship of machinery, that the really blessed thing is to like what right reason ordains, and to follow her authority, then we have got a practical benefit out of culture. We have got a much wanted principle, a principle of authority, to counteract the tendency to anarchy which seems to be threatening us. (Arnold 15-16)

The world today is indeed practising perfection, but in the form of pretents, only; thanks to social media!

The Intellectual (?) Intertexuality

On February 16, 2016, the Facebook page of the same "berlin-artparasites", posted a quote by Rabindranath Tagore, which was, *"The water in a vessel is sparkling. The water in the sea is dark. The small truth has words which are clear. The great truth has great silence",* with an abstract image of glass fullof water waves. The post had comparatively lesser "likes", as the page mostly focuses on users from the Western world (it itself is a Berlin-based entity). Is this only because Tagore is not a well-known name in the West; or is it because it sounded Indian, and thus evoked theonce-colonized people? Interestingly, the commentsposted were mostly from Indians, and Bengalis, thanking the page for sharing a quote from their famous poet, in an international page. Does (not) this phenomenon suggest something?

When pieces of literature, like this, are being consumed by a greater audience; who find it convenient, it can provide us with a feel of being contemporary romantics. Or should this phenomenonbe called Pseudo-Romanticism, since it is mostly a simulated one? The effect of one post fades or even ends with the insertion of the next. Is it racial, to some extent? Does the audience of such "content" vary according to their demography, racial profile, gender and financial stability? Or is this the only platform that mitigates all the above-mentioned differences? A lot of questions like these can preoccupy a mind when it tries to dig deep and read between the lines of a practice that has become "normal" now. Or, is it an attempt to make us believe that it is normal not to read an entire book or care for how the entire story provides an original context for the line or quote we are liking, sharing, and repeating?

The practice of devouring art in such a manner, developed by the anonymous/ untraceable "consumers" themselves, who in Michel de Certeau's words are "users", eventually turn their "consumptions" to become their "productions". Is it also hegemony in the works? The internet itself can be taken as a hegemonic entity. It power-plays, manipulates and confides its "users" in a never-ending loop from where they can never actually escape. The interesting thing is, the internet, or social media itself, provides userswith the feel as if it is "the escape" chaotic minds are searching for. The tapestry of "content" that stimulates emotions in small doses is no better than drugs which make people addicts, and imprison them. The small doses soon become the only intake; the few minutes of pleasure online become hours, and soon become the only thing to do in a world that is apparently "busy". Curation becomes art, theauthor becomes anonymous, and free-thinking gets locked in a vivid, expensive box of "smartness".

When talking about smartness, the mention of the quick-facts that circle around internet with information that have arguably zero use becomes a necessity. For example, in a picture, shared by a quick fact based group 8Fact's Facebook page, a "fact" with pictures of Oreos, said, "Oreos have a 71 percent to 29 percent cookie-to-cream ratio". This quick fact had thousands of likes and shares within a few hours. It was almost a viral post. However, is that essential information to begin with? It is an example of how information is used to entertain more, than educate. Also, werethere any sources to verify if the information is correct or not? Or was there anyone who could claim that this information helped them in any way to make their lives better? It is a plain attempt of manipulating the mind, with a presentation that looks "authentic" and "trademarked"; andthus testified. It might actually be a fact, but how does it help? No, no body said that everything we learn has to be of discernible worth. The problem begins when everything we "consume", becomes something like this. It is something good to see, share and like. The post is designed to grab attention, to make people believe in its

authenticity and to allure them to re-circulate it, to preach it. The curation is done masterfully. Content curation in internet means sorting out the information and content already available in the internet, and then reproducing them to create more attractive and organized contents. The post from 8Fact about Oreo cookies' cookie-to-cream ratio appeals to the viewers for the presence of the cookie itself, a globally recognized brand of delicacy. Interestingly, the very look of the cookies - black and chocolaty from the outside, and white and creamy from the inside- could be read as a perfect racial combo. Oreo or Nutella are taken as inoffensive delicacies. Interestingly, these are black and brown from the outside; Oreo comes with a white center and Nutella, in a white labeled glass jar. Like the case of "Adderall" this also lures the viewers to the consumption of delicacies like Oreo and Nutella. This strategiesdoes two things, subtly-promotes the already famous brands (which are often criticized for their excessive use of sugar and preservatives, thus creating health cautions for young children), and reinforces the fact that the cultural practices of breakfast and snacks done by the people in the developed world are still the best. The likes and shares also preach the latter in the parts of the world where such brands might not be that popular, creating a craving and thus market for them.

Hegemony?

The discussion is not drifting away from its central argument, not really. In fact, our necessity and consumption of literature in tiny bits is more like serving old wine in a new bottle, or for this instance, in short glasses. We are still in the world, acting like Oreos and Nutellas. In this world of globalization and shared cultures, the consumers often adopt foreign cultures as their own. As far as the consumption of Nutella and Oreo is concerned, people from countries like Bangladesh or other developing ones would prefer to do so out of curiosity first, and then out ofcraving. The idea that people in developed or rich countries and cultures consume these, even though these look darker in appearance, similar to the skin colours of people of African and Indian origins, makes people from the rest of the world interested in it. The message is often that the skin colour does not matter, when the product or person is backed up or linked to a financially developed and dominant country, just like Oreo and Nutella. One might wonder, how do such serious racial accusations come up in a discussion that started with a keep calm poster and tarot card readings? Well, is not it all under the same roof? What the tarot card readers did is similar to what the quote cards, quick facts and one-liners are doing through social media and/or the internet. The practice is somewhat the same - making educated guesses, feeding on the vulnerabilities and insecurities of people, and earning money by reproducing things that they did not create to generate fame and fortune. Have we really moved on from this position? Can we? Well, these are questions that can never have one accurate answer.

According to Gramsci's essay included in John Storey's *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture,* "cultural hegemony" is,

> the supremacy of a social group manifests itself in two ways, as 'domination' and as and moral leadership … the 'normal' exercise of hegemony on the now classical terrain of the parliamentary regime is characterized by the combination of force and consent, which balance each other reciprocally, without force predominating excessively over consent. (Gramsci 215)

The fact that these pages are mostly promoting ideas as if they are "normal" and "accepted" is dividing users. People are unknowingly consenting to and practising class distinctions even in their innocent activities in the social media. The quotes, facts and one-line stories, mostly in English, project the fact that the Western world is still in the lead, and what they do or enjoy is normal. White users and their comments testify tothe fact. The othering process keeps continuing, under plain sight.

So, how does one keep calm in a world which is more chaotic than it ever was? The answer is simple: by practising art. It is something that has been done by people since the beginning of the blossoming of minds. We search for meanings; we look for answers; we raise questions. According to Mikhail Bakhtin: Meaning is established through dialogue-it is fundamentally "dialogic":

> The word in language is half someone else's. It becomes 'one's own' only when … the speaker appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic expressive intention. Prior to this … the word does not exist in a neutral or impersonal language … rather it exists in other people's mouths, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own. (Bakhtin 294)

Therefore, everything we say and mean is altered by communication with others. The "Other" cannot be overlooked to form any meaning.

This leads us to the crucial question, is it the end of literature as we knew it? Is it time to embrace the changes, to introduce a new way of creating literature, which can simply be curating it? Is the artist dead? Is the artist just a collaborator? Will literature, the beautiful form of art that circulates around life, become a painted veil of consumerism only; circling around smart screens, entertaining and manipulating people and keeping them away from the physical world? I do not have the answers to all these questions, which actually came from my own conscience. My own hypothesis is not able to answer the future, or even the present of literature. We have apparently reached a time where Roland Barthes' argument in "The Death of the Author" of an author being a mere "scriptor" reaches a new dimension. Now not only does the writing constitute "multi-dimensional space" depending on the place it has been used, the anonymity of the source omits the authority of the author at its best. The content matters, andnot the creator. My question here would be, "Was it really different from what it is now, ever?" No, the question does not blatantly support the practice of enjoying the pieces of words as literature like the way we are doing now. There have always been new ways of reaching the intellectual side of us human beings. That is how civilization has developed. The concern is, if people, for the sake of being too busy with whatever they are doing right now, stop indulging into the small scale of literature which literally floats and vanishes like a minuscule pollen that impregnates a flower and dies as it converts? Will our world still have the power of knowledge that it takes pride in? Or, is it going to be the beginning of a new garden? A garden that might have rather deeper, darker secrets in it than it appears to incorporate now?

The questions are obscure, and so can be the answers. It might already be the starting of a post-book era. The availability of e-books and the production of one can be the basis ofanother entire study. For now, for this paper, the concern is to where this practice of mass yet minuscule consumption of literature is taking us. Is it destroying the ability of thinking in a broader manner for an entire generation? The short-lived satisfaction and escape from the world where the problems are piling up every minute, in a way that can rarely have a solution, is enough or not-- might be a course of concern. Or, isthe over-creation or curation of literature, where every user is also a producer, destroying the importance, or gravity itself? Or was this the "plan"; to make everyone think that they are "superior", by providing them with all the "facilities" and "features" to make them feel included, and to feel advanced? The tools of creating, curating and/or consuming such literary delicacies are all the same for people everywhere; an illuminating screen. Whether it is in Bangladesh, in Belarus, in Baghdad or in Birmingham, the very tools remain same. The eyes-the same? The human beings-the same? Their lives-the same? Their world-the same? They might think that all these are same since

they are "liking" the same kind of "posts", with the same kind of "contents", that they can relate to, altogether. The pain, the pleasure, the power is the same for all-they might think. After all, it is part of literature, and literature has the unique ability to bring everyone together. Or is it a trick that when everyone is convinced that they are "same", they are not concerned, bothered, vocal, aware or active about how they are not?

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Deconstruction of Identities and Cultures in the Age of Networked Society

M. Shakhaowat Hossain
North South University

Abstract

Both human identities and cultures seem to be taken for granted by human beings themselves, as if both are static and natural. Earlier, before the introduction of the networked society, an individual had two lives: (i) life on earth and (ii) life after death. Similarly, an individual's belief in culture was linear and homogenous, surrounded around the singleness of his/her own culture. But there seems to be a paradigm shift as a result of the introduction of technologies and new media. Human beings now have at least two (or even more) lives/identities on earth itself: (i) first life, which is life on earth and (ii) second life, which is life in the internet. For the latter, they create identities on social networking sites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter etc. They treat these new identities as if they are equally real. Thus, life after death has become the third life. In other words, their number of life increases. Culture (or the idea in it), on the other hand, also becomes more than one.As a result of sharing information about the cultural events through the new technologies, more people - known and unknown - participate in them. When more people participate in the events, then belief in one single culture lessens. Thus, this paradigm shift for both identities and cultures seems to lead to a pluralistic and relative society although there are also attempts that obstacle this shift. In other words, this paper explores the beliefs in linearidentities and cultures, the reasons for such beliefs, the re/deconstruction of new and several identities, the obstacles, and the aftermath of such re/deconstruction.

Introduction

Identities and cultures are the essences of human beings. Although human beings can live without beliefs in identities and cultures, the essences assist in defining who they are. According to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, identity means, "who a person is, or the qualities of a person or group that make them different from others" ("Identity"), and culture means, "the way of life, especially the general customs and beliefs, of a particular group of people at a particular time" ("Culture"). Both human identities and cultures seem to be taken for granted by human beings themselves, as if both are static and natural. Before the emergenceof the internet, an individual seemedto have two lives: life on earth and life after death. Similarly, an individual's belief in culture before the internet was mostly objective, as if the individual's culture is the only culture, or, at least, the superior one, and also the individual's belief centred around the singleness of his/her culture. But there seems to be a paradigm shift as a result of the introduction of technologies and new media, which had changed human perceptions regarding their beliefs in identity and culture. Human beings now have at least two (or even more) lives/identities on earth itself: life on earth is the first life, and life in the internet seems to be the second life. Consequently, life after death has become the third life. In other words, before the life after death,

there is now at least one more life for any individual. Along with these new lives, culture (or the idea in it) is also affected, and it remains no more "intact".Theborders of culture are broken and expanded. Culture appears not to remain as a unique entity of a particular group, not anymore, although there are attempts to preserve the "purity" of culture. This paradigm shift for both identities and cultures seems to be a consequence of the deconstruction of selves.

Through deconstruction human beings break free from traditional notions of identity and cultures, which are mostly linear, limited, andhomogeneous. This process of breaking free is not reconstruction. Reconstructionmaymean "repairing" something foronly one second and last time, and that "repair" is the "final-thesis". Reconstruction may also mean "repairing" an identitywhich is about to "ruin"; thus, reconstruction is necessary! In other words, reconstruction is equally straight, restricted, and not diverse. Reconstruction may seem revolutionary at the time of "fixing" something one last time, but that reconstructed identity becomes static at one point, too, as many human beings become habituated to that reconstructed identity, as if there is nothing more to be done. Why not? It is because one's identity has already been reconstructed. In other words, the reconstructed identity may also remain static. Deconstruction, on the other hand, is a ripple in water. It means endless possibilities. It also means, even after going through innumerable phases of thesis-antithesis-synthesis, there is no final thesis. In other words, however homogeneous, linear, and objective people's beliefs regarding identities and cultures are, they are subject to a process of continuous deconstruction in the age of networked society.

Deconstruction of the Self and Culture through Social Networking Sites

The internet is a medium of communication. Through it human beings convey messages not only to people who are close to them, but also to people who live far away, people whom they would probably never meet. Denee noted that "People around the world can communicate nearly at the speed of light. Chat rooms are 'buzzing' with people talking to each other from every corner of the earth. News from one hemisphere is instantly read by people in the other. Street video cameras in the cities of Japan can be viewed live by someone in Canada, and vice versa" (TheReal Truth).The internet has opened up this unprecedented means of communicating with more and more people.

In other words, more communication means more opportunities to come closer to each other and as a result of this communication there is an interaction among different cultures as well. The blending of people and cultures in many cases takes place first on the internet. Afterwards, people and cultures may come to the streets for an actual realization; in many cases, they may not come together at all, yet, the internet opens up the space for meeting, and also it creates curiosity for others, known or unknown. Both human beings and their cultures become interested in knowing each other. As a consequence, none of them remainsor can remain the same; they are always in the process of becoming. None is or will be ever complete. Human beings now deconstruct their other selves through the internet, and their cultures also receive new dimensions in their definitions, for both self-identities and cultures are a continuous process, neither complete nor will be so.

First of all, the decreated virtual identities of the selves in the social networking sites, specially, Facebook, seemto be more real than the actual persons in reality.Although the source of human existence is reality itself, that reality seems less real than the virtual reality. Human beings themselves create and decreate that virtual reality.The individuals do not have a hand in creating themselves. Parents, for example, give birth to a baby; she then grows up at the hands of parents, relatives, and society; gradually, she discovers herself with a personality, individuality, and attitude towards life. But that individual does not have any role in creating herself since some other people create her. In contrast, the identityof a person in Facebook of the self is created, decreated, and maintained by the individual himself. He consciously knows the fact that he is creating or decreating it. In other words, this creation of the self is more exciting than being created at the hands of some unknown people. This decreated identity thus becomes enchanting and loveable. It also requires fancy and punctual maintenance.

The internet is a place of wish fulfillment. Anything what she is not and cannot do in reality is made possible here. In reality, the person is probably not that "fancy", but using the internet he can fulfil his desires. In order to put up the virtual self in the internet, they use make-up, trendy hairstyles, ornaments, piercings, tattoos etc., and they alsophotoshopthemselves. All these together constitute a matter of representing the self to others. Without all these, one appears "unexciting" and "ugly". There can be vast differences between the real person and the made up person. The differences, for example, can clearly be seen between the real and made up Shahrukh Khan.

Fig. 1. Khan, AmusingFun

Fig. 2. Khan, Facebook[19]

[19] The image may not remin in the online location because of rotation or change in the profile.

Not only for Khan, but also for others, too, life on the internet opens up doors to deconstruct the selves, for example, AnantaJalil, a hero in Bangladeshi films.

Fig. 3. Ananta, Facebook[20]

In other words, life on the internet is fancier than life in reality. Thus, one tries to present oneself in a fancy way on the internet, and this fancy presentation can bring more 'likes' for the person, for example, in Facebook.

The deconstructed identities of the internet can also be found in the novels. There is a restlessness for uploading wish-fulfilling pictures on the internet. Maya, the protagonist of *Dari Koma Abong Ekti Pakhi,* meets many of her childhood friends at the wedding of a friend's daughter. She wants to sit and chat with all the old friends, but no one has time, as all are busy taking pictures, which must be immediately uploaded on the social networking site. Maya calls her friend, Swarna, and says, let's sit and call all our friends (Kaisar 12). But Swarna replies that all are busy with mobile phones, including herself. Maya then explores a terrible situation in the dinner table. All the childhood friendsusually sit there together.Butthese days all of them are busy with their own lives; they hardly meet each other. On the occasion of the wedding of the friend's daughter, they have got a rare opportunity to see each other. But all are busy with their mobile phones. Seeing her old friends, Maya bursts out thus.

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[20] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

'Hi, Seema, Leera! How are you? Haven't met you for ages. Oh, I heard you all went to a trip to Kolkata, but no one informed me!'

'No?! But I notified it in Facebook. You didn't reply.'

'What do you mean by notifying in Facebook!'

'Where's the time to call the individuals personally?! From wedding to divorce, from birthday to death anniversary, all the updates are in Facebook!'

'Ah! I didn't notice that!'

'I didn't notice that you didn't notice the notification. I thought, those who are interested, they are replying, and those who aren't replying, they aren't going!'

(Kaisar 12)

In other words, social networking sites become the spokespersons for the selves. The news regarding events is made public through Facebook. As the discussion continues among Seema, Leera, and Maya, from the corner, another friend, Piya, says:

'Hey, Maya, stop your nonsense. We are extremely busy checking the pictures.'

'But finish your dinner first.'

'The dinner is not at all important. The ugly and vague pictures must be deleted first, and then the good looking ones should be uploaded in Facebook.'

'You can upload them after finishing your dinner.'

'Are you crazy?! The status and pictures must be uploaded right from here and instantly.'

(Kaisar 12-14)

In other words, the pictures cannot be uploaded at a later time. They must be uploaded immediately or at the time as events take place in reality. The real events and virtual pictures thus co-exist at the same time.

Also, the appearances of the people are hyperreal, "exaggerated in comparison to reality" ("Hyperreal," def. 1). Most importantly, there is anextreme restlessness for uploading the pictures immediately. In his essay," The Precession of Simulacra", "Baudrillard argues for the idea that people no longer distinguish between reality and a constructed representation of reality or a simulacrum" (Zaykova). While explaining Baudrillard, Simon notes that "The all-pervasive power of the simulacra entangles us in a constantly re-transfigured hyper-reality, where the signs are more real than reality itself" (*Marxist Theory*). At the time of uploading pictures, Piya does not have time to lose her concentration on any other issue, for her signs in the internet become more important. Maya informs,

'Look, Piya, someone is calling you. There, the Hijab-clad woman and her husband want to talk to you. Go and talk to them.'

'In a moment. Let me post the status first.'

'Is posting that urgent?'

'Certainly. It is most urgent. Right now I am choosing and posting the pictures and writing statuses. After posting, these pictures and statuses must be checked over and over. I also have to count the likes, read the comments that come in, and reply to those comments. Where is the time to talk to them now?'

(Kaisar 13)

In other words, the events are taking place in both reality and virtual world almost at the same time. Even before the events take place in reality, they are about to be uploaded on the internet, which shows that there is almost no gap between reality and hyperreality.

However, the "ugly" pictures are probably close to the actual appearances of people. This is probably how they mostly look in reality. But they seem not content with that situation.Therefore, they put on makeup, stand or pose in such a position, or ask the photographer to hold the camera in a special way, so that they look fancy and hyperreal.In the wedding programme, Swarna asks a stranger to take some photographs. After taking some, the stranger returns the mobile phone to Swarna, but she does not like the pictures. She says, oh, Lord, I look tubby here. So, she asks the stranger, can you please tilt the phone camera a little and click again (Kaisar11)? In other words, holding the camera in a specific position will capture one in a slender physique, the contemporary "standard" of beauty and smartness. That slender physique cannot go through any change once uploaded in Facebook, as the photograph itself is still. Although the person is probably tubby in the actual world, the same person will become slender in the virtual world and be so for eternity.

In other words, as manypredicted in the early days of computer and internet, human beings will live their second lives in the internet, and they are actually doing so on the internet now.There is even a popular virtual world namedSecond Life, where one can create her identity called avatar and interact with other avatars or objects. The avatars can participate in individual or group activities, build houses, shop in the supermarkets etc. Second life is a total "representation" of reality.This deconstruction, however, seems to be a postmodern quality, where human beings show "incredulity towards metanarratives" (Lyotard). They no more believe in a linear and unexplored self. Instead of a metanarrative or grand narrative, human beings now practise micro-narratives, narratives which are subjective and full of possibilities.

Fig. 4. Second Life, Online Image A[21]
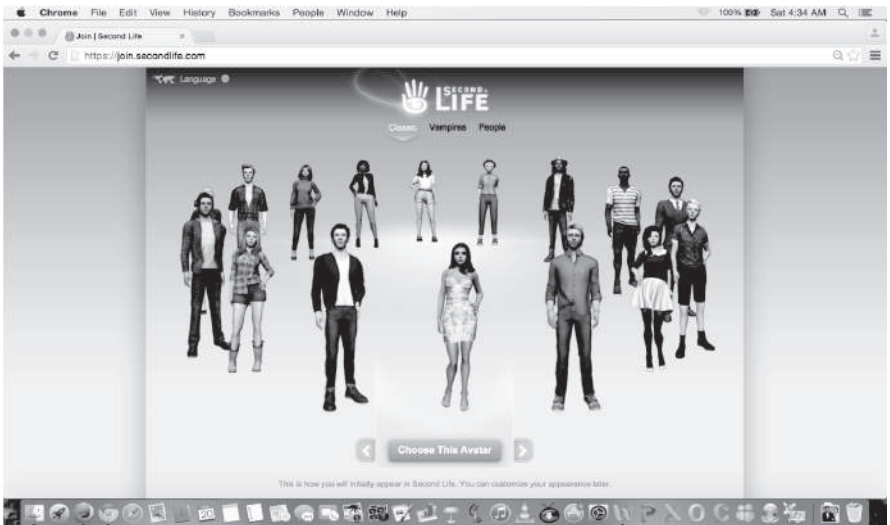
Fig. 5. Second Life, Online Image B[22]

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[21] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

[22] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

Secondly, as for the deconstruction of culture, the internet also influences and blurs the differences between cities and villages, or a village in Bangladesh and a city in an absolutely different country. Any cultural practice from any part of the world is being watched, enjoyed, and also, to some extent, performed in other parts of the world. A specific cultural practice from one corner of the world may not be practised in another part, but the practice is now open to all, which means any practice mayget deconstructed and global, including the creation of new habits or cultures.

From the social networking site events, for example, known or/and unknown people now go on tours together. They do not know each other, but become a community after seeing people with similar interests on the internet. When an advertisement, for example, of a trip to Bandarban, Bangladesh is shared in Facebook, anyone then has the possibilities of knowing about this event, since thisis open and meant for anyone. This openness is another characteristic of deconstructing the human self. Moreover, travelers who show the same interests then meet theirfellow unknown friends at the bus stoppage or rail station, just before the start of their journey. The station in this case is the first place for meeting the unknown. In other words, at least in some cases, the internet precedes actual, physical introduction. It creates opportunities for meeting together. The moment one event is shared, many people from many domains take interests and join the event. True, these people will not probably meet again frequently, probably not even once in the whole life, but that may not mean human beings live in isolation. It seems that they keep meeting different people at different times. Those who think that the introduction of technology and new media reduces chances of physical communication may not be right. Denee, for example, believes that "Virtual worlds are becoming the latest instrument that people are using to run away from life's most important issues-building character, rearing children, loving a spouse, exercising etc. People are literally leaving reality behind and living in a fantasy world" (*The Real Truth*). But, from the example of Bandarban above, it seems that the fantasy world is leading human beings to reality. Now it is not meant that the fancy face that one has on the internet will or should also become reality! This going together to a tour with mostly unknown people, however, is a new culture. This is how old cultures are strengthened and new cultures are created and decreated. Surely, behind identities or cultures, it is human beings who are the catalysts, who decreate.

Contrary to popular beliefs, physical interactions of human beings seem to increase in many cases as a result of social networking sites. Social networking sites lead to new cultures and trends. Many fancy food restaurants are emerging around the streets of Dhaka, for example. All of them advertise through Facebook. Food lovers, for instance, log on to Facebook and search for restaurant. They target a restaurant for one day and gather there to enjoy some time together.
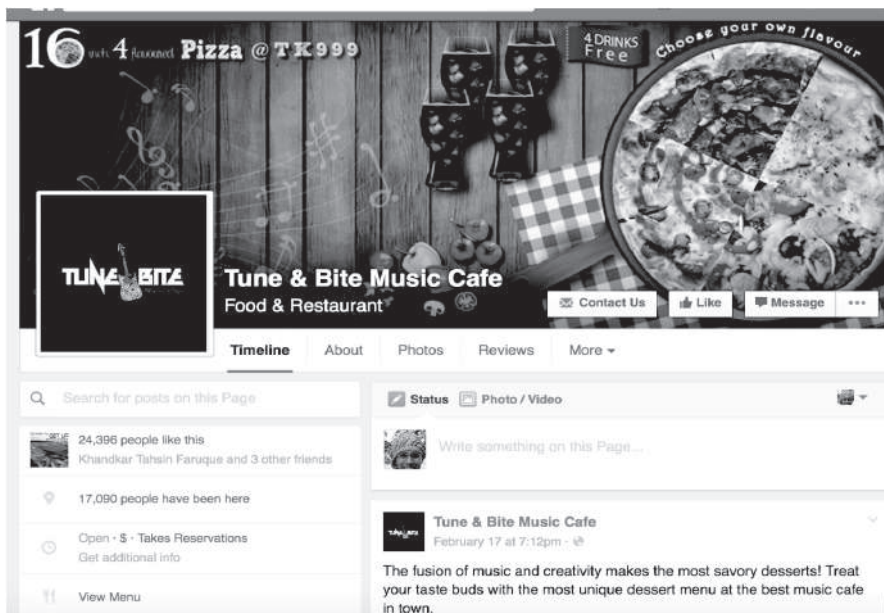
Fig. 6. Tune & Bite[23]

This going to the restaurants, specially in the evening, seems to be a new trend or culture for both young and middle-aged people in Dhaka. After the classes and offices, they now want to spend time together at a cozy restaurant. Social networking sites, thus, seem to be the instrument taking people out of the home and decreating new cultures.

These days more people attend programmes that are advertised through social networking sites. Not only people from the same culture, people from other cultures also attend them. As a result, they share features or have the possibilities of sharing features, which strengthen the tie among cultures. Since people from across the board join the programmes, a culture may not remain as it is right now.

The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

Thus, objective and homogenous beliefs in identities and cultures diminish. They may not diminish from the mental spheres, but they diminish from human practices. Human practices show that humans practice what they probably do not believe in.

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[23] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

Photographers: the Biographers of the Twenty First Century

Mobile cameras of the contemporary world have the quality of capturing photos, yet they are not enough. They may quench the individual for some moments, but human beings want even more elaborate details of their faces, expressions, and appearances. Thus, they hire photographers who have both professional expertise and thelatest cameras. These photographers seem to define the individuals and their identities. They define who someone is. As a result, the photographers now open up professional houses. They are hired on any trivial occasion, not only for events like wedding. Consequently, even less significant events assume enormous importance in the age of networked society. In other words, the difference between less and more importantevents blurs, as everything becomes"important".

Fig. 7. Biswas[24]

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[24] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

The Wallsagainst Deconstruction

Deconstruction of identities and cultures seems not a smooth expedition. Deconstruction is a road that is less travelled by although it may make all the difference (Frost). The objective and natural belief in singlenessof anything, however, seem to be deterrents for the deconstruction of identities and cultures. Denee, for example, states that

> The excessive pursuit of virtual worlds is another example that people are dissatisfied with their existing lives. People are not content with their looks, so they turn to a virtual life in which they can look "sexy," never getting sick or aging. . . . It does not matter where human beings live-in a virtual world or in the real world. One thing has stood true through the ages: "It is not in man…to direct his steps" (Jer. 10:23) . . . Man will continue to look for a better world-but he is looking in the wrong place. A seemingly unreal scenario will occur in the very near future. The God that created 10 billion trillion stars has a plan for humanity. He has prepared a new world that will provide happiness and fill emotional needs. He has a set of rules and guidelines regulating behaviour that will bring about prosperity" (The Real Truth).

But human beings are the makers of their identities and cultures, as they deconstruct all these. In theory, many human beings may believe in rules and destinies, but in practice they seem to do otherwise, in many cases; they explore their potentials, consciously as well as unconsciously. Also, how was life before the introduction of the internet? Did human beings remain happy? The answer lies in the fact that they were never always happy, nor they ever will be. Notably, being not always happy may be a positive quality some. This insatiable quality often drives them to do something creative, next, and new. In other words, dissatisfaction is a prerequisite to explore something new. Now as a result of the introduction of the internet, on the contrary, human beings have one more option to be content. That contentment comes from the deconstruction of their ideas of identities and cultures. They can explore and add new ideas to the already exiting definitions of identities and cultures.

It can be noted at this point that there are social networking sites for Muslims only, for example, Ummaland. Apparently, sites like theseprevent the mingling of people from diverse backgrounds. In order to keep one's identity "intact", one creates borders around the self-identity. One wants to keep one's identity "pure".
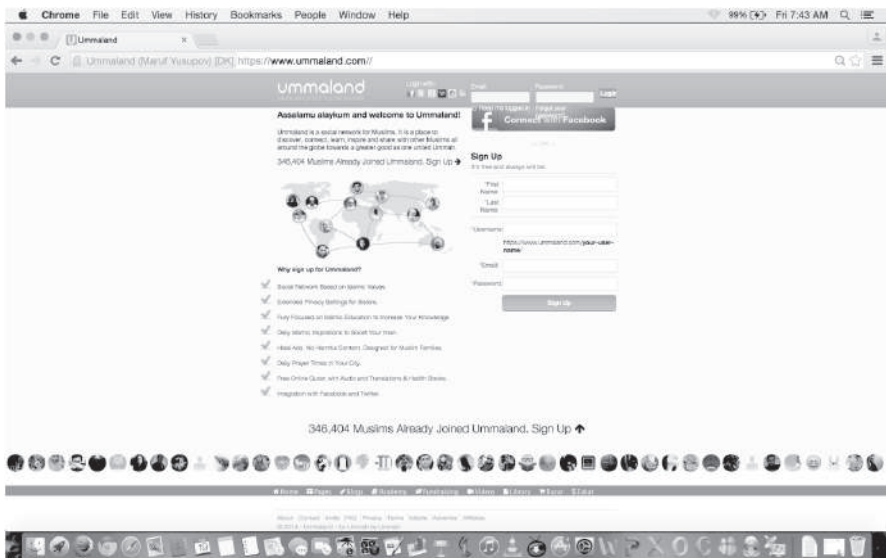
Fig. 8. Ummaland[25]

But Yeats declared, "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold" (Poetry Foundation). Also, even if onehomogeneous group succeeds in creating a social networking site for itself, there is no guarantee that all of them will similarly agree on the same idea. For example, there may be differences in terms of an interpretation of a text between Sunni and Shia Muslims, although both are followers of Islam. Meaning of an idea itself is subject to continuous deconstruction. There is no one meaning, for meaning keeps splitting. In other words, although there are attempts for singleness or objectivity in a specific idea, in practice human beings show diversity. Facebook, a comparatively comprehensive and secular platform, seems still more popular than a site which aims for one group out of the whole of humanity.

Some may also worry about consequences after definitions of identities and cultures change. But thousands of yearsagoone's identity and culture were not like what they are right now. Human beings kept deconstructing their identities and cultures throughout history although every decreated identity tended to be static and frozen. The newer generations always deconstruct. Even within a new generation, there are two groups: One group wants to hold onto the old ideas, whereas the other groupattempts to bring changes in the definitions. Of course, if some people attack one's identity and culture because they think their identities and cultures are the "epitome"of all identities and cultures,

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[25] The image may not remain in the online locarion because of rotation or change in the profile.

then there will be resistance. The victim, whose identity and culture are attacked by means of brutal and repressive forces, will resist. If identities and cultures change because of the mingling of people or because of the passing of time, they may let that be. Identities and cultures are better understood in continuity, not in stagnancy. Every time an identity orculture is decreated, one may not make it static and frozen, for that is not human instinct or nature. Human beings keep changing. The change or deconstruction is the thesis against all the antitheses. The only constant thing in the universe is change, said Heraclitus.

Free Will and Contingency: the Stimuli for Deconstruction

In order to deconstruct both identities and cultures, free will and contingency seem to be preconditions.

Without free will, deconstruction of identities and cultures becomes impossible. Human beings, knowingly or unknowingly, seem to practise free will. They are never satisfied with anything; they want to explore, create, and decrease something new, which is a positive quality of being human. Not only dothey create or recreate new products, they also keep creating and decreating new identities and cultures. Decreation seems to be a result of free will. But there is a debate regarding whether human beings have free will or they are destined. Many people want to believe, at least mentally, that they are destined. According to Baruch Spinoza, for example, "There is no such thing as free will in the mental sphere or chance in the physical world. Everything that happens is a manifestation of God's inscrutable nature, and it is logically impossible that events should be other than they are" (Russell 523). But human beings can think. When they can think, they can exercise free will. A precondition of decreating newer forms of anything is thinking, and thinking can be diverse. "'Thinking' is used by Descartes in a very wide sense. A thing that thinks, he says, is one that doubts, understands, conceives, affirms, denies, wills, imagines, and feels - for feeling … is a form of thinking. Since thought is the essence of mind, the mind must always think, even during deep sleep" (Russell 517). In other words, thinking is a quality which leads human beings to free will. Things around human beings are not just happening as time passes. They happen because human beings think and deconstruct.Human beings deconstruct new forms of identities and cultures. But that should not mean that those are the final forms of identities and cultures; they will always find newer forms of identities and cultures.

Next, contingency, "An eventthatmayoccurbutthat is notlikely or intended" ("Contingency," def. 1), contributes to free will and thus, deconstruction of identities and cultures. Human existence seems to be contingent.

It seems not destined. While explaining the philosophies of Leibniz, Russell notes the following: "He argues that every particular thing in the world is 'contingent', that is to say, it would be logically possible for it not to exist; and", as Russell now adds his ideas to Leibniz, "this is true, not only of each particular thing, but of the whole universe" (536). According to Stephen Hawking, "Science predicts that many different kinds of universe will be spontaneously created out of nothing. It is a matter of chance which we are in" (*The Guardian.com*). In other words, since human existence is contingent, human beings seem to have free will and the power of decreating.

Also, existence precedes essence, and none of existence and essence seems static. Someone, for example, is a Bangladeshi simply because s/heis born here, and 'Bangladeshi' is an essence here, but that someone must have an existence.

If that someone were born in Cuba, she would have been a Cuban today. In other words, that someone is not a Cuban because he was not born there. Also, it is logically possible for someone not to come to this world. The birth of an individual is accidentaland incidental. In other words, a human being exists first and then develops essence/s, and both existence and essence are subjective. In the sentence, for example, 'someone is a Bangladeshi', 'Bangladeshi' is an essence, but before developing the essence, that 'someone' must exist. Without that existence, this essence does not make any sense. In other words, existence precedes essence (Hossain).

Existence is not constant either. After the arrival of human beings on earth, however, they (or most of them) try to make the most of their lives. As they do so, they start, consciously and mostly unconsciously, believing in their existenceobjectively, as if the world would not have been possible without them. Thus, since human beings have free will and are contingent, they may not guarantee any static or objective quality to any idea, for example, identity or culture, of any time. In the introduction for Jacques Derrida's deconstruction, Rivkin and Ryan (2004) noted that "no presence or substance of an object or of an idea is complete in itself. … one must say that there is no "first" (259). In other words, the belief in "first" or "originality" results in dogmatism. When one believes in any "original" identity, then one probably does not want to experiment with it, let alone deconstruct it.

Conclusion

The parameters of identities and cultures change over time. Human beings now live in a world of possibilities. They take a detour. After the first life, instead of moving on to the second life, which is life after death, they nowtravel to a life in between first life and second life, that is, life in the internet. Seemingly, the internet has a secular and humanistic appearance. Anyone is exposed to all forms of beliefs, not only to something which is for one specific culture or group. Of course, there are obstacles, but those seem not to be able to stop the experimental spirits of human beings. Those obstacles may slow down the pace of exploring, but cannot completely stop the process of deconstruction of identities and cultures.For the obstacles which are exceptions, the answer lies in humanism. Said (2003) stated that "humanism is the only, and, I would go as far as saying, the final, resistance we have against the inhuman practices and injustices that disfigure human history. . . . The human, and humanistic, desire for enlightenment and emancipation is not easily deferred, despite the incredible strength of the opposition to it that comes from" (xxii-xxiii) all the obstacles or walls.Humanism means free will, contingency, and deconstruction. In other words, human beings create and decreate new identities, cultures, and histories.

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Contributors

Fakrul Alam is the Pro‑Vice Chancellor of East West University and former Professor of English, University of Dhaka.

M. Shahidullah is Professor at Department of English, University of Rajshahi.

Somdatta Mandal is Professor at the Department of English and Other Modern European Languages, Visva‑Bharati, Santiniketan.

Senath Walter Perera is Senior Professor of English, University of Peradeniya.

Hasan Al Zayed is Assistant Professor of English, University of Liberal Arts Bangladesh.

Tasneem S. Mahboob is Assistant Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka.

Md. Shazed Ul Hoq Khan Abir is Lecturer at the Department of English, East West University, Bangladesh.

Mithila Mahfuz teaches English language and Applied Linguistics at Independent University, Bangladesh.

Shaila Shams teaches English at Independent University, Bangladesh.

M. Shakhaowat Hossain is Lecturer at the Department of English and Modern Languages of North South University.

Mehnaz Tabassum is Lecturer at Department of English of East West University.

Mohammad Rejaul Karim is Senior Lecturer in English Language at the Department of English of East West University.

Md. Abu Sufian is Lecturer at BRAC Institute of Languages, BRAC University.

Md. Mahbubul Islam is Lecturer at BRAC Institute of Languages, BRAC University.

Fakrul Alam, Ph.D. is Pro Vice-Chancellor of East West University and has retired as Professor of English at the University of Dhaka. He is also the Consulting Editor of *The Daily Star.* His publications include *Rabindranath Tagore and National Identity Formation in Bangladesh: Essays and Reviews* (Dhaka: Bangla Academy, 2013); *The Essential Tagore* (Boston: Harvard UP and Viswa Bharati: Kolkata, 2011; with Radha Chakravarty); *Imperial Entanglements and Literature in English* (writer's ink: Dhaka, 2007); *South Asian Writers in English* (Detroit: Thomson Gale, 2006); *Jibanananda Das: Selected Poems* (Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1999); Bharati Mukherjee (Twayne's United States Authors Series. New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995). His translation of Sheikh Mujibur Rahman's Unfinished Memoirs was published in 2012 by University Press in Bangladesh, Penguin Books in India, and Oxford University Press in Pakistan. He received the SAARC Literature Award 2012 given at the SAARC Literature Festival of 2012 held at Lucknow India on 18 March 2012. He was awarded the Bangla Academy Puroshkar (Literature Award) in the Translation category for 2013 on February 24, 2013. *Ocean of Sorrow,* his translation of the late nineteenth century Bengali epic narrative, *Bishad Sindhu* by Mir Mosharraf Hussain, published by Bangla Academy in November 2016 are his most recent publications.

Muhammed Shahriar Haque, Ph.D. is the Executive Director of East West University Centre for Research and Training (EWUCRT), and Professor at Department of English, East West University (EWU). He has published over 30 scholarly articles and co-edited two books: *Prostitution: Women, Society, State and Law* (1997), published by Bangladesh National Women Lawyers' Association (BNWLA), Dhaka, Bangladesh, and *Constructing Identities in the Malaysian Media* (2008), by University of Malaya Press, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Furthermore, he is editor of the peer-reviewed journal, *East West Journal of Humanities* (EWJH), and producer and assistant director of the documentary film *Life after Grey* (2015).

Zohur Ahmed is Assistant Professor of English in East West University, Bangladesh. He has been teaching English in Bangladesh and India for more than sixteen years. He graduated with a Bachelors degree in English from Aligarh Muslim University, India. He also completed M.A. in English (TESL) and M.Phil. in English Language Education from Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad, India. He has authored several scholarly articles in the field of English Language Education and has been a member of the editorial advisory committee for the book *English Language Teaching in the Twenty First Century: Issues and Challenges* published by Kumaran Book House, Colombo, Sri Lanka. His research interests include ICT in Language Teaching, Second Language Acquisition, Language Testing and Evaluation.