



## Teaching English in Bangladeshi Secondary Schools: A Blessing or A Curse?

**Farah Amir**

Wide Vision School & College, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Email: [farahamir477@gmail.com](mailto:farahamir477@gmail.com)

Permalink: <http://dx.doi.org/10.24036/ld.v16i2.120304>

Submitted: 09-11-2022

Accepted: 12-12-2022

DOI: 10.24036/ld.v16i2.120304

Published: 12-12-2022

### Abstract

This article examines whether teaching English in Bangladeshi secondary schools is a blessing or a curse. The paper seeks to ask soul-searching questions; reiterates the voices and findings of previous scholars and evokes the need to look at the rot within our system in order to engender genuine and practical transformations. It adopts the desk research methodology and mostly draws data from the review of 50 secondary-based sources. The paper argues that the students learning English in Bangladeshi secondary schools are deprived of many essentials that should make them proficient users of the English language, yet they are expected to be effective users of the language in different real life situations; which is challenging. Furthermore, the paper proposes that if there other acknowledged World Englishes, Bangladesh can have a variety of English that accepts and reflects Bengali pronunciations, grammar and meaning. The paper concludes with the question- if other Asian countries, whose native speakers do not use the English language fluently; still develop in geometric progression, can we still tie the teaching of English in our secondary schools and the ability of students (and the rest of the population) communicating fluently in English to Bangladesh's development?

**Keywords:** *Bangladeshi Secondary School, English Language, Teaching and Learning, Bangla Curriculum*

### Abstrak

Artikel ini mengkaji apakah mengajar bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah Bangladesh merupakan berkah atau kutukan. Artikel ini berusaha untuk mengajukan pertanyaan yang menyelidiki temuan dari para peneliti sebelumnya sebelumnya dan membangkitkan kebutuhan untuk melihat kebusukan dalam sistem untuk menghasilkan transformasi yang nyata dan praktis. Kajian ini mengadopsi metodologi penelitian pustaka dan sebagian besar mengambil data dari tinjauan 50 sumber berbasis sekunder. Penelitian menemukan bahwa siswa yang belajar bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah Bangladesh kehilangan banyak hal penting yang seharusnya menjadikan mereka pengguna bahasa Inggris yang mahir, namun mereka diharapkan menjadi pengguna bahasa yang efektif dalam situasi kehidupan nyata yang berbeda dan yang menantang. Selain itu, artikel ini mengusulkan bahwa jika ada bahasa Inggris di negara lain yang diakui, bahasa Inggris di Bangladesh memiliki variasi bahasa Inggris yang berterima dan mencerminkan pengucapan, tata bahasa, dan makna bahasa Bengali. Makalah ini diakhiri dengan pertanyaan - jika negara Asia lainnya, yang penutur aslinya tidak menggunakan bahasa Inggris dengan lancar; masih berkembang secara geometris,

dapatkah kita masih menghubungkan pengajaran bahasa Inggris di sekolah menengah kita dan kemampuan siswa (dan populasi lainnya) berkomunikasi dengan lancar dalam bahasa Inggris dengan perkembangan di Bangladesh?

**Kata kunci:** *Sekolah Menengah Bangladesh, Bahasa Inggris, Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran, Kurikulum Bangladesh*

## INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is a South Asian country centered on the transnational historical region of Bengal along the Bay of Bengal. Bangladesh is a small and densely populated country with a population of 160 million (Rahman, Islam, Chowdhury, Rahman, Seraj & Singh 2019). Even though they have other indigenous languages (Rahman 2010), after independence, Bengali (or Bangla) was recognized as the state language, official language and lingua franca and has been their symbol of national integration until English showed up (Kirkpatrick 2010). English was used first as a lingua franca for political interactions and in formal domains; since the British were ruling, then later, as a foreign language and a second language (Rahman et. al 2019). Hence, the tussle for which of these two languages practically serves all the language needs and functions of the Bangladeshis became an issue. This is because while Bangla served as a viable means of unifying the Bangladeshis, English on the other hand was very relevant to international prospects in terms of education, career and other profitable interactions that involves development (Rahman et. al 2019). So, English was regarded as the de facto co-official language, lingua franca and most especially, the language of education.

Bangladesh is one of the largest populations in the world learning English as one, a foreign language (EFL), which implies the use of English to teach mostly in the classrooms to non-native speakers. So, the use of English here is mainly for academic purposes, examples are China or Pakistan, where English is used as a medium of instruction but is not widely used within the countries. Two, as a second language (ESL) which refers to where English is used widely in public places and parliament, such as in India or Malaysia, along with their indigenous languages (Carter & Nunan 2001; Hamid & Honan 2012; Rahman & Pandian 2018). Ali (2010) locates English Language Teaching (henceforth, ELT) in Bangladesh as ESL, although Ali & Walker (2014) maintain that English language teaching in Bangladesh is EFL. It is obvious that ESL and EFL interacts in Bangladesh as English is the only recognized language in Bangladesh other than Bengali. This is clearly exemplified in the fact that the government of Bangladesh mandates English as a second language through its curriculum (Ministry of Education 2010), while the constitution recognizes English as the lingua franca. Before this time, Bangladesh never had any planned and consistent English language policy because they were running three educational systems: the ‘mainstream’ secular state education system, the ‘Madrasah’ system of religious education; (Rahman & Pandian 2018; Chowdhury & Sarkar 2018; Sanjida 2019) and ‘English-medium education’ managed by the University of Cambridge through the British Council (Rahman & Pandian 2018). English was used as the medium of instruction for official purposes, in private universities but in government schools and at tertiary-level education, English was used alongside Bengali (Hamid, Jahan & Islam 2013).

Chowdhury & Kabir (2014) and Hamid (2016) assert that Bangladesh is one of the largest English learning populations of the world. In recent times, over 17 million children learn English in Bangladesh as it is being taught as a compulsory subject from

classes 1 to 12 in the national curriculum (Asim 2020). Nonetheless, it becomes pertinent to wonder why the performance of Bangladeshi students in English still falls below standards. The objectives of the paper are to ask soul-searching questions; reiterating the voices and findings of previous scholars and evoke the need to look at the rot within our system in order to engender genuine and practical transformations. As such, it becomes imperative that we ask ourselves a few questions: Why do we have such a solid policy on ground on teaching and learning English, yet our students do not measure up? How has the English language education in the country helped Bangladeshi secondary school students? To what extent has the teaching of English to Bangladesh secondary school students been a blessing or otherwise? These are questions that this article intends to sincerely evoke.

## **REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

### ***Brief history on the use of the English language to teach in Bangladeshi secondary schools***

The initial coming of English language to Bangladesh had a bias background. It was aimed at serving the interest of the colonialists. The only aspect that considered the subjects was in the area of making them talk, behave and dress like the colonialist. In a way the concept that English language, culture, literature and people are superior was overemphasized. This circumstance led to the introduction of English as a language of teaching, as a subject of study, and used in public administration, army and court (Hoque 2009); both during the British and the Pakistan period. In the first few years after independence, Bengali was publicly favored over English, so English was used as a foreign language. However, later in the late 20th century, English as a foreign language became emphasized and given priority to be taught in class 6, class 1 and grade 6. In the early 21st century it was enforced as a subject for kindergartens and class 3 and as an additional subject for classes 1 and 2; however for class 7, it was to be taught alongside Bengali. Later, it was added as a medium of instruction at the primary level, secondary and tertiary level but by this time, emphasis was now being placed on training secondary school teachers, and teaching the language to students as a language course; so even books written in Bengali had to be translated too (Chowdhury & Kabir 2014).

With the need to reform the school curriculum, and the method of teaching/assessment, the Communicative Language Teaching (henceforth, CLT) model was brought to replace the traditional Grammar-Translation Method (henceforth, GTM) in the 20<sup>th</sup> century but was not effectively implemented (Rahman & Pandian 2018). CLT came with the new language policy in education and was first implemented in secondary schools before other levels. The idea of CLT had a lot of merits in itself. It was tasked with the plan to improve communicative competence amongst students of secondary education and give teachers the requisite language techniques to communicate with their students (NCTB 2012). The CLT was to work hand-in-hand with the English Language Teaching Improvement Program (ELTIP), which enthroned the use of ELT, unfortunately, it managed to train just a little over 50% of the English teacher population and failed to adequately implement several tenets of the CLT among other reasons (see Fullan 2007; Khan 2011; Akbari 2015; Anwaruddin 2016; Rahman & Pandian 2018). It became obvious that the wherewithal to implement this new system was lacking, as it created social inequality (in accessibility, proficiency, human resources and infrastructures) within the country. One of the results was seen in secondary/medium school students' access to the English language, which was limited to a few secondary schools in urban areas (Rahman et. al

2019). When one is confronted with an unfamiliar and new thing and the means to utilize it is not available, it becomes easy to continue with the old and familiar. So, many teachers relied more on GTM as they lacked the sufficient understanding to implement the new curriculum (Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman & Khan 2014)

Another approach aimed at restructuring the school curriculum, was the English in Action (EIA). This was a national program established not only to improve the curriculum but to advance ELT in order to boost the economy. It was funded by the Department for International Development, UK (English in Action 2008; English in Action 2018; Mott McDonald 2022). Its impact was not comprehensive enough in catering for a good number of the teachers' population (urban and rural), provide adequate resources to practice what they learnt and did not even bother to know if the teachers had a good understanding of the curriculum to leverage on as they teach their students (Karim & Mohamed, 2019; Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, & Rahman, 2018; Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018). Other funded projects geared towards improving the curriculum include- Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP-1999-2006) funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB), and the Teaching Quality Improvement Project in Secondary Education (TQI-SEP 2006-2016, Phases I & II) funded by ADB and Canadian International and Development Agency (CIDA). All these were centered around training secondary school teachers based on CLT. One thing is obvious from these curriculum review- they are more of outside interventions with underlying selfish interests which brings up the question- how could teaching secondary school students be effective in such conditions?

### ***How the cookies crumbled!***

Many previous studies have identified problems that have made curriculum reforms abortive like politically motivated decision in lowering the status and use of English in Bangladesh since the independence (Rahman et. al 2019), inconsistent language in education policies (Rahman & Pandian 2018), lack of implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) curriculum, teaching method and instructional materials in practice (Rahman, Pandian & Kaur, 2018), lack of implementation of assessment reform (Al Amin and Greenwood 2018; Ali, Hamid, and Hardy 2018), inadequate language teachers' professional development (Karim and Mohamed 2019), Fear of religious bigotry, fear of minority bias and lack of a structure on recurrent and state-of-arts teacher-based education (Karim & Mohamed 2019) and the fact that curriculum reforms were mostly motivated by the pull towards colonial linguistic domination (Asim 2020), amongst others. However, these studies did not stop at just identifying these problems but made efforts to recommend suggestions on how to tackle these problems. This study nevertheless draws reflections from the findings of these previous studies not just as addition but a means to evoke the need to take practical steps as we look into the rot within our system.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This paper adopts desk research methodology and mostly draws data from the review of over 50 secondary-based sources (see sources in the references' section). Data include peer-reviewed articles Researchgate and Google Scholar based on the key words of the study- Bangladeshi Secondary School, English Language, Teaching and Learning, Bangla Curriculum. Other works bordering on teaching English as a foreign language or teaching English to non-native speakers, within and outside Bangladesh are also used in the study.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

### ***Challenges Bangladesh secondary students face while being taught English***

Bangladesh is described as a homogeneous nation considering that a large number of its total population (over 90%) speaks Bengali (or Bangla); the national language (Hassan, Jamila & Sultana 2019). Bengali plays a huge role in the national and cultural life of the Bangladeshi. One question that comes up at this point is- since Bangladesh has a homogenous-speaking population, why is there a need to emphasize on English language as a lingua franca? Patwary & Rumman (2019) argue that English was made compulsory to equip Bangladeshis to participate and contribute to global intercourses and to encourage personal and national growth. Despite the advantages that the use of English have been said to bring, it has been a smooth sail. A few of these problems and unanswered questions that should have been considered are discussed in this section.

Communicative English was introduced in the teaching of English in schools to increase students' speaking and listening competence for meaningful interaction while establishing the grammar of English through interactive classroom teaching (Adhikari 2011). However, since this approach was not adopted properly many students are inept in expressing themselves in English (Islam & Stapa 2021). At present, English is a compulsory subject in primary and secondary schools, and is also taught as a foundation course at Dhaka University, however, the issue of the unintelligibility of English pronunciations still remains (Rahman & Chowdhury 2018). This may be tied to teachers' perception and attitude towards RP (Received Pronunciation), British English (BrEng) or American English (AmEng) pronunciations. Some teachers believe that it is very challenging to use the BrEng or AmEng standard while teaching, hence this contributes to why it is de-emphasized while they teach the secondary school students even though it is part of the syllabus (Rahman & Chowdhury 2018). The importance of pronunciation (both for segments and suprasegments like tone and intonation patterns) which is usually ignored during teaching, cannot be overemphasized. Jenkins (2012) upholds that speaking English as a Lingua Franca does not advocate for one specific pronunciation variety, so it can be any variety ranging from RP to American English to Nigerian or Indian English. Therefore, will it not be a blessing to also have Bangladeshi or Bengali English?

Listening is an integral and indispensable communication skill which is also neglected when teachers teach secondary students. They do not consider the fact that education, being informed, knowing which ideals to uphold and reasoning generally, is hinged largely on the ability of these secondary school students to acquire listening skills. This agrees with Peters (2001:87) as cited in Patwary & Rumman (2019) that argues that "no other type of language input is easy to process as spoken language, received through listening ... through listening, learners can build an awareness of the inter-workings of language systems at various levels and thus establish a base for more fluent productive skills." Listening comprehension is a multifaceted, active process in which the listener must discriminate between sounds, understand vocabulary and structures, interpret stress and intonation, retain what was gathered in all of the above, and interpret it within the immediate as well as the larger socio-cultural context of the utterance. Coordinating all these involve a great deal of mental bustle on the part of the learner. "Listening is hard work" in the words of Vandergrift (1999:168), it is what makes us "understand other speakers of other varieties, if not, communication will be a cumbersome activity." If this is right, why then is it overlooked or deemphasized while teaching English in secondary schools, despite being in the curriculum?

Another problem is that the teaching of English in schools is not contextualized, that is, it is not well structured to incorporate indigenous reality while the English

language is being taught. In as much as secondary school teachers are to use the English language, it does not make sense to teach an abstract concept that is foreign in the worldview of a Bangladeshi with English. For instance why should we use ‘A’ for apple when it is not a home grown fruit, whereas there are fruits and other things that could be used to represent ‘A’?

The pressure and expectations that students face from family and society could bring stress, depression and an anti-school trauma that could lead to secondary school drop outs or school ‘haters’. Most secondary students who accomplish high performance rely a lot on intense supplementary (private) tutoring in order to compete favorably for admissions into top-ranking institutions (Mustary 2019). This implies that because the mainstream educational system does not give the required skills and teaching, the window for additional tutoring pops up. Now can we call teaching English in Bangladesh secondary schools a blessing, if people from poor backgrounds cannot afford extra tutoring thereby increasing the social status divide? Also, with the intense pressures, is it still a blessing when we consider how slow learners pass through the whole process? Again, is it a blessing, if secondary school graduates cannot get admitted on their own without these ‘supplements’?

### ***Discussion and Reflections from Previous Findings***

Teaching English in Bangladesh started out as a Western-induced curriculum arranged by people who only design these curriculum without much consideration to the context of the host country or seeing to its implementation, hence, it failed from the start. Teachers were not well equipped in welfare and resource capacity (needs and training infrastructure) to see it through and worse of all were not fully involved/carried along in the process of the curriculum change or planning. At this point, one big question is- how do you expect a teacher to effectively teach in a foreign language (which is embedded in a foreign culture), with an unfamiliar method of teaching; which the teacher neither has no idea about, nor played no role in developing, with limited training infrastructure? To add to the mix, the set of students to be taught are at a very crucial level of their educational career- secondary school. This gives a good reason why teachers rely more on their ‘traditional’ methods of teaching; which is more teacher-centered even while teaching English and of course, the resultant effect is like forcing a square peg into a round hole. What this means is that teaching English as a foreign language must consider the host’s context. For instance Bangladesh’s culture, teaching methods and curriculum should not be thrown out in favor of that of the West. This agrees with Fullan’s (2007) and Marsh and Willis’ (2007) submissions that in recent times, the frequent incompatibility of curriculum innovations with the existing perceptions, beliefs, and values of the teachers charged with implementing these innovations is perhaps the single biggest constraint in curriculum change facing English language teachers both in Bangladesh and other countries like her.

Furthermore, writing and reading which are supposed to be part of language skills are overlooked and some English texts designed for teaching, lacked the basics that could meet the expected purpose of the curriculum (Kirkwood 2013). Looking at the *Students’ Favourite Dictionary* by AT Dev (1993), some incorrect pronunciations of some words are observed as it uses characters from the Bengali alphabet to represent English sounds that are not present in the Bengali language. Again, we see the *English Pronunciation Dictionary for Bengalis (EPDB)* using the Bengali Phonetic Alphabet (BPA) to transcribe the RP pronunciations of about 29,500 English words (Rahman, 2016); thereby engendering misperceptions amongst secondary school students who use these texts as part of their learning materials. Some other times, even when the

syllabus is designed with communicative language teaching, and the contents, items and texts are written with communicative thoughts and ideas, the language teachers are still apathetic. Then I ask again, how can a curriculum and the materials designed for that curriculum which differ essentially in purpose, (content and context application), help the target audience (secondary school students)? Can we call this a blessing to the students?

Students are usually inactive in classroom teaching, in fact in one research, it was reported that students avoided talking with the researcher in English or speaking on any given topic due to anxiety, language shock, cultural shock and their linguistic inadequacy (c. f. Chidambaram 2005). The reason for this may be that they have never been exposed to opportunities to hone their communicative skills and use them in public speaking. This is why Shethi (2004) argues that if a class is interesting and interactive, students will be bold to share their ideas, stay in class till the end and of course, and desire not to miss that class. This brings the ball to the courts of the teachers. Many English teachers are more comfortable to use the teacher-centered, 'boring' method of teaching. The teachers also hardly speak English in the class nor encourage their students to speak English with their classmates inside or outside the classroom environment. This makes Hoque (2009:32) note that "it is painful to see that after long years of learning English, most of the learners cannot speak English with the necessary fluency, correctness of grammar, and pronunciation". So then, how can these students become confident in themselves to express themselves in the English language or compete favorably with their counterparts in other parts of the globe?

Britain has been said to be no more the only owner of English language (Rahman & Chowdhury 2018). This is evident with the presence of other acknowledged world Englishes like Indian English, Nigerian English, and Singapore English amongst others, which are now sufficiently developed to be considered as distinct varieties of English. The average Bangladeshi speaks English with some features of Bangla interfering either in the pronunciation, structure or meaning. Thinking deeply on this, the question comes up again, will it not be a blessing to have a variety of English that takes into cognizance or reflects Bengali language and culture?

Many Bangladeshi students, often, secure 'A+' in English in public examinations (Bosu 2020). Unfortunately, their English knowledge does not reflect in practical life contexts. Many cannot write essays properly and avoid getting involved in spontaneous public speaking in the English language (Bosu 2020). This shows that public examinations on language testing in Bangladesh have been 'compromised' as secondary school teachers concentrate only on how students can pass rather than their communicative competence. So, while the public examinations council follow the policies of the new curriculum in administering exams, the students on the other hand are not holistically prepared. So, the pressure to just cram concepts in order to pass will tend to be high and areas that do not appear in exams will hardly be emphasized on, therefore, graduating half-baked students with good grades (Rahman et al., 2018; Hamid et al., 2009; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). How then, will Bangladeshi secondary students compete favorably with international students at their level?

Furthermore, there are no marks awarded for listening and speaking tests and since the students have been taught to be 'exam-driven', they are unconcerned about these skills. For instance, after memorizing rules for writing an essay and the student gets an A+, why should the student do more? Especially when their tutors, hardly speak in English even while teaching English subject. When the blind leads the blind what do you expect? How will they ever do better since they came from the molding stage (primary schools) that taught them with the same pattern? Bosu (2020) additionally

reports that even fellow teachers discourage their colleagues. Many Bangladeshis hold the sentiment that learning English is not a thing of pride and is against the propagation of Bengali. Funny enough, many elites who are in favor of the extensive use of Bengali, emphasize that their children and wards learn English in very good secondary schools- A house that is divided within itself cannot stand! That is why it is claimed that based on English language efficiency among some Asian countries, Bangladesh occupies the lowest position (Bosu 2020).

In addition, it is a fact that most of the evaluation of students learning, is dominated by the national examination system (Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, & Khan 2014; Rahman 2015). Unfortunately, the design of the Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C) and Higher Secondary Certificate (H.S.C) examinations leaves out the oral test aspect, emphasizes cramming and memorizing rather than understanding and oral competence (Khan 2010; Das et al., 2014). Hence, reading and writing skills are the two language skills being horned at the expense of listening and speaking which are not only language skills but essential life skills. As earlier commented, over 80% pass with a good GPA; which they use to further their education, get good jobs, pursue good careers, get government positions, become famous or even get married but their language performance is below average (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Asim 2020). Why this is doleful is that, the essence of teaching them (in) English is so that they can effectively use the language in different situations- to conceptualize and test new ideas, challenge status quo, constructively criticize both written and spoken viewpoints and define themselves among many other things. This brings up the question: how will secondary school students who graduate with such average or low skills perform on the international platform, take the instance of IELTS? Is this situation a blessing to the students or an impediment?

### ***Paying Peter and paying Paul, rather than robbing one to pay the other!***

One may want to consider the option of using Bengali to teach English language in secondary schools; not to disappoint you, this has already been explored! In fact the CLT approach supports the use of Bengali while teaching English as a Foreign language but should be used prudently and pragmatically especially inside the classroom. This agrees with Tang's (2002) assertion that this limited exposure to English using the pipeline of the L1; even though judiciously, does not affect student's understanding and learning of English, rather it encourages it. Another is that learning has been considered better when learners are competent in their L1 and the L1 is used alongside the L2 or FL; no matter how limitedly it is used (Zaman, 2003, Islam & Ahsan 2011). Native language usage in classroom teaching can be used to enable understanding of foreign concepts, ideologies, validate their realities and creates free flow between students and teachers. Therefore, it is a misconception to believe otherwise. A few studies have supported this, using the Bangladesh context (Maniruzzaman, 2003; Islam & Ahsan, 2011; Chowdhury 2012; Islam & Rahman 2019). Yet, it is not without its demerits, one of which does not encourage proper learning of English; as argued by some other scholars (c.f. Miles, 2004; Almoayidi, 2018). The confusion yet to be sorted out is- to what extent can the mother tongue be used and it will still be within the boundaries of judicious usage?

Also, Rashed, Alam & Hossain (2018) report that even though Bangla secondary school teachers had access to more professional CLT training over their English counterparts, the latter exercised better teaching practices than the former because of the big difference in their English language proficiency level. This implies that their lack of English fluency is one of their major setbacks. So, it is not only the training that



matters but the ability to communicate or pass across their ideas accurately in English. How then do their students do better, if they cannot accurately communicate? This is why Fatema (2019) maintains that even though the syllabus employed by teachers of English and Bangla secondary schools favor the CLT techniques, both leave much to be desired in the area of its application while teaching. That is why many students from both English and Bangla secondary schools upon graduation, still fail to communicate fluently in English. But does failure to communicate fluently in English really mean a failure in education? This is another pressing question we need to ask ourselves, since English is only one of the mediums of instruction in the country.

Last but not the least, it is believed that though teachers were directed by ELTIP to use English to teach all the EFL classes, during implementation, the main actors (which are teachers), were not so persuaded of the efficiency of teaching English classes totally in English (Islam & Ahsan 2011; Islam & Rahman, 2019). So, if teachers are not committed to the tenets of the improved curriculum or even convinced in the skills and approach they are introduced to, what is expected of their students?

## CONCLUSION

As much as English language proficiency is important for international interactions and growth, learning through the lens of one's indigenous culture and language is very vital in reinforcing knowledge and in breaking through barriers of difficulties. Hence, the importance of Bengali cannot be underestimated in teaching students in comparison with English. Islam & Ahsan (2011) explain that during the time when the GTM was used in classroom teaching, the use of Bengali; the mother tongue was mostly used. Now, to what extent were the Bangladesh secondary school students performing well then, in contrast to what is obtainable presently when Bengali is minimally or entirely not used? This is a question to ask ourselves and can be an area for further studies.

Despite the hype and push for English education, how much representation do Bangladeshis have on the world platform who can hold their heads high as acclaimed experts? The English proficiency of Bangladeshis may be average or even beneath average but can we boldly say that it is still difficult for them to express their world view, emotions and ideas? There are Asian countries like Korea, China and even Japan who have a lesser number of their indigenous population not able to use the English language fluently, yet development is in geometric progression in these countries. Can we still insist that the teaching of English in our secondary schools is inevitable for Bangladesh's development?

Finally, if Bangladesh is to achieve her goals of preparing its students to be competent in spoken as well as written English and to be effective communicators in real life situations, then its educational processes need to include many opportunities for spontaneous, creative and contextually relevant use of language. On this note we ask again, can we conclude that Teaching English at the secondary school level is a blessing? Can we say that insisting that secondary students be taught in English is a curse to Bangladeshis? Or can we say that it is both?

## REFERENCES

- Adhikari, B. R. (2011). Teaching speaking in the Nepalese context: Problems and ways of overcoming them. *Journal of NELTA*, 15(1-2), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v15i1-2.4602>.
- Akbari, Z. (2015). Current challenges in teaching/learning English for EFL learners: The case of junior high school and high school. *Procedia - Social and*

- Behavioral Sciences*, 199:394–401.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2015.07.524>.
- Al Amin, M. & Greenwood, J. (2018). The examination system in Bangladesh and its impact: On curriculum, students, teachers and society. *Language Testing in Asia*, 8(4). <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-018-0060-9>.
- Ali, M. M. (2010). Revisiting the English Language Teaching (ELT) curriculum design: How appropriate is Bangladesh higher secondary level national ELT curriculum as a learner-centred one? *IIUC Studies*, 7(1), 283–96.
- Ali, M. & Walker, A. L. (2014). Boggled down” ELT in Bangladesh: Problems and policy. *English Today*, 30(2), 33–38.
- Almoayidi, K.A. (2018). The Effectiveness of Using L1 in Second Language Classrooms: A Controversial Issue. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 8(4): 375–9.
- Anwaruddin, S. M. (2016). ICT and language teacher development in the global south: A new materialist discourse analysis. *Educational Studies*.  
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00131946.2016.1169183>
- Asim, K. B. (2020). English language teaching in secondary level in Bangladesh: An unsuccessful story. *American Journal of Education and Learning*, 5(1):112-122. <https://doi.org/20448/904.5.1.112.122>.
- Bosu, A. (March, 15 2020). Present status of teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh and feasible solution. Retrieved from [Present Status of Teaching Learning English in Bangladesh and Feasible Solution \(dainikocan.com\). 25/10/2022](https://www.dainikocan.com/25/10/2022).
- Carter, R. & Nunan, D. (2001). *The Cambridge Guide to Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Chidabaram, K. (2005). A Study on the Learning Process of English by Higher Secondary Students with Special Reference to Dharamapuri District. *Language in India*, 5:112-270.
- Chowdhury, N. (2012). Classroom Code Switching of English Language Teachers at Tertiary Level: A Bangladeshi Perspective. *Stamford Journal of English*, 7: 40–61.
- Chowdhury, R. & Kabir, A. H. (2014). Language wars: English education policy and practice in Bangladesh. *Multilingual Education*, 4(1), 1–16.  
<https://doi.org/10.1186/s13616-014-0021-2>.
- Chowdhury, R. & Sarkar, M. (2018). Education in Bangladesh: Changing Contexts and Emerging Realities. 10.1007/978-981-13-0708-9\_1.
- Das, S., Shaheen, R., Shrestha, P., Rahman, A., & Khan, R. (2014). Policy versus ground reality: Secondary English language assessment system in Bangladesh. *Curriculum Journal*, 25(3), 326–343. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2014.909323>.
- English in Action (2008) English in action project – project memorandum. Dhaka, Bangladesh: English in Action. Retrieved from [English in Action \(eiabd.com\)](https://www.eiabd.com).
- English in Action (2018). Bringing Bangladesh into the global conversation. Cambridge Education. Retrieved from [English in Action - Camb-Ed. 12/8/2022](https://www.eiabd.com).
- Fatema, K. (2019). A Comparative Study on Teaching English in the Bengali and English Medium Schools in Bangladesh. *Journal of Humanistic and Social Science Studies (JHSSS)*, 1(4):31-47.

- Fullan, M. (2007). *The New Meaning of Educational Change*, (4th ed). London & New York: Routledge.
- Hamid, M. O. (2016). The linguistic market for English in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 17(1), 36–55. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14664208.2016.1105909>.
- Hamid, M. O. & Honan, E. (2012). Communicative English in the primary classroom: Implications for English-in-education policy and practice in Bangladesh. *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 25(2), 139–156.
- Hamid, M. O., Jahan, I. & Islam, M. M. (2013). Medium of instruction policies and language practices, ideologies and institutional divides: Voices of teachers and students in a private university in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 14(1):144–163. doi: 10.1080/14664208.2013.771417.
- Hassan, M. K., Jamila, F. & Sultana, N. (2019). Problematic areas of ELT at secondary level schools in Bangladesh: Issues and prospectus. *International Journal of English Language Teaching*, 7(6):15-31.
- Hoque, M. E. (2009). *English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh at the Alim level in the Madrashas in Bangladesh: Problems and possible solutions*. M. Phil. Thesis submitted to the faculty of Arts and Humanities of Jahangirnagar University Savar, Dhaka Bangladesh.
- Islam, M. J. & Ahsan, S. (2011). Use of Bangla in EFL classes. The reaction of the secondary level students and teachers in Bangladesh. *ASA University Review*, 5(2).
- Islam, M. S. & Rahman, M. (2019). Bangla in English classes in Bangladesh: A study of learner's attitudes. *South Asia Research*, 1-12. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728019872052>.
- Islam, M.S. & Stapa, M.B. (2021). Students' low proficiency in spoken English in private universities in Bangladesh: reasons and remedies. *Lang Test Asia* 11, 22 <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-021-00139-0>.
- Jenkins, J. (2012). *English as a Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
- Karim, A., & Mohamed, A. R. (2019). Examining the impact of an English in action training program on secondary-school English teachers' classroom practice in Bangladesh examining the impact of an English in action training program on. *Qualitative Report*, 24(3), 441–469.
- Karim, A., Mohamed, A. R., Ismail, S. A. M. M., & Rahman, M. M. (2018). Organized hypocrisy in EFL teacher training programs. *International Journal of Instruction*, 11(2), 437–450. <https://doi.org/10.12973/iji.2018.11230a>.
- Khan, I. A. (2011). Challenges of teaching/learning English and management challenges of teaching/learning English and management. *Global Journal of Human Social Science*, 11(8), 79–80.
- Khan, R (2010). English language assessment in Bangladesh: Developments and challenges. In Y Moon, B Spolsky (Eds.), *Language assessment in Asia: Local, regional or global?* (pp. 121–157). South Korea: Asia TEFL.
- Kirkpatrick, A. (2010). English as a lingua franca in Asean: A multilingual model. Aberdeen, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press.
- Kirkwood, A. (2013). English for communication in Bangladesh: Baseline research to establish the pre-existing environment for the “English in Action” project. *System*, 41(3), 866–879. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2013.09.002>.
- Marsh, C. J. & Willis, G. 2007. *Curriculum: Alternative Approaches, Ongoing Issues*, (4th ed.). New Jersey: Prentice Hall.

- Maniruzzaman, M. (2003). The use of mother tongue in the EFL classroom: learner's reaction. *Harvest Jahangirnagar Studies in Literature*, 18.
- Mott McDonald (2022). English in Action, Bangladesh. Retrieved from [English in Action - Mott MacDonald](#). 12/8/2022.
- Miles, R. (2004) *Evaluating the Use of L1 in the English Language Classroom*. Birmingham: University of Birmingham.
- Ministry of Education. 2010. *National Education Policy 2010*. Dhaka: Ministry of Education.
- Mustary, M. (2019). The Shadow Education System in Bangladesh: A Blessing or a Curse? *Glocal Education in Practice: Teaching, Researching, and Citizenship BCES Conference Books*, 17:64-70.
- NCTB (2001). Online at <<http://www.nctb.gov.bd/>> (Accessed October 29, 2022).
- National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). (2012). *Secondary English Curriculum*. Dhaka: NCTB Publications, pp. 82-90.
- Patwary, M. N., & Rumman, S. I. (2019). Teaching English Listening Skills at the Secondary Level in Bangladesh. *Crossings* 10:179-199.
- Rahman, A. (2016). *English Pronunciation Guidebook for Native Bengali Speakers*. Dhaka, Bangladesh: Zobeda and Amin Rahman.
- Rahman, S. (2015). English language policy initiatives and implementation in Bangladesh: Micro political issues. *Asian EFL Journal*, 88, 59–96.
- Rahman, A. & Chowdhury, R. (2018). Teaching “English for Life”: Beliefs and attitudes of secondary school English teachers in rural Bangladesh. *Bangladesh Education Journal*, 17(2):35-54.
- Rahman, M. M., & Ambigapathy P. 2018. “A Critical Investigation of English Language Teaching in Bangladesh: Unfulfilled expectations after two decades of communicative language teaching.” *English Today* 34(3):43–49. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026607841700061X>.
- Rahman, M. M. Islam, M. S., Karim, A., Chowdhury, T.A., Rahman, M. M., Seraj, P. M. I. & Singh, M. K. M. (2019). English language teaching in Bangladesh today: Issues, outcomes and implications. *Language Testing in Asia*, 9(9):1-14. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0085-8>.
- Rahman, M. M. & Pandian, A. (2018). A critical investigation of English language teaching in Bangladesh: Unfulfilled expectations after two decades of Communicative Language Teaching. *English Today* 135, 34 (3):43-49. Doi:10.1017/S026607841700061X.
- Rahman, M. M., Pandian, A., & Kaur, M. (2018). Factors affecting teachers' implementation of communicative language teaching curriculum in secondary schools in Bangladesh. *Qualitative Report*, (5), 23.
- Rashed, M. Alam, M. R & Hossain, M. R. (2018). A comparative study on the methods and practices of English language teaching in Bangla and English medium schools in Bangladesh. *Australian Journal of Business, Social Science and Information Technology (AJBSSIT)*, 4(3):118-126.
- Sanjida, R. (2019). Education System in Bangladesh. B.A. Assignment submitted to the Department of English Language, Institute of Modern Language; University of Dhaka. Retrieved from [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334898587\\_Education\\_System\\_in\\_Bangladesh](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/334898587_Education_System_in_Bangladesh) 12/8/2022.
- Tang, J. (2002). Using L1 in the English classroom. *English Teaching Forum*. 40(1).

World Bank. 2016. 'GDP growth (annual %).' Online at  
<<http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?page=1>>  
(Accessed October 29, 2022)

Zaman, N. (2003). English. *Bangapedia*. Dhaka: Bangladesh Asiatic Society