



# Positive Change in the Classroom

## BACKGROUND

With approximately 4,400 teachers, Cohort 2 of the English in Action (EIA) school-based teacher development (SBTD) programme was six times larger than Cohort 1. This cohort was enabled by a greater emphasis on teacher development videos and local peer support, with less direct contact with English language teaching (ELT) specialists.

## RESEARCH

Too much teacher talk severely limits students' language learning outcomes (Cook, 2008); a general goal of English language (EL) teachers is to motivate their students to speak and to practise using the target language (Nunan, 1991). Therefore, EIA carried out a study which focused upon the extent of teacher and student talk in classrooms, and the use of the target language by both.

The research questions were:

1. To what extent do teachers of Cohort 2 show improved classroom practice, particularly in relation to the extent and language of student talk?
2. To what extent has the programme been successful in repeating the improvements seen in Cohort 1, at much larger scale?

Post-intervention timed observations of classroom practice were carried out by researchers from the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka. These were compared with EIA baseline studies (EIA 2009, a & b) and studies of Cohort 1 in 2010 (EIA, 2011) and 2011 (EIA, 2012).

The sample comprised 401 lesson observations (of 230 primary teachers, 145 secondary teachers and 26 primary head teachers). Overall, 47% of teachers were female; the gender split differed for primary (61%) and secondary (21%). The sample size enabled statistically valid comparisons to be made with the Cohort 1 studies.

## KEY FINDINGS

### *Baseline practices*

The baseline study (EIA, 2009) found that English classes were:

- not embracing a communicative approach;
- dominated by the teacher.

Also:

- most of the classroom talk (largely by the teacher) was in Bangla;
- there were few opportunities for students to participate in the lesson;
- few students spoke during the lesson.

### *Cohort 2: Primary practices*

Primary student talk time increased to 27%, a substantial improvement over baseline practices, equal to that achieved in Cohort 1. The proportion of student talk in English also rose to 91%, higher than previously seen in Cohort 1 (81%, 2011). While choral work predominated (46%), almost a fifth (18%) of student talk was in pairs (10%) or groups (8%). Compared with the baseline, these findings represent a dramatic increase in students' active participation in lessons and in opportunities for target language use, very similar to those achieved at the smaller scale of Cohort 1.

Teacher talk time dropped to 45%, much less than was seen in the baseline, though above Cohort 1 (34%). Teachers use of the target language increased from negligible (baseline) to 76%, slightly higher than Cohort 1 (72%, 2011). Compared with Cohort 1, primary teachers spent less time (25%) presenting (40%, 2011), and more time (32%) organising student activity (22%, 2011).<sup>1</sup>

### *Cohort 2: Secondary practices*

Secondary student talk time increased to 24%, a substantial improvement over baseline practices and similar to Cohort 1 (24%, 2011). The proportion of student talk in English also rose to 87%, similar to Cohort 1 (85%, 2011). While individual work predominated (53%), over a quarter (28%) of student talk was in pairs (13%) or groups

<sup>1</sup> Note, primary teacher and primary head teacher data were analysed and reported together.

(15%). Compared with the baseline, these findings represent a dramatic increase in students' active participation in lessons and in opportunities for target language use, very similar to those achieved at the smaller scale of Cohort 1.

Teacher talk time dropped to 48%, much less than was seen in the baseline, and similar to that observed in Cohort 1 post-intervention (50%, 2011). Teachers use of the target language increased from negligible (baseline) to 87%, somewhat higher than Cohort 1 (79%, 2011). Compared with Cohort 1, secondary teachers spent much less time (32%) presenting (45%, 2011), a similar time (22%) asking questions (23%, 2011) and more time (29%) organising student activity (22%, 2011).

## SUMMARY

Observations of Cohort 2 classroom practices show substantial increases in students' active participation and in opportunities to speak and practise the target language. This was achieved by teachers making great efforts to promote and model the use of the target language and organising increased student participation in lessons.

## ABOUT ENGLISH IN ACTION

English in Action (EIA) is a nine-year education programme which aims to enhance the economic and social prospects of people in Bangladesh by improving their communicative English. It does this through communicative language learning in primary and secondary classrooms, and television and other media, such as websites and mobile, aimed at adults.

EIA encourages teachers to introduce new English language learning activities into their classroom practice, with their students. Teachers are supported by audio-visual and print materials for professional development and classroom practice activities, and by other teachers in their school and local area. Teachers 'learn by doing' in the classroom, reflecting on their practice and by supporting each other. They are guided by a video 'trainer in the pocket', showing authentic videos of classroom practice and supported by audio

materials for use with students in class. Audio-visual materials are provided at low cost, offline, through memory cards accessed on affordable mobile phones.

Following the pilot intervention with 751 teachers (Cohort 1), the EIA schools intervention up-scaled with a cohort of 4,368 teachers and an estimated 887,000 students in 2012 (Cohort 2).

EIA research reports are available at [www.eiabd.com](http://www.eiabd.com) under 'publications'.

## REFERENCES

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