



## Highlights

- BBC Janala's new TV series
- EIA Strategy meeting held
- BBC Janala at Digital World 2012
- EIA at the mLearn conference 2012 Helsinki

## Message from the Team Leader

Dear Colleagues,

During this quarter, I have had the rewarding opportunity to visit a number of EIA schools and training events across the country. Particularly memorable was my visit to Tahirpur Upazila (Sunamganj, Sylhet). Tahirpur is a remote, poor and extremely vulnerable area, subject to extensive annual flooding which limits agricultural growth. People live in isolation and have limited access to essential basic services.

After a long journey using various modes of transport, I paid a visit to a number of EIA-supported Government schools in Tahirpur. I was extremely pleased to see the enthusiasm of the school children listening to the audio lessons during the English classes and the positive support the project received from the Government officials, which really struck me.

Being aware that learning English will not be ranked top of the list of all development priorities in this deprived Upazila, the Government officials of Tahirpur stressed that learning English is of critical importance for the long term development of the region. The Upazila Education Officer (UEO) reported that the project has increased the confidence of the teachers and also confirmed the positive responses of the head teachers from the EIA schools. The fact that the project has gone the extra mile to work in such a remote area has encouraged the teachers, head teachers and other education officials, to make a concerted effort to ensure the impact of the project is long-lasting.

My visit to the secondary head teacher meeting confirmed this view. Despite travelling long distances, all the head teachers attended the half-day workshop. They confirmed their support to the project and had useful suggestions for further improvement. After an intense workshop full of discussions, there was time to relax with the head teachers through participation in a song meant for primary and secondary students.

My experience in Tahirpur made me realise that learning English in a remote area, where its immediate use is less obvious, is equally important as learning in more central districts. Moreover, the level of commitment and enthusiasm of the local teachers suggests to me that the impact on learning outcomes will at least be at a similar level.

Supported through this great field experience, it is with regret to say that I will leave the project as I have accepted a new post on a DFID-funded education project in Rwanda.

I am extremely proud that I have been part of this remarkable project. I am sure that with such levels of commitment and enthusiasm of project staff and wider EIA family members, the project will indeed change the lives of millions of people. I wish the project all the best with its ongoing journey!

A very happy New Year.

*Pieter Feenstra  
Team Leader  
English in Action*

## Secondary Government Education Officers Orientation Workshop “The English in Action initiative is really fruitful.”

*Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh*

An orientation workshop for Government Education Officers for secondary schools was organised by English in Action on 17 November 2012.

The aim of the workshop was to provide orientation for education officers from divisional, district and upazila level, as well as Academic advisors and TTC principals. The main objective of the workshops was to create awareness about the project and work with the participants to plan for its implementation and monitoring.

Mr. Pieter Feenstra, Team Leader, English in Action, in his opening speech welcomed and thanked the Secretary MOE, Director of Development, Open University, UK, and



*From left: Ms. Edith Prak, Pieter Feenstra and Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury.*

the workshop participants. He was pleased to learn that many of the participants were already

aware of EIA activities taking place.

Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh, the chief guest of the event, said ‘The English in Action initiative is really fruitful, and we hope that the project in future will be able to achieve its objectives.’

Ms. Edith Prak, Director of Development at the Open University, UK, in her speech said ‘the key element of the methods used in EIA aim to change the way the teachers teach English with full support and training resources.’

*[Workshop pictures at page-3]*

## English in Action, changes in the classroom and changes in assessment in Bangladesh

Small changes in classroom practice can result in big changes in learning outcomes. The materials we produce can aid these changes, but more than anything it is what teachers actually do with whatever materials are available, and the techniques that they use in the classroom, that can bring about sustained and profound changes. In English in Action we listed a number of goals as success measures that we hoped to see in the classroom over different periods of time. Key among these changes were more English being spoken by both teachers and students in more meaningful and communicative ways. In addition, we hoped to see more pair and group work, an integration of the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening, evidence of clear lesson planning, students engagement and enjoyment of creative use of English, and better and more inclusive monitoring by the teacher. Our research

shows that this has happened to a far higher degree than we originally anticipated.

The last mentioned of the above list (monitoring by the teacher) is really about assessment. It is concerned with the teacher assessing what the students have understood and learnt as they engage in lesson activities. Of course, as well as the improvements in students use of English in the classroom we also want to see them performing better in the exam system, and until now there has been no measurement of either speaking or listening in the state assessment system – despite the fact that speaking and listening skills are a key (but not only!) part of communicative English teaching. So far, assessment of these two areas has been neglected in the final exams. Of course, improved communicative abilities in English both include

and aid reading and writing, but teachers are very aware that speaking and listening skills have not figured in the exam system yet.

However, this, we are really pleased to see, is now beginning to change as in the future in the secondary (and we hope primary will soon follow) system, 20% of the marks in the school based assessment state exams will account for speaking and listening. This is a very significant move in the Bangladeshi assessment system and points to a direction that makes the work of EIA even more pressing and relevant for the future of Bangladeshi students and teachers. We hope to be able to work with the government on further changes that are planned in the assessment of English.

*Mike Solly, English in Action  
Senior Lecturer in Education, The Open University*

## EIA Training: feedback from teacher facilitators and teachers

English in Action is very keen to hear from teacher facilitators and teachers participating in the project to help improve its training and materials. The feedback received after the second round of training is very positive.

### Teacher Facilitators

The TFs who are one of the key actors of the project have reported being very satisfied with the workshop arrangements. 57% of secondary TFs strongly agreed while over two-thirds of both primary and secondary Teacher Facilitators strongly agreed that workshops were participatory.

It is also encouraging to note that 70% of secondary and 47% primary TFs strongly felt that they could implement their learning, which is an increase from 40% and 27% after the first training respectively.

### Head teachers

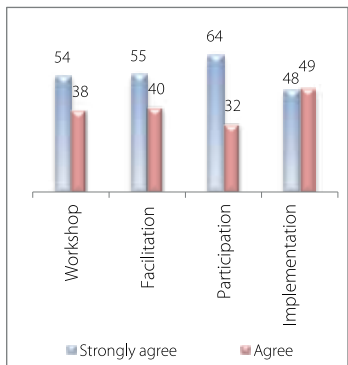
The head teachers and teachers are ultimately the people that make things happen in schools and it

is very encouraging to receive positive feedback from them. Over 50% of primary and secondary head teachers were strongly satisfied with the workshop arrangements and two-thirds with opportunities for participation. While over half of secondary head teachers strongly agreed that they could implement the learned activities.

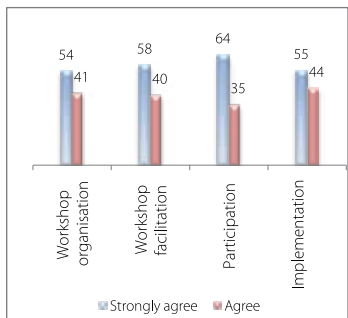
### Teachers

The teachers have shown an equally positive response with more than half of primary and secondary teachers reporting being strongly satisfied with the workshop arrangements, while approximately half strongly agreed that they could implement the activities in their classroom, (slightly more primary than secondary). Around one-third of teachers strongly agreed that the workshops were participatory; As shown in Graphs 1 and 2.

**Graph 1: Views of Secondary Teachers**



**Graph 2: Views of primary teachers**





# Second EIA cluster meetings: The first glint of success

*"The EIA Good Morning and Goodbye songs are not only sung in the classroom; they are sung in the countryside in the afternoon, when the cowboys [students] go to fetch the cattle from the field."*  
Primary Head Teacher, Chokoria Upazila, Chittagong

*"These days we do not face problems when teaching rhymes to the children – they love to sing along with the EIA audios."* Assistant Teacher

These interesting stories were shared with other teachers during the teachers' second English in Action (EIA) cluster meetings, held across Bangladesh in October 2012. These are the experiences of just a few of the 4,500 teachers who began their EIA journey back in June and July this year. Similar stories have been heard during the reflection sessions of all the other 210 second cluster meetings which took place.

The launch of EIA mobile and print materials, through which communicative teaching techniques are promoted, has made a great impression on both the teachers and students. The mobile phone materials have been well

received and highly appreciated by the teachers. Mobile learning (or 'M-learning') is very new to the Bangladeshi teachers and students. Even though there have been a few initial problems in adapting to the new devices, already the teachers have seen some positive changes in the classroom in using the EIA approaches.

Some teachers have already reported better rates of student attendance, more interactive classrooms, more enjoyable English classes, quicker learning from students, as well as increased contentment in themselves. They have also had to address large classrooms, time management, cope with new training materials, and charge the battery-ran speakers in places where there is no electricity – these are all very common initial challenges reported by teachers.

Despite these, the faces of the EIA teachers' are illuminated with new hopes of overcoming the obstacles in order to become successful digital English teachers.

*Shahanaj Parvin, Core Trainer, English in Action*  
*BMB Mott MacDonald*



EIA teachers and head teachers attending the second cluster meetings at their respective upazilas.

## 'BBC Janala Engreji Shekhar Boi 2' is in store now



BBC Janala Engreji Shekhar Boi-2 (BBC Janala English Learning Book 2) was launched at the offices of the Daily Prothom Alo newspaper on 15 December 2012. Officials from Prothom Alo, BBC Media Action and Prothoma (the publication house of the book) were present at the occasion. Richard Lacey (Head of Project EIA) and Faisal Ahmed (Deputy Country Director) from BBC Media

Action; Abdul Qayyum (Associate Editor), Sajjad Sharif (Managing Editor) and Selim Khan (News Editor) from Prothom Alo; and Zafar Ahmed (Chief Coordinator) from Prothoma spoke at the occasion. The first BBC Janala book, launched around a year ago, has now sold over 35,000 copies across the country.

## English in Action at Dhaka University conference "Teaching and Learning English through Technology"

The plush, hi-tech facilities at Dhaka University's Senate building were a far cry from the low-resourced local schools that are the more familiar backdrop for EIA's activities. Yet judging from the positive audience reaction, EIA's two presentations at the recent DU English department-hosted conference on "Teaching and Learning English through Technology" were certainly not out of place.

The tone set in the opening address by the major Bangladeshi educational dignitaries and in Dr Helen Bond's (Howard University, Washington) inspiring key-note talk was all about the immense power, diversity of opportunity and flexible response to wide-ranging circumstances which educational technology is now bringing to Bangladesh.

On the one hand, this was reflected by some presenters, who were rooted in learning contexts where technologies like interactive whiteboards,

Moodle platforms and web quests are already well-established as a way of enhancing language learning. As educators who use them regularly, they were able to stand back and give almost philosophical reflection on their impact on quality of that learning.

At the other extreme were the two well-attended presentations given by members of the EIA team. In "New channels for learning" and "Getting the technology right" we shared a very different kind of experience. In this case a simple piece of highly familiar technology like a mobile phone is starting to bring first-time basic learning opportunities to millions of children and adults for whom even seeing a textbook or a trained teacher cannot always be taken for granted.

*Malcolm Griffiths, English in Action,*  
*English Language Teaching Academic,*  
*The Open University*

## EIA Strategy Meeting held



On 11 December 2012, English in Action organised a Strategy Meeting for EIA partners and stakeholders in Dhaka. The agenda for the yearly scheduled meeting was "Institutionalisation and Sustainability of English in Action".

Team members from BMB Mott MacDonald, The Open University, UK, and BBC Media Action presented their plans and goals for institutionalisation to the DFID Bangladesh office and the wider group present at the session.

Marc van der Stouwe, Project Director to English in Action, in his introductory speech welcomed and thanked all the partners for their endless

support to the project which has illustrated impacts across schools and media platforms in Bangladesh.

Fahmida Shabnam, Education Adviser to DFID Bangladesh was pleased with the plans for institutionalisation and assured all possible support from DFID in achieving the set goals.

Pieter Feenstra, Team Leader, EIA, Daniel Nti, Director of International Development, The Open University, UK and Faisal Ahmed, Deputy Country Director of BBC Media Action were present amongst others in the session.



Colleagues from EIA presenting papers at the International Conference 2012, organised by Dhaka University.



# Pictures from the Secondary Government Education Officers Orientation Workshop



**1 to 4:** Dr. Kamal Abdul Naser Chowdhury, Secretary, Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh, Mr. Pieter Feenstra, Team Leader, English in Action and Ms. Edith Prak, Director of Development of The Open University, UK, speak at the workshop.

**5 to 12:** Education Managers from the Secondary Education sector (Deputy Directors and Upazila Secondary Education Officers) from across Bangladesh took part in the day-long workshop aimed at increasing supervision and effective implementation of the project methods in the secondary schools.



# BBC Janala at Digital World 2012



Richard Lacey, Head of Project EIA from BBC Media Action, speaking at the Digital World 2012.

‘Digital World 2012’, organised by the Ministry of Information & Communication Technology (ICT) from 6-8 December 2012 at BICC Dhaka, brought participants from around the world together to exchange ideas on technological advancement. Richard Lacey, Head of Project EIA from BBC Media Action, was one of the guest speakers and panelists at the event. He presented at a session on ‘Innovation in Learning: Opportunities Beyond

Classroom’, exploring the emerging possibilities of open and distance learning, e-learning and m-learning; and at a second session looking at the challenges of developing engaging, local content for mobile platforms. The conference saw seminars, workshops, debates and exhibitions, all aimed at increasing co-operation within the Bangladeshi ICT community and an aspiration to boost economic growth in Bangladesh through ICT development.

# ‘The Making of a New EIA Television Series’

To help get millions of people in Bangladesh excited about learning English, the television program makers inside BBC Media Action had to invent a new television series.

After hours of brainstorming, the producers settled on a series all about ‘real people’: no actors, no drama on a stage, no sets and props. We wanted to see into the life of a variety of people throughout the country, all of whom wanted to learn English to improve their own livelihoods.

Under our BBC Janala flag we decided to produce eight new, half-hour factual entertainment shows, inspired by the huge popularity of ‘reality’ series throughout the world. “There’s nothing new about reality shows,” I hear you cry but, in Bangladesh, believe me that this is heading into new territory. And, just to make it even more challenging, we’ve opened our door of opportunity to first time producers, directors, writers, assistant editors and production assistants to make this prime-time television series.

As always in broadcasting, we have to develop and write the idea, research the audience and format the show before testing it out, and we do this by making a ‘pilot’ episode. This is a one-off program that lets us discover if the idea transfers from paper to screen and tells us whether the target audience like it or not.

After weeks of development and planning, filming took place over a three day period, in the smallest location imaginable.

Inside Mita’s Hair and Beauty Parlour, the recording began and we were surrounded on all sides by enormous wall mirrors. Lights, cameras and mirrors do not mix well: anywhere we aimed the cameras, we saw reflections of the crew, the lights, the boom mics and more. Even lying on the floor underneath the camera tripod, a mirror would

somehow reflect you round the parlour and pop you into the lens.

Our non English speaking contributor was the owner Mita, who started off as an assistant in posh parlours, with years of making little money. Now, through hard work – and taking a huge business gamble in the process – she runs her own parlour.

Inside was our tall, glamorous teaching mentor, Samia, eight invited customers getting make-overs, Mita’s five assistants and a crew of ten: so you can visualise the fun and games.

Our other locations for the pilot show included Mita’s home, the zoo, the streets of Mirpur, a very posh hair salon, a newly opened riverside restaurant, five sari shops and a supporting cast of family, friends and colleagues to bring more depth to the story of why Mita wanted to learn English: to grow her own business and to be able to communicate with the many foreign customers that are now in Dhaka.

After editing and sound mixing the pilot show was ready to test and the research team took it around the country to find out if the audience followed the story and could understand the English lesson that was the backbone of the show.

Luckily, they did; and their feedback gave us the vital information we needed to make improvements to the format and to make sure the series worked for the BBC Janala target audience.

Now, we have found eight main contributors – all very different and from all over Bangladesh – who want to tell their own stories about how learning English is transforming their own business and lives.

Cameron Miller, Creative Director, BBC Media Action

# BBC Janala organises a Community Radio Workshop

Despite being a relatively new form of broadcasting, community radio has the potential to reach millions of people across communities in Bangladesh: particularly those who do not have access to more widespread forms of media. BBC Janala is working alongside the Bangladesh NGOs Network for Radio and Communication (BNNRC) to trial a new community radio programme, aimed at spreading English language learning beyond the mainstream airwaves. November saw the first step along the road as BBC Janala hosted a day-long introductory meeting with all 14 community radio stations in

Bangladesh. The day included presentations on various aspects of English in Action’s work as well as sessions to share our future plans with potential community radio partners. This was followed by an interactive workshop led by senior BBC broadcaster Sheetal Parmar, currently on secondment to the BBC Media Action team in Dhaka. All of the community radio stations were enthusiastic to broadcast BBC Janala programmes, as they believe that it will benefit people in the communities they serve. We hope that this is the start of a strong and long-lasting relationship for the future.

# English in Action at the mLearn conference 2012 Helsinki



Clockwise: Tom Power, Mahub Leelen, Md. Arifuzzaman and Dr. Robina Shaheen at the mLearn Conference in Helsinki.

Md. Arifuzzaman, Core Trainer, EIA, reports on the visit to mLearn conference

The English in Action team had the privilege to participate in the 11<sup>th</sup> mLearn conference 16-18 October 2012, in Helsinki, Finland.

mLearn is the short name for the ‘World Conference on Mobile and Contextual Learning’, a series of mobile learning conferences that has been running annually since 2002.

Participants from the EIA team comprised members from The Open University, UK, BBC Media Action and BMB Mott MacDonald. The OU and BMB colleagues conducted a 1 day pre-conference workshop on 15 October 2012, titled “mLearning Solutions for International Development: Rethinking what’s possible.”

The mLearn conference was a big platform for exchanging experiences, sharing ideas, challenges and issues; showcasing projects; and disseminating best practices amongst those working within the field of mLearning in International Development. In that conference the team shared experiences of using mobile technology for a large number of teachers in the

EIA project. The participants of the conference give presentations based on current practices, scale and impact of English in Action. One of the presentations aimed at focusing on how video materials are working for the professional development of a large number of teachers in Bangladesh within their context. Another presentation, titled ‘Usability and sustainability in using audiovisual contents for ELT in Bangladesh’ considered the use of audio-visual materials for English language teaching. It not only considered the usability of audio-visual materials and technology in Bangladesh, but also the sustainability of these in terms of integrating the EIA schools approach within mainstream Bangladeshi teacher training institutes and programs. All the participants showed interest and positive response in the EIA project and its activities. Overall, it was a rewarding experience for myself and the entire team. It gave us the opportunity to exchange knowledge and learning in the field of education and mobile technology.

# ENGLISH in ACTION

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