



Improving English Language Competence in Schools

RESEARCH AND EVALUATION OF THE EIA SCHOOL INTERVENTION

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

1. understanding teacher and student views about their experiences of, and how they think about, learning English;
 2. examining classroom practice;
 3. measuring teacher and student English language competence.
- This briefing focuses on the last of these areas: English language competence.

MEASURING EL COMPETENCE

Purpose and methodology

To measure the impact of the EIA pilot school intervention, the spoken English language (EL) competence of a sample of participating teachers and students was tested at the start of the programme (Trinity College London 2010a & b) and then again after 12 months (see EIA 2012a). It is assumed that the students' spoken English ability should improve through use of EIA activities, materials and methods in the classroom; furthermore, as the teachers become more effective in teaching English, their proficiency is likely to improve. To examine these assumptions, EL competence testing was carried out by independent assessors from Trinity College London via diagnostic EL interviews.

Samples

The first round of testing of the EIA pilot school intervention, conducted at the start of the programme (February and March 2010), assessed 367 primary teachers, 176 secondary teachers, 4630 primary students and 2609 secondary students. The second round of testing, conducted 12 months after the launch of the programme (March and April 2011), assessed 230 primary teachers, 87 secondary teachers, 785 primary students and 317 secondary students.

The sample sizes enabled statistically valid comparisons to be made between the 2010 and 2011 data. Testing was carried out in various regions across Bangladesh (6 districts in round 1; 4 in round 2).

Trinity scale

The EL competence of both teachers and students was measured using the 12-point Trinity scale: Grade 1 indicates initial spoken English; Grade 12 indicates complete fluency*. Those students and teachers failing to achieve a Grade 1 were assigned a Grade 0.

KEY FINDINGS

Teachers

The study found that after 12 months of participation in the pilot EIA programme, the spoken EL competency of primary and secondary teachers had improved, with both groups achieving higher Trinity grades (see Figures 1 and 2): for both primary and secondary teachers there was a shift from scoring lower Trinity grades (0-2) in 2010 to higher Trinity grades (3-7) in 2011. The improvements in EL speaking ability were found to be statistically significant. Supporting these findings, almost all teachers (95% primary; 98% secondary) reported that EIA had helped improve their own English (EIA 2011a).

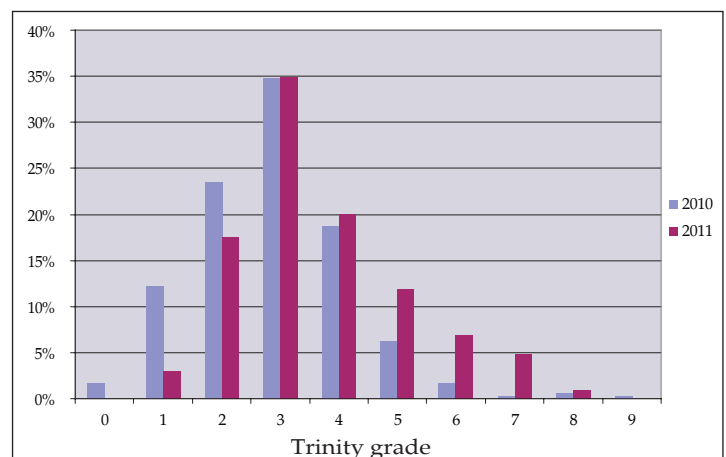


Figure 1: Primary teachers - 2010 & 2011 data

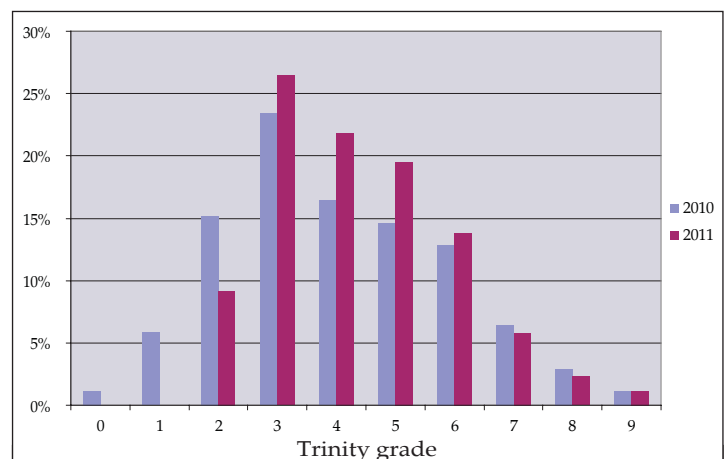


Figure 2: Secondary teachers - 2010 & 2011 data

*Trinity level 2 is equivalent to the Common European Framework (CEF) level A1, and levels 3 and 4 to A2.

Students

Improvements were also found in the primary and secondary students' spoken EL competency (Figures 3 and 4 respectively); both achieved higher Trinity grades after 12 months of participation in EIA.

- ▶ 50% of primary students achieved a Grade 1 or above in 2011 (compared to just 35% in 2010);
- ▶ for secondary students, 90% achieved a Grade 1 or above in 2011 (compared to just 75% in 2010) and an improvement was found across all Trinity grades compared to those achieved in 2010.

Again, these improvements were found to be statistically significant for both groups.

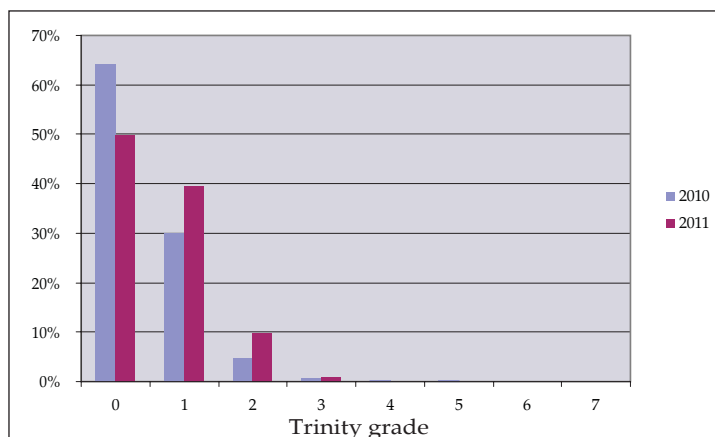


Figure 3: Primary students - 2010 & 2011 data

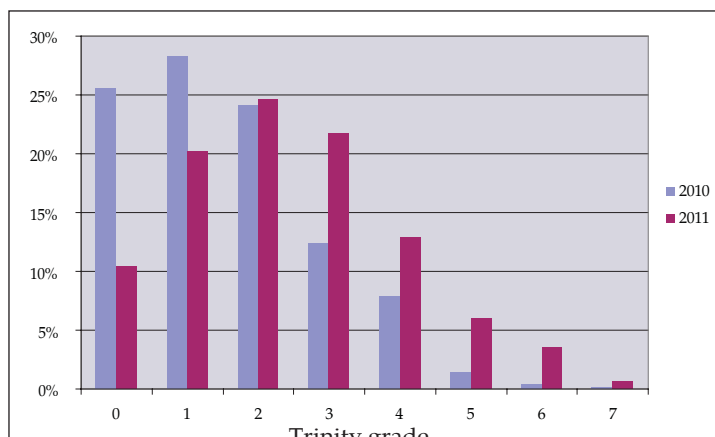


Figure 4: Secondary students - 2010 & 2011 data

SUMMARY

The results reported here show the positive impact of the EIA pilot school programme on spoken EL ability. After just 12 months of EIA:

- both teachers' and students' spoken EL competency had improved;
- for both primary and secondary teachers, there was a shift from scoring lower Trinity grades (0-2) in 2010 to higher Trinity grades (3-7) in 2011;
- more students were passing the Trinity test (i.e. scoring Grade 1 or above): 50% of primary students and 90% of secondary students in 2011.

Associated with these improvements, EIA teacher professional development has also resulted in changes in classroom practice (EIA 2011b, 2012b). What is more, teachers and students have shown positive views to learning English and to the EIA intervention itself (EIA 2011a). The improvement in EL competence described here is a result of these changes in classroom practice and perceptions towards learning English.

The EIA project needs to sustain the improvements in EL competence and practice over the long term both for teachers and students and, more challenging, to do so when the scale of the programme moves from several hundred teachers to several thousand.

REFERENCES

- EIA (2011a) *Perceptions of English Language Learning and Teaching among Primary and Secondary School Teachers and Students Participating in English in Action (Study 2b3b)*. Dhaka: EIA.
- EIA (2011b) *The Classroom Practices of Primary and Secondary School Teachers participating in English in Action (Study 2a)*. Dhaka: EIA.
- EIA (2012a) *English Proficiency Assessments of Primary and Secondary Teachers and Students Participating in English in Action (Study 3a2)*. Dhaka: EIA.
- EIA (2012b) *The Classroom Practices of Primary and Secondary School Teachers participating in English in Action (Study 2a2)*. Dhaka: EIA
- Trinity College London (2010a) *Report on the Assessment of Teachers' Levels of English 23 February–4 March 2010 (Study 3a1)*. Internal report.
- Trinity College London (2010b) *Report on the Assessment of Students Levels of English 23 February–25 March 2010 (Study 3a1)*. Internal report.

ENGLISH IN ACTION

Aims

EIA aims to enhance the economic and social prospects of people in Bangladesh by improving their communicative English. It does this through communicative language learning in primary and secondary classrooms, and television and other media, such as websites and mobile telephones, aimed at adults. By 2017 EIA will have reached 25 million people in Bangladesh.

Partners

EIA is a nine-year development project funded by UKaid from the Department for International Development (DFID). The project is implemented through a partnership of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and a consortium of three international partners: BMB Mott MacDonald, BBC Media Action and the Open University; and two national NGOs: Underprivileged Children's Education Programme (UCEP), and Friends in Village Development Bangladesh (FIVDB).

Scope of the pilot school intervention

The project's pilot phase was carried out during 2008-2011. In 2010-2011 EIA piloted its school programme with 690 teachers (465 primary; 225 secondary), supported by

Implemented by:



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

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

Innovative teacher professional development in schools

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