



M. SHAMSUL HOQUE

MY BRITISH COUNCIL TALE

The British Council Bangladesh's Tell Your Tale Contest



Forty year ago, one afternoon, I received a brief message from the British Council.

The year was 1975 and I was assistant professor of English at Titumir College, having 15 years of experience in teaching English at different government colleges. I did my masters in English literature from Dhaka University in 1961 and without having any idea about what ELT was, began to teach the literary pieces and the grammar composition contents of the curriculum in the traditional way. Sadly, within my second year into the job, I began to realise that my students were learning the textbook contents in only the name of learning English, but they could hardly use the language to do any function in real life. I was goaded by my conscience into doing something, and that something came out of a 14 page write-up, showing the wastage that was happening in teaching English compulsorily at primary and secondary classes.

I did not know what to do with the write-up. Acting on impulse, I took it with a cover letter to the British Council. As I knew nobody there at the time, I left the envelope at the reception. In a week or so, one Mr. Johnson, education adviser to the British Council called my Principal, asking him to tell me to meet him. I went to the British Council, my heart in my mouth, and met Mr. Johnson and Mr. Phillips, the representatives. The meeting lasted only about 30 minutes, but its outcomes brought a sea of change in my life. After due process, I was given a study-award that enabled me to do a diploma in education in ELT at Exeter University (1976-77). The course sparked within me a lifelong interest in ELT.

From then on I never looked back.

Back home, I was transferred to TTCs, then to NCTB, and then deputed to Bangladesh Open University (BOU). I retired from the government service (1995) as a professor, but could not retire from my work, which I continue at BOU as an ELT adviser. The Council has sponsored my visits abroad to attend a number of short courses and seminars in ELT held in Leeds, Manchester, London, Oxford, Sheffield, Bangkok, Bangalore and Samarkand have specialised in materials development, teacher training and course development and delivery in ELT.

Since 1978 the government has started developing incrementally the new curriculums and textbooks, and ever since I have been involved in curriculum design and writing most of the English For Today books for grades 1-12. Besides, I was involved in developing most of the ELT books for BOU.

Currently I am Senior English Teaching Specialist at the Institute o Educational Development (IED), BRAC University, working mainly for the institute's professional development and innovative Nobodhara School programmes.

So all I am today has stemmed from that brief message I received from the British Council forty years ago.