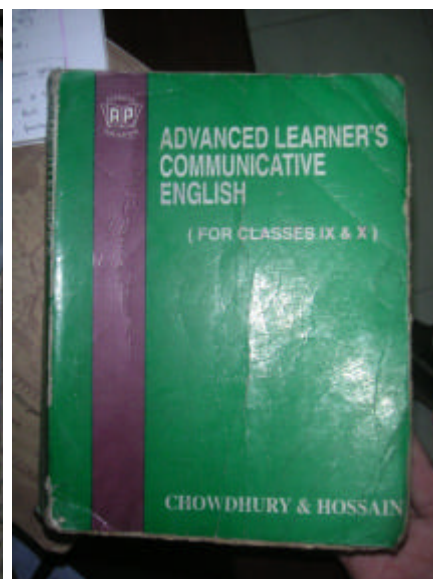
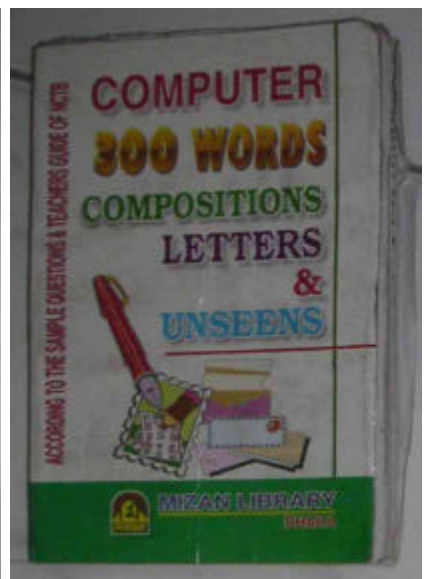
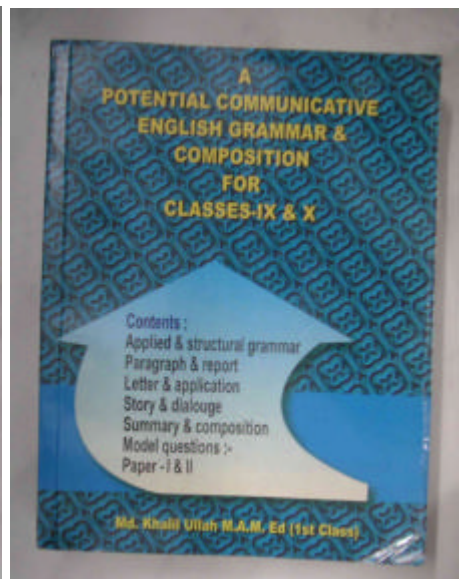
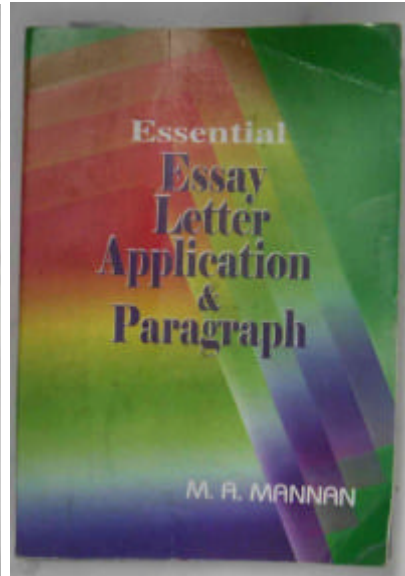
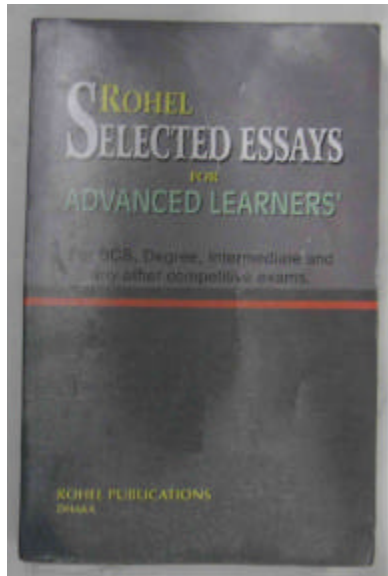


The Bangladeshi English Essay Book

An Analysis by Robin Upton,
January 22nd 2006



Contents

Purpose	1
Introduction to Essay Books	1
Impact of Essay Books	2
Inaccuracy	4
Grandiloquence/bombast (long words)	5
Exaggeration	6
Repetition	7
Oversimplification /Over-Generalisation.....	8
Obscurity/Obsolescence	9
Waffle.....	10
Pointlessness	12
Tackling ‘Essay Book Style’	14
Introductions	15
Reasoning	16
Conclusions	17
Overcoming Bad Essay Writing Habits	18
Epilogue: In Praise of Banglish Essays.....	19
Bibliography.....	21
Appendix: Some Essays	22

Purpose

This paper is intended primarily for English teachers in Bangladesh who wish to improve their students’ essay writing. After introducing Bangladeshi essay books, it describes their main flaws, places them in context and suggests methods for helping students whose English has been affected.

Introduction to Essay Books

Books of model *rochona* (essays) have been a staple tool of English teaching in Bangladesh for decades. These essays are formulaic compositions of about 250 words on a fairly narrow range of stock topics. The majority of these are perennial favourites with wide applicability, such as *My School, A Tea Stall, My Daily life, Blessings of Modern Science, The autobiography of a river*¹, *The Necessity of The Value of Time*. Bangladesh specific topics are also popular, such as *Rural Development of Bangladesh, Arsenic Pollution, The International Mother Language Day, Care taker Government, The War Liberation of Bangladesh*. Some variety is brought to the mix by a range of more modern topics: *The world cup football – 98, Internet, Women’s Contribution to our Country, Dish-Anteena*. These essays have a flavour all of their own, so if you are not yet familiar with Bangladeshi Essay books, try reading a few from the appendix of this paper.

¹ Due to the high volume of errors in Bangladeshi Essays, this paper will not follow use ‘(sic.)’ to alert the reader to deliberately quoted mistakes, since their prevalence would prove disturbing to the reader. Efforts have been made to quote the Bangladesh essays faithfully, errors and all.

Impact of Essay Books

Mass producing fixed length essays on a narrow set of topics may seem logical to the command hierarchy of business, but such an activity undermines the essay as a means of self-expression by the individual. The low quality, mass produced nature of most Bangladeshi Essay books does at least warn the reader of the devalued and deadened the material they contain. Nevertheless, parents, teachers and publishers alike encourage students to learn these essays by rote, especially for examinations. Bangladeshi English exams typically ask for an essay of *at least* 200 words on one of the standard essay book titles.

For students with a natural aversion to rote learning, books have a variety of other strategies to encourage the use of essays as models. One such is to present questions and answers one below the other, a common feature of Bangladeshi school textbooks:

“Write a paragraph about your idea of a good teacher. Think of a particular teacher you have known. In your paragraph include the following points.

- ? Kescribe some of his qualities,
- ? specially his behaviour with the students,
- ? his general nature, and
- ? how he helps the students with their lessons

My Idea of a Good Teacher

A good teacher is the person who is committed to work for building a nation. I know a good teacher named Mr. N. Haq. His is B.A. B-Ed. He is fond of his young children. An ideal or a good teacher is fond of his young learners and helpful to them in making their lesson interesting and preparing their house work. He always keeps them busy in the class and helps them enjoying playful games too. He or she advises them to follow the foot prints of the great mean. Teaching is a noble and honourable profession and he lives ideal lives.

2

Note how the subject shifts from a particular teacher (supposedly chosen by the student) to the general case of ‘an ideal teacher’. The real and the imaginary are blurred, a recurring phenomenon of ‘personal accounts’.

Another section of this book is entitled ‘*Writing paragraph Using Key Words*’:

Write a paragraph about “your best friend in the class.”

In your paragraph you must include the following key words:

Kamal	Neglect	Sit	listen	Polite
helpful	understand	Try	turn	Model

3

Inclusion of the proper name ‘Kamal’ gives a clue as to the amount of personal input expected from students. The ‘*Accordance with the given model*’ section demonstrates to students how to produce an essay on a supposedly personal topic without making any semantic modification of one of the prepared essays:

² p.7 (Paragraph 13, *My Idea Of A Good Teacher*), Mannan

³ p.69 (Paragraph 20, *Your best friend in Class*), Mannan

Read the following paragraph about “Kamal’s Hobby” and follow it to write a paragraph about “Your Hobby”

MODEL: Kamal’s Hobby

Kamal is a student. He has a hobby of his own. It is gardening. It is his favourite hobby. He spends his leisure time in his garden. Every early in the morning he goes to his garden. He looses the soil with a spade and weeds out the grasses and then waters the little plants. He also puts fence around his garden so that children and cattle can do no harm to the garden. Every morning his minds fills in joy to see the garden full of various kinds of flowers. Besides, the work, which he does in his garden, helps to make his body strong and active.

My Hobby

I have a hobby my own. It is gardening. It is my favourite hobby. I spend my leisure time in my garden. Every early in the morning I go to my garden. I loose the soil with a spade and weed out the grasses and then I water the little plants. I also put fence around my garden so that children and cattle can do no harm to the garden. Every morning my mind fills in joy to see the garden full of various kinds of flowers. Besides, the work, which I do in my garden, helps to make my body strong and active.

4

Repeated from an early age, such base exercises undermine students’ perception of essays, removing the essential value from writing, degrading it to a purely technical exercise. Many students have a similarly subverted perception of what it means to learn English – as an activity which requires no creativity and offers no scope for self-expression. Although most essay books have a nominal indication of the level, precious little difference is obvious aside from progression in vocabulary. Unlike those from Kolkata⁵ or further afield, the language and spelling of Bangladeshi essay books of all levels is very variable, but even the most accurate are rife with minor errors such as misspelled words, missing articles or capitals letters, incorrect pronouns etc. Such errors are normally referred to as ‘careless mistakes’, although in this case they may stem from lack not only of care but also of exposure to conventional English.

In the absence of access to material produced by native speakers⁶, ‘*essay book style*’ is an almost universal feature of Bangladeshi students’ written English. It has a host of interrelated aspects, of which we shall look in depth at the following:

- Inaccuracy
- Grandiloquence (big words)
- Exaggeration
- Repetition
- Oversimplification/Overgeneralization
- Obscurity/Obsolescence
- Waffle
- Pointlessness

⁴ p.87 (Accordance with Given Model 7, *From Kamal’s Hobby to my Hobby*), Mannan

⁵ Whilst their style is reminiscent of Bangladeshi essay books, the grammar of those from Kolkata are *far* superior. Many of them are often almost completely free of grammatical mistakes.

⁶ Internet usage rates in Bangladesh are very low but rapidly increasing. It will be interesting to see whether this will significantly affect students’ English.

Inaccuracy

The language and material of the essays suggests that some were originally written prior to the 20th century. If re-copied every few years since then, this would amount to dozens of copyings, not necessarily even by English speakers. Mistaken transcription and correction are a pair of processes that, unchecked, gradually devolve essays to a lowest common denominator, explaining the prevalence of errors, particularly spelling mistakes and the omission of small words etc.

*The practice of writing a thing is a good way of knowing a subject and a language. Because writing makes a man perfect.*⁷

Perhaps the commonest errors in Bengali English are omitted articles or prepositions and incorrect sentence formation (e.g. sentences starting with ‘And’, ‘But’ or ‘Because’). See the essay on ‘*Value of Time*’ for a more spectacular demonstration of the same process.

*There was a terrible flood occurred in our locality in September-October, 3000.*⁸

Proofreading appears to be almost unknown. The complexity of grammar employed makes the transcription process error prone:

*All the greatmen of all ages earned name and fame by dint of perseverance. They might have come out successful again and again, but they did not lose heart.*⁹

Inaccurate transcription mutates words, as spelling errors are ‘corrected’ incorrectly. Sometimes it is possible to guess the original text; ‘Boring’ was probably ‘boredom’ in the below, a very common mistake in Bangladeshi English.

*In our boring television is our most favourite friend.*¹⁰

Mutation of words is not the only factor that creates contradictions. Crass oversimplification of is another. The second sentence, below, probably once began with the word ‘avoiding’:

*Unemployment is a great social evil. It is imperative for the peace and prosperity of social life.*¹¹

Spellcheckers have sped up of the process of ‘correction’ of errors, and allowed it to be carried adding another sort of error to the mix:

*Measures should be taken against draught and heavy rainfalls. River beds should be depend against floods.*¹²

Automated ‘correction’ forms an unholy alliance with unusual grammar and *grandiloquent* expression to degenerate the original authors’ sentiment into a bizarre and tragic linguistic wreck.

⁷ p.36 (Essay 14, *How To Learn English Well*), Ullah

⁸ p.302 (Composition 26, *The Flood Affected People of My Locality*), Shahidul Islam

⁹ p.119 (Essay 113, *Perseverance*), Bhattacharyya & Hoque

¹⁰ p.192 (Essay 11, *Television*), Mannan

¹¹ p.284 (Essay 91, *Unemployment Problem in Bangladesh*), Mannan

¹² p.148 (Essay 139, *Grow More Food*), Bhattacharyya & Hoque

*“Seize the day”, cried Horace about two thousand years ago. But time and tide wait for none. Time passes and passes. Nobody can stop time’s ever-busty frigate for even a second. It passes away throwing everything into the dark mysterious cavern of the past. Yet, it can be made full use of.*¹³

Language learnt from essay books is used by subsequent generations of essay writers who have either looked up the denotation or grasped it intuitively, but who have no sense of its connotations.

*[Science] has given man various death-weapons like missiles, atomb bombs, various types of fire-arms, modern fighter-planes and what not.*¹⁴

The discussion on *pointlessness* mentions the topic of personal or commercial interests. Most essayists, however, have an agenda which extends little further than the absolute necessity of school and essay books, subservience to authority and discipline in general. This seems to affect a lot of them, even on apparently unrelated topics.

*Physical exercise means the movement of the limbs with the help of rules.*¹⁵

Facile topics in which the essayist is not really conveying any information promote sloppiness in thinking, while an overemphasis on grammar and vocabulary inevitably mean that less attention is paid to the exact meaning of what is written:

*Atom and hydrogen bombs are invented with the use of nuclear energy.*¹⁶

Grandiloquence/bombast (long words)

Since vocabulary is the only significant linguistic progression evidenced by essay books, Bangladeshi learners of English are naturally keen to demonstrate proficiency in English by employing long words. These words are important if the illusion of progression is to be maintained, ensuring that class VI students feel that they have moved on from class V when in fact there is generally little difference in other aspects of the essays, apart perhaps from volume of output.

*We are living in a fast changing environment. Everything old is being removed by the mighty gust of remorseless change. If we, for relevant reasons, want to survive and advance, we must keep up with the gorgeous procession of change toward amelioration and development.*¹⁷

In one sense, of course, longer words do represent real progress – essay book users often have surprising abilities at comprehension. However, this striving for an appearance of competence is a cause of real problems. The long words in Bangladeshi Essay Books are often incorrectly spelled, of inappropriately high register, or have other problems such as unwanted connotations. Such swollen vocabularies often increase students’ comprehension at the expense of their ability to make themselves understood in speech (or sometimes, even in writing). Such verbiage is of little use to

¹³ p.? (Value of Time?), Chowdhury & Hossain?

¹⁴ p.131 (Essay 29, *Is Science A Blessing or Curse?*), Zakir

¹⁵ p.32 (Paragraph 25, *Physical Exercise*), Shahidul Islam

¹⁶ p.568 (*The Wonders of Modern Science, The Blessings of Modern Science or Science in Everyday Life*), Chowdhury & Hossain

¹⁷ p. 245 (Essay 65, *Mass Media*), Zakir

those who flout conventions of grammar, collocation etc. At least as far as native English speakers are concerned, those raised on grandiloquent essay books sometimes lack the ability to make themselves understood not in spite of but because of their clumsily increased vocabularies.

*[The teacher] dispels the darkness of ignorance from the minds of his students and enkindles the light of education in them.*¹⁸

What is merely bizarre or quaint in written form can be unintelligible in speech, where foreign accents also hamper comprehension¹⁹. Whilst its effect on learners is mixed, grandiloquence is worse for the essays themselves, where it is frequently used to conceal other problems such as the shallowness or partisan nature of arguments.

*The path of success and victory is not only steep but also difficult and thorny. It is the crushed flower that gives forth the richest, sweetest, and rarest fragrance. pangs, sufferings, misfortunes and adversities sublimate our soul and ripen our judgement.*²⁰

Some of the essayists are so poetic that to try to look too hard for logic may be to fundamentally misunderstand them, just as certain plot devices require a suspension of disbelief. Many essays are bombastic throughout, but especially so in the prescriptive rhetoric of conclusions.

*Everyone should keep himself aloof from inhuman, unsocial, irreligious works. Unlawful activities should be discouraged from all walks of life. The lady killer or lady hunter should be severely punished and fined at any cost. Everybody's target should be to build up a fine heritage of lofty idealisms.*²¹

Exaggeration

Exaggeration sometimes occurs almost accidentally from the casual use of language:

*We can not live even for a single second without air.*²²

It is often mixed with *over-generalisation* in a desperate effort to add interest to the bland essays on uninspiring topics.

*If we use [radio] properly, it can bring infinite good for us.*²³

Whilst obvious out of context, wild exaggeration is a natural property of the oversimplification and bombast that is such a common feature of Bangladeshi essays. It is common at the end of paragraphs, as if the writer uses the preceding sentences to work himself up into a fervour, and especially common in concluding statements of an essay.

¹⁸ p.? (?), Chowdhury & Hossain?

¹⁹ The commonest sound in English, the schawa, is unknown to most Bangladeshis, in whose language it does not feature.

²⁰ p.329 (Essay 163, *Sweet are the uses of Aversity*), Rohel

²¹ p.235 (Essay 115, *Violence Syndrom in the World*), Rohel

²² p.252 (Essay 17, *Air Pollution*), Bhattacharyya & Hoque

²³ p.43 (Essay 24, *The Use of Radio in our Day to Day Life*), Ullah

*With the help of computer we can solve any complex problem within a minute or two. In our modern life we canno't think of a day without it. It is not a fashion but a necessity.*²⁴

It is at its most pronounced when advancing the interests behind the essay books, such as the necessity of obedience to the social order in general, and the importance of school in particular.

*Patriotism is pure love. It is more than human love for other individual human beings.*²⁵

Repetition

Of all the stylistic weaknesses of essay book style, repetition is the most obvious for Bangladeshis to spot and the easiest for them to correct. The more repetitive an essay is, the easier it is to learn off by heart, so the more popular with students and teachers alike. Like waffle, repetition stems mainly from the artificial construct of having to write a minimum number of grammatically correct words, of never being corrected on style, and of having nothing of moment to say in the first place.

*Tutul, you want to start a poultry farm. So you have to do something to start a poultry farm. At first you should take a training on poultry farm. There are many training centre under the "Juba Unnayan Sangstha". You may visit one of those. Then you have to manage some money for attending the training. Next you will need some more money to start a poultry farm and then you may contact with the Agricultural bank for a loan. After that you can start a poultry farm with the money given by the Agricultural bank. Finally, after establishing you poultry farm up to a good position you have to pay the loan.*²⁶

Repetition is rarely as blatant as the above. In fact, grandiloquent paraphrasing is often used to hide it from the uncritical reader. Occasionally however, entire sentences are repeated verbatim in the course of an essay. Such cases of provide a useful chance to check the accuracy of the copying; note below how careless transcription has changed 'lost time' at the first mention into 'loss time' in the second, and a comma has mutated into a full stop:

*We can make up the loss of money by industry, the loss of health by medicine, but the loss of time is never found again. Everybody ought to make proper use of time. Because lost time is never found again. We can make up the loss of money by industry, the loss of health by medicine. But loss time is never found again. An active man is conscious of the proper use of time. It is sure that he who makes proper use of time is sure to prosper in life. We should not misuse time. Because the misuse of time would be a great loss for life. We must, therefore, make the right use of time. Success in life depends on the right use of time. An industrious man, who does not loss time, is sure to reach of the goal of life.*²⁷

Repeated words or syllables, such as *shonge shonge*, *khaowar daowar* or *fushpush* are a regular and welcome part of the melody of Bengali, so the native speaker may well not realise that such repetitions usually create a negative impression in English. The desire to pack sentences with long words naturally leads to complicated and repetitive expression of simple ideas:

*Bangladesh can never develop with her rural areas undeveloped or underdeveloped.*²⁸

²⁴ p.21 (Essay 47, *Learning Computer Education*), Shahidul Islam

²⁵ p.74 (Essay 12, *Patriotism*), Zakir

²⁶ p.96 (Methodological Paragraph 13, *Training on a Poultry Farm*), Mannan

²⁷ p.196 (Value of Time), Mannan

²⁸ p.?(*Development of Bangladesh?*), Zakir Hasan?

Oversimplification /Over-Generalisation

Complex issues are best discussed with language capable of framing debate and communicating chains of thought in sufficient detail. Doing this in simple sentences is not easy. To argue that the language itself presents sufficient challenge, and that young learners should not also be presented with interesting content at the same time is to believe that the two can successfully be separated.

Tree plantation means planting trees more and more. Trees are very essential for our existence. We cannot think of our existence without trees. Trees are closely related with our life. They are our best friends. They help us in many ways. They are a great source of food, vitamins and furniture. They go a long way to solve our economic crisis.²⁹

The depth of discussion which can be undertaken in only a couple of hundred words is necessarily limited. Moreover, from the publishers' point of view, the best essays are ones that can be presented to any age group, perhaps explaining the facile nature of so many of the arguments.

When there is no hope left for the young, they generally become addicted to drugs for temporary pleasure. It carries them to an unreal world of dreams. But slowly it leads them to death. As a result a large number of the rosy possibilities of our young are nipped in the bud. Moreover, the addict often feels drowsy and loses appetite. It may also damage their brains and all the internal functions of their body and ultimately lead them to death.³⁰

Publishers naturally prefer essays they can sell to as wide a range of people as possible and that do not go out of date, so the general is preferred to the specific, the timeless to the ephemeral. In a country in which few have faith in the justice system to protect them³¹, it is also important not to make powerful enemies, so the few essays on contemporary or specific topics generally treat them in a highly superficial fashion. Throughout these essays, obeisance is made to authorities of all kinds. Controversy is eschewed; platitudes abound such as the necessity of avoiding AIDS, of loving ones country or maintaining economic growth at all costs.

There is no man in this world but love his country. The man who has no love and regard for his motherland is called a traitor. So we should love our country.³²

Essays bereft of both details and opinions are barely worthy of the name. A desire to cover over their flawed nature may help to explain why the creators of essay books (and of exams) include a lot of desperately general topics, such as 'Honesty', 'Hobbies' or 'The Value of Time'. Many essays are infested with *exaggerated* generalisations, particularly in the introduction and concluding paragraphs:

Aim is a target. None can reach his destination without it. So everyone should consider the pros and cons of everything before determining to choose any profession because man's future course of action depends entirely on his right choice.³³

Exaggeration and oversimplification often seem to stem from wishful thinking on the part of the essay writer, desperate to drum up passion about the hackneyed topics on which he has to write.

²⁹ p.528 (*Tree Plantation*), Chowdhury & Hossain

³⁰ p.? (*Drugs?*), ?

³¹ Bangladesh has been consistently last in the last few years in Transparency International's 'Perception of Corruption' index, indicative of how likely people think they are to have a fair trial.

³² p.? (*Patriotism?*), ?

³³ p.312 (*Essay 154, AIDS – A deadly Disease*), Rohel

*Only students can make a nation great.*³⁴

The Bangladeshi talent for wishful thinking is even more important in essay books than in their society; it replaces with equal efficacy arguments that are non-existent and those that are too lengthy or complex for inclusion.

*But if there were only one main goal of everyone – world-peace, then there would actually be peace. No matter whatever the difference between various systems or philosophical beliefs, we can all easily disregard it for a greater peaceful world. We have to ensure non-proliferation and tolerance.*³⁵

The necessity of compulsory schooling is certainly the most frequent, but not the only agenda advanced by the grossly simplistic arguments presented in essay books.

*As most of the villagers are illiterate, they have no knowledge of health and sanitation.*³⁶

Obscurity/Obsolescence

Both the information and its expression are often antiquated, perhaps going back as far as a hundred years or more. The linguistic historian could find the provenance of Bangladeshi essay books to be a topic worthy of investigation.

*My final examination is knocking at the door. I am taking preparation in full swing. But load shedding is hampering my study.*³⁷

Language is frequently employed without awareness of modern usage or connotations, resulting in sentences that sound bizarrely and obscure, even contradictory to the native speaker:

*Drinking means to be addicted to wine and liquid substance of intoxication. It is a first class bad habit.*³⁸

A few books contain essays on modern topics such as *Winter of 2003 in Bangladesh* or *Bangabandhu Bridge*³⁹, but most are made up of older stock topics. Although the essays on stock topics are rewritten to provide at least the pretence of being up to date, their antiquity is blatant on occasion.

*Television is one of the latest inventions of modern science. The British Scientist J. L. Baird invented it in 1926. It has given the world a new dimension in every sphere of life. It is the most up-to-date means of broadcast.*⁴⁰

Determination to avoid obsolescence is itself damaging to essay book style, since it no doubt contributed to the deliberate removal of any contemporary data. Where this is included, it naturally becomes outdated.

³⁴ p.54 (Essay 43, *Duties of Students*), Ullah

³⁵ p.165 (Essay 39, *War and Peace*), Zakir

³⁶ p.598 (*Rural Development*), Chowdhury & Hossain

³⁷ p.70 (Paragraph 57, *Load Shedding Is A Curse To The Examinees*), Shahidul Islam

³⁸ p.263 (Essay 132, *Evils Of Drinking*), Rohel

³⁹ This bridge across the Ganges was completed in 1998

⁴⁰ p.31 (Essay 68, *Television*), Ullah

Now the world has a population of about five hundred crores⁴¹.

Some material in essay books has been archaic for decades. Since the target customers are illiterate Bengali parents or apathetic school authorities, book publishers may simply have decided that archaic material is unlikely to discourage potential purchasers. However, the comparative rarity of such material and the token efforts made at modernization of the content suggest that those who reprint essay books may simply have failed to notice the obsolescence of some of the material.

In England there are poor law institutions maintained by the community. Those, who are rendered unfit for work and have none to support, are removed to charitable institutions like the Parish houses generally attached to the church and kept there as a charge on society. There are vagrancy laws that make begging by the able-bodied, is a punishable crime.⁴²

Lacking proper understanding of the texts, essay book compilers have a difficult job. If they adopt a policy of never getting texts updated, all but the most general of essays become outdated. Conversely, updating them too frequently is also unwise; like the incorrect 'correction' of spelling mistakes, essays are sometimes updated so incoherently that the updating process decreases their relevance still further.

Now-a-days in developed countries computer is used to diagnose a disease. A newer process of operation has been invented by computer as an alternative of surgery. It is used to grind stones in normal pathological tests. Today Computer is used in the fields of agriculture in the developed countries. A farmer of America simply puts on the switch of the computer and gets everything done.⁴³

Where can we hunt the elusive golden-deer of peace? When we look at the developed countries, we have little hope seeing that they are being tickled by arms-competition.⁴⁴

Waffle

The minimum length requirement, artificial essay topics, lack of personal commitment and the quest for an appearance of competence all contribute to students having not much to say but having many words with which to do so, ensuring the ubiquity of waffle. Sentences tangential to the topic are sometimes inserted from other essays:

...The country roads get covered with mud and many of them turn impossible. Outdoor games and activities become difficult. My feeling was wonderful when I was thoroughly drenched. Life in a Bangladeshi village is, as a rule, dull and monotonous. The village people are simple, religious and conservative. They do not like to change with the changing condition of the world. The villagers may be classified under three main heads the rich, the middle-class and the poor labouring class.⁴⁵ [Italics added]

⁴¹ p.576 (*Population Problem of Bangladesh*), Chowdhury & Hossain. [500 Crores = 5 billion]

⁴² p.193 (Essay 94, *Beggars and Begging*), Rohel

⁴³ p.584 (*Computer*), Chowdhury & Hossain

⁴⁴ p.164 (Essay 39, *War & Peace*), Zakir

⁴⁵ p.30 (Paragraph 24, *The Rainy Season*), Shahidul Islam

Blatant waffle, like blatant inaccuracy, is relatively easily highlighted and removed. In the long term, the native speaker may be more upset by the constant low level of waffle, like an aggravating background noise. The following introduction may illustrate this point:

*Traffic jam is a common affair in the big cities and towns. It is one of the major problems of modern time. The causes of traffic jam are many.*⁴⁶

Its effectiveness is bolstered in the context since it precedes a list of causes of traffic jams. It is not waffle in the sense of off topic material that has been added. The regular reader of Bangladesh essays will recognise it as one of the typical introduction formulae: “*X is a common affair in Y. X is a major {problem, blessing,...}. The {causes, kinds...} of X are many.*” Much of what seems like waffle is a necessary consequence of such an impoverished approach to essay writing – one that is fostered not only by the formulaic nature of the essays themselves, but directly encouraged by the ‘*Accordance with the given model*’ section shown above.

Wordiness abounds. Essays are replete with redundant words: ‘*Summer season*’ replaces ‘*Summer*’, ‘*red colour*’ replaces ‘*red*’, ‘*big in size*’ instead of ‘*big*’ etc. Unnecessarily verbose and obscure grammatical forms are used when simpler alternatives exist.

*Goats are small but of various kinds and colour. They are black, brown and of mixed colours. They are two kinds in sex – he goat and she-goat.*⁴⁷

Many essays shun pronouns, linking phrases, and other ways of improving readability that might damage the all important word count.

*People who live in our society are known as neighbours. They are not alike. Some of my neighbours are rich, some are poor; some are educated and some are illiterate. Their occupations are not also alike. There are some government employees, teachers, doctors in our village. Some of my neighbours are farmers, some are businessmen and some of them are day labourers.*⁴⁸

As with repetition, a good strategy for tackling waffle is to ask the students to translate their essays into Bengali – or even better to do it yourself, if possible. Sometime this has evoked gales of laughter, indicating that students correctly identified the wasted words.

*We can further explore the uses of adversity in life. The world is very complicated. Our interaction with the society and the environment is, consequently, vary sophisticated. Here, we must proceed towards the future in light of the experience we gathered in the past. A complete stranger in any time-bound socio-political system cannot but get shocked at the crudeness of reality. That is why one needs to bravely face – and, if possible, overcome – adversities. The manly confrontation of what we call adversity give us experience and strength. Such experience produces in us an awareness of what may occur in life. Thus we can get prepared in advance to take the challenge of any incident that may come later. The result is inevitable; we can adapt ourselves to any kind of situation.*⁴⁹

Waffle cannot be explained as wandering off the topic without assuming that some of the essay at least has a coherency and purpose from which to wander. It is intimately connected to my deepest

⁴⁶ p.270 (Essay ?, *Traffic Jam*), Chowdhury & Hossain

⁴⁷ p.228 (Essay 112, *Goats in Poverty Alleviation*), Rohel

⁴⁸ p.28 (Paragraph 50, *Your Neighbours*), Mannan

⁴⁹ pp.257-258 (Essay 69, *Sweet are the Uses of Adversity*), Mannan

personal objection to the Bangladeshi essays: their *pointlessness*. The truth is that language is used largely for appearance's sake, with an exceedingly casual relationship to reality. The essay above continues:

*The conducive effect of the experience of adversities extends itself to national life as a whole. History promulgates the extraordinary success of those nations which have undergone harsh realities and bravely faced them. It is, undoubtedly, their brave confrontation of the adversities that has made them fit for the sweet results they are enjoying now.*⁵⁰

Pointlessness

The frequency with which they state the obvious suggests that sentences are included to exemplify the meaning of new words and phrases. As scaffolds on which to hang new words and phrases, essays are basically exercises in language for its own sake.

*Ours is a happy family and I wish it to prosper day in and day out.*⁵¹

With no clear target audience, they are a monologue straight from the students to the classroom dustbin. It is surely no coincidence that while most students are very interested in their marks, few are interested in receiving essays back. Outside of the academic framework they have no purpose at all. Even within it, since only grammar is marked, their meaning is utterly irrelevant. This, I believe, teaches students a lesson more fundamental and more disturbing than the stylistic issues highlighted above, any of which can be corrected for – or at least overlooked. It teaches them that they have nothing to say which is of interest. It teaches them that writing essays is, in a word, pointless.

Of course the essay books themselves have a point, or they would not be produced and sold. The interests of the following groups are all reflected in the Bangladeshi essay books:

Party	Interest
Original authors (19 th Century?)	Moral education/indoctrination
Publishers/later authors/copiers	Easy money
Officialdom in General	Indoctrination of subservience
Fluent English Users	Preservation of privilege
Advertisers	Access to youngsters
Examiners	Control, Ease of examination
Teachers	Ease of teaching/marking
Parents	Perceived benefit for children
Children	Simplistic learning, Feeling of progress

The provenance of many of these essays is an interesting topic of investigation. The morally improving subject and archaic turns of phrase suggest that a comparison of with UK essay books from the Victorian era might prove informative. The titles of many of the essays give a clue to their original purposes, as tools to instil upright thoughts in young minds: *What I did for The Poor Villagers Last Year, Humanity is a Great Virtue*.

⁵⁰ p.258 (Essay 69, *Sweet are the Uses of Adversity*), Zakir

⁵¹ p.52 (Essay 39, *My Family*), Ullah

Obedience to officially sanctioned authorities is lauded in general, especially to school and country. Topics include *Necessity of Learning English, How to Become A Good Student, Obedience to Parents.*

*I love all the teachers and students of my class. I enjoy all the periods of my class. I also love the environment and situation of my classroom. To me my classroom is the best one. I must be aware about the rules and regulations of the class all the time.*⁵²

Whether or not the emphasis on discipline and moral improvement had the desired effect on the children and on society at large, it seems to have made a deep impression on the writers (and re-writers) of essay books. Essays are often imbued by crude but fervent, even fanatical efforts to imbue students with a love of regularity, obedience and discipline.

*If I want to prosper in life I must follow a daily time-table. Every human being has a daily time-table of work. He should do my daily duties regularly. Nobody can prosper in life without a time-table. I am a student of class ix. I want to do something special in my life, so I follow a time-table regularly.*⁵³

During the time of British rule, fluency in English was a ticket to wealth and status for the Bengalis who possessed it. What is more, it could also be passed down so descendants could also enjoy privileged access to foreigners, provided of course that the skill did not become too widespread. Whilst the precise political circumstances of Bangladesh have undergone violent change repeatedly since the end of colonial rule, the basic pattern remains. Foreign favour is limited and extremely lucrative, explaining some parties' satisfaction with the current nature of Bangladeshi essay books. Whilst the large vocabulary used allows hard working students to understand English instructions, the practice of rote learning inaccurate essays hampers fluent self-expression in English whilst undermining the desire to do so.

The inclusion of advertisers in the list of interested parties is admittedly somewhat speculative, but would explain the appearance amidst some more traditional essays of a few highly partisan paragraphs on such as *Fantasy Kingdom, or How My Family Are Benefitted by NGO.*

Memorising essays is a small but indicative part of the modern Bangladeshi school system, which is rife with 'opportunities for advantage'. Centring teaching on essay books opens up rich room for discussion about *which* books, as well as decreasing the standard of English required for teachers, thus increasing the options for who can be appointed whilst boosting demand for private coaching.

English amongst parents is rarely sufficient to allow them to appreciate the shortcomings of Bangladesh essay books. Those with knowledge of English have little idea of niceties such as collocation, connotation or stylistic points. However, Bengali has a huge vocabulary, so familiarity with long words and phrases is a skill that is well understood by Bangladeshi children, parents and examiners alike. Even illiterate parents can tell the difference between short or long words, so to the uncritical eye, Bangladeshi essay books appear to offer sufficient progression in teaching. They represent a 'lowest common denominator' of English teaching.

Bangladeshis set great store by English, and essay books are firmly established in the popular understanding as an important route to this exclusive skill. It is most unfortunate that their users have no way of knowing the extent to which they mangle and abuse the conventions of English as used outside of Bangladesh, or the extent to which they eclipse the most important function of essay writing – developing the capacity for critical thinking and independent self-expression.

⁵² p.308 (Composition 28, *My Classroom*), Shahidul Islam

⁵³ p.222 (?), Chowdhury & Hossain

Tackling ‘Essay Book Style’

A good first step is to awaken students to the shortcomings of essay books. Flawed though they are, the level of English in Bangladesh essay books often exceeds that of the teachers who rely on them, so while aware of the occasional grammatical error, few students have any idea just how riddled with mistakes most of the books actually are. Even more seriously, stylistic points are almost never picked up on, at least at the school level. They could not be, since the majority of teachers, reared on essay books themselves, are totally unaware of them.

By contrast, there is a lot of awareness of the problems of learning by heart, and of an exam-based curriculum, as witnessed by the below essay from an essay book:

English that most students learn is very poor. Various studies have shown that most university students of the country cannot write even a good paragraph in English... The traditional curriculums of all levels up to the university are poorly constructed. Students aim to pass rather than learn. Methods of student evaluation also lack merit because they discourage learning and encourage selective memorizing.⁵⁴

However, do not be misled by the encouraging sound of this essay; it should be borne in mind that it occurs in a book with the following short message on its back cover:

Read only this book.
It provides you with
excellent essays and
tactics for memorizing
them. Read it and
snatch away your
coveted marks/grades.

Whilst many educationalists work hard to cultivate an appearance of more progressive models of education, huge numbers⁵⁵ of them have vested interests in maintaining the status quo. To be fair, self-interest may not even be the major factor here. Schooled in academic hothouses themselves, most teachers identify academic success with rote learning for old style exams. Few have the imagination needed to conceive of what education might mean outside of this framework, far less the courage to try it out in a traditional culture hostile to such radical reformist notions.

Students who have spent a lot of effort memorising Bangladeshi essays may feel a commitment to them, so sensitivity is required when raising the issue of their shortcomings. Ironically, you may find the traditional Bengali notion that ‘today’s teacher is always right’ gives you authority to challenge these sacred cows. However, do not underestimate the difficulty of awakening the scepticism and critical thinking needed to overcome years of indoctrination and begin to see essay books in a new light. Memorising essays maybe as boring as it is demeaning, but it is also not intellectually demanding.

An adept choice of topics should help lead students away from old habits of relying on stock formulae from half-remembered essays. The range of essay book titles is not broad, so familiarising yourself with it should help you avoid inadvertently setting a trap for your students by giving them a topic reminiscent of one they have learnt off by heart. In general, personal and contemporary topics are more likely to lead them away from regurgitation of old material and towards the potentially exciting new area of their own creative thinking.

⁵⁴ pp.296-297 (Essay 84, *The Status of Teaching and Learning English in Bangladesh*), Zakir

⁵⁵ The same essay claims that “lakhs [100,000’s] of coaching centres... are offering various courses in English.”

Introductions

The general approach of the Bangladeshi essay book separates the form of essays from their function. One reflection of the essential *pointlessness* of these essays is the stilted nature of their introductions. With no target audience, 'introducing the topic' becomes a nonsense. A standard recourse exists for topics which consist of more than one word. This is to fall back on a trivial syntactic discussion:

*The morning in the winter seasons is called winter morning.*⁵⁶

This formula for padding out introductions is standard, even if it has minimal explanatory power or if the meaning of the topic has already been clearly explained.

*Load shedding means discontinuations of the supply of electricity. It is a process taken by the authority to shed the load of the electricity.*⁵⁷

Quite often its triviality is covered by an exaggerated veneer of self-important verbiage.

A reading room plays a vital role in the life of an educated person. Specifically, it is mostly essential for the students. Without a reading room, a student cannot go on studying in a planned manner.

Now, what is a reading room? A reading room is a specially separate room for a learner where he can persue his studies to meet his thirst of knowledge.

*The importance of a reading room cannot be denied. Reading makes a man perfect. And it is the reading room that parves the way for studies, studies instill in human being the quality of humanity. Without humanity a man is not a man in the reaj sense of the term. So, a reading room for every human being is a must.*⁵⁸

This bombast covers over the waffle that besets these essays. Whilst lacking somewhat in coherence, such introductions do at least give a flavour of the peculiar style that is to follow.

*The world is a global village. It has an environment with many disasters. Human beings are members of this globe. They want to have their suitable, natural and happy existence here in the global world. The threat is prodigious that a singl country cannot tackle it. The world is well aware of it and various measures are under way to cope up with any unforeseen disaster.*⁵⁹

To the native speaker, such a formulation is as pompous and clichéd as it is unclear, but to an audience of aspiring young English students, schooled on essay books and hungry to increase their vocabulary, it is right on target.

⁵⁶ p.16 (Paragraph 28, *A Winter Morning*), Mannan

⁵⁷ p.19 (Paragraph 24, *Load Shedding*), Mannan

⁵⁸ p.? (Essay?, *Reading Room?*), Chowdhury & Hossain?

⁵⁹ p.273 (Essay 136, *A Threat to Global Security*), Rohel

Reasoning

Bangladeshi Essay books make efforts to follow the external appearance of English essays, whilst the reality of their substance is often degraded. The convention of writing in paragraphs, for example, is obeyed, but the paragraphs themselves often lack both coherence and logic. This aspect of essay book style is so insidious that heavy exposure to essay books can render the native speaker almost insensitive to it, since the natural tendency is to adjust one's expectations. One Bangladeshi commentator makes the following helpful, if exaggerated remark about his compatriots' style: *When they write any composition, they simply heap up their sentences in a jumbled way. As a result, their composition always lacks in coherence. In fact, a composition is not a haphazard string of unrelated sentences*⁶⁰.

*AIDS is spreading like jungle fire all over the world and is taking its toll. The youngsters of today are getting themselves addicted to drugs and pre-marital sex. Women are also falling victims to this fatal and deadly disease for illegal sexual intercourse with others. Lack of sexual knowledge is also responsible for AIDS. It is hard to cure AIDS.*⁶¹

Sometimes the essayist's craft is so debased that it is hard to tell whether or not a logical argument is actually being put forward.

*Trees have a great impact on climate. A country needs trees to ensure a cool and healthy climate for her people. They induce rains and prevent air pollution. An area devoid of forests and trees will go barren and turn into a desert in course of time.*⁶²

Other essays have a much more fluent structure of reasoning, with sentences that flow together and even exhibit some notion of balance, or of a connection between syntax and semantics. The following example is one such, most unusual in its convincing use of a rhetorical question:

*Naturally, man is thirsty for peace. He believes in peace. Yet why do wars take place. Yet why do wars take place? Maybe man acquired some amount of beastliness from the struggles he had to do with wild animals and natural calamities in the ancient times. Or maybe some people are inherently beastlike by birth. But whatever the reason, though they want to disguise their beastlike nature under the costumes of modern education etiquettes and modesty, their real nature at times get disclosed. Then we see the primitive intransigent beast in him. Such people are always fond of destruction games. And war is an inevitable consequent of their wilful thoughts and desires.*⁶³

Unusual fluency of sentences notwithstanding, one senses that the author may be less concerned with expounding a logical argument than with the use of language for its own sake. This is a recurring theme of the Bangladeshi essay.

⁶⁰ p.i (Preface), Jaharul Islam

⁶¹ p.313 (Essay 154, *AIDS – A deadly Disease*), Rohel

⁶² p.50 (Composition 36, *The Importance Of Trees In Our Life*), Ullah

⁶³ p.163 (Essay 59, *War and Peace*), Zakir

Conclusions

Bengali culture does not favour the admission of failure or ignorance, so it is unsurprising that reservations are unusual and open questions are extremely rare in Bangladeshi essays. As a consequence, wishful thinking and – sometimes charmingly naïve – *oversimplifications* abound in the concluding sections of essay books.

*Only a few steps can save the country from the curse of traffic jam. By appointing more but sufficient traffic police, applying strict traffic rules, allowing licenced vehicles and expert drivers, making sufficient road, traffic jam can be solved.*⁶⁴

Echoing the essays themselves, conclusions are definitive and display an optimistic mood. No story is too complex to be told within a couple of pages, no mystery too difficult to be solved. The preferred content for conclusions is a summary of opinions to be held and actions to be performed. The traditional style is so bombastic as to be more reminiscent of political rhetoric, as if the writer were concluding a rousing speech, exhorting listeners to selfless furtherance of the greater good.

*To conclude the roles of women in child development are crying needs. So they should be allowed to develop themselves and their posterity will take over the reigns of the land and the nation. We can under no circumstances neglect or deny the role of a woman in child development.*⁶⁵ [*Italics added – ending in the title of the essay is a common cadence.*]

Such admonishments are rarely found at the end of simple personal accounts, where *generalisation* provides an alternative to such opinionated rhetoric. Summarising the main body of the essay is less important than the use of climactic language. The ‘Journey By Bus’ essay starts with the claim that “Bus is a wonderful invention of science and technology⁶⁶” but provides no further reference to this until the conclusion:

*A journey by bus is both interesting and pleasing. It is not so costly. It is the speedy vehicle on land. People can go to their goals so easily by bus. It is a blessing of science. However, the impact of the journey will remain ever fresh in my mind.*⁶⁷

Their occurrence as titles of other essays explains the writers’ predilection for certain words and phrases. Conclusions, alas, are not free of the low level of waffle that is such a feature of Bangladeshi essays.

*It is the loveliest of all the seasons, so visiting my village during the rainy season I enjoyed a journey by boat from one place to another.*⁶⁸ [*Italics added*]

The final sentence of conclusions is somewhat less random than the others. Bangladeshi English letters use a range of highly formal (and generally archaic) structures, and are often in the same books as English essays. The assumption therefore, that essays must be concluded in a similarly formulaic fashion is as natural as it is fallacious.

*This visit to the moon will remain refresh in my memory for ever.*⁶⁹

⁶⁴ p.270? (Essay ?, *Traffic Jam*), Chowdhury & Hossain?

⁶⁵ p.246 (Essay 121, *The Role of Women in Child Development*), Rohel

⁶⁶ p.15 (Essay 8, *A Journey by Bus*), Rohel

⁶⁷ p.16 (Essay 8, *A Journey by Bus*), Rohel

⁶⁸ p.31 (Paragraph 24, *The Rainy Season*), Shahidul Islam

⁶⁹ p.2 (Paragraph 1, *Visit to the Moon*), Shahidul Islam

The most common concluding sentence for personal narrative is about how fresh the memory will stay in the writer's mind.

*The journey in my heart I bore. It gave me much pleasure. It was one of the most memorable days in my life indeed.*⁷⁰

Minor variations on this theme are allowed. The next essay in the book features a token effort in this direction:

*The journey in my heart I bore. It gave me much pleasure. It gave me much pleasure. Indeed it was one of the most memorable days in my life.*⁷¹

Overcoming Bad Essay Writing Habits

Rote learning of incorrect essays means that *inaccuracy* is one of the hardest of the bad habits to break. A lot of effort and exposure to authentic language will be needed if learners are to overcome inaccuracy ingrained by a childhood exposed to highly inaccurate English.

One positive side effect of emphasising accuracy is that this may serve to stem writers' love of *grandiloquence*. This, together with *exaggeration* stems in part from frustration with the menial nature of the task, from its essential *pointlessness*. Escaping somewhat from the academic framework is absolutely necessary here; if the work done has no function external to the student-teacher relationship, its artificiality will inevitably frustrate any efforts to imbue it with real meaning. The phrase '*target audience*' is almost unknown, but will occur naturally once work done is enlivened with any purpose other than mere training and grading of students. Since this requires relationships with life outside of the educational institution, systematic advice on this would be unhelpful. Instead, I offer an example: I encouraged my students to develop material of practical benefit for foreigners, so that I could post it on the Internet⁷².

When writing from personal experience, students rarely use *obsolete* language, whilst *obscurity* too is not a great problem if they maintain an awareness of writing for a particular purpose, rather than writing for its own sake.

If motivated to do so, such as by imposing a maximum word limit, *repetition* is one of the easiest problems for students to detect and tackle. The need to combine repetitive sentences can provide a good motivation for grammatical teaching, giving students practical techniques with which to start to overcome bad habits. *Waffle* is another obvious consequence of the minimum word limit, so a natural approach is to set a maximum rather than a minimum length (provided, of course, that the problem of pointlessness has been tackled).

Careful, critical reading exposes the *oversimplification* and *overgeneralization* in which so many Bengali essays are steeped. The essays are especially dishonest about schooling and order in general, so a couple of more crass examples should serve to alert students to the need to correct such problems in their own writing.

⁷⁰ p.564 (*A Journey by Boat*), Chowdhury & Hossain

⁷¹ p.565 (*A Journey by Train*), Chowdhury & Hossain

⁷² At www.bdesh.info

*The lives of all great men teach us to be punctual and do our respective duties in proper time.*⁷³

Such habits will undoubtedly persist as long as students aim to write essays not to accurately reflect reality, but to cover over its less palatable aspects. These matters are far from straightforward. Bengalis may be slow to grasp that whilst it may be embarrassing to admit that a truth is of limited use, it is still generally preferred in English essay writing that making exaggerated claims of its validity.

The language of qualification is an essential tool to accompany such critical thinking. If they can begin to say 'one reason' instead of 'the reason', and to insert warning phrases such as 'mostly', 'generally' etc. students are a long way towards tackling problems of oversimplification and sweeping generalisation so common in their essays.

In Praise of Banglish Essays

After such a criticism of Bangladesh essays, I am motivated to write a little something in their favour. In spite of their many problems, many possess a peculiar charm. Aping Bangladeshi society as a whole, attitudes to things modern and Western are often appallingly credulous and naïve. However, Bengali discourse on topics such as the family or community, even in English, sometimes exudes a robustness and coherency no longer evident in 'developed' countries.

*My village is not an ideal village, but day by day its economic and socio-cultural conditions are improving. The memory of my childhood is inseparably tied with every aspect of that village, especially with the nourishing nature and tonic environment. That is why I love it with all its people very much. Above all, it is part of my life.*⁷⁴

The shortcomings of the essay books all have their counterparts. Misspellings, for example, are only misspellings by dint of newfangled notions that words have to be spelled in one way⁷⁵. Similarly, the oversimplification and inaccuracy of the Bangladeshi reflects a different world; the Western techno-civilization project, to the Bengali, is needlessly complex and accurate. Some of the language in essay books is as creative and florid as it is superfluous, so its blanket condemnation as 'waffle' would be narrow minded and overly utilitarian.

Just as surely as they shape the English of the next generation of Bangladeshis, essay books communicate the worldviews of the previous one. A collection of essay books of various vintages would reward the socio-linguist. The modifications made by Bengalis to texts originally written by English native speakers could provide a rich resource of information from which to observe a fusion of two cultures.

The devoted visitor to Bangladesh will know of her people's ability to sing about life, to experience it in a more visceral, less cerebral fashion than the typical Westerner. Whilst not easily captured in words at all, older rather than more modern English is certainly better suited for the task.

It came into my sight that many other big and small birds were singing to greet the spring morning; with that melodious sound was mixing the rhythmic beats of the coconut leaves

⁷³ p.? (Essay?, Punctuality), Chowdhury & Hossain

⁷⁴ p.90 (Essay 16, *My Village*), Zakir

⁷⁵ In Bengali, quite a lot of words have two or more common spellings, just as they used to in English in centuries past.

that were blithely quivering in the air. I realized the truth that spontaneity has a specific rhythm and rhyme of its own, and that natural emotion has a normal playful pace, though it behaves like a wayward butterfly flying in a not-so- strong whirlwind. I realized that it is a pleasure to sing out in unison with nature's concert. I was beyond myself with ecstatic feeling.

I was only moving my eyes around, spell-bound, New sight adorned the environment all around. There was a jovial vivacity in the eyes. I saw that innumerable bees were sharing amorous hugs with thousands of wild flowers. Will they only gather honey today? No. Perhaps some purposeless merry-making tickled them much during that golden morning.⁷⁶

Amidst the poorly printed, inaccurately copied pages of Bangladeshi essay books lurk thoughts that are unusual, even fey to the Western mind. The English essay books of Bangladesh can never be fully understood in Western terms, and such a claim would be unworthy. Like the Banglish language itself, they have become a law unto themselves.

⁷⁶ pp.188 (Essay, *A Spring Morning*), Zakir

Bibliography

1. *The Status of Teaching and Learning English in Bangladesh*, Zakir Hussain
2. *A Handbook of Paragraph Writing*, Jaharul Islam, Aligraph Library, Dhaka, 2000.
3. *Selected Essays for Students of Degree (Pass and Subsidiary) O Level, Intermediate and BCS Exams* (S.M. Zakir), 4th Edition, September 2003, Gyankosh Prokashoni, Dhaka
4. *Selected Essays for Advanced Learners* (Md. Safiur Rahman), 2nd Edition, October 2004, Rohel Publications, Dhaka.
5. *Computer 300 Words Compositions, Letters & Unseens for classes IX-X* (M. Shahidul Islam), Revised Edition, January 2004, Mizan Library, Dhaka
6. *Essential Essay Letter Application & Paragraph* (M. A. Mannan), Mousumi Prokahoni, Dhaka
7. *A Potential Communicative English Grammar & Composition for Classes-IX & X* (Md. Khalil Ullah), 5th Edition, March 2005, Shupti Prokashoni, Dhaka
8. *My Essays and letters, with Paragraph Writing & Comprehension 250 Words*, (P. C. Bhattacharyya & Md. Nurul Hoque), Revised and Enlarged New Edition, Students' Library, Barisal

Appendix: Some Essays From Bangladeshi Essay Books

A Spring Morning⁷⁷

Normally, I do not become much astonished or thrilled at anything when I get up from bed, get tickled by no extraordinary emotional appeal. Because as soon as I rise up, I loose my dreams; even the remotest feeling of dreams wither away at the presance of too much consciousness. But as soon as I woke up the other morning, I was startled. what an extraordinary feeling! Though I woke up, my dreams, as it Were, were not gone. Various birds were chittering all around, doves were cooing, cuckoos calling from amidst undetectably covered branches of trees. New leaves were visible suring the winter. There was a smell of warmth in the air. Something seemed to have touched my heart, my dreams, my imagination. I breathed out spontaneously:

O, what is this?
Mysterious and uncapturable bliss
That I have known, yet seems to be
Simple as a breath and easy as a smile,
And older than the earth.

Even after my awakening, I seemed to have entered into another dreamy realm of wakefulness. The mango-trees were in bloom, The southern wind with its touching warmth came floating over the garden on the other side. The inertis due to the long-lasting winter were gone. It was nothing but the spring , I could easily understand.

In such a morning there should be no repentence even if one happens to wake up earlier by mistake. Sleep can easily be sacrificed to enjoy such a beautiful morning. The much-familiar environment around looked new. To which ever direction I looked, it seemed to me that some hidden initiatives were being taken by someone stealthily to bring about a drastic change in nature. The sky was bathd in vermillion. Lively freshness was was ostensibly visible on new green leaves. Thousands of flowers adorned the morning all around. A mysterious reddish layer encircled the horizon. The sky held up an upturned image of itselfon the transparent water of the nearby lake. Domestic animalswere wearing a mask of mundane smile over their faces. Everything satisfied my eye.

All of a sudden I caught sight of several girls on the roof of a neighbour house. They wore yellow sarees, some golden flowers woven in to their hair. Several yellow birds flew over their heads, calling loudly – tee tee tee.

O, was that all a sight, or just a feeling! was that any reality, or just an accidental extrovert reflection of my own imagination?

Slowly walked I down, like a bewitched soul; on my hypnotized legs. I took my stand in my garden. So much sound! Such a wonderful combination of sounds of so many tones! That very morning was, as it were, a poem, a full-fledged poem reflecting all the tenderest moments of the inner self. The mind was perhaps awaiting something thrilling. Perhaps it took much delight in being startled. suddenly there came into my hearing some sounds – Coo, Ku, Ku. I was startled really! Because I had been awaiting this very event during the last part of the year.

It came into my sight that many other big and small birds were singing to greet the spring morning; with that melodious sound was mixing the rhythmic beats of the coconut leaves that were blithely

⁷⁷ pp.186-188 (Essay, *A Spring Morning*), Zakir

quivering in the air. I realized the truth that spontaneity has a specific rhythm and rhyme of its own, and that natural emotion has a normal playful pace, though it behaves like a wayward butterfly flying in a not-so- strong whirlwind. I realized that it is a pleasure to sing out in unison with nature's concert. I was beyond myself with ecstatic feeling.

I was only moving my eyes around, spell-bound, New sight adorned the environment all around. There was a jovial vivacity in the eyes. I saw that innumerable bees were sharing amorous hugs with thousands of wild flowers. Will they only gather honey today? No. Perhaps some purposeless merry-making tickled them much during that golden morning.

All of a sudden it occurred to me that I had my slipper on. I put them off. As soon as I put my bare feet on the bedewed grass, it seemed top me as it the spring had touched me. There was something human in that touch. That grass too had an emotion. I walked on it slowly. Why were the dew-drops touching me like that? Never before had I felt such an intimate touch of nature. I could feel that everything could be felt from within and from without.

That spring morning was a symbol of youth, of the spring itself, of the matured emotions of the heart. It had its beauty, smell, taste, its sound. As a result, it could be felt from within and from without. Could be seen, heard, smelt, and touched. This multi-dimensionality of the morning is never to be forgotten.

Value Of Time⁷⁸

We have a short span of life on thus earth. But we have a lot of things to do during this short time. So we can do a lot of things only when, we make good use of our time. Proper use of time makes a man happy and prosperous in life. So, we must not neglect or, while away our time in vain. Time once gone is gone forever. Lost wealth may be regained by hard labour, lost knowledge by studying hard, lost health by taking proper food and medicine but lost time can never be brought back by any means. It always goes on its way and waits for none. Only by utilizing every moment of our time perfectly, we can achieve success in any endeavour. If we leave anything for tomorrow, which we can do today, there is no guarantee that we shall be able to do it tomorrow. Everything must be done at its proper time. Otherwise it may never be done in the future. Days are passing out hastily and we are nearing our graves. So, present in the best time for us to make good use of. The success and failure in life depend largely on how we utilize our time. The lives of all great men teach us to be punctual and do our respective duties in proper time. Anything contrary to it will bring total failure and misery in life.

An Ideal Teacher⁷⁹

A teacher who devotes himself to the task of teaching his students is called an ideal teacher. An ideal teacher is a very important person in any society or, country. He dispels the darkness of ignorance from the minds of his students and enkindles the light of education in them. He helps his students in learning their lessons. Through his teachings he makes them clever and brings about a desirable change in their behaviour by developing their latent potentialities He teaches them to follow the path of truth and avoid the path of vice. An ideal teacher applies all his abilities and intelligence to build up the character of his students and to make them good and useful citizens of the country. He is in fact, a friend, philosopher and guide to the students. Moreover, he is thoroughly a sincere and an honest man. That is why he is considered one of the most important persons of the society and of the nation. He is also regarded as a guardian of civilization.

⁷⁸ pp.? (*Value of Time*), ?

⁷⁹ p.? (*An Ideal Teacher*), ?

Violence Syndrom In The World⁸⁰

Introduction: Violence results in misunderstanding might, power and a support by underground big guns. It is a serious problem. Domestic violence is regarded as worldwide problem. All countries of the world experience the barbarous custom of violence perpetrated by both men and women of all calibres whether at home, workplace, street, primitive jungles, areas steeped in the wars.

The Violence Syndromic countries: The domestic violence mainly prevails in the countries like Yugoslavia, Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh, India and China. The prevailing situation is severe and intractable.

Reasons: The brutality against women in different societies and some of the methods of society. The battered women have almost become an institution so vehement and obiquitous is the problem which in most cases goes unreported and unresolved due to matrimonial ties involving subtle deterrents like withdrawal of financial support, shame and propagandas.

Circumstances faced by battered women: The battered women have to face the circumstances like separation, surveillance, exhaustion and hunger, hostility and paranoia, chemical dependence, financial deprivation, discredit, insecurity, further battering, cycle of violence, sexual abuses, guilt and denial.

Different battering in different countries: Women have been battered, abused, murdered, beaten, killed and what not for different reasons in the following countries- 95% abused in France, 60% murdered in England, 62% murdered by their husband in Canada, in Bangladesh 50% women were killed by men. In Beijing there is concern about the frequency of domestic violence, in Chinese families amounting to two thirds of Chinese households.

Reasons behind domestic violence: There are a few reasons behind this violence syndrome. Man is by nature sex-oriented, self-centred, greed, malicious and rapacious as well.. Some cohabit with more than one woman or girl at a time. They find an interest when they find a chance of enjoying an opposite sex physically. Dowry system and barbarious character lead them to commit violence domestically.

Nature of the violence syndrom: Violence syndrome or domestic violence does not belong to the same category or nature. It differs from man to man, taste to taste, country to country on geographical situations and climatic conditions. Rape is a common outrage against women and young girls and even babies committed by fathers. In south Africa, one woman is raped every 90 seconds and six women in the USA every six minutes. Sexual harassment is another favourite abuse. In the workplace bosses demand sexual favours in exchange of career advancement or job security. In Asian countries like India and Bangladesh women fall victims to homecide and infanticide because of poverty which forces families to indulge in selective nurishment in favour of the boys who are used to work in the fields by virtue of superior strength. In India, boys are preferred to girls and women are made ashamed to bear girls.

Dangers of violence: Domestic violence is not at all danger-free. Excessive sexual abuse brings about a heavy loss on character, finance and social status. It also creates health problems, trauma, infections and uterine retention.

Solutions to domestic violence: Domestic violence is a worldwide problem. Its solution or eradication is a crying need. To prevent domestic violence the following suggestions can be accepted. Since man is a rational and considerate being, awareness of its danger should be created among men of all nations. Everyone should keep himself aloof from inhuman, unsocial, irreligious works. Unlawful activities should be discouraged from all walks of life. The lady killer or lady hunter should be severely punished and fined at any cost. Everybody's target should be to build up a fine heritage of lofty idealisms. Spousal abuse should be stopped so that it cannot involve itself in humiliation, economic problem and physical brutality. There should be no pressure to abort girls before prenatal testing. Dowry death should be removed by making people conscious of it.

Conclusion: Domestic violence is a crime. It destroys peace and harmony. It should not be allowed to cut across all racial, cultural, political and religious spectrums.

⁸⁰ pp.233-235 (Essay 115, *Violence Syndrom in the World*), Rohel

The Child is Father of Man (Wordsworth)⁸¹

The purport of the above aphorism is that the potential and possibility of tomorrow's man is latent in today's child. In other words, it is his childhood which shows what kind of a man the child will be in the future.

Just as the morning shows the day, so the childhood shows the ensuing manhood.

The epigram can be interpreted in two ways. If a man is destined to be great or notorious in future, it can be understood by observing his childhood behaviour; and the other possible interpretation is that, the way a child is brought up determines what he will become in the future. Obviously, the two interpretations are based on two completely opposite angles of view, the first being based on the belief in fate, and the second on the notion that man is the architect of his own fate. Necessarily, we shall explore into both the angles of view.

Examples abound, with exceptions however, in support of the first point of view. That the greatest prophet Hazrat Muhammad (Sm) would be a prophet in the future had been implied by his childhood conduct. Edison was the *inventor Edison* from his very boyhood. The poet Rabindranath demonstrated himself in his early boyhood. Marconi and James Watt evinced great enthusiasm in scientific things when they were children. The great composer Beethoven showed his creative talent in his early boyhood. Thus many other examples can be cited in support of the claim that a great man begins to be great from his very childhood.

The opposite point of view—that how a child is brought up determines what he will be in future—seems to be more practicable and scientific. Man is the architect of his own fate. Not only that, what a man will be or achieve largely depends on what input is instilled in him in the childhood. If, for example, a child is brought up in an educated environment, where he is provided with all possible facilities to exploit and flourish his talent fully, then, it may be hoped. He will become a very valuable and big man in the future, if not in the extreme sense. If, on the other hand, he, instead of being brought up that way, would be brought up in a crude environment full of crimes corruption haughtiness or such inhumane situations, then most probably he would become a not-so-good or useless or harmful man, if not notorious in the extreme sense. In these days of science and research, the truth of these statements is proven, and they are not mere theoretical hypotheses. So we may repeat with emphasis that we can expect a good man out of a well-brought-up child. In fact, the child is father of the man.

My Idea Of A Good Teacher⁸²

A good teacher is the person who is committed to work for building his nation. I know a good teacher named Mr. N. Haq. His is B.A. B-Ed. He is fond of his young children. An ideal or good teacher is fond of his young learners and helpful to them in making their lesson interesting and preparing their house work. He always keeps them busy in the class and helps them enjoying playful games too. He or she advises them to follow the foot prints of the great men. Teaching is a noble and honourable profession and he lives ideal lives.

⁸¹ pp.259-260 (Essay 70, *The Child is father of man - Wordsworth*), Zakir

⁸² p.7 (My idea Of A Good Teacher), Mannan

The Fantasy Kingdom⁸³

Now-a-days, “The Fantasy Kingdom” is the dream world in children’s heart. Yesterday I went to ‘Ashulia’ where “The Fantasy Kingdom” is situated with my parents. There I watched so many charming things that I could not count then in number. However, I can mention the names of few things which fascinated me very much. They are planes, sports circle, the flying train etc. Riding on the flying train was the best enjoyment for me. I lost myself in the air while I was riding on the flying train. How jubilant I was in the fantasy Kingdom, can not be expressed in brief. My feelings of amusement is unlimited. In our country children do not get. Attractive parks and enough facilities for recreation according to their absolute demands. So, I think that the fantasy Kingdom is very effective for the children. If a child visits, as per my opinion his hidden talent will be flourished. It was Friday. So, we had no hasty. We stayed there for about three hours from 10am to 12.45 p.m. The enjoyment of my visit to the fantasy kingdom will remain fresh forever in my memory.

How My Family Are Benefitted By NGO⁸⁴

NGO’s are playing an important role for the sustainable development of the country. Most of the helpless, vulnarable and landless poor people of the coutry are the beneficiaries of the NGO’s of Bangladesh. My father was a landless farmer and our family was a poor family. For this our family falls in a target group of a NGO. There are many NGO’s in our locality, but our family gets the benefit of Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC).

There is a branch of BRAC and a BRAC School in our village. The branch starts it activities from 1990. It has some community organizers. When BRAC sets up the branch in our village, the community organizers offer the villagers to participate in its development activities. At first they advised my father to form a five members group to be the beneficiary group or target group members. My father forms such kind of group. After forming it, BRAC starts to provide its facilities.

BRAC is a welfare organization. As a welfare organization it provides some facilities to us. My first primary education starts at BRAC Sattelite School. In 1992, I get myself admitted into this school. BRAC School provides all the elements of my reading and writing. It gives me books, pen, chalk etc. There I get a chance of three years reading facility.

My family gets some group facilities from BRAC. When my father forms a group to be the beneficiary group, BRAC starts to provide micro-credit facility to my father. At first BRAC give my father some 5000.00 Tk as loan. Taking this amount, my father sets up small shop infront our house. In this way my father gets the facility of doing a small business.

BRAC also provides us housing loan. For this we get the advantage to build up our houses. It also provides us sanitary latrine at free cost. In 1995 BRAC provides another 25 thousand taka as loan for business purpose. My father takes it and expaned his shop. Now our shop has become a departmental shop in our locality. It also becomes familiar and big shop. Now our family has become selfsufficient family. BRAC has not finished its facilities programmes. It also supply’s the seeds of hybride paddy. My father takes it from BRAC office with a low cost. BRAC has already started pisciculture in which there is a support of BRAC programme.

BRAC has opened the door of the development of our family. My education, my fathers business and to become selfsufficient of our family, there is a great contribution of BRAC. I hope that its programmes should be expanded.

⁸³ p.47 (Paragraph 38, *The Fantasy Kingdom*), Shahidul Islam

⁸⁴ pp.268-269 (Composition 9, *How My Family Are Benefitted By NGO*), Shahidul Islam

My School⁸⁵

Everybody has some particular place or thing for which he is proud. I have also a lot of things for which I am proud. My school is one of them. When I am alone and try to think about something my school comes first. I am telling about my school here.

The name of my school is Dulai High School. It is situated in the Upazilla of Sujanagar under the district of Pabna. It is a famous school of Pabna.

Our school was established in 1967. At first it was fully a tin-shed school. Later on it was built with bricks. Now the school building is three storeyed and there are thirty rooms in the building. It's an L-shaped building.

There are two thousand students and thirty teachers in our school. All of our teachers are efficient, qualified and experienced. Our Headmaster is a very wise man having vast knowledge and administrative efficiency.

Our teachers are very careful to us. They enter into the class in time and teach us well. We learn academic and extra academic lessons from them. Sometimes they make jokes in the class to make our lessons enjoyable. When anyone of us is sick they become very anxious. They always try to make our future glorious. We also respect them very much.

Our school compound is very nice. In front of it there is a big play ground. There are many big trees around our school which make our school like a garden.

Actually, my school always attracts me. As we were out going batch, most of the time I think how I will spend my time when I will leave my school. And I also think that my feelings about my school is a sign of deep love to my school.

Patriotism⁸⁶

Hints: ∝Introduction ∝Love for the Country ∝Why Should We Love ∝What Does It Do ∝What We Should Do to Our Motherland ∝Duty of a True Patriot ∝Conclusion

Introduction: Patriotism is a noble virtue. There is no man in this world but love his country. The man who has no love and regard for his motherland is called a traitor. So we should love our country.

Love for the Country: We should all love our country. A man who does not love his own country is an infidel. Everyone is familiar to the famous lines in which Sir Walter Scott says, "This is my own, my native land." A patriotic man loves his countrymen as brothers and sisters and if they are in troubles, he feels pain and does all he can to relieve their sufferings.

Why Should We Love: We live in our mother country. We are born in this land. We have blood connection with the country like mother. It also gives us food to eat so that we can live. For this we should love our country.

What Does It Do: Patriotism inspires a man to sacrifice his life for the sake of the motherland. A man without this quality is no better than a beast.

What We Should Do to Our Motherland: Love for the country is nothing but a vain sentiment if it is not translated into action. For all round development of the country we need to be sincere workers who are ready to sacrifice their comfort, happiness and even life.

Duty of a True Patriot: A true patriot has a great outlook. He loves his country more than his life. He has sincere love for his country and a keen desire to promote its progress and happiness.

Conclusion: In conclusion, we can mention that everybody should sacrifice his life for his country. Because it is our holy duty. For this we all have to be a patriot.

⁸⁵ pp.300-301 (Composition 25, *My School*), Shahidul Islam

⁸⁶ p.? (? , *Patriotism*), ?

A Sleepless Night Before Examination⁸⁷

It was a dark and gloomy night. The darkness gradually overshadowed everything just after the sunset. At about 6.30 I went to my reading room and devoted myself fully in study. As my examination was near at hand. I had been on my chair throughout the whole night in study. But I could not go on with my study all the time. I dozed in my chair and passed a sleepless night. I felt bored in my study. But as I was to sit for the examination the nextday, I was very anxious and worried. So I tried to study again and again. At times I had tea so that I could be stimulated dor a while to study for some more time. At last at 4.30 a.m. I could not keep myself awake and went on bed for just one and half an hour to sleep.

The Rainy Season⁸⁸

I live in Dhaka. During the last rainy season I visited my village, and I saw the condition of nature and life in a village during this season. At an interval of every two months, there appears a new season in Bangladesh. They are summer, the rainy season, autumn, the late autumn, winter, spring. The months of Asharh and Shraban indicates the rainy season. During this season the sky often remains cloudy. Violent blasts of wind blow. The sun remains hidden behind the clouds and it rains in torrents. Sometimes rain continues for days together. Tanks and pools that dry up in winter and summer are filled up again. Rivers gradually rise till they overflow their banks. Some places remain under water for the greater part of the season and appear to be vast sheets of water. Everywhere roads are covered with mud. In many villages one has to go about in boats. The lamndscape appears green. Dry leaves fall from trees and new ones sprout forth in their place. The country roads get covered with mud and many of them turn impossible. Outdoor games and activities become difficult. My feeling was wonderful when I was thoroughly drenched. Life in a Bangladeshi village is, as a rule, dull and monotonous. The village people are simple, religious and conservative. They do not like change with the changing condition of the world. The villagers may be classified under three main heads the rich, the middle-class and the poor labouring class. During the rainy season the life of the poor labouring class is miserable and the rich and middle-class pass time joyfully. The rainy season is the most important and useful season in our country. It is the loveliest of all the seasons, so visiting my village during the rainy season I enjoyed a journey by boat from one place to another.

⁸⁷ p.43 (Paragraph 34, *A Sleepless Night Before Examination*), Shahidul Islam

⁸⁸ p.30 (Paragraph 24, *The Rainy Season*), Shahidul Islam