

TSL 510

**Using Bangladeshi Cultural Elements in EAP classrooms:
A Study on Tertiary Level Students in Dhaka**

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Statement of Original Authorship

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Abstract

The study attempts to investigate the reflection, and consequently the influence, of local culture and heritage in the syllabus, materials and teaching techniques in English classrooms at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The study also investigates the role and attitudes of teachers and learners in this regard. Data were collected through a questionnaire survey among tertiary level students, class observation and interviews of English teachers from private and public universities in Dhaka. The results reveal several positive effects of incorporating local cultural elements in English language classrooms; it generates learners' enthusiasm and motivation toward English—thereby promoting effective understanding and learning. The study suggests that curriculum and material designers need to focus on learners' interests and needs while designing materials for tertiary learners by adjusting with the local cultural issues for the sake of students' better learning.

Keywords

Target language, local culture, native culture, motivation, materials development

CHAPTER 1

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and Context

It is almost trite to mention that English is the de facto international lingua franca that is dominating in a number of fields, such as global business and finance, science and technology, medicine and public health, education and social sciences, public relations and media, sports and entertainment. Most of the Asian countries have English as compulsory subject in their national curriculums. In this post colonial era, English is still considered as a dominant language (Le, 2004). And this domination is being controlled by various agencies of the UK and the USA in order to sustain the global market of English (Blundell, 2006). The effects of ELT on ex-colonial countries have great impact in terms of English language teaching approaches and selecting materials for language class (Brumfit,1983; Pennycook,1989). When such a dominant language is taught in ex-colonial countries like as Bangladesh, the influence of the language would be powerful in general view. The reason is what we call as the colonized minds despite being politically independent; ‘the world continues to involve relations of domination and exploitation, under new names: globalization,’ (d'Errico, 2011). ELT practitioners often face difficulties while selecting materials and implement teaching methods for English as a Second Language or L2 class because of the post colonial dominance of English language (Tomlinson, 2005). As a result, countries like us have not come up with new ideas and materials of ELT that are related to our cultural context. Native cultural issues and items keep dominating the syllabuses and classroom materials.

At past, ELT facilitators and teachers were from native countries of English. So, they used to prescribe non-native speakers of English to adapt their ready-made teaching materials and teaching methodologies. The scenario has undergone a bit of change with the help of some enthusiastic non-native ELT practitioners, but still the course contents, lesson plans and ELT materials are dependent on native cultural contexts. But several

prominent ELT exponents have talked of culture as the 'fifth skill' in an English language class (Tomalin, 2009). In this line, a few ELT practitioners and curriculum designers in Bangladesh are trying to consider this culture issue and its impact in order to select materials for language class at different levels (primary to tertiary levels).

A very common debate exists among ELT practitioners and researchers whether learners of English in Asia should follow native culture materials to learn English. The current use of English in Asia demonstrates that L2 learners not only learn English to communicate with native speakers but also to communicate with non-native speakers. In addition, the prerequisite of getting good jobs is to have good command on English. Because of the importance of learning English as an L2, curriculum designers to language teachers are very careful with teaching L2 in Bangladesh as English is a compulsory subject for all learners from primary to tertiary levels. The key issue arises whether learning materials should be on native cultural context or local cultural context. English Language teaching occurs within a context and the context is based on the way of life of the dominant culture. The cultural issue influences L2 teaching and learning process in non-native speaking countries of English. The situation becomes complicated, or even worse, when ELT experts and teachers fail to make bridge between native culture and local culture through the adjustment and inclusion of local cultural elements in their ELT materials for non-native speakers of English. Textbooks that are adopted from native cultures are far away from the reality of non-native countries. Furthermore, those books are not locally produced and cannot meet the challenges, goals and needs of L2 learning process. Using locally familiar topics and issues through locally produced ELT materials is one big solution to overcome the challenges of English teaching in non-native contexts (Shahed, 2013).

According to public perception, EAP (English for Academic Purposes) classes of tertiary level students in Bangladesh by and large ignore Bangladeshi culture and heritage. It is apprehended that due to the selection of books or texts from foreign culture, students do not get any essence of the local culture. At present context, it needs to focus on role of teachers and students in EAP class, so that others could get an overall idea of language learning process in EAP course. Teacher teaches cultural

background of students' culture besides language teaching. If not, learning of students could be empty or meaningless and students could not be able to use language contextually. To foster English language learning, class materials from local culture could be an integral part of learning process. Usage of local cultural items give students an opportunity to learn more about their own culture as well as the language needed to explain these cultural elements in English (McKay, 2003). It has been a matter of discussion among ELT experts that how culturally diversified items or materials influence the learning process. Moreover, learners often avoid the texts or items that are culturally different. So, the time is to explore the scenario of EAP class where including local cultural information could play a vital role in teaching process besides foreign cultural elements. In addition, students' fear of English is an important factor in Bangladeshi context. Changes in teaching process could change the scenario of fear in English gradually. Inclusion of own local cultural elements in language learning could be a way of learning about history, societal norms and behaviors of one's culture.

1.2 Research Objectives:

Primary objective:

- To examine whether our tertiary level students are exposed to Bangladeshi cultural issues and contents in their EAP classrooms besides native cultural issues and contents.

Secondary objectives:

- To examine the attitudes and approaches of English teachers regarding the usage of local cultural items in their class.
- To explore the attitudes of learners regarding impact of native cultural items and contents in their classrooms.

1.3 Thesis Outline

Chapter One outlines a brief description about the study including background of the study, the research questions, purpose of the research, objectives of the research, the significance and scope of the study.

Chapter Two provides the literature of the study. It gives a picture that previous researches have said about usage of local culture in language learning.

Chapter Three provides the method of the study. It also illustrates the instruments used in the study and the participants as well. It also mentions how the data was collected and analyzed.

Chapter Four outlines the findings of the study.

Chapter Five presents analyses of the findings linked with the existing literature.

Chapter Six presents the recommendations in terms of the research findings.

Chapter Seven includes the conclusion of the study along with a brief summary of the whole study.

1.4 Significance of the study

The study will hopefully help the curriculum designers and English language teachers to get rid of the misconceptions regarding the cultural dimensions of ELT and help them rethink the selection of appropriate materials for language class. This study is also crucial specifically for the academic authorities of our private universities given the fact that English skills are being taught in a comparatively wider canvass—with two, three or more courses allocated for English—compared to public universities. At the same time, it will help generate public consciousness for creating self-dependent, innovative, nationalistic English language teaching and learning programs—regardless of General English, English for Academic Purposes (EAP) or English for Specific Purposes (ESP)—and create an efficient English-knowing workforce for our nation.

CHAPTER 2

2.0 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

English is taught as a compulsory subject at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi educators, UGC (University Grants Commission) and educational institutions are concerned about the inclusion of English language in curriculum for its greater importance in this competitive world. There are no hard and fast rules to select the materials for English language class at tertiary level. However, curriculum and syllabus designers of public and private universities design their own syllabuses for L2 class. Most of the time, some educational institutions design their own materials for language class but some institutions adapt materials from other native sources like, The New Cambridge English Course, Headway, True to Life, Interactive etc. These materials are widely used for non-native speakers around the world. The books also reflect native cultural issues and cover four language skills.

McKay (2003) explains that culture influences language teaching in two ways, linguistics and pedagogical. Culture affects the semantic, pragmatic and discourse levels of the language. Pedagogically, it influences the choice of the language materials because cultural items of the language class and teaching methodology depend on the selection of language class materials. As an example, some textbooks provide examples from the target culture while some others use local cultural materials. McKay (2003) also stated that English language teachers should recognize the value of topics that deal with local culture. The use of local culture in L2 class helps learners to learn L2 very well. Among many factors of L2 teaching, incorporating local culture is one factor to teach L2 with social context.

Every L2 learner has unique cultural background that has link with L2 learning process. Culturally known items help L2 learners to learn L2 and communicate with confidence.

McKay (2003) also states that the purpose of teaching L2 is to facilitate learners' ideas and culture through communication. In most of the time, it was found in different researches around the world is non-native speakers of English have low motivation in learning L2. On the other hand, there are some factors works as barrier to this lack of motivation. Among them, having very little knowledge on native culture can be a major reason behind lack of motivation for learners. The advantage of using local cultural items in L2 class is to motivate L2 learners (Chen & Chen, 2009). It also enhances L2 learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Cheung, 2001). Motivation works as energizer to learners because of their low motivation while learning L2.

Second language learning has been reconceptualized over the last decade as a participatory process, in which a learner is not only a learner of new ways of expressing ideas, but rather the learner becomes a learner of new ways of thinking, behaving and living in an L2 community gradually (Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000; Young & Miller, 2004). The adoption of popular culture materials in the second language classroom is generally considered to show positive impacts on L2 learning (Fukunaga, 2006). Moreover, inclusion of local cultural items enhances learners' ability to communicate in L2 with knowing social context. Consequently, learners get habituated with local cultural items with native cultural items. It also enhances cultural awareness among learners that helps them to gather ideas for writing and speaking.

L2 learning involves a number of different dimensions, including grammatical competence, communicative competence, language proficiency and cultural understanding (Thanasoulad, 2001). Among six proposals for strategies to include cultural items in L2 classroom, the first strategy is to provide culturally learning materials. The usage of appropriate materials can help students engage in real cultural experiences. These materials can include films, television shows, magazines, newspaper etc. However, classroom activities that are not contextualized and attached to real life issues, activities, do not help the students learn to use L2 (Firth & Wagner, 1997; Hall, 1997; Stoller, 2006; Van Lier, 2000 and 2002). Many researchers suggest that, learners should learn L2 in such a way that learners could relate class materials with real life during L2 learning process.

Cultural factors play an important role in teaching and learning process. Teacher has to listen to learners and empathize with them. Teacher should share his or her own cultural experience with learners to help them enter another culture (Ellis, 2003). Teachers need to localize the native cultural items by providing examples from their own experiences. The localization process is not possible for all the time. In this regard, inclusion of local cultural items could meet the gap between native and local cultural items.

Shahed (2013) mentions how most of teachers of tertiary level in Bangladesh think about L2 in class and a great number of students are not interested to read the text when the topic is culturally different. In listening activities, students were found with very poor understanding as they could not relate the contents with their own culture. To deal with culturally diversified items, language teachers try to explain the semantic meaning and contexts of those items according to target culture. They also ignore some contents of target culture because they think it is not necessary to explain all contents.

Second language learning is to provide a chance for learners to reflect their local culture, through the experience with L2 culture (Byram, 1988). To design curriculum, it is suggested that L2 teaching should be in a way that raise learners' awareness about their own culture as well as native culture.

Tomlinson (1998) mentions the characteristics of good materials such as: materials should achieve impact; materials should help learners to feel at ease; materials should help learners to develop confidence; learners should perceive learning materials as relevant and useful.

While supporting the idea that teachers should prepare their own materials. Howard and Major (2004) present a set of guidelines for designing effective materials for teaching and learning English: English language teaching materials should be contextualized; materials should stimulate interaction and be generative in terms of language; English language materials should be flexible.

Tomalin (2009) in his paper raises a crucial issue of developing cultural sensitivity and cultural skill through the use of local items. He prioritizes the building of cultural

awareness, the qualities needed to deal successfully with other cultures, and the process of operating successfully with people from other cultures. He thus empathizes the consideration of the following issues in the teaching of culture in ELT: (a) cultural knowledge (i.e. the knowledge of the culture's institutions), (b) cultural values (i.e. the 'psyche' of the country, what people think is important, it includes things like family, hospitality, patriotism, fairness etc.), (c) cultural behavior (the knowledge of daily routines and behavior) and (d) cultural skills (the development of intercultural sensitivity and awareness, using the English language as the medium of interaction).

Tomlinson and Mashura (2004) suggest several standards for text selection, including the following questions: (a) Is the text likely to interest most of the students? Does it connected to real lives? (b) Are the students likely to be able to understand it?

Byram (1998) states that teachers have to reflect on learners' own culture first and to introduce the target culture later on through the experience with foreign language and culture. It is suggested that to improve learners' motivation in learning L2, local cultural items need to be included in curriculum.

Shahed (2013) highlights the role of culture in undergraduate EFL classrooms of private universities in Bangladesh depicting how most of the language teachers were following British or American cultural items while selecting materials for L2 classrooms. The language teachers highlighted the global status of English that influences present EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

Textbooks usually play a dominant role in terms of materials used in the class. Textbooks are consists of topics, texts, pictures etc according to syllabus (Pulvernes, 2004). International textbooks are designed to represent native culture whereas locally produced books focus on local non-native culture. Locally produced books in Bangladesh are written by Bangladeshi authors who can reflect local culture first and then assimilate both native and non-native cultural items from broad perspective. McKay (2003) provides the examples of textbook projects in Morocco and Chile to prove the effectiveness of using local cultural items in textbooks. The output came well by incorporating local cultural items in textbooks in which learners were found

enthusiastic while learning L2 and teachers taught L2 in a lively environment. In Bangladesh, there is a scope for introducing local cultural items at large scale besides integrating local and native cultural contents in L2 classrooms. Bangladesh government could take an initiative of writing textbooks following Moroccan and Chilean government to ensure better L2 learning in terms of inclusion of local cultural items in classrooms.

Some of the researchers strongly agree to use task-based teaching in L2 classroom. Shahed (2013) recommends task-based teaching for teachers for helping students learn English as an L2. By this way, learners would be able to communicate using their own knowledge of L2 in classroom and outside of the classroom. There are three basic types of tasks in task based teaching such as information gap, reasoning gap and opinion gap (Prabhu, 1987). Information gap activities refer to involvement in transferring information from one person to another. In information gap activities, learners learn how to request, ask for clarification and negotiation in a given context. Both in other activities of task based teaching, learners get a situation in which learners involve in activities in terms of given situation.

Nunan (2001) argues that classroom texts and dialogues are inadequate for learners to cope up with learning L2 in outside of the classroom. He suggests ensuring inclusion of real world texts in classroom could help students to learn L2 in natural setting.

Kramach (1993) states that to understand native culture, local culture and foreign culture should be assemble together for better learning.

When there is no use of local cultural items in grammar teaching, learners might fail to apply grammatical knowledge in real life communication (Richards & Reppen, 2014).

A study was done in Hong Kong to enhance EFL students' grammar learning. The result of the study shows adoption of popular cultural items can improve performance of the L2 learners in grammar learning.

It is significant to mention that though previous studies have tried to reveal the importance of incorporating local culture in L2 classroom for learners' better

understanding. Nonetheless, the most of the studies were done in other countries in Asia like China, Taiwan, Saudi Arabia etc. Their findings may not be valid for Bangladeshi context of L2 teaching.

Chapter 3

3.0 RESEARCH DESIGN

This chapter discusses the methodology of the study that was followed to meet the aims and objectives mentioned in Chapter 1. The first section of this chapter described the methods used in the study. The second section detailed the participants taken in the study; the third section listed all the instruments used in study; the fourth section outlined the procedures used in study; the fifth section described data analysis. The last section listed ethical issues and limitation of the study.

3.1 Research Questions:

The study tried to seek the answers of the following questions:

General question:

- To what extent and in what ways is our national culture and heritage reflected in our EAP syllabuses and teaching-learning process?

Specific questions

- What are the roles of teachers and students in using national cultural elements in EAP classrooms?
- How much do the foreign/target language elements influence our students' learning?

3.2 Methodology of the Study

As this research comprised a study of participants' attitudes, the researcher intended to follow the mixed method, i.e. a combination of quantitative and qualitative research. The data was collected from two universities of Dhaka city through a questionnaire consisting of open-ended and close-ended questions, interview of three English

language teachers and observation of seven classes. In order to collect data, the researcher followed a structured procedure such as, questionnaire for students, class observation checklists, interview questions for teachers, data collection on research topic, analysis of data, interpreting results and drawing conclusion.

3.3 Participants

The researcher selected two universities (one public and one private) in Dhaka city. The participants were forty students of tertiary level and three English language teachers. The tertiary level learners filled in a structured questionnaire. Eight tertiary level English language classes were observed to find out the reflection of national culture and heritage in EAP class. The language teachers were asked to respond according to structured interview questions. The selected teachers had L2 teaching experience in tertiary level from three to eight years.

3.4 Data collection tools

The researcher collected data through questionnaire for students, interviews of teachers and class observations. To get an overall idea of EAP class at tertiary level, these tools were helpful for the research.

3.4.1 Questionnaire for students

For the study, two types of questionnaire (open and close-ended) were designed by the researcher. Forty students were asked to fill in the questionnaire. There were twelve questions in the questionnaire. The participants got instructions on how to fill in the questionnaire. So, the students wrote the answers without any anxiety. In addition, the researcher provided assurance of confidentiality of all the data.

3.4.2 Interviews of teachers

The researcher selected three English teachers from public and private universities in Bangladesh to take interviews. There were eleven open-ended questions for the

teachers. With consent of the teachers, the researcher recorded face to face interviews of the teachers in a recording device. The teachers provided examples in reply to most of the questions that showed the vivid scenario of teaching process of L2 at tertiary level in Bangladesh.

3.4.3 Class observation

In order to collect data from class observation, the researcher observed eight language classes—six from the private and two from the public university—following structured observation checklist that helped to conduct the research in a systematic way.

3.5 Data collecting procedure

To congregate the necessary data, the researcher collected data from students and teachers during class time and after the class. The researcher provided questionnaire to forty students of tertiary level. The researcher also conducted face to face interviews of the teachers through some specific interview questions. Upon proper permissions from the authorities, the researcher then conducted the teacher interviews. However, the researcher did not get permission to observe a writing class in one of the universities.

3.6 Procedure of data analyses

After collecting the data through questionnaire survey among students, interviews of teachers, and observation of classes, the researcher analyzed them in both qualitative and quantitative frame of data analysis. The researcher used both closed-ended and open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the interview. There were 12 (twelve) questions in the survey for students. After collecting responses of close-ended question the researcher analyzed the data on a scale of 100 and demonstrated them in percentage. The outcomes were indicated on charts and diagrams. In addition, the researcher analyzed the data acquired through the open-ended questions. The interview data were qualitatively analyzed. The teachers' interview was not audio-recorded for ethical issues. The data analysis was accomplished by using MS Excel.

3.7 Ethical considerations

While conducting the research, the ethical issue was given the highest priority. The researcher took permission from tertiary institutions to observe class as well as teachers to take interviews. Interviews of the teachers were recorded with teachers' consent.

3.8. Limitations

Getting permission from the university authorities for class observation and interviews took a long time due to bureaucratic procedures. Thus because of time constraints, the researcher was not able to take more participants as sample to collect data for the research. And because the sample was not at very large, the results of the research might not reveal the actual scenario of EAP classes in Bangladesh.

In addition to this, it was be difficult to fix appointments with teachers as well as to convince students to fill in the questionnaire. Also, since the study was confined in Dhaka city it would have been better if the research could be conducted in other cities of Bangladesh.

CHAPTER 4

Part I

4.0 OVERVIEW OF THE FINDINGS

The purpose of this study was to examine whether and to what extent students of tertiary level are exposed to foreign cultural contents in their EAP classes. The study also attempted to explore the probable process of learning that is likely to enhance due to inclusion of Bangladeshi cultural contexts. In this chapter, the findings of the study have been analyzed and organized according to the research questions.

The first section shows the findings from class observation along with different important issues that were explored in different language classes. The second section presents the data collected from the teachers' interviews. It contains the responses from three English language teachers of two universities and their experiences and opinions on local cultural elements in EAP class. Finally, the findings from the students' responses have been analyzed.

4.1 Results from class observations

The researcher collected data through observing eight English language classes of tertiary level in both public and private universities. From the class observation, researcher got an overall idea of the L2 learning process, teaching process, materials etc. The first thing researcher observed was, students' performances and reactions positively changed whenever teachers included examples or samples concerned with Bangladeshi culture and heritage. They could relate themselves better to those items and showed more enthusiasm than usual.

The researcher also observed that teachers sometimes dealt in a different manner with some items if they thought those culturally inappropriate for learners. The teachers

either changed and replaced those inappropriate items with local counterparts or totally skipped them.

Students were found lively and interested while expressing views on any topic that was from own local items. In such cases, students showed much lower amount of anxiety in their verbal feedback.

4.2 Results from students' questionnaire

The results from students' feedback on the questionnaire indicate that there exists a significant impact of teacher's usage of Bangladeshi culture and heritage in classrooms. 85% of the students said that the use of native cultural items in L2 class seemed difficult for them to understand the lessons and concepts clearly. 80% of the students prefer local cultural elements in their journey of learning L2.

Interestingly, students of the public university said that the materials which their teachers used were mostly based on native cultural items or issues, while private university students said that their teachers most of the time tried to use and apply materials based on Bangladeshi culture and heritage.

95% students in general believe that usage of local cultural items in L2 class promotes learning in many ways. The students expressed that teachers shared own experiences and real life examples from day to day life to demonstrate local content, and because of that students felt comfortable to accept even the most unknown topics from native culture. However, all of the students were found to be unaware of the issue of culture as a skill in the English class; as a result, they never expressed their opinions on the native items or aspects in their materials with their teachers even if they had faced difficulties in understanding. So, it can be inferred that inclusion of local cultural items might reflect positively on their students' performances in L2.

4.3 Results from teachers' interviews

All of the three L2 teachers stated that usage of local cultural items helped learners to participate in class much better as well as show greater interest in learning L2 through

self motivation. A teacher from the public university felt that it would be better if teachers or material designers could design book or materials by including local cultural items that are directly connected to real life. Most of the time teachers ignore culturally sensitive issues and rather focus on localizing native items for students.

All of the three teachers agreed that students' performance varied because of the inclusion of unknown items from native culture though teachers expect students to get habituated with the native items for the sake of their developing global mindset. One of the language teachers believed that self motivation might work in terms of accepting native cultural items in L2 learning process. Teachers also said that they demonstrated native cultural items with sharing plenty of examples from day to day life.

Part II

4.4 PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS

This chapter contains the findings, analyses, interpretations and discussions on the data collected through students' questionnaire, teachers' interview and class observation. The researcher has analyzed and discussed the questions under the following sub-headings.

4.5 Class Observations

Eight English language classes—two from the public university and six from the private university—of tertiary level were observed to explore the reflection of local cultural items in EAP classes and the techniques of teachers and students in dealing with the cultural items during class. Among the classes observed, six were concerned with speaking and writing course and two were concerned with reading and writing course. The criteria set in the observation checklist were followed in collecting the data. The results found from class observation are stated below.

4.5.1 Usage of native and local cultural items in class

Experience in private university

The researcher observed six English language classes in private university to get ideas of the usage of native and local cultural items. She found language teachers using local cultural items most of the time.

In the speaking classes, students were found giving individual presentations where they shared their experiences of different day to day life issues such as their pastime, pet dogs, village tour, visit to historical places, memorable days of life etc. Almost all of the students were found spontaneous and lively in their presentation. Teacher selected topics for another group presentation which were related to global issues such as Robot Sofia or journalism as a weapon against corruption in different countries etc. In the latter case, students were not seen fluent in speaking compared to the first presentation.

In the writing class, teachers taught different kinds of essay writing (argumentative, compare-contrast, problem solving etc) and used relevant native samples to explain the essay writing format. Students were attentive with usual body languages. It was unclear how much they understood the lecture or getting connected with those samples that were being shown. However, after a while, the teachers shifted to locally familiar examples and samples on child marriage, teenage depression, Baul song verses pop song, rickshaw art, public and private universities in Bangladesh, road accidents in Bangladesh etc. Students were seen to instantly connect themselves with the issues and come up with enthusiastic responses to teachers' lectures.

Experience in public university

The researcher found a different scenario of English language class in the public university in terms of class materials and learning process. Teacher conducted classes by prescribed book from institution that was written by native writers. There were different tasks in class activities, e.g. dialogue writing between teacher and students, listening track on conversation about 'Year gap' between mother and son, writing essay on

'Safari in Africa's etc. However, the teacher was found to be conscious of the culture issue and adjusted the local items and issues with the native ones wherever necessary. Here also, students showed more interest during when local examples came up.

In the writing class, students were asked to write a dialogue about providing advice to students for upcoming exams between teacher and students. In their course reader, students were giving advice to teacher in a friendly way but language teacher told students to write the same dialogue in a way where teacher would give advice. In Bangladesh, teacher only gives advice to students that are unusual in native culture.

4.5.2 Teachers' explanation on native cultural items

In both the universities, teachers localized the different native cultural contents by using examples from real life. To teach vocabulary from the selected passage ('Communication around the world'), teacher shared her own experience of communication around the world that helped students to understand the words with contexts. In addition, all of the teachers compared Bangladeshi culture and heritage with native culture in class. As a result, students understood the contents of language class properly and participated in class with great interest.

While teaching grammar (tense, subject-verb agreement, if conditions etc), teachers gave plenty of examples from real life issues that technique worked successfully in class. However, teachers provided examples from native cultural items in worksheets and class tests. Almost all of the students were able to write correct answers in exam as they understood the structures of different grammatical items with real life examples.

4.5.3 Teacher-student interaction pattern

Teachers created lively environment while dealing with local items which made learners feel free to participate in class work. The students were self-motivated to respond to teachers' questions. The language teachers gave formative feedback that helped students to improve their four skills in L2.

When teachers demonstrated any unknown topics related to native culture, they took assistance of audio visual materials and localized the contents with examples.

4.5.4 Challenges faced by language teachers

During the class observations, the researcher experienced that the language teachers often faced items or issues concerning cultural sensitivity. In a speaking class, the teacher had assigned different task for one student because of that student's having reservation of the native cultural issues. The student also had a religious perspective of watching English movie for presentation and so the teacher assigned the student a Bangla movie instead of the English movie.

However, most of the students showed flexibility to accept native cultural elements that are also accepted in Bangladeshi culture. Teachers demonstrated the meaning of different unknown words and expressions to cope with the challenges to compete in present world so that their students could get good understanding in L2 and show interest to learn L2 in class and outside of class.

4.6 Teacher interviews

Three English language teachers were asked questions on the following aspects (please see Appendix-3).

4.6.1 Preference of using local cultural items in language class

In the response to the question, all the three teachers came with identical responses. They expressed that they preferred the inclusion of local cultural items in course materials but were bound to follow the prescribed books by their respective institution. One language teacher with four years teaching experience in the public university told that he taught 'Headway' as course reader prescribed by institution which was published by Oxford University Press. The teacher mentioned, 'When I conduct English language class, I localize the contexts most of the time because students face difficulties with both the native cultural items and context; they show almost no enthusiasm while dealing with the native aspects from the book.' The two teachers from

the private university felt that the usage of familiar issues in class materials facilitates learners to speak and write enthusiastically at the beginning of language course.

4.6.2 Inclusion of local cultural items in L2 syllabus promotes better learning

All teachers agreed that students understood the topics very well because of their incorporating local cultural items in syllabus. They expressed that usage of local cultural issues in syllabus appeared to be very useful as it generates lower stress level in L2 learning. One language teacher with 20 years L2 teaching experiences shared her experience of grammar teaching (subject-predicate identification) where she gave an example: 'The lad was glad in red tops'. Most of the students did not get the meaning of it because of the culturally uncommon 'the lad' and 'tops' expressions. When teacher told the same sentence in another way with the same meaning: 'The boy was glad in red shirt', the students understood the meaning properly.

In a writing class, the teacher shared a real life experience in the Dhaka airport when she talked about the meaning of the word 'embarrassing'. Eventually, two students also shared their experiences regarding the word 'embarrassing'. As a result, the whole class was involved in learning new words with listening to real life experiences from teacher and their classmates.

4.6.3 Dealing with culturally sensitive native items

In response to the question how teachers deal with culturally sensitive native items in ELT materials, every teacher had given their own opinions and shared their own experiences of language class. The teachers tried to make their students understand the meaning and contexts of target language culture referring to the Bangladeshi cultural context as well. The teachers followed eclectic approach in which teachers made students autonomous to receive acceptable native cultural items. They often faced culturally sensitive native issues in the class. One teacher mentioned that he gave an assignment to his students on watching English movies selected by him in class. He found a very religious-minded student who refused to watch that English movie. In that

situation, teacher told the student to watch a Bangla movie that was selected by teacher as the task was mandatory in language class.

Besides, teachers often face difficulties with different native expressions that are not common in our Bangladeshi culture. The teachers agreed that it is high time to win social taboos by expressing semantic meaning of specific expression such as ‘darling’. Every word has different semantic meaning that might vary from country to country.

In addition, one language teacher gave examples of some issues from native culture that he found in his L2 course materials, such as ‘Brat camp’, ‘Year gap’ etc. These contents are not familiar in local culture. The lesson becomes interesting when teachers localize the native contents by providing examples from local culture.

In response to the question ‘students are not interested to achieve cultural sensitivity; they are more interested in attend English class and learn some English, all of the L2 teachers agreed in this issue.

4.6.4 Students’ performance and native cultural items

To answer the question, one of the teachers responded: ‘I observed that when my students write on any known issues, they can write a lot of things about it. It becomes challenging to motivate students to write any unknown issues especially if those are native. I try to motivate them extrinsically. In addition, I often tell them these unknown issues might come in exam, so you all need to write to get good marks in exam.’

Other teachers claimed that local cultural items promote better understanding but local cultural contents are limited. According to the teachers, students should not be confined in Bangladeshi culture to know the outer world.

4.6.5 Effects of native cultural items in language class

The teachers mentioned that there were no negative effects of native cultural items in their classes. Because of their careful dealing with the culture issue, students had been more proactive—knowing how to blend the native and local cultural items. It is true

that unknown issues seem difficult at first glance, but eventually students welcome it with great interest. However, teachers need to explain native cultural items in class with examples from real life that are challenging task for L2 teachers.

4.6.6 Students' perception about course materials

All of the teachers found that Bangladeshi students hardly ask them anything regarding cultural issues in English class. They felt that students have the sole idea of 'doing an English class' to 'learn English grammar and sentence constructions' and also 'get training in speaking skills'; they do not have this perception that culture should be dealt with as an important skill in the English class. One of the teachers mentioned: 'It would be better if Bangladeshi teachers could produce materials blending local cultural items with those of target culture. In this way students would be benefitted undoubtedly.'

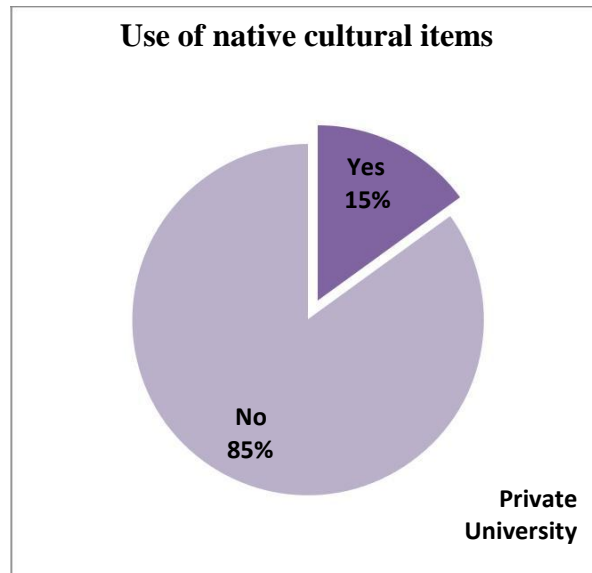
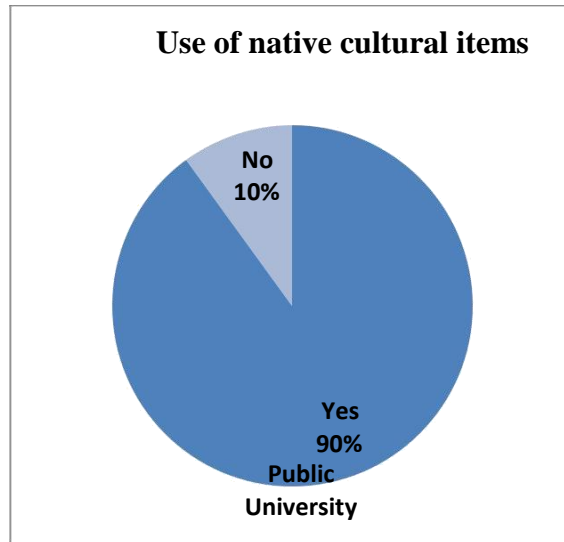
4.6.7 Culturally diversified issues in L2 class

In response to the question regarding students' facing difficulty of dealing with culturally diversified items of English, one of the teachers had chosen reading and listening and others had chosen speaking and writing. All of the language teachers expected their students to get habituated with the diversified cultural issues related to English language.

4.7 Student responses

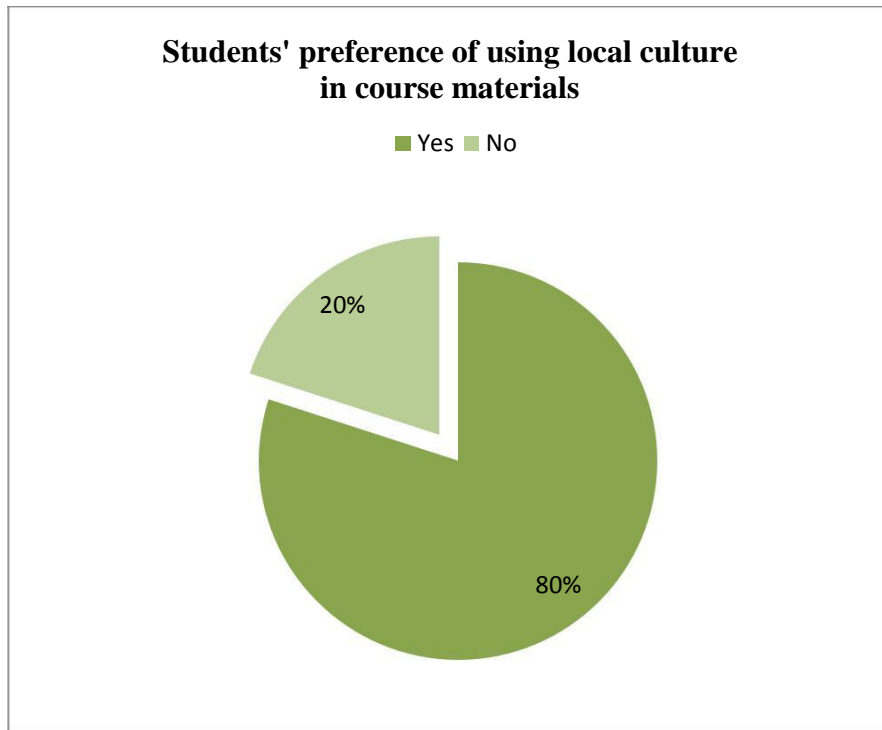
4.7.1 Use of native cultural items

There were 12 questions in the questionnaire. In question no 1, students were asked to respond about their language class materials. They were also asked to judge the use of native cultural items in their language class.



The pie charts show an almost close similarity between the responses of public university and private university students. In question 1, students were asked to judge the use of native cultural items in their course contents where most of the learners said that native cultural items seemed difficult to understand. They also explained that learning L2 was challenging for them when they found any unknown topics. In most of the cases, learners memorized English paragraphs, essays etc. in secondary and higher secondary level. This could be a reason of facing difficulties in understanding native cultural items.

4.7.2 Preference of using local culture in class

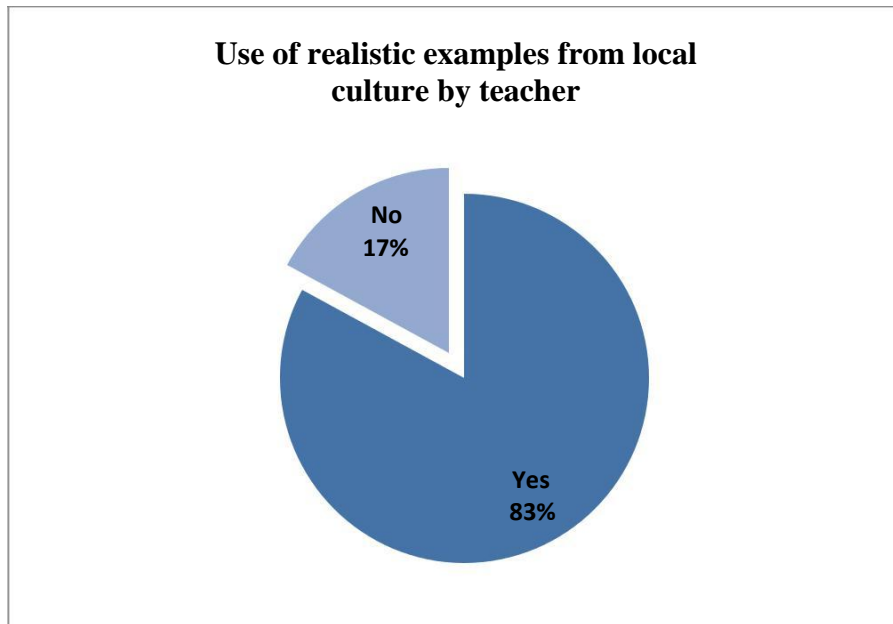


The pie chart above shows 80% of students said 'yes' whereas only 20% said 'no' in terms of their preferences of using local cultural items in L2 class. The students were asked to provide reasons of using Bangladeshi culture and heritage in course materials for better understanding. The purpose of asking the question was to find out the preferences of students and reasons of preferring local cultural elements in class. Some students preferred local cultural items for better understanding as well as to know own culture and heritage in L2. On the other hand, a few students preferred native cultural items in L2 class to get acquainted with new items that are different to local culture. Therefore, the students responded according to their experiences in L2 class that are related to real scenario of L2 learning in tertiary level of Bangladesh. One of the reasons behind some students' preferring local items could be, they might face difficulties to understand lessons in L2 because of using native cultural items that were alien to them.

4.7.3 Local cultural elements promotes learning

In question 5, students were asked about their opinions of inclusion of Bangladeshi culture and heritage in L2 class materials. 95% of the students said 'yes' where only 5% students said 'no' in response to the question. It explains that almost all the students preferred local cultural items in L2 class. In question 7, 20% of the students thought that native culture does not matter in class whereas 80% students said it matters in language learning process. So, it justified the usage of local cultural items promote learning.

4.7.4 Use of realistic examples from local culture



The pie chart above shows that 83% of the students said 'yes' where only 17% students said 'no' when they were asked to respond about using realistic examples from their daily life by teacher in L2 class. It shows that most of the L2 teachers both private and private universities of Bangladesh used real life examples to demonstrate any content in L2 class for students' better understanding that could be a bridge between class materials and real life experience in local culture.

4.7.5 Role of language teachers

The students were asked whether or not they discussed their positive or negative feelings with their teachers regarding the inclusion or exclusion of native cultural elements in class. The purpose of asking the question was to investigate students' awareness about cultural elements. None of the students ever discussed this issue with their teachers. It shows that students were not conscious about cultural contents despite coming to learn English and improve L2 skills.

CHAPTER 5

5.0 ANALYSES OF THE FINDINGS

From the findings, it is evident that tertiary students of Bangladesh were enthusiastic and lively when teachers incorporated local cultural items in their L2 classrooms rather than including native cultural items. In order to enhance students' involvement in class activities and meet the challenges of L2 learning process in Bangladesh, selecting local cultural items must be mandatory to foster L2 learning to non-native speakers. Ellis (2003) stressed on the integration of local culture in order to facilitate the foreign language learning. The researcher found while analyzing data from class observation and teachers' interview that teachers could not often integrate local cultural items in L2 class and localize all contents of lesson. As a result, students were found less active in the classes when teacher told students to discuss in group or pair on native cultural items.

Ellis (2003) also focuses on sharing real life experience by language teachers which could help learners to learn culture of native language as well as to connect their own culture with native culture. In this way, learners will show interest in L2 learning because of localizing native cultural contents.

Tomlinson (1999) stated some characteristics of good materials in which he suggests such materials that help learners to feel at ease, develop learners' confidence. So, curriculum designers must think of this issue before designing materials for L2 class at tertiary level in Bangladesh. If learners do not understand the lesson, the objectives of L2 learning will not be fulfilled by any means. When learners see class material on known issue that is related to national culture and heritage, they feel confident. The researcher observed this situation while observing language classes of tertiary learners.

It could also be stated from the data analysis that usage of local cultural items promotes learning in EAP classes of tertiary level in Bangladesh. McKay (2003) suggests that

English language teachers should recognize the value of topics that deal with local culture. So, when there is much cultural inference and language difficulty, learners do not show interest in L2 learning. If teachers, facilitators could ensure inclusion of local cultural items that has directly link with real life, the learners will feel ease to learn L2 in stress free environment. The outcome of inclusion of local cultural items in L2 class shows that local cultural items in L2 teaching promote better learning. To raise learners' awareness of their own culture, language teachers should include own cultural items (Strsub, 1999).

The textbook or the course reader is the one of sources of learning L2 for non-native speakers. There will be a great achievement for L2 teaching at tertiary level while authors could write books from local perspective to global perspective. From the study, the researcher found in course readers at tertiary level in Bangladesh that most of the items are covered with native cultural items. In response to questionnaire of tertiary students, most of the students said they expect inclusion of their national culture and heritage in EAP class rather than native cultural items because of difficulty in understanding and visualizing the contents. Tomlinson (1998) suggests good materials should perceive learning materials as relevant and useful. From the reference, it is clear that L2 learners are feeling need of locally produced course book in which local cultural items will be included at large scale. By this, the objectives of learning L2 will be fulfilled simultaneously. Keeping the Bangladeshi socio-cultural context in view, it is imperative for a teacher and curriculum designer to select and implement appropriate learning materials.

Cortazzi and Jin's (1999) propagation of using 'source culture' material implies that using localized items gives students an opportunity to learn more about their own culture as well as the language needed to explain these cultural elements in English. Such a situation also places local bilingual teachers in a position in which they can explain particular cultural events or cultural behavior to students who are not familiar with that particular aspect of the culture.

Shahed (2013) cites McKay (2003) who provides the examples of textbook projects in Morocco and Chile to prove the efficacy of using localized items in ELT books. In the

early 1990, the Moroccan Education Ministry implemented a textbook project in which Moroccan culture formed the basis for textbook content rather than target culture information. More recently, Chile has developed an entire series of textbooks, entitled 'Go for Chile' which incorporates a good deal of localized cultural content.

A noteworthy finding of the study is that lack of cultural background knowledge might be a barrier to do better in listening skill. Listening skill has connection with cultural background of the listening tracks.

Most of the tertiary learners in Bangladesh are not self-motivated. To achieve motivation inclusion of local cultural items could be a way of teaching L2 in a natural way. Through this, learners would be able to learn about their own geography, history, festivals, cultural issues etc. Known local culture materials may also motivate learners and bring enjoyment in L2 class.

Cultural knowledge works as facilitator for language teachers to teach new lexical items. Studying own culture in L2 helps learner to learn different new words with context. There is specific vocabulary with particular features in every language. However, the meaning is linked to the local culture as well. According to the study, language teachers do not often link specific vocabulary with local cultural contexts because. If language teachers relate lexical items with local cultural items, tertiary learners of Bangladesh would be able to expand their knowledge of vocabulary and use that vocabulary in class and outside of class while speaking and writing in L2.

In the study, some participants found local cultural items useful in grammar class. When learners learn grammatical structures or items, teacher often give examples from real life. The use of real life examples in language class makes the learner ease to understand grammatical rules without facing any difficulty. Language teachers suggest the usage of local culture materials in L2 class that can be effective in grammar teaching than traditional way of grammar teaching.

As most of the researchers suggest task-based teaching in L2 class, task-based activities should be included in curriculum. Before including task based activities, local cultural contexts need to be added to class materials because local cultural items foster L2

learning in Bangladesh. Tertiary learners of Bangladesh often practice task-based activities but most of the contents of class materials are adapted from native texts that are not always welcoming to ensure better performance by L2 learners. From the data analysis, learners were found more enthusiastic about local cultural items rather than native cultural items while dealing with task-based activities in L2 class.

CHAPTER 6

6.0 CONCLUSION

It can be claimed that usage of local cultural items in L2 teaching of tertiary level need to be brought under serious consideration. Integrating Bangladeshi local cultural values in English Language Teaching could play important role in encouraging, improving and maintaining the true spirit of nationalism. The study aimed at how much and in what ways our national culture and heritage get reflected in our EAP syllabuses of tertiary level and teaching learning process.

When learners learn a new language, they need to adopt the culture of the target language to a certain extent because the cultural aspect comes combined with the target language. Teachers often localize the native cultural items to make L2 learning meaningful. While dealing with culturally diversified items L2 teachers in Bangladesh at tertiary level, L2 learners often face difficulties because learners are not self motivated and most of the learners are from beginner level L2 learners. The tertiary level learners are not aware of cultural issues in L2 class as they only come to learn English. However, native cultural items are one kind of barriers for L2 learners to learn L2. To sum up, it can be said that ELT practitioners need to focus on local cultural items in class to ensure better performance by learners. Students need to freely discuss their opinions on culturally diversified issues that are unknown to them with their language teachers. And teachers must accept the culturally diversified items besides own cultural items. Inclusion of national culture and heritage in L2 class materials would be a way of raising awareness to get to know about Bangladeshi culture and heritage.

From the study, it has been found that inclusion of local cultural items fosters L2 learning rather than native cultural items in course materials at tertiary level. So, when second language teachers and material designers will design course materials for EAP class, they could show priority to local cultural items to ensure better learning. The study would be helpful for both language teachers and learners to know about the barriers to L2 learning. For this, ELT practitioners might change their mindset that was dominated by English speaking native countries through inclusion of own cultural items

in course materials. As usage of native cultural items has connection with L2 process in Bangladeshi context, local authors could show initiative to write books for L2 class of tertiary level considering Bangladeshi local culture and heritage in brief with the help of our government.

CHAPTER 7

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings, the researcher recommends on some specific issue that might be effective for further study and implication in pedagogy.

Firstly, the research recommends that use of local cultural items should be maximized for tertiary learners in L2 classrooms. Teachers have to be conscious about the role of local cultural in EAP classrooms. By this, the L2 learners will be able to feel confident and less stress through incorporating familiar topics by L2 teachers in class.

Secondly, the course reader for L2 class should be used in systematic and flexible ways. ELT practitioners have to carefully think about learners' interests and needs. Most of the L2 learners at tertiary level are interested in local cultural items that they can visualize and relate with their day to day life as well as their own culture.

Thirdly, material designers have to design course books for tertiary level L2 learners considering local cultural issues in which L2 teachers do not have to adapt books from native country and localize native contents.

Finally, syllabus and material designers as well as L2 teachers have to consider local cultural issues while designing materials for learners because inclusion of local cultural items promote learning and enhance learners' interest at large scale. So, teachers have to use contents that are related to real life and culturally appropriate.

In order to raise the cultural awareness of students, as Shahed (2013) highlights, meticulously prepared cultural items should be taught as a component under any or all of the four skills. Tomalin (2008) terms it as 'culture spot' or 'culture corner' that can be incorporated in specific lessons. This should obviously be a conscious activity on both teachers' and students' parts.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Dear participant,

I am conducting a research as part of my M.A. in TESOL program at BRAC University on **Using Bangladeshi Cultural Elements in EAP Class: A Study on Tertiary Level Students in Dhaka**. I request you to participate in the survey by filling in the questionnaire. Your sincere responses will help me do a good research which may contribute to the development of teaching and learning English. The information you provide will be treated as confidential and used for research purpose only.

1. Do you think the materials of English classroom are mostly from native (UK, USA, Australia etc) culture?

i. Yes ii. No

2. In case of 'yes', how do you judge the use of native cultural items in your course contents regarding your learning of English?

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.....
.....
.....
.....

3. Do you prefer Bangladeshi culture and heritage in course materials for better understanding?

i. Yes ii. No

Write the reasons briefly (in case of both 'yes' and 'no')

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

4. Do your English teachers use realistic examples from your daily life rather than from target language cultures?

i. Yes ii. No

5. Do you want more contents from Bangladeshi culture and heritage to be included in your materials?

i. Yes ii. No

6. Do you feel that the inclusion of native elements create difficulty in your understanding of English?

i. Yes ii. No

Write your reasons briefly.

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Do you think that using local native culture does not matter in the English class? i. Yes ii. No

Why.....
.....
.....
.....

8. Are any elements of your English course materials seem difficult for your understanding due to your lack of knowledge about that culture?

i. Yes ii. No

9. Do you think you will get a medium of learning about your own local culture and heritage if teacher includes materials from local culture in your English syllabus?

i. Yes ii. No

10. Do you think that your English teachers show bias towards using native cultural elements?

i. Yes ii. No

11. Have you ever discussed with your English teacher about using native cultural elements?

i. Yes ii. No

Why.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

12. Do you think that your English teachers will respond favorably to your request of including local cultural elements?

i. Yes ii. No

Appendix B

Interview Questions for Teachers

Teacher: _____

Gender: Male/Female

Teaching Experience: _____

Date of Interview: _____

1. Do you prefer using items of Bangladeshi culture and heritage in English course materials? Why or why not?
2. Do you believe that the inclusion of local cultural items in L2 syllabus promotes better understanding and learning of English?
3. What approach do you usually take while dealing with the culturally sensitive native items in your ELT materials?
 - A. I ignore those and pay attention to my regular teaching
 - B. I try to make my students understand the *meanings* and the *contexts* of those items of the target culture.
 - C. I explain students briefly but give them the impression that those are not important issues for them all the time
 - D. Others
4. Do you find your students lively and interested in class while they write and speak about known issues that are mostly from local culture?
5. Do you think that using native cultural items have negative effects on class performance such as understanding the lesson properly?
6. Have your students requested you to include local cultural items in their class materials?

7. Do you find native cultural elements being difficult for your students? If yes or no, why?
8. My experience says, students as a whole are not interested to achieve cultural sensitivity; they are more interested in attend the English class and 'learn some English'.

Agree Partially agree Neither agree nor disagree Partially disagree Disagree

In which case, do you feel, students face difficulty of dealing with culturally diversified items of English?

- A. Reading
- B. Writing
- C. Listening
- D. Speaking
- E. All of these

***(Please provide examples to prove your point)

9. Since I feel that culture is obviously a prime issue in FL learning, I deliberately use local cultural items in my English class.

Agree Partially agree Neither agree nor disagree Partially disagree Disagree

10. I expect my students to get habituated with the diversified cultural issues related to English language that may appear in the teaching materials.

Agree Partially agree Neither agree nor disagree Partially disagree Disagree

Appendix C

Class Observation Checklist

Date of Class: _____

Course Title: _____

Teacher: _____

Content	Y/N	Comments
Provides well designed materials based on local culture		
Explains concepts clearly with providing example from local culture		
Course materials are mostly on native culture		
Course materials are well enough to motivate learners' ability To speak and write		

Teacher-Student Interaction	Y/N	Comments
Teacher invites students' participation and comments		
Teacher uses realistic examples from local culture while demonstrating any foreign cultural items		

Teacher clarify confusions faced by students through using local cultural contents		
Teacher assigns task(presentation, group discussion etc.) mostly on local culture		
Students show interest to participate in class discussion		
Students face difficulties while dealing with foreign cultural items		
Students' participation in class increases when teacher uses local cultural items		

Overall Comments