KEY FINDINGS

Teachers
The study (reported in EIA 2011a) found that four to six months into the intervention, teachers’ views were positive in terms of what they thought about EIA activities and about learning English (which underpins EIA activities).

1. Views on practice
Over 80% of primary and secondary teachers agreed that they mostly used English in the classroom, and over 90% agreed that they designed activities to enable interaction. (Similar proportions also agreed that students liked these kinds of activities.) At a basic level, teachers’ perceptions matched observations of their classroom behaviour (see findings of studies on classroom practice; EIA 2011b, c, d & e, 2012a). Obvious as these findings may seem, universally teachers estimate that they speak for a much smaller proportion of lesson time than they actually do.

2. Views on learning English
The basic pedagogic conditions for a communicative approach are being seen in classrooms (EIA 2011c, d & e). There is also evidence of communicative language teaching (CLT) practices being widely used, and many, though not all, teachers’ views on learning matched the communicative approaches adopted in EIA. For example:

a. Most teachers (86% primary; 92% secondary) agreed that the focus in their English classes was communication, explaining grammar when necessary.

b. Whilst only 26% of primary teachers thought that grammar rules should be explained explicitly in class, 53% of secondary teachers still thought grammar should be explained separately, perhaps reflecting examination requirements at this level.

c. Only 33% of primary teachers and 39% of secondary teachers thought that students’ English improved most quickly if they studied and practiced grammar.

Whilst CLT methods promoted by EIA suggest teachers pay less attention to error-correction (over-correction can inhibit students’ experimenting with language), 98% of primary teachers and 82% of secondary teachers still expressed the view that error correction was important.

Students
This study (EIA 2011a) also found that four to six months into the intervention there had been success in creating positive student views towards EIA activities; however, their views on learning English were less aligned with the EIA approach.

EXPLORING VIEWS ON LEARNING ENGLISH

Purpose and methodology
To ascertain views of English language practices within schools involved in the EIA pilot school intervention, the attitudes and perceptions of participating teachers and students were explored through a medium-scale mixed-method study. Teacher views were collected via questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. Primary and secondary student views were collected via student group interviews (SGIs); questionnaires were also used with secondary students.

The fieldwork was carried out in primary and secondary schools during July-August 2010, four to six months after the launch of the pilot. All fieldwork was carried out by researchers from the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka.

Sample
Questionnaires were completed by 103 primary teachers and 49 secondary teachers; the same teachers also participated in interviews (100 and 49 interviews respectively).

Data were also collected from the teachers’ students. SGIs were conducted with a sub-section of one class: 612 primary students (all from Class 3) and 288 secondary students (Classes 7-10) participated. Further to this, questionnaires were administered to an entire secondary class (Grades 7-10) – 1693 were completed. Fieldwork was carried out in six divisions across Bangladesh.
Aims

EIA 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 telephones, aimed at adults. By 2017, EIA will have reached 25 million people in Bangladesh.

Partners

EIA is a nine-year development project funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development (DFID). The project is implemented through a partnership of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and a consortium of three international partners: BMB Mott MacDonald, BBC Media Action and the Open University; and two national NGOs: Underprivileged Children’s Education Programme (UCEP), and Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB).

Scope of the pilot school intervention

The project’s pilot phase was carried out during 2008-2011. In 2010-2011 EIA piloted its school programme with 690 teachers (465 primary; 225 secondary), supported by teachers there is thus, a convergence of minds and behaviour in terms of their practice: indeed, that side of the EIA professional development programme is almost complete for the pilot teachers. However, the student side of EIA is only partially complete: their views on learning require some work to bring them more in line with a communicative approach, although the effect of examinations needs be countered for this to be successful.

These findings have two implications for EIA: i) it should work to change elements of the assessment system; and ii) it should support teachers in dealing with both students’ learning and also students’ views on learning. The latter is something that is a task in many parts of the world, as the international efforts on ‘learning to learn’ make clear (e.g. see James et al. 2007).

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