

Socio-Linguistic Factors – The Motivations and Experiences of School Students, Teachers and Adults in the Community



One of the series of baseline studies undertaken for English in Action in 2008-2009

Why this study was undertaken?

- English in Action (EiA) aims to develop language learning and teaching over a 9-year period. It is funded by the UK Government's Department for International Development (DfID).
- The goal of EiA is to "contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as a tool for better access to the world economy". The purpose of the project is to "increase significantly the number of people able to communicate in English, to levels that enable them to participate fully in economic and social activities and opportunities".
- Little is known, however, the reasons why the people in Bangladesh want to learn communicative English.
- This baseline study was undertaken to examine the motivations and experiences of school students, teachers and adults in Bangladesh with regard to English language learning.

How and where this study was conducted?

The study involved a survey of 2877 individuals – 2174 school students, over 450 teachers and 250 adults in the community in and around the Dhaka region. The study was undertaken in 2 phases: the first in NGO schools from 26 October to 6 November, 2008 and the second in Government schools from 8 March to 24 March, 2009.



Key Findings

“The results show that a vast majority of teachers, students and community people have little exposure to English language through mass media except television”

- Around 70-80% of the students, nearly one-half of the teachers and about 60-75% of the community people do not listen to radio programmes in English at all.
- A vast majority of the students (70-80%), teachers (around 85-90%), and community people (around 70-80%), however, do watch TV programmes in English.
- Nearly 75-80% of the students, around a third of the teachers, and about 55-75% of the community people do not read newspapers in English at all.

“Use of the Internet in English is almost non-existent”

- Almost 100% of the students and community people and around 90% of the teachers do not use Internet in English at all.
- Almost 100% of the students, from 90-95% of the teachers, and around 95% of the community people do not write e-mails in English at all.

“Opportunities for people to communicate with foreigners in English are very rare”

- Very few (7-8%) of the students speak to foreigners in English while only about one-fifth of the teachers do so. Only 6-14% of the community people were found to speak to foreigners in English.

“Most people felt that their weakest skill in English is ‘speaking’ but that this is what they need for their career and profession”

- Around one-half of the students believed that their weakest skill was ‘speaking’, but more than 75% of them felt that skill in ‘writing’ was necessary for them to pass examinations. A substantial percentage (60-80%) of the students, teachers and community people felt that it was spoken English that was necessary for their future lives.

“Motivation to learn English is very high”

- Almost 100% of students and teachers and 75% of community people are motivated to learn English and feel it is important.

Key Conclusions

Motivation to learn to communicate in English is very high. However, a large proportion of people in Bangladesh do not encounter English – particularly spoken English – in their everyday lives. With such limited exposure to English, there is little to promote communicative use of English outside of formal lessons. Many people feel that the existing examination system in Bangladesh does not support the development of communicative English learning.