

OPINION

# The NCTB's approach to English language education could be better

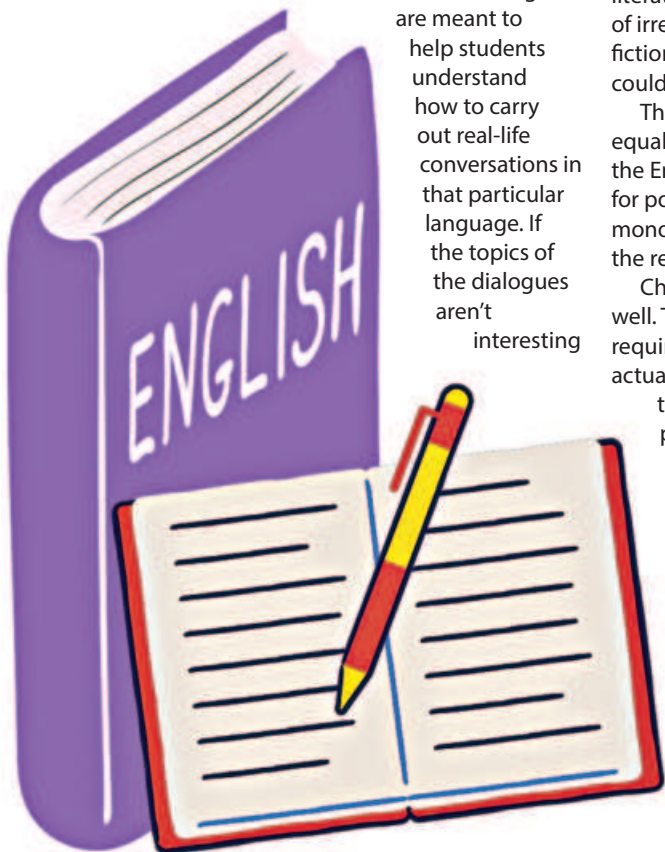
**HASIB UR RASHID IFTI**

Back in class eight, our English teacher told us to memorise all the rules – around 36 – of subject-verb agreement from the Grammar book. In the next class, he picked a student randomly and asked him to state rule number 23 from the book. The conditions were simple – you get to sit down if you remember the exact rule down to the sequence in which they're written and if not, you get punished.

This ridiculous yet true incident depicts how English, as a language, is taught in our schools, especially as per the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) curriculum.

The board-approved "English for Today" textbook is historically laughed at for being ineffectual in teaching the English language. The text is filled with characters having unrealistic dialogues and creates zero resonance with its readers. Dialogues

are meant to help students understand how to carry out real-life conversations in that particular language. If the topics of the dialogues aren't interesting



or relevant, students will inevitably lose interest.

Another helpful tool for the readers in learning a language is to read stories in that language. While the English textbook contains some short stories and essays, most of them are childish to the point that they aren't challenging enough to make the readers think. While the Bangla textbook does a great job of introducing its readers to famous writers and their work, the English textbook fails to do the same. Although the class nine and ten book contains a few short stories written by prominent writers, introducing the students to significant literary works at a very young age would be more effective.

Contrary to the Bangla textbooks, English doesn't have any NCTB-approved rapid reader books similar to 'Shohopath' in Bangla. The Bangla Shohopath involves short stories, dramas and even novels which help readers get a wider perspective of Bangla literature. Unfortunately, literature isn't prioritised in the English textbooks. Instead of irrelevant dialogues or primitive essays, including fiction pieces or sections of dramas from English literature could be a good place to start.

The Bangla textbook is arranged in two sections, giving equal importance to both stories and poems. Contrarily, the English for Today textbook contains little to no space for poems. This makes the content of the English textbook monotonous, and the lack of variation makes it tough for the readers to remain invested.

Changes are necessary in the evaluation process as well. Topics like re-arranging and filling in the blanks require memorisation on the students' part rather than actual understanding of the English language. Irrelevant topics like e-mail writing and letter writing are still present in the English 2nd Paper syllabus which serve little to no purpose in helping students be better writers in that language.

The lack of creativity in the English textbook makes the students uninterested in the subject. Even after being a compulsory subject in all ten grades, "English for Today" offers no help to the students in mastering the English language. A complete revamp of the course content and the evaluation system is necessary to make sure students can rely on board-approved textbooks for mastering the English language.

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ILLUSTRATION: FATIMA JAHAN ENA

## EXPLAINED The Bangladeshi economy

**BIPRA PRASUN DAS**

An economy is a system by which a country makes and uses things, like the stuff we buy, sell, and share. Bangladesh's economy encompasses various elements, such as households, businesses, the government, and financial institutions, that interact to manage resources and generate wealth.

One aspect of understanding how an economy works is understanding how money flows. Your family and you make up a household. Your household may earn money through various sources like jobs. Now, think about the companies that produce goods and services. For many of us, our household income is generated by working at these businesses. When your family spends this income on goods like groceries, clothes, or services like healthcare, you are engaging with these companies. Your spending becomes their revenue. In short, money flows from households to firms in exchange for the goods and services you consume. When firms pay households for resources such as land, labour, and capital, money returns to households. This is called the circular flow.

The overseer of this money flow is the central bank. If there is too much money, prices might rise causing inflation. If there's too little, it can slow down the economy, resulting in fewer goods and services being produced and higher unemployment.

The government collects taxes from households and firms, which is like a small chunk of money flowing in the circular flow. The government then uses these taxes to provide public services like education, healthcare, and infrastructure.

Bangladesh also trades with other countries. Trade is like sharing and playing to your strengths. For instance, Bangladesh can manufacture garments in bulk at a low production cost due to the availability of cheap labour. Other countries might not be as efficient at making clothes, but they might excel at something else, like machinery. So, when our country trades its garments with other countries, we can purchase machinery or other things we need.

Bangladesh's economy, like most modern economies, has many more complexities, which are beyond the scope of this article.