

# Approach to Poetry in Curriculum: An Exploratory Study on the Introductory Poetry Courses of Different English Departments in Bangladesh

Kallol Bain<sup>1,\*</sup> 

This research analyses the syllabi of various English departments in Bangladesh to explore different approaches to poetry in academic studies. This study examines the syllabi of introductory poetry courses in the English departments of four major public universities in Bangladesh to understand how poetry and literature are introduced to first-year students for academic reading and critical appreciation from three perspectives: course design, course objectives, and content selection. The first-year curricula of Bachelor of Arts (BA) programmes across departments have been analysed to understand how introductory poetry courses are placed in the syllabus and how they serve as bridging courses for first-year students. Offering an overview of how poetry and its formal elements are introduced in foundational courses, this exploratory study should help clarify the different visions and missions of English departments in Bangladesh, even though they share the same field of interest. One of the significant findings of this research is that some universities use a similar course design, offering students a dedicated course on critical appreciation before a foundational course on poetry, prose, or drama. Another significant finding of this study is that factors such as poets' nationalistic identity, race, gender, and academic acceptance play a considerable role in inclusion or exclusion in course content across all these departments. This comparative research on syllabi aims to understand how introductory courses are designed to help students experience pleasure in reading poetry and to contextualise it through a critical, academic lens.

**Keywords:** poetry pedagogy, tertiary level English, critical pedagogy, de-westernisation, postcolonial studies, English studies in Bangladesh

## Introduction

According to the University Grants Commission (UGC; 2021), 50 public universities offer bachelor's degrees in various subjects and disciplines. Additionally, more than 100 private universities and three international universities currently have permission to provide higher education across multiple fields. A large number of these universities offer a BA (honours) degree in English, making the Department of English one of the most common departments at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. All these English departments primarily focus on the academic mode of studying literature, where the approaches, strategies and visions may vary from institution to institution. English, as a second language, is taught and learnt from the very first grade of school in the Bangladeshi school system. Before applying for higher studies in any English department in Bangladesh, a student must have completed 12 years of


academic study, during which English language and grammar courses are mandatory. Some literary texts (poems and short stories) are also included in secondary and higher secondary English syllabi. Still, these texts are mainly used as language-learning tools, since the primary focus of those English courses is on the foreign language and its grammar. On the other hand, all university-level English departments in Bangladesh mainly study literature, not the language. Here, one observation from the preface of *Making Connections: Responding to Literature* (A course book for English 102, University of Dhaka) can be quoted:

Our teaching experience has led us to the conclusion that our students of tertiary level are not prepared to deal with literature without a bridging course. Although they have studied English for twelve years, there has been very little emphasis on literature. Hence, apart from language barriers, students have to comfort the remoteness of foreign cultures and the challenge of a new

Bangladesh Journal of Educational Research, Vol. 12, No. 1, pp. 32-38

Print ISSN 2313-2515 Online ISSN 3080-6925

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3329/bjer.v12i1.87254>

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Publisher: Institute of Education and Research, University of Rajshahi  
<https://www.banglajol.info/index.php/BJER>

\* Corresponding Author: [bain\\_eng@diu.edu.bd](mailto:bain_eng@diu.edu.bd)

<sup>1</sup> Department of English, Daffodil International University

subject. (Ahmed, Alam, Farida, Khan & Sinha, 2014, p. v)

At most universities, the very first course in “literature” students encounter is an introductory poetry course. This pedagogical research explores the syllabi of introductory poetry courses in the English departments of four major public universities in Bangladesh to understand how poetry, as well as literature, is introduced to first-year students for academic reading and critical appreciation from three perspectives: course design, course objectives, and content selection.

This exploratory research focuses on the syllabi of the English departments at the University of Dhaka (DU), the University of Rajshahi (RU), the University of Chittagong (CU), and Jahangirnagar University (JU). This study compares the first-year curricula of four English departments to understand how the “Introduction to Poetry” course is placed in the syllabus and how it serves as a bridging course for first-year students. The main reason for selecting an introductory poetry course for this research project over an introductory prose or drama course is that most universities place “Introduction to Poetry” right before Introduction to Drama or Introduction to Prose. So, technically, “Introduction to Poetry” is the first course for most universities through which the first-year undergraduate students first encounter the academic mode of studying literature.

## Research Problem

Students in English departments in Bangladesh encounter the academic study of literature for the first time at the undergraduate level with an introductory course on poetry. Different English departments take different approaches to a foundational poetry course, varying in objectives, content, and overall curriculum design.

## Objectives

This research sought to pursue the following objectives:

1. To explore how different English departments in Bangladesh have different perspectives and objectives for the introductory poetry courses in the undergraduate curriculum.
2. To investigate the policy and strategy behind the selection of content of the introductory poetry courses of different English departments.
3. To find out how literary pieces outside of England have been incorporated into the course curriculum in a postcolonial context.

## Rationale

This study is essential for understanding how literary study (with a critical and academic approach) is contextualised in university classrooms. This research can serve as a tool for a better understanding of the current state of teaching and studying literature, as well as of overall literature pedagogy in Bangladesh.

## Methodology

This comparative study focuses on the syllabi (2018-2019 academic sessions) of the English department at the DU, the RU, the CU, and the JU. To obtain authentic information and critical insights on course objectives and content selection, three faculty members from DU, two from JU, one from RU, and one from CU have been consulted and interviewed. Due to time and logistical constraints, it was not possible to obtain opinions from multiple faculty members at universities such as RU and CU. All of these academicians’ statements and thoughts are quoted and paraphrased with their permission, and all serve as expert opinions in this study.

The main theoretical framework for this study draws on critical pedagogy as articulated by Freire (1970), which conceptualises education as a practice of freedom aimed at developing critical consciousness and challenging oppressive structures. The study also engages poetics through Aristotle’s (c. 335 BCE/1961) foundational *Poetics*, which establishes core principles of literary form and structure. For syllabus and curriculum design in literary studies, the work builds on Tyler (1949) and Taba (1962), which offer systematic approaches to organising educational content and learning experiences. Additionally, the postcolonial notion of de-westernisation is applied as a theoretical lens, informed by Said (1978) and the broader decolonial scholarship that critiques Western epistemological hegemony and seeks to recover marginalised knowledge systems.

The main reason for selecting these four universities for this research project among the fifty-one public universities in Bangladesh is that they are the only universities in Bangladesh to be run and conducted under the 1973 University Ordinance, which grants each of them sufficient autonomy and independence to design courses and programmes. Another justification for such sampling is that all four universities have a long history in this academic field.

## Limitations and Delimitations

This research covers only the English department’s first-year syllabi (2018-2019 academic sessions) at DU, RU, CU, and JU. Due to the limited scope, interviews with faculty members from RU and CU had to be conducted over the telephone. Though de-westernisation and postcolonialism do not function conventionally as a framework for this study, it draws on some fundamental aspects and ideas of postcolonialism. It works more as a lens for evaluating the content of introductory poetry courses at four universities. In other words, postcolonialism here is not used to construct a rigid theoretical model, but rather as a guiding perspective for critically examining which voices are prioritised in the syllabi and whether the selection of poets reflects a move beyond Eurocentric literary traditions.

## Literature Review

### *Poetry and Poetics*

Poetry is conventionally thought to be the earliest form of literature in the history of most civilisations. According to American author and critic Wolosky (2001), “Some studies have shown that poetry is synonymous with literature in many cultures across the world” (p. 16). This study is not about different definitions and the nature of poetry. Still, it is essential to foreground some fundamental aspects of poetry to help foster a better understanding of the challenges a student may face when encountering English poetry in the very first year of an undergraduate programme in the Bangladeshi context. As Wordsworth (1854) famously described, “Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity” (p. 668). According to Eagleton (2007), “Poetry is the chiselled marble of language. It is a paint-spattered canvas, but the poet uses words instead of paint, and the canvas is the reader” (p. 11).

So, poetic definitions of poetry kind of spiral in on themselves. An accessible definition of poetry can be rendered by simply looking at its form and its purpose. It will be helpful to understand the approaches Bangladeshi universities follow when introducing poetry in the classroom, and this is where poetics comes into play, setting poetic language and style apart from ordinary, day-to-day language and linguistic patterns. In the fourth century BCE, Aristotle (ca. 335 BCE/1895) successfully founded the discipline of poetics by accepting poetry as suitable for rational analysis and by establishing the main terms of debate that still define the field today. Poetics goes back to the Greek *poietikos*, which means “pertaining to poetry,” or literally, “productive or creative.” While poetry is evident in this word, it can be used to describe a deep study of any literary work. In this pedagogical study, the notions of poetics, aesthetics, and literariness are essential because they address fundamental aspects of poetry and literature. In this particular study, poetics is given as crucial as poetry because it incorporates theoretical concepts and notions of literature and poetry.

### *Syllabus and Curriculum for Literature Studies*

Two of the most used terms in the modern education system are “syllabus” and “curriculum”. Since the primary focus of this study is on introductory poetry courses at four institutions, addressing their strategies and approaches to poetry, as well as syllabus and curriculum design, is essential, given the missions and visions of these departments. This study is not about the definitions or differences between syllabus and curriculum. Before analysing a course’s content and objectives, it is helpful to focus on these two terms first. In general, a syllabus refers to the subject and the topics covered in the course of study.

On the contrary, curriculum refers to the knowledge, skills, and competencies students should learn during their studies. Kerr (1968) describes curriculum as the totality of planned and guided learning experiences provided by the

school, extending beyond any single subject and oriented toward the learner’s overall development. In contrast, the syllabus is typically defined as an outline of the specific topics and activities to be covered in a particular course or subject, functioning as a detailed plan within the broader curriculum (Nunan, 1988). A syllabus can serve as a guide for the teacher in charge and the students. It helps students understand the course in detail, why it is part of their course of study, and what expectations are placed on them, among others.

On the other hand, American critic and educationist Tony Monchinski (2010) explains “Curriculum is designed and defined as the guideline of academic content covered by an educational system while undergoing a programme” (p. 10). In a theoretical sense, curriculum refers to what an educational institution offers. Understandably, it has a broader scope that covers the knowledge, attitude, behaviour, manner, performance, and skills imparted or inculcated in a student. According to Malott and Porfilio (2014), “It (curriculum) is aimed at both physical and mental development of a student. So, curriculum can be seen as the overall learning experience that a student goes through during the entire course of study” (p. 8).

This study draws on the intersecting frameworks of critical pedagogy and postcolonial theory to examine the selection and presentation of poetry in the first-semester BA Honours syllabus across four universities. Critical pedagogy, as conceptualised by Paulo Freire, views education not as a neutral transmission of knowledge but as a profoundly political act that can either reproduce or challenge dominant ideologies (Freire, 1970). In the context of English departments, the syllabus plays a central role in shaping students’ cultural consciousness—what is taught, and, more importantly, whose voices are heard—becomes a matter of critical inquiry.

Postcolonial theory, similarly, interrogates the lingering structures of colonial domination in language, literature, and education systems. Scholars like Edward Said argue that the canon of English literature, often presented as universal and apolitical, actually reinforces Eurocentric worldviews that marginalise non-Western voices (Said, 1993). When examined together, these frameworks reveal how the teaching of poetry, especially in early semesters, can either uphold a colonial legacy by centring only English or Euro-American poets or resist it by embracing a diverse and global poetic tradition.

This research, therefore, evaluates the syllabus and curriculum not only in terms of what is taught but also in how it is introduced, questioning whether students are encouraged to view poetry as a static body of “high culture” or as a living, pluralistic, and contested space. By using critical pedagogy, the analysis will uncover whether these syllabi encourage active, critical engagement with literary texts or reinforce traditional hierarchies. From a postcolonial lens, the study will investigate whether syllabi include poets from the Global South, formerly colonised regions, or marginalised communities, thereby assessing how far they have moved beyond the colonial model of literary education.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Introducing Literature and/or Poetry: Course Objectives*

Even though DU offers a semester system for the BA programme, RU, CU, and JU offer a year system. As mentioned earlier, to get an equal and even time frame with the other three universities, the first two semesters of DU have been considered for this research. Students at DU and CU are offered a dedicated course designed to introduce literature and its critical appreciation before they encounter more traditional foundational courses on prose or poetry. This study found that the core textbook for these two courses is the same: *Making Connections: Responding to Literature* (Ahmed, Alam, Farida, Khan & Sinha, 2014), designed and published by the Department of English, DU. The course title is not the same, though: CU has another prescribed course book (*Now Read On* by McRae and Vethamani, 1999), along with the previously mentioned one—these two courses serve as a bridging course for students new to this field of study.

*The DU Student Handbook* (which also serves as a syllabus) describes three objectives of English 102, and the first is to introduce students to three genres and to develop their ability to interpret and respond to them. The second objective is to teach different figurative devices (such as images, similes, metaphors, connotations, personification, allusions, and hyperboles) and sound patterns (such as alliteration, consonance, assonance, internal rhyme and rhythm). The third objective is to develop students' awareness of aspects of style and structure such as mood, tone, setting, character and theme. So, it is clear that the course is designed to develop students' ability to read and understand different genres and to recognise various figurative devices and literary mechanics.

Similarly, the syllabus of CU describes the course objective of English 102 (Reading) as introducing a wide range of English texts to develop literary and linguistic awareness and to respond to them interactively. Another objective, as mentioned in the syllabus, is to introduce students to various techniques and literary devices to help them understand how they relate to the elements of a text. When speaking of the objective of this course, one of the faculty members, Ms Tasnim, argues that, "The learners usually get exposed to the realm of literature through this particular course for the first time, developing literary appreciation and evaluating literature from critical perspectives remain the prime goal of this course as a part of the first-year curriculum" (personal communication, n.d.).

In JU (English 102), "Critical Reading and Academic Writing" is the course where students receive their first lesson in practical and critical reading, as they are introduced to some fundamental aspects of literature, literariness, and critical appreciation. Apart from presenting students with the conventions of academic writing, enabling them to differentiate among reading techniques (skimming, scanning, previewing, and inferring) is one of the main objectives of this course, as described in the syllabus. Another objective is

to enable first-year students to understand rhetorical and poetic uses of language. This course introduces students to a critical appreciation of literary texts and helps them write explanations, analyses, interpretations, and evaluations as outlined in the syllabus. When asked about the function of this course before introducing foundational courses on prose or poetry, Sharif explains that "This course introduces first-year students to basic literary elements like theme, structure, plot, point of view, style, imagery, prosody, rhetorical and figurative languages" (personal communication, n.d.).

RU offers course 102, titled "Reading and Writing", right before the dedicated poetry course. According to the syllabus, the objective of this course is to enhance students' reading ability so they can better understand and appreciate the literature courses to be offered later. One of the faculty members, Islam, says, "This course is designed to introduce the freshers to the academic mode of reading and literary studies" (personal communication, n.d.).

"Introduction to Poetry" (English 106) is a dedicated course in DU, offered in the second semester of the BA in English programme, that serves as a foundational introduction to poetry. When asked about the course objective, Dutta, who has been part of the department's syllabus design and modification body, explains four objectives for this course. First, he argues that English 106 is designed to introduce poetry from a generic perspective. Next, he argues that enabling students to understand how language functions in poetry and how it differs from its non-poetic use is another objective of this course. This leads into the third objective of this course, as he notes that English 106 aims to help students understand how poetry is more suggestive than prose and other forms of creative writing. Finally, he argues that this course is designed to help students understand the timeline of English poetry. (personal communication, n.d.) Here, one thing can be mentioned: Karim, one of the course instructors, explains, "Department of English, DU has a much more traditional approach to poetry (and literature, overall) than some of the other universities" (personal communication, n.d.).

"Introduction to Poetry" (English 103) is a dedicated course on poetry for first-year students of CU. As mentioned in the syllabus, the first objective of this course is to introduce the students to different periods of English literature (from the ballad tradition of earlier ages to 20th-century modern poetry). The second objective of this course is to provide students with varied concepts and contexts to understand them and help learners evaluate them not only from a critical but also from a creative perspective. The last objective is to enable students to identify different conventions, genres, and elements of poetry.

"Introduction to Poetry and Poetics" (English 103) is the foundational course on poetry that first-year students at JU take. Here, from the perspective of the objective of this course, the title of this course is important to address. Uddin, who has been a part of the syllabus modification body of this department argues that, "The (new) title of this course has the word 'poetics' in it to emphasise on the fact

that the aesthetic conception and elements of literature (both from stylistic and linguistic) are important to recognise in foundational poetry course like this to have a proper understanding of the literary pieces this course offers" (personal communication, n.d.). His argument is justified by the content of this course, which includes elements of poetics alongside poems from different styles, genres, and eras. Another objective of this course is to familiarise oneself with poems in different languages (translated into English) and with poetic works across genres and forms, ranging from the sonnet and elegy to concrete poetry. Finally, as described in the syllabus, this course is designed to enable the freshers to write effective papers to analyse style, structure, theme, and other features of poems.

For RU, "Introduction to Literature: Poetry" (course 103) is the foundational course on poetry. It can be argued that this course is designed to offer a basic introduction to rhetoric and prosody, as well as to some fundamental elements of poetry, such as theme, style, mood, and imagery, as far as the course's content is concerned. Islam, who is the course instructor for this course, comments that, "There are basically two main objectives of this course. The first is to introduce students to the basic elements of poetry. The second one is to familiarise them with selected (poetic) pieces from different ages in the history of English literature as well as from different genres and styles of poetry from different parts of the world" (personal communication, n.d.).

By reviewing and analysing the objectives of these foundational courses on poetry and poetic elements, it is clear that all four departments have addressed both fundamental aspects of literature and literary studies. However, there are differences in their approaches. The missions and visions of each department play an important role in these approaches, and this will be addressed in the next section of this article, focusing on the content of these courses.

### *Content Selection: How and Why*

As mentioned earlier, this study focuses on "Introduction to Literature (Critical Appreciation)" (English 102) and "Introduction to Poetry" (English 106) at DU. This research has found that the core textbook for these two courses is the same: *Making Connections: Responding to Literature* (Ahmed, Alam, Farida, Khan & Sinha, 2014). First of all, the title of this book is important to foreground. When asked about the title of this book the instructor for this course (DU) Abedin explains, "This book has been specially designed and developed as a text book for this bridging course for the first-year students and the title is very suggestive since this book is about creating or making a connection between literature and real world and responding to them" (personal communication, n.d.). The impression this textbook gives is very welcoming, and it complements the course's primary motto. This study finds that the overall design and presentation of this book is very much like a children's story book (with photos and illustrations), and the department expects the students not to face too many challenges and difficulties in

dealing with this new mode (for the students) of studying literature. Then, if the book's chapterisation is considered, it also complements the title, since the chapters' titles aim to create a "connection". Some of the titles of chapters are "Petals and Words", "Pictures and Sensations", "Fun and Fear", "Kings and Rebels", "Songs and Sounds", and "Love and Roses". Another instructor of this course (DU), Karim, explains, "Each chapter of this book is designed in such a way that the reader should be able to make a connection to what they are offered to study with their real-life experiences and emotions" (personal communication, n.d.).

Now, if the actual content of *Making Connections: Responding to Literature* (Ahmed, Alam, Farida, Khan & Sinha, 2014) is considered, unsurprisingly, the main concentration is on the canonical literary pieces of English literature. This textbook includes several poets of different ages, including Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Keats, Lawrence, Donne, Dickinson, and others. Along with them, to make it easier for students more familiar with Bangladeshi and South Asian literature, culture, and tradition, this course book also incorporates translated literary works by Rabindranath Tagore, Kazi Nazrul Islam, and Jahanara Imam. Some of their familiar, well-known works are kept alongside those of the canonical Western writers, making it easier for the freshers to understand what poetry and literature are all about. Talking about the content of this course and incorporation of all these poets and authors in this book, one of the faculty members of DU, Dutta, comments that, "Canonical literary pieces are highlights of this book (*Making Connections: Responding to Literature* [Ahmed, Alam, Farida, Khan & Sinha, 2014]) because we want to introduce our students to texts which hold universal appeal and are considered classics. However, we have also tried to widen the range by including some of the well-known South Asian writers and poets" (personal communication, n.d.). As mentioned before, this book is on the CU syllabus for English 102, along with another book by McRae and Venthamani (1999).

"Introduction to Poetry" (English 106) is the dedicated course at DU which is offered in the second semester. If the selected content for this course is analysed, it can be found that poets of different ages are included. This course offers an introduction to Renaissance poetry, poems from the Restoration and neoclassical period, the Romantic period and the Modern era. This course primarily offers an introduction to the different genres and styles of English poetry, including the sonnet by William Shakespeare, the elegy by Thomas Grey, the ode by John Keats, the metaphysical poems by John Donne, and so on. Dutta, a faculty member of the Department of English at DU, has experience serving on the department's syllabus modification body. When asked about the strategy and policy behind the course's content selection, he explains, "The department wants to introduce variations in genres as well as poems from different ages in the history of English literature to the students" (personal communication, n.d.).

"Introduction to Poetry" (English 103) is a dedicated course on poetry for first-year students of CU. This course

offers an introduction to several poems of diverse taste and form from different periods of English literature. Along with other major genres, incorporating poems from oral tradition and the modern period is a noticeable feature of this course. Ms Tasnim, a faculty member of CU and one of the instructors for this course, explains that, “This course wants to offer an easy introduction to different genres of poems like lyric, ballad, sonnet, elegy, dramatic monologue, etc”.

“Introduction to Poetry and Poetics” (English 103) is the foundational poetry course offered to first-year students at JU. The content of this course differs in some respects from the introductory poetry courses at DU and RU. First of all, as the title of this course suggests, this course incorporates a significant amount of theoretical and technical content of poetics, like the formal introduction of different genres and styles of poetry (ballad, concrete poetry, dramatic monologue, elegy, lyric, narrative, nonsense, ode, prose poetry, rubai, sonnet, spiritual, among others.). This “Poetics” section also includes elements of poetry from three dimensions. The first one is “lexical-thematic dimension”, then there is “visual dimension”, and finally “rhythmic-acoustic dimension” that includes rhyme, rhythm, alliteration, and onomatopoeia, among others. Finally, there is one more content in the poetics part: “elements of music,” which includes pitch, scale, time (rhythm), among others. In the “Poetry” section of this, there are three subsections. The first subsection is “Oral Tradition” (medieval and African American spirituals). The second is “Written Tradition: Poetry in English”, where poems of different genres and ages are incorporated.

Here are a few observations worth mentioning. Along with other more popular and classic genres, there are poems from concrete and dub poetry. Another noticeable characteristic is the presence of poetry from different parts of the world, alongside that from England and America. For instance, the Indian poet Jayanta Mahapatra writes in English. Then there is the third and final subsection, “Written Tradition: Poetry in English Translation”, which incorporates translated poems by different poets. In this section, there are poems by Li Bai, Rumi, and other non-Western poets. So, it can be argued that, alongside the quality of works, several factors influence content selection, such as nationalistic identity, race, and gender, among others. Such a cross-national, cross-gender, cross-ethnic approach is liberating, and it can be seen as de-westernising in the postcolonial context of Bangladesh.

As mentioned before, in the case of RU, both courses 102 and 103 serve as introductory poetry courses, as they include several poems. Both courses offer a wide variety of poems from generic (lyrical, elegy, ballad, ode, sonnet, among others) and periodic (Renaissance, Victorian, Romantic, Modern) perspectives. These two courses incorporate the major English and American poets and include poems by Indian poets such as Rabindranath Tagore and Kamala Das. Islam is one of the course instructors for course 103, and he says, “Most of the poems are selected as sample text from different ages and different genres of English

literature and some poems are included in the syllabus to introduce English literature from different parts of the world” (personal communication, n.d.). Course 103 also incorporates technical elements of poetry, such as rhetoric and prosody, as well as foundational elements such as theme, mode, imagery, tone, and diction.

#### *English Literature or Literatures in English? A Postcolonial Overview*

Based on the analysis of content across all these courses, it can be argued that DU and CU have a similar approach to selecting content for foundational poetry courses. RU introduces more poems and poets, as two first-year courses include poetry. On the other hand, JU takes a transnational, cross-cultural approach, introducing poems from around the world by incorporating translations alongside those written in English. Uddin (JU) has been part of the body responsible for curriculum design and modification. He says, “This act of incorporating non-canonical, contemporary and translated poems alongside other classic and canonical works of English poetry can be seen as an attempt to challenge and destabilise the notion of a West-centric image of English literature and Englishness” (personal communication, n.d.). One of the faculty members from JU, Sharif, argues that, “Incorporation of all these translated non-Western literary pieces in the foundational course suggests a strong value and approach that this department has” (personal communication, n.d.). Overall, this approach can be seen as an attempt to de-westernise the department’s mission and vision.

In the BA in English programme at DU, the focus is on English literature rather than literature in English, and this is clear in the department’s approach to poetry. As mentioned earlier, the foundational poetry course (English 106) mainly features poets from English-speaking countries. No non-Western poet or translated work is incorporated into this course content. Here, one thing worth mentioning is that the English 102 course content includes non-Western poets like Tagore and Islam. However, they are selected for that course book to offer students an easy transition to the academic mode of studying literature, since they are familiar with their works and writing style. When asked about the department’s overall approach to literature, faculty at DU acknowledge that it focuses on English literature rather than world literature or postcolonial literary studies. One of the faculty members from DU, Karim, argues that, “There are other literary approaches too other than postcolonialism and as far as the mission and vision of this department is concerned, this department’s focus is more on the aesthetic and creative side of English literary studies” (personal communication, n.d.).

Like DU, the CU syllabus does not incorporate translated or non-Western poems in its foundational poetry course. However, one thing should be mentioned here: there is a separate third-year course (World Literature in Translation: English 302) on translated literary works from all over the world. So, that suggests the English department’s mission

and vision at CU. On the other hand, RU incorporates poems by Indian poets such as Tagore and Das, along with those of prominent English and American poets, in the foundational poetry course (course 102). A dedicated course on world literature in translation is also offered in the second year, and this approach is similar to CU. So, it can be argued that, apart from DU, the other three universities (JU, CU and RU) have a noticeable interest in world literature. One thing worth mentioning is that DU offers courses on postcolonial literatures and literary studies, but these are part of the department's MA programme.

## Conclusion

In an inter-university scenario, this research locates and addresses a more conventional approach of DU for the course content compared to a liberating and postcolonial approach of JU, RU and CU, where it resists colonial literary hierarchies and embraces a more inclusive, critically engaged pedagogy—one that values diverse poetic voices from across the globe and encourages students to question dominant cultural narratives. DU's approach can be seen as classical, more focused on the aesthetics and technicality of literature, whereas the other three universities are more towards a nonlinear, critical approach. Syllabi for all these departments change and evolve, as do their missions and visions. So, that is an important consideration when addressing all the issues in this study.

This research should help improve the understanding of literary studies and overall pedagogy in arts and humanities studies in Bangladesh. This research focuses only on foundational poetry courses. Further study can be conducted on other foundational and advanced courses in literature and criticism. Apart from transnational or postcolonial lenses, other lenses, such as feminism and utilitarianism, can also be applied to evaluate the content of courses in critical and literary studies.

## ORCID IDS

Kallol Bain  <https://orcid.org/0009-0006-4905-9929>

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Manuscript received: 7 July 2021

Initial acceptance: 18 September 2021

Revisions received: 14 February 2022; 3 November 2023;

27 August 2024; 12 May 2025; 3 January 2026

Final acceptance: 11 January 2026