

Changing Practice in the Classroom



RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF THE EIA SCHOOL INTERVENTION

An extensive research and evaluation programme is associated with the EIA project, particularly during the pilot phase but continuing through to 2017. For the school intervention, this involves both quantitative and qualitative studies directed at:

1. understanding teacher and student views about their experiences of, and how they think about, learning English;
2. examining classroom practice;
3. measuring teacher and student English language competence.

This briefing focuses on the second of these areas: classroom practice.

EXAMINING CLASSROOM PRACTICE

Purpose and methodology

To measure the impact of the EIA pilot school intervention, the classroom practice of participating teachers and students was examined through quantitative and qualitative classroom observation studies.

Quantitative studies

Three quantitative studies were conducted:

- a baseline study (EIA 2009), which observed classrooms before the launch of the pilot in a sample of Bangladeshi schools;
- Study 1 (EIA 2011a), which observed classrooms four months after the launch of the pilot; and
- Study 2 (EIA 2012a), which observed classrooms 12-16 months after the launch.

Designed as a large-scale study, quantitative observations of teacher and student talk and activities were carried out to determine the extent of change in the classroom as a result of EIA.

EIA Teacher Development Coordinators undertook the observations for the baseline study; EIA Teacher Facilitators undertook the observations for Study 1; and, researchers from the Institute of Education and Research (IER), University of Dhaka, undertook the observations for Study 2.

Samples

The baseline study (EIA 2009), conducted in February 2009, observed 90 primary and 162 secondary classrooms. Study 1 (EIA 2011a), conducted in June 2010, observed 350 primary and 141 secondary classrooms. Study 2 (EIA 2012a) was conducted in primary schools in February–March 2011 and in secondary schools in June–July 2011; in total, 195 primary and 129 secondary classrooms were observed.

The sample sizes enabled statistically valid comparisons to be made between the 2010 and 2011 data. Observations were carried out in various regions across Bangladesh in which EIA is active (five divisions in 2010; seven divisions in 2011).

Qualitative study

A qualitative study (reported in EIA 2011b, c & d) was carried out in classrooms nine months after the launch of the pilot. Designed as

a medium-scale study, qualitative observations of teachers' and students' practices were carried out to determine the nature of activity in the classroom as a result of EIA. Researchers from IER undertook the observations.

Sample

90 teachers were observed (60 primary; 30 secondary) in October–November 2010. Of these, 46 lessons (28 primary; 18 secondary) were selected for a cross-case analysis to obtain an overview of teaching in the classrooms. A case study was also made of seven lessons (four primary; three secondary) to show the nature of complete lessons.

KEY FINDINGS

Baseline quantitative study

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.

Quantitative studies 1 & 2

Study 1 (EIA 2011a) found that the classroom practice of participating teachers had improved after four months exposure to EIA. Study 2 (EIA 2012a) showed that most of these changes were sustained a year or more later.

1. *Substantial and sustained increase in teachers' spoken English*

After four months of EIA, on average:

- 71% of the teachers' talk in primary lessons was in English; 72% after 12 months.
- 86% of the teachers' classroom talk in secondary lessons was in English; 79% after 16 months.

2. *Substantial and sustained increase in student talk*

After four months of EIA, students were talking on average for:

- 27% of the lesson during primary lessons; whereas teachers were talking for a third of the lesson.
- 23% of the lesson during secondary lessons; whereas teachers were talking for a third; after 16 months, 24% and 50% respectively.

For secondary, the figure for teacher talk is higher after 16 months, reflecting a different emphasis in teaching at the time of the school year when Study 2 was conducted.

Classic studies of US classrooms typically show student talk taking up around a quarter of the lesson (Flanders 1970). Therefore, student talk time in EIA classrooms is comparable to international standards.

3. Substantial and sustained increase in students' spoken English

After four months of EIA, on average:

- 88% of primary students' classroom talk in lessons was in English; 81% after 12 months.
- 88% of the secondary students' classroom talk in lessons was in English; 85% after 16 months.

4. Student participation in communicative activities

The amount of student talk and the students' use of English were achieved by the use of more communicative activities, such as pair and group work. After four months of EIA, on average:

- 14% of student activity in primary lessons was pair work, 15% was group work; after 12 months, 5% and 4% respectively.
- 32% of student activity in secondary lessons was pair work, 27% group work; after 16 months, 15% and 13% respectively.

Reductions in pair and group work after 12 and 16 months (Study 2) reflect the time in the school year that the study was conducted – at this time these kinds of activities are reduced, along with a corresponding increase in teacher talk.

Qualitative study

The qualitative study also showed some important changes. Of the primary lessons observed, two thirds included the use of EIA audio resources, and half included the use of EIA posters. Even though fewer classroom resources were provided to secondary teachers, a quarter of all secondary lessons observed included EIA audio resources.

During the lessons observed, teachers were in control of the EIA materials and activities and how these were used. Whilst many activities were still teacher led, there was greatly increased student participation, for example, through the use of audio, singing and rhymes. Whilst much of the activity was with the whole-class or individual students, there was some evidence student-focused activities, such as pair and group work. Some teachers were giving greater attention to individual student learning, through improved monitoring, checking of understanding and feedback, and some teachers were purposefully combining a number of ELT pedagogies.

SUMMARY

The results reported here show the positive impact of the EIA pilot school programme on classroom practice. After just four months of EIA, the data have shown:

- substantially more English is spoken by both teachers and students;
- students have more opportunities to participate in lessons. (EIA 2011a)

Furthermore, these changes were sustained – after 12-16 months most were still observed in the classroom (EIA 2012a).

These changes have been achieved through the use of the teaching strategies featured in EIA teacher professional development materials and activities (EIA 2011b, c & d). Indeed, elements of EIA are already widespread in use and are embedded firmly in practice for some EIA teachers; for other EIA teachers, these elements have been adopted more selectively. This is what would be expected after some six to nine months of trying out these new methods.

Further to changes in classroom practice, teachers and students have shown positive views to learning English and to the EIA intervention itself (EIA 2011e), and there have been improvements to the English language competence of both teachers and students participating in EIA (EIA 2012b).

The EIA project needs to sustain these improvements in teachers' classroom practice over the long term and, more challenging, to do so when the scale of the programme moves from several hundred teachers to several thousand.

REFERENCES

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ENGLISH IN ACTION

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



59 Teacher Facilitators, and approximately 132,700 students (79,900 primary; 52,800 secondary) across all 7 divisions of Bangladesh.

The project's next two phases will scale up the school programme to larger numbers: by 2014 to reach 12,500 teachers and 900,000 students, and by 2017 to reach 80,000 teachers and over 10 million students.

Innovative teacher professional development in schools

EIA encourages teachers to introduce new English language learning activities into their classroom practice, with their students. Teachers are supported in making these changes by a range of project materials, including audio-visual materials provided at low cost through mobile technologies. The audio materials are designed to be used with students in class, whilst video resources help teachers understand and implement new practices. Pairs of teachers support each other in school and participate in professional development activities, such as workshops and cluster meetings, beyond school.