

## English Language Policy and the Teaching of English in Bangladesh

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### **Abstract:**

*Bangladesh is an independent and promising country. In 1971 we achieved our independence by defeating the brutal and aggressive Pakistani Armed Forces under the leadership of Bongo bondhu sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the Father of the nation. During the reign of British Empire in this sub-continent English language was used as the official language. Now in the present world context English language has become a global language .So the demand of using this language has increased among all the countries in the world like China, Japan, India, Bangladesh and others. But in Bangladesh there is no clear cut policy regarding the status of English language. Since 1974, several national education commissions were formed in Bangladesh with changing shifts in policies which in turn had their impacts in our education system. This article attempts to analyze the policy influencing on the varied aspects of English language education from the primary to the tertiary level – including changes in curriculum design, materials, pedagogy, and*

*assessment with its spillover into dubious teaching- learning practices sadly sanctioned by society. This paper will also explore the diverse realizations of these policy shifts within an overarching perception of a changing global polity, newly emerging stakeholders and the complexity of transition from policy to practice. However, in reality this is a focus on the changing perceptions of the English language perceived initially through strong nationalist feelings but gradually moving on through diverse realizations to a current neo- liberal stance.*

### **Keywords:**

English language policy and teaching, Curriculum design and materials, Balanced Planning, Pedagogy, Evolution of Language, Changing global polity, Instructional material, linguistic nationalism, NGO-ization and privatization of education. Neo-liberal Turn.

### **Introduction:**

Language is the means of communication. As a medium of communication English

enjoys the position of World Language. So a good English Language policy is of Paramount importance to determine the standard of our system of education. On the other hand the teaching of English depends to a large extent on the policy adopted by the Government. With this end in view here I have made an attempt to give an overview of the English Language policy *vis-a-vis* the teaching of English in the perspective of Bangladesh.

### Research Methodology and Techniques:

The study is explanatory in nature. Primary data were collected through in depth interview with few teachers at University level from both public and private Universities in Bangladesh as respondent, those who are selected by snowball sampling technique (Linking one from another with same case). Different magazine and journal articles, newspaper columns, books and reports also have supported the study as the sources for the secondary data. Moreover, relevant statistics are shown and analyzed in order to authenticate the postulates put forward throughout the paper. The variables of the study have been selected through extensive literature survey.

### Limitations of the study:

This study suffers from a number of problems. The number of respondents were very few. There might have some limitations in data collection for the shortage of time. Performance analysis and their long time impact needs more time to asses. The research found the Lack of cooperative attitude of the samples as well as Lack of sufficient secondary online data

regarding the research problem in Bangladesh. To do this study the researcher had limited books and resources regarding the subject.

### Review of Literature and Discussion:

#### History of English in Bangladesh:

- In the early 17<sup>th</sup> century the British merchants brought English to this sub-continent as a result the uses of Persian and Portuguese began to decline.
- Macaulay's minute first laid the foundation of English education in 19<sup>th</sup> century (cited in Aggarwal : 1993)
- After the partition of India English continued to be the language of administration, offices and courts, higher education and social mobility.
- In school curriculum English was present from class 3 to class 10 in Bangla medium schools. At higher secondary level (class XI and XII), medium of instruction was English.
- Higher education in all the disciplines was offered only in English (Rahman : 2007)
- 1947 the imposition of English and Urdu for the people of East Pakistan was vehemently opposed by the Bangla speaking people.
- This actually led to the sowing of the seed of the liberation war of Bangladesh in 1971.

- There was no problem for a newly born state like Bangladesh to select a national language: Bangla.
- In 1971 Due to strong sentiment of patriotism of the great majority of the people, they not only rejected Urdu at the same time threw away English, resulting in introduction of Bangla at all levels of administration, education and judiciary.
- The constitution of Bangladesh was written in Bangla and declared Bangla as the state language. There was no mention of English.
- As a result it became difficult to outline a definite policy for the English language and its development in Bangladesh.

### Changes in the Curriculum:

Curriculum is always a changeable matter .With the passage of time the curriculum of a country is being changed to cope up with the outer world. So changing and development of curriculum is a very common phenomenon in any country-So as in Bangladesh. Since 1971 numerous development and changes have been done in the curriculum policy.

Development of curriculum and changes in the teaching and learning of English since the inception of Bangladesh is noted below.

- The first education commission was formed in 1974 (kudrat E khuda). According to this commission English was introduced as a compulsory subject from class 6 to 12.

- In 1976 there was a change in the planning and English was made compulsory from class 3 up to 12.
- In 1986 another decision was taken to start teaching English from class 1-12.
- 1990: CLT (Communicative language Teaching) was introduced in teaching English.
- 1992: A major decision was taken to implement the Private University Act which gave rise to a number of private universities allowing the affluent of the society to taste US model education system. The medium of instruction in these Private Universities was English.
- 1992: Competency based primary curriculum was introduced.
- 1994: English was re-introduced in degree (Pass) courses. (It was abolished from this course in 1972)
- 1996: In 1996 compulsory foundation courses on English and Bangla were introduced in all the public universities under graduate programs. Of course in the meantime various departments used to deliver lectures on their courses either in English or in Bangla or in some cases there was flexibility i.e. mixed languages were used.
- 1996: In the same year another important change was made Regarding the English language teachers; the retirement age of all government school English teachers were increased for 3 years

without any consideration of their quality or qualification as there was already a great demand for English teachers at the secondary level. Due to this decision we had to compromise with the quality of English Language Teaching.

- 1997: English curriculum was reviewed to make it competency based. Separate learning outcomes were identified for each skill. But the system of evaluation did not cover all the four skills, though it was supposed to do so.
- 2000 :
  - (i) Medium of instruction of teaching at KG schools was English.
  - (ii) Inclusion of separate grammar books for grade 6 up to grade 10 Students. Distribution of marks were revised, some portion of marks were allotted for grammar.
  - (iii) Junior secondary level put more emphasize on grammar than the secondary level.
- 2008 : Bangladesh government decided to change the status of English language from foreign language to second language, though the present practice does not allow the situation to be second language one in respect of both teaching and learning.

#### **Recent Development in English Language Policy:**

From the above description it is clear that since the inception of Bangladesh seven national education commissions have been

formed, all of which placed various degrees of emphasis on the planning , Pedagogical practice and learning of English in Bangladesh. Recent Development in English Language Policies are as follows:

#### **NEP (National Education Policy) 2010:**

- This is the first education policy which published its report in consistent with the present demand of the needs of English language.
- With the review of the curriculum equal emphasis has been given on all the four skills of English.
- To strengthen further so for neglected two skills listening and speaking have been included in assessment.
- Twenty percent of the total marks allotted for English has been set for listening and speaking.
- To ease the load of the teachers, NCTB provided CD'S for class room practice
- Teachers of all the levels are provided lots of training on both pedagogy and content knowledge.
- URCS and PTIS have been strengthened with both software and hardware.

### Where is the Problem? :

- Despite so many commissions and developments in English language teaching and learning, there are issues still to be resolved.
- Teaching learning at English and Bangla versions.
- Inconsistent foundation courses
- System of Assessment

### English Language Education Policy in Bangladesh: Historical narratives and Underlying factors:

#### English Language Education Policy:

Policy documents can be treated as primary resources (Prior 2011 cited in Chowdhury and kabir 2014) to explore the historical development of English education and how English has played out in education system of Bangladesh. Actually to make our education system up to date and globally standard several education policy has been formulated since 1974 to 2010 in Bangladesh .let us have a look on different education commissions and policy.

- \* Bangladesh Education Commission 1974.
- \* English Teaching Taskforce commission 1976.
- \* Bangladesh National Education Commission Report 1988.
- \* National curriculum committee 1991.
- \* National Education Policy 2000.
- \* Miah Commission Report 2003.
- \* National Education Policy 2010.

### Education Commission and English Language Education Policy.

#### Bangladesh Education Commission 1974 (Qudrat e khuda Education Commission)

- Based on Socio-economic, Political and cultural heritage of the country.
- Education System of the global perspective was taken into consideration.
- The report reflected the spirit of independent nation and the fundamentals of the newly framed constitution.
- Report affirmed Bengali to be used as only medium of instruction from primary to higher education level.
- English given priority as foreign language, to be taught from class 6.

General emphasis on English Language, at this stage it needs to give emphasis on language education rather than literature to learn English. (Ministry of education 1974, P.14)

#### English Teaching Taskforce Commission 1976

(Prof. Shamsul Hoque Education Committee)

- Based on the recommendation of the Qudrat-e-Khuda commission National curricula and syllabus committee was framed.
- English to be taught either in class 3 or class 6, subject to availability of English teachers.

### 1988 Bangladesh

#### National Education commission

(Also known as Mofiz Uddin Education commission).

- Grade 3 suggested as recommended starting point for English education.
- Grade 6 suggested as uniform starting point for English education.

National curriculum committee 1991

- English Education introduced in class 3.
- English introduced as compulsory subject in class 1 (1992).

### National

#### Education Policy 2000

- English set as medium of Instruction for kindergartens.
- Curriculum and all text material used in kindergartens translated into English.
- Introduction of English as extra subject from class 1 and 2 and as compulsory subject from class 3.
- Along with Bengali, English could be medium of instruction from the secondary level (Class 7).
- Emphasis on English as medium of instruction at the tertiary level.

#### National Education Commission 2003

(Moniruzzaman Mia Commission)

- Report consists of mainly 3 parts and suggests 880 recommendations on all the education sub-sectors.
- Re-emphasis on English learning from the primary level.
- One objective of primary education is to acquaint learners with English language skills as a foreign language.
- Emphasis on rebuilding over all English.
- Emphasis on organizing foreign training for trainers at PTI and NAPE and local training for all secondary school teachers to improve English education.
- Emphasis on introducing a six-month English language course at the tertiary level.

#### 2010 National Education Policy

(Headed by Prof. Kabir Chowdhury)

- English recognized as essential tool to building knowledge based society.
- Emphasis on English writing and speaking from the very beginning of primary education.
- English to be set as compulsory subject adopted in all stream from the secondary level.
- English as medium at instruction could be introduced from the secondary level.
- Emphasis on appointing adequate number of English teachers at secondary level.
- English to be a compulsory subject in all colleges and universities.
- English (along with Bengali) to be the mediums of instruction at the tertiary level.
- Emphasis on the need to translate books written in English to Bengali.

### **Drawback of the abovementioned English Language Policies:**

- Lack of Dialogue between policy makers and stakeholders while formulating language education policies.
- Policies need to be informed by concrete research findings.
- Gaps exist between policy and practice.
- These commissions and committees were inevitably influenced by the respective ruling party's political ideologies and used as a means of short term political gain (Chowdhury & Kabir 2014:6)
- Conflict between nationalism and market demand of language.
- Hamid et al (2013) report policy makers started realizing the damage (P.150) done to English teaching and learning as a consequence of such nationalist policies.

### **Language Policy and its reflection on curriculum in Bangladesh:**

A language policy is a body of ideas, laws, regulations, rules and practices intended to achieve the planned language change in societies, group or system. Language policy is the expression of ideological views and language planning is the actual proposal that makes up the implementation.

Language planning is an activity, most visibly undertaken by government intended to promote systematic linguistic change in some community of speakers (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). It includes all the conscious efforts to change the

linguistic behavior of a speech community (Haugen 1966).

### **Why language Planning and policy:**

- Language is the most powerful instrument in human communication. Language gives an individual identity. But sometimes this medium of communication may create problem for/hinder smooth and meaningful interaction among a social group, here is the necessity of a language planning/policy.

### **Types of language Planning:**

There are three types of planning:

#### **Corpus:**

Coining new terms, reforming spelling, creation of new forms etc.

#### **Status:**

The recognition by a national government of the importance or position of one language in relation to others.

- Medium of instruction
- Official language
- Vehicle of mass communication
- Language of internal communication etc.

#### **Acquisition:**

Planning directed toward increasing the number of users- speakers, writers listeners, and readers-of a language.

- Literacy Education and Second and foreign language education efforts (Wiley course reader)
- Backwash effect on learners learning continuous professional developments etc.

**Impact of policy changes on instructional materials**

As a result of policy changes the nation has been experiencing the following impacts on instructional materials like:

- Course books
- Readers
- Grammar Books
- Literature to language

**Waves of changes**

- OSST TEB 1991-1995

- ELTIP 1997-2008

- EiA, TQI, SEQAEP, NCTB, NAEM, BC, American Centre

GT	to	CLT(Grammar Translation	to
Communicative Language Teaching			

**OSSTTEB:** Orientation of Secondary School Teacher for Teaching English in Bangladesh.

**ELTIP:** English Language Teaching Improvement Project.

**Course Book:**

- OSTTEB: 6-8 Course Book
- ELTIP: 9-10 & 11-12 Books
- NCTB: 1-12 Text Books

**Impacts:**

- Orientation to communicative books
- Communication not enjoyment
- Unprepared ground
- Unhappy guardians
- Textbooks are not used
- Resentment , nostalgia

Local expertise e.g. text book writers, communicative text designers

**Literature to language:**

\* **Old books** (Includes the following study materials like)

- Short Stories
- Essays
- Poems

**Impacts:**

- Narration and translation
- Listening to stories
- Memorization of notes
- Partial acquisition of TL : Size does not matter, I'm me, I'm the monarch of all, I see, thus let me die unseen and unknown and unlamented me to die .

- Character portrayal

- Describing facts

Exam
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**New course books:**

- Communication for local and International interaction
- Inter cultural communication
- Real life situation like hotel booking, filling departure card, matching pictures, identifying, taking interviews, introducing oneself and someone else, following instructions etc.
- Learning outcome
- Local and international context (Usaine bolt, Jukarburg, Pritilata Waddedar, Jainul Abedin, Martin luther king, Bongabondu)
- Different genres
- Communication, entertainment

**Impacts:**

Controversy:

- Why change
- Local VS native



- Dryness
- Human qualities VS human resources
- Emotion, ethics and morality

**Unawareness of learning out comes**

- 13.46 (Yes)
- 86.53 (No)

**Challenge:**

- Didactic model to exploratory or imperative model of learning.(Roy 2004)

**Recommended grammar books:**

- Communicative grammar books
- NCTB Published : grades 6-10
- Private publishers : 11-12

**Impacts:**

Communicative practice  
 Grammar practice in context  
 Convert grammar teaching  
 Induction  
 No rote learning

NCTB

Presentation, Practice, discovery  
 Old wine in new bottle  
 Misconceptions

Private Publishers

**Overall impacts:**

- appreciations
- Text book unutilized/ Unexplored
- low cost
- Melting ice: audio, small classes, TG/TED language experts, assessment of all skills, Bloom's taxonomy, classroom research, and case studies.

Most established system and those in education are no exception-tend to be conservative by nature so inertia is a major characteristic. Innovations are often seen as threat to stakeholders in the system: any disturbance to status quo may have unforeseen and possibly damaging consequences. (Hayes 2000).

**New waves:**

- effectiveness of one off short inset
- Training or CPD
- Can we achieve CEFR B2?

**Characterizing the evolution of language in education policy in Bangladesh:**

\* Changes in language policy can be read as a neoliberal narrative in a globalized world.

**Negative impression: Why**

“Teachers must perceive change to be relatively advantageous to them if they are to accept it. If they are to own innovations, teachers must have the opportunity to clarify their ideas about language education and engage in ideological as well as, behavioral change difficult, though not impossible’ (Marquee 1997).

\* How a nation with a strong sense of linguistic nationalism at birth has gradually opened itself to English and has given space to supra-national and sub-national entities that have promoted English.

\* Linguistic nationalism > balanced planning>neo liberal turn

Outline:

\* Factors influencing language policy research

\* Relationship between globalization, neoliberalism and English.

\* Linguistic nationalism following independence

\* Balanced planning

\* Shift towards neoliberalism

\* Implications of the neoliberal turn

### Factors shaping LPP research

Ricento (2000) identified 3 factors:

\* Macro sociopolitical

\* Epistemological

\* Strategic

1. Early work: Decolonization, structuralism and pragmatism

2. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase: Failure of modernization, critical sociolinguistics and success.

3. 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase: New world order, post modernism and linguistic human rights.

### Globalization, English and neoliberalism:

□ Global connectedness and interdependence

□ Rule of market and private entrepreneurship at the expense of state control and regulations

□ If globalizations an electric wire, neoliberalism is the current passing through this wire.

□ English provides communicative infrastructures to globalization and neoliberalism

□ Forces driving post nationalism in economy education and language.

### Linguistic nationalism:

□ Bangla elevated to higher status and brought to the center of social, economic, cultural and political life.

□ Limited role of English under nation state ideology

□ No acknowledgement of ethnic minority communities and their language.

### Balanced planning:

□ Growing recognition of English did not underestimate the place of Bangla.

□ Bangla and English occupying comparable curricular spaces.

□ Introduction of the Foundation course (Bangla) at DU.

### Neo liberal turn:

Presence of English increased in past several decades. Here is a table to understand new liberal turn in English Language;

Bangladesh Education Commission 1974	National Education Policy 2010
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English given priority as foreign language, to be taught from class 6.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> General emphasis on English Language.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English recognized as essential tool to build up knowledge-based society.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis on English Writing and speaking from the very beginning of primary education.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English to be set as compulsory subject adopted in all streams from the secondary level.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English as medium of instruction could be introduced from the secondary level</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis on appointing adequate number of English teachers at secondary level.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English to be compulsory subject in all colleges and Universities.</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> English (along with Bengali) to be the mediums of instruction at the tertiary level</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Emphasis on the need to translate books written in English to Bengali</li> </ul>

**Privatization of education:**

- English medium school
- English medium private universities.

Public Sector- classical Macro LPP (Language Planning and policy)	Private sector- Neoliberalism driven LPP (Language Planning and policy)
<input type="checkbox"/> Motivated by nationalism and the national language	<input type="checkbox"/> Driven by open market economy
<input type="checkbox"/> Language is a tool for uniting people and for creating national identity	<input type="checkbox"/> Language is a communicative tool; the role of language in national identity is not on the agenda.
<input type="checkbox"/> Politics of national language denies minority languages.	<input type="checkbox"/> Politics of language involves the instrumentality of languages promoting or denying languages is not the explicit focus.
<input type="checkbox"/> Languages require state protection and control.	<input type="checkbox"/> Languages do not require control or protection
<input type="checkbox"/> Promotion of global languages may have adverse effects on national languages and identities.	<input type="checkbox"/> No language can harm any other languages or identities. The use of languages and identities changes over time.
<input type="checkbox"/> Language planning is a balancing act.	<input type="checkbox"/> Balancing between languages is irrelevant.

### NGO-ization of Education:

- BRAC Education Program (<http://brac.net/education>)
- Teach for Bangladesh ([http:// www.teachforbangladesh.org](http://www.teachforbangladesh.org))

### Conclusions and Recommendations:

While preparing the article I had an intensive study and survey of different data sources and as such, it encompasses in the subject matter: the history of English in Bangladesh, changes in curriculum, English education Policy, Education commission of different periods right from 2003-2010, draw backs of the said policy and its reflection on our curriculum in conjunction with the main topic in particular sequence.

### Implications:

- Who owns education and language education?
- Multiple LPP factors at national, Supra-national, and sub national levels are required
- Nationalistic Views of language and language education may need reconsideration.

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