English-in-Education Policy and Planning in Bangladesh: A Critical Examination

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Abstract This chapter draws on critical perspectives on language policy and planning and language-in-education policy implementation framework to provide an overview of the history of English language education policies, policy implementation and their outcomes in Bangladesh. It traces the factors that have influenced the policies, their implementation and their rather dismal outcomes. The chapter describes the socio-political and sociolinguistic contexts within which Bangladeshi education is located, providing a historical overview of English in education policy from British colonial rule to Pakistani rule to the post-independence period. It then explores the status of English language education within the Bangladeshi education system and describes the various actors that have shaped English language teaching policy and practice within Bangladesh. The section that follows explores policy outcomes and the complex set of factors which have hindered the successful implementation of quality English language teaching in Bangladesh. We draw our conclusion at the end, which also includes a set of recommendations for policy implementation in the country.

Keywords Bangladesh • English language teaching • Language policy and planning • Actors in language policy • English and development • English learning outcomes

1 Introduction

Until recently, Bangladesh has not received much attention in language-in-education policy research, most probably due to the absence of local expertise and a lack of funding for research (see Bolton, Graddol, & Meierkord, 2011). Language-in-education planning (LEP) is one of the key sites and mechanisms for implementing national language policies (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997). Despite its limited scope and capacity (see Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), which have become ever more apparent in

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the contemporary context of neoliberal influence in education and language policy (see Ball, 2012; Block, Gray, & Holborow 2012; Duchéne & Heller, 2012; Piller & Cho, 2013; Ricento, 2012), LEP still constitutes a major channel of language change efforts in polities across the world. Therefore, this site deserves attention from any attempt to understand language policy and acquisition management together with the outcomes. In Bangladesh, English language education policy and planning has been influenced by numerous forces at the national, supra-national and sub-national levels. These include historical factors and national priorities, but also extend to educational NGOs and international development agencies. This complex set of factors makes it difficult to find simple explanations for the strong ideologies of English as a language for economic development, the prominence of the language in the national curriculum and, conversely, the modest outcomes of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

Accordingly, this chapter critically examines English language policy and planning in Bangladesh to provide an understanding of the factors that have influenced the policies, their implementation and their rather dismal outcomes. We first describe the socio-political and sociolinguistic contexts within which Bangladeshi education is located. This includes a historical overview of English in the polity from British colonial rule to Pakistani rule to the post-independence period. It then explores the status of English language education within the Bangladeshi education system and describes the various actors that have shaped English language teaching policy and practice within Bangladesh, including international donors. The section that follows critically explores policy outcomes and the complex set of factors which have hindered the successful implementation of quality English language teaching in Bangladesh. We draw our conclusion at the end, which also includes a set of recommendations.

2 Theoretical Framework

In the chapter, we draw on Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997, 2003) framework that identifies seven key areas of policy development for LEP implementation, including access, curriculum, materials and methods, personnel, resources, evaluation and community policy. This is complemented by Chua and Baldauf's (2011) framework of contexts and levels of LPP that indicates that instead of being confined to the traditional macro context, language policy initiatives should be located in supra-national (global) as well as sub-national (local) domains. Within this framing, we also draw on the critical LPP (see Baldauf, 2012), with reference to works by Canagarajah (1999), Lo Bianco (2014), Pennycook (2000, 2001), Phillipson (1992, 2011), Ricento (2012) and Tollefson (1991, 2013). These works help us understand the complexity of English language policies in developing societies which are shaped by global and local forces. Inspired by these scholars, we also take a critical look at the policies, how these relate to the local language ecology and the socioeconomic and socio-political realities and what outcomes these policies produce for policy target groups.

3 Bangladesh: The Socio-political and Sociolinguistic Context

Any language or education policy is, in effect, an expression of a people's desires and aspirations which have been shaped by the polity's historical, socio-political, cultural and economic contexts and realities. Therefore, understanding any policy – and particularly language policy – calls for a situated examination, locating policy within its context. The socio-political and sociolinguistic context of Bangladesh is described in the following.

Bangladesh is a densely populated Muslim-majority country in South Asia. Over 160 million people live in a land area (143,598 km^2) which is slightly bigger than New York State. Although the country has made some progress in recent decades in reducing poverty and malnutrition, poverty still remains a chronic problem with over 30 % of the people living below the poverty line. The per capita national income of US$840 as of 2012 (World Bank, 2013) is one of the lowest figures for South Asian nations. Bangladesh's economy has been significantly impacted by political instability which has affected investment, productivity, education and, occasionally, normal life and living. Although parliamentary democracy is the official form of government, poor governance, corruption and suppression of dissident voices and political oppression have been common practices of recent political regimes. Bangladesh's Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of 146 (UNDP, 2013) also points to the overall poor quality of life and low human development in the country. Although progress has been made in recent years in primary school enrolment rate, particularly in regard to eliminating the male–female disparity (CAMPE, 2006), the literacy rate still hovers around 50 %.

These socioeconomic indicators provide the rationale for the budgetary allocation for education in general and English teaching in particular. Bangladesh's investment of 2.2 % of its GDP in education is one of the lowest figures in South Asia (cf. Bhutan and Nepal each at 4.7 %) (UNESCO Institute of Statistics, 2013). They also explain the prominent role of international donors and NGOs in shaping the educational landscape in Bangladesh, which will be discussed further below.

From a sociolinguistic point of view, Bangladesh is often portrayed as a monolingual country with 98 % of the people speaking Bangla, the national language. However, this representation denies the existence of minority groups and their languages. Although reliable statistics are hard to come by, it is generally agreed that there are around 36 minority groups, both indigenous and non-indigenous, many of whom have their own languages (Mohsin, 2003; Rahman, 2010). Moreover, the national language is divided into several regional dialects (Morshed, 1994), one of which has been claimed as a separate language (see Hossain and Tollefson, 2007). To further complicate the sociolinguistic landscape, over 300,000 stranded Pakistanis who speak their own language, Urdu, have lived in Dhaka since the end of the civil war of 1971. Added to this is the dominant presence of Hindi in Bollywood films and music, which have become more popular than their local

counterparts. English has a strong presence in the country, particularly in the education sector. Arabic is used for Muslims' religious practices and is also an important language in religious education in the country.

4 The History of English in Bangladesh

Several authors have discussed the establishment of English in Bangladesh from its colonial origin including Hamid (2009, 2011a, 2011b), Hamid and Jahan (2015), Imam (2005), Rahman (1999), Rahman (2007), Hossain and Tollefson (2007) and Zaman (2003). Drawing on these works, we provide a brief overview of this history.

As a global language, English enjoys a special status in Bangladesh, as in other former British colonies. First introduced by the British East India Company in the early seventeenth century and later established through British colonial rule (Zaman, 2003), the language has passed through phases of significant ambivalence—simultaneous and/or successive attraction and repulsion—during its long journey to its current state of prominence. During British rule, some social reformers argued for English and western education for Indians. However, the language was seen as suspect by a significant proportion of both Muslim and Hindu communities, the legacy of which was the *Angreji hatao* movement formed after independence in 1947 in order to banish English from India (Guha, 2011). Despite this, English has not only survived but has also been established on the highest rank on the linguistic hierarchy – most plausibly due to its association with social elitism and power (Hamid, 2011b; Hamid & Jahan, 2015). As a result, the movement aimed to banish English from India appears to have gone into self-banishment (*Times of India*, 2004).

Although English education was introduced by Christian missionaries mainly for proselytizing purposes, the language became an object of social desire when it replaced Persian as the language of colonial bureaucracy. The long debate between the Orientalists and Anglicists over the introduction of English education for the natives ended with the apparent victory of the latter when Macaulay's infamous Minutes of 1835 were accepted, paving the way for the teaching of English (see Hamid, 2009 for details). At the turn of the century, the deleterious consequences of English education were conspicuous, as noted by Spear (1938):

> […] the most serious effects of British language policies and practices were the excessive emphasis on English in the schools, the neglect of the vernacular languages as subjects and instructional media, and the unrealistically early introduction of English as a teaching medium. (p. 277)

Nevertheless, English came to be associated with social elitism given a wide gap between the demand and supply of English. This meant that it was mostly the privileged groups located in urban areas who were able to access English for their children.

At the end of British colonial rule in 1947, the current territory of Bangladesh was established as one of the two wings of the Dominion of Pakistan—then called East Pakistan. The formation of the Dominion gave new status and legitimacy to the

colonial language. English served as the link language between East and West Pakistan, which was separated not only by languages and cultures but also by hostile Indian territories. Although the two regions were bound by religion, Islam, which was the basis for the state formation, this nation-building element was seen as inadequate by Pakistani rulers given the linguistic and cultural differences between East and West Pakistan and their geographic non-contiguity. Therefore, in addition to religion, a common language was considered important for forging unity among various groups of people. To Pakistani leaders, a rational choice was Urdu, which was seen as a language of Islamic identity. This was also a relatively neutral choice given that Urdu was practically a minority language spoken by less than 5 % of the total population of Pakistan and therefore it was not going to advantage or disadvantage a large segment of the population in either part of the country. There was nothing unique about choosing a language for a nationalist cause or giving preference to Urdu since the authorities were aware of European models of a one-language one-nation formula (Wright, 2012). A similar example can be seen in Indonesia where Bahasa Indonesia was spoken by comparable proportions of the population when it was chosen as the basis for forging national unity (see Hamied, 2012). However, Urdu as the state language of the Dominion of Pakistan was not received well in East Pakistan, where people protested against the imposition. While West Pakistani leaders insisted on Urdu as a national language in the interest of the Islamic identity of the Dominion, Bangla-speaking East Pakistanis perceived the state language policy as aiming to destroy their cultural identity. The Urdu-only policy was defended by Mohammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, at a civic reception in Dhaka on 21 March 1948, where he claimed that those opposing Urdu were enemies of Pakistan. While a movement to protect Bangla was taking shape in East Pakistan, the Urdu-only policy was reiterated by Governor General Khawaja Nazimuddin, the successor of Jinnah, in a speech at the University of Dhaka on 27 January 1952. Students of the University of Dhaka organised demonstrations to protest against the imposition of Urdu on the 21st of February 1952 violating Section 144, which was imposed to ban such gatherings. Several students of the University of Dhaka were killed when the police opened fire to disperse the gathering. This loss of life for the "mother tongue" marked the beginning of an intense language-based nationalism which not only restored Bangla as one of the state languages of Pakistan but also ultimately led to the separation of East Pakistan and the emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country in 1971 (see Hamid, 2011a; Musa, 1996; Mohsin, 2003; Thompson, 2007).

5 English in Post-independence Bangladesh

The new nation of Bangladesh inherited Bangla as a potent symbol of identity and national aspirations. It also inherited the legacy of the Language Movement and strong ideologies around the "language heroes". Special minarets were built throughout the country to commemorate those who died. The 21st of February was

declared as a national mourning day, a public holiday, which is still observed with solemnity throughout the country every year. This national pride in Bangla, the memory of the heroes and the sentimentalities surrounding both influenced language policy and planning in the early days of independent Bangladesh.

Bangla was given official recognition as the national language in the nation's first constitution. It was to be used in all walks of life and as medium of instruction for higher education (Banu & Sussex, 2001; Rahman, 1999). In promoting Bangla with nationalistic fervour, minority groups and their languages were ignored. These groups were expected to "convert" into *Banglaees*, forgetting their own languages and identities. Indeed, it is ironic (and yet perhaps not unusual) that the state that had its origin in linguistic injustice exercised no compunction in committing the same injustice to ethno-linguistic minority groups in the same polity (Hamid, 2011a).

Although the English language received policy recognition for "historical reasons", Bangla-centric sentimentalities overshadowed any discussions about the role of English within the new nation. In practical terms, English had already been relegated to a foreign language from its earlier status as a second language which was the means of intra-national communication during the Pakistani era.

At this time, only a handful of English-medium international schools were operating in the country serving the needs of expatriate communities together with local elites. The restriction of English in the public sector, however, was responsible for the strengthening of the language in the private sector in the form of English-medium schools opened for the wealthier classes. The realization of the increasing value of English by the socially privileged class led to an expansion of the market in the 1980s. This has led to the current situation, in which English-medium schools are now ubiquitous in Dhaka and other metropolitan centres as this schooling has become a default choice for those with financial ability (Hamid & Jahan, 2015).

In the 1970s and 80s, nationalistic fervour was weakening and the nation was waking up to the necessity of English. Falling standards of English in the country were reported by a special task force commissioned by the Ministry of Education in the late 1970s (BEERI, 1976). Thus, after several incremental reforms in the 1980s, English was introduced as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 in 1991. The policy of early English (access policy) was followed by other efforts such as the introduction of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the late 1990s (methods and materials policy) (Farooqui, 2008). Since then, there have also been considerable efforts to enhance the professional skills of English teachers (personnel policy) carried out by a number of donor-funded English language projects (discussed further below).

6 The Education System in Bangladesh

Socio-political, historical and cultural dynamics have given rise to a complex pre-university education system in Bangladesh which comprises three major streams (see Hamid, 2009 for a thorough review). The dominant stream is general or secular education which caters for 83 % of the school-going population. This stream

follows the national curriculum in which Bangla is the language of instruction. The second one is *madrasa* education which provides Islamic education together with secular subjects such as English, mathematics, sciences and social sciences. This education is funded and overseen by the Government through a national board of religious education. Bangla is the medium of instruction in this stream with Arabic and English being taught as compulsory subjects. The student population of madrasa education is mainly drawn from lower and lower-middle class families and it caters for about 16 % of the school age population (see Hamid, 2009). The third is English-medium education which is provided by privately run schools for the social elite and members of the professional and business communities. It caters for 1 % of the student population in the country. Although some other forms of schooling are also available (for example different types of religious and vocational education), a discussion of these three sectors is sufficient to highlight the complexity of educational operations in the country and the resulting diversity in terms of educational quality and outcomes. More crucially, it demonstrates the limits of the public sector to provide quality education and of macro-level language planning to address language issues for the whole society, as previously noted.

Table 1 provides estimates of the number of institutions, students and teachers at the primary and secondary level in both secular and madrasa education. Although some details on English-medium education can be found in Hossain and Tollefson (2007) and Al-Quaderi and Al Mahmud (2010), the exact number of these schools and their enrolment sizes remain unknown because the Government has no control over this stream of education (see Hamid & Jahan, 2015).

Apart from these streams of education, non-government organizations (NGOs) have made a critical contribution to education in Bangladesh. Of the many NGOs involved in educational intervention, mention must be made of the BRAC Education Program (BEP) which provides pre-primary, primary and inclusive education to hard-to-reach, disadvantaged, disabled and ethnic minority children which complements government provision. The aims and scope of BEP are described by the official website in the following way:

> Establishing education programmes in six countries (Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uganda, South Sudan, and the Philippines), BRAC has built the largest secular, private education system in the world, with over 700,000 students enrolled in BRAC primary schools.
>
> The high-impact, low-cost model of BRAC's primary schools give disadvantaged students a second chance at learning. Complementing mainstream school systems with innovative teaching methods and materials, BRAC establishes primary schools in communities inaccessible by formal education systems. Through this endeavour we bring education to

Table 1 Estimates of institutions, teachers and students in pre-tertiary education in Bangladesh (BANBEIS, 2011)

Level of education	No. of institutions	No. of students	No. of teachers
Primary	78,685	16,957,894	395,281
Secondary	19,070	7,510,218	223,555
Madrasa (Grade 1–10)	6779	2,313,153	Not available

Table 2 BRAC education statistics for pre-primary and primary schools (BRAC, 2013)

	Pre-primary education	Primary education
Number of schools	15,164	22,618
Number of students	433,658 (61 % female)	670,815 (64 % female)
Number of teachers	15, 164 (100 % female)	22,699
Course completed to date	4.35 million	4.95 million
Class transfer rate	99 %	94 %

> millions of children, particularly those affected by violence, displacement or discrimination and extreme poverty in rural areas as well as urban slums. (BRAC, 2013)

The following statistics provided by the BRAC website provide insight into the scale of the BEP: (Table 2)

English language teaching is also delivered in BRAC schools, following the national curriculum, and programmes have been delivered to enhance the quality of teaching in these contexts (see Rahman et al., 2006).

7 The Role of English in the Education System

With over 30 million students learning English as a compulsory subject from Grade 1 in the different streams of pre-tertiary education, Bangladesh has one of the largest English learning populations in the world. However, the status of English language education varies significantly across the various sectors of education. In secular education, it has the same status as the national language in the school curriculum and occupies almost 19 % of the curricular space. Like Bangla, English is taught every day in the class, between one and two class periods of 35–45 min. But English teaching and learning outcomes are in no way comparable to those in English-medium schools, where English is the dominant language and Bangla has a peripheral role (Hamid, 2006a; Hamid & Jahan, 2015). Finally, despite the compulsory presence of English in madrasa education, it generally has a marginal status compared to that of Bangla and Arabic.

A patterned relationship can be seen between the socioeconomic conditions of the sector of education and the role of English in the sector. English is dominant in the elitist English-medium schools and has a marginal status in lower status madrasa education (Rao & Hossain, 2011). English has a higher status in secular education, but nowhere near that of English-medium schools.

Large-scale evaluations of English language teaching in Bangladesh, as elsewhere (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997), have rarely been undertaken, in any of the sectors (but see Rahman et al., 2006 for an overview of what exists). Therefore, adequate and reliable evidence that measures the success of English language teaching is hard to come by, despite the awareness of the importance of English and curricular reforms and teacher development activities (see Farooqui, 2008). Anecdotal evidence suggests that English learning outcomes in the three streams of education can be

correlated with resource investment. Optimal investment in English-medium schools (from private sources) results in optimal output while poor English-learning outcomes in madrasas can be attributed to negligible resource investment in English teaching. The situation is comparable to a similar hierarchy of the three streams of education in Pakistan, which are distinguished by their quality of standards and learner achievement, particularly in terms of teaching communicative English (Shahab, 2013; Shamim, 2011).

The evidence that is available, drawn from various sources, suggests that English teaching and learning has yet to produce desirable outcomes across the country, particularly in secular state schools and madrasas where the majority of children are schooled. Some pockets of success can be seen in a rise in pass rates in public examinations at the end of Years 10 and 12. In the past few years these levels have risen to around 70 % or higher, meaning that larger numbers of school students have successfully passed English together with other subjects to graduate from that level of education and progress to the next (Hamid, 2009). Nevertheless, those who fail in public exams usually do so in English and/or in mathematics (EIA, 2009b; Hamid, 2009). Moreover, this success does not necessarily point to students' functional proficiency in English, as it has been shown that students' grades are not reliable indices of their levels of English proficiency, a situation also observed in Malaysia (Ali, Hamid, & Moni, 2011) and Indonesia (Hamied, 2013). In fact, poor levels of English proficiency are common among students and teachers alike in Bangladesh. Baseline studies undertaken in 2009, for example, found little evidence of English language progression through primary and secondary school and concluded that the majority of students remain at the most basic ability levels year after year (EIA, 2009a, p. 2). Regarding teachers, these studies found that a majority of teachers are teaching students at higher levels than their own ability in the language. Low levels of English are particularly common in rural areas, where Hamid and Baldauf (2008) reported that not a single Grade 10 student in a cohort of 14 students interviewed was able to introduce themselves properly after 10 years of study of English.

8 The Role of Donor-Funded English Language Education Projects

It is in part due to the limited success of implementing quality English language teaching in Bangladesh that, in addition to the NGOs like BRAC, there is an important role for donor-funded English language projects at various levels of education. These projects tend to be supported by British and American sources as well as international financial institutions such as the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). They operate at all levels of education including primary, secondary and tertiary, focussing primarily on teacher education. While each of the projects has had some measured success, their reach and ability to significantly and sustainably change the situation remains limited.

Examples of such projects include the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP), which was initially funded by the UK's Department for International Development (DfID) and the Government of Bangladesh and jointly implemented by the British Council and National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh. ELTIP, which ran from 1997 to 2012, had as its aim the roll out of a communicative language teaching approach in secondary schools which was introduced in the national curriculum. The project faced multiple challenges, not only financial and environmental constraints, but also conflicting interests of the various stakeholders involved (see Hunter, 2009). DfID withdrew funding in 2002, but the project continued through two more phases and managed to train an additional 17,328 teachers (ELTIP, 2009) – however missing out almost half of the teachers it aimed to reach (*Daily Ittefaq*, 2010; Hamid, 2010; Rahman, 2007). During the period in which it was active, ELTIP succeeded in introducing a new course book series which was adopted in schools throughout the country, and in setting four regional and twelve satellite resource centres for training purposes. However, none of the educational processes proposed through the project were adopted by the government, and the cadre of trainers skilled by the project were, for the most part, diverted (Hunter, 2009).

A further project – which has overlapped with ELTIP in part – is the Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP), funded by the ADB, the Canadian International Development Agency and the Government of Bangladesh and implemented by the Ministry of Education (MoE) from 2005 to 2011. Approval for extension of this funding has recently been given (Hamid, 2010). The focus of this project is to improve the quality of secondary education in general, but it also includes English language teaching. As it provides similar training, TQI-SEP does not involve teachers who have received ELTIP training. This project aimed to train 28,000 English teachers, but due to budgetary constraints, not even a quarter of this number received training by 2010 (*Daily Ittefaq*, 2010; Hamid, 2010).

Another small-scale initiative is the British Council's English for teaching, teaching for English (ETTE) project which began working in 2008 with a view to developing primary teachers' English and pedagogical skills, predominantly in rural areas where it was felt that poor teaching was having a knock-on effect into the other sectors. While ETTE has met success in improving teachers' language skills and the techniques they need for the effective delivery of materials to large classes, the project reach is limited to around 2000 teachers (Hamid, 2010, p. 301).

Each of these projects had laudable aims and has met limited success, but none were able to make the impact required at scale to train English language teachers across the country and to radically and sustainably improve the quality of education in Bangladesh. It is for this reason that English in Action (EIA) was designed as a large-scale project with significant funding (£50 million) and a relatively long time scale (9 years) (see Hamid, 2010). Funded by DfID the project aims to reach nearly 100,000 teachers across the country. The focus of the school-based programmes in EIA is on achieving enhanced and improved English language learning through the professional development of teachers – both by supporting their skills in student-centred, communicative language teaching and the improvement of their language

competence. What makes EIA different from its predecessors is its innovative model of teacher development supported through self-study materials delivered through low-cost mobile phones, or the "trainer in your pocket" (Shohel & Banks, 2012; Walsh et al., 2013). Evaluation of the project so far indicates that it is helping to increase the English language skills of teachers and their ability to teach communicatively (Walsh et al., 2013), but it remains to be seen whether the project will be able to make the lasting impact that is needed. Moreover, regardless of any measurable change at the classroom level, wider changes need to be made, for example to the national teacher training and assessment systems, in order to make a lasting impact.

9 A Critical Examination of Policy Outcomes

As mentioned above, the implementation of English language education policies in Bangladesh have met limited success, and this despite rather significant support from NGO and international donor agencies. These disappointing results of English teaching and learning are not unique to Bangladesh. Research has suggested similar outcomes in other parts of the world. For instance, Qi (2009), based on a comparative assessment of English teaching outcomes in Japan, Korea, China and Taiwan, observed:

> Countries in Eas[t] Asia are investing considerable resources in providing English, often at the expense of other aspects of the curriculum, but the evidence suggests that these resources are not achieving the instructional goals desired. It would seem advisable, then, for governments and educational bureaucracies to review their policies in ELT (119).

Similarly, regarding Indonesia, Renandya (2004) noted that

> Empirical data that provide a comprehensive profile of Indonesian students' proficiency in English are lacking. However, the few studies that have been conducted seem to support the claim that the English teaching program has been largely unsuccessful (125).

In the following, we therefore critically explore why the implementation of successful English language teaching is only met with very limited success in Bangladesh. In doing so, we draw on Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997, 2003) framework that was previously mentioned. While the seven components constituting the framework are relevant to an understanding of English in education in Bangladesh, there are additional issues that can be examined by referring to Chua and Baldauf's (2011) framework of contexts and levels of LPP that we introduced in the introduction.

10 The Politics of Language and Nationalism

One factor limiting the implementation of English language education in Bangladesh is the politics surrounding the national language. This may not be linked to Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) framework, but the language ecological perspective that they

emphasize requires an understanding of all languages in a polity and their interactions. This may also be true for a number of countries in Asia including Japan and Malaysia. These countries may have found it difficult to strike the right balance between policy emphasis on the national and the global language which has resulted in tensions between the two. This has created a dilemma for these polities: people may not accept English whole-heartedly for fear of its impact on the national language but at the same time they cannot resist the dominant discourses of English as a language for economic development (see Seargeant & Erling, 2011). There may also be some kind of guilt among educational authorities who may be influenced by dominant ideologies that English and the national language are tied in a zero-sum relationship, meaning that the promotion of English will essentially harm the national language. These concerns may thus inadvertently result in policy ambiguity.

This can be seen, for instance, in Japan where the Government seems to have recognized the value of English language learning for Japan, but at the same time this is happening among fears that English may become dominant or have a negative impact on Japanese language and identity (Seargeant, 2009, p. 55). Consequently, English in Japan has been subjected to Japanese as can be understood from the discourse of Japanization of English or the emphasis on Japanese citizens who can use English (Hashimoto, 2009).

Similarly, given the political sensitivity around Malay, the national language, which has an ambiguous status particularly among minority language speakers (e.g. of Chinese or Tamil), the Malaysian Government cannot fully endorse English. So while it introduced English for teaching primary science and mathematics in 2003, this policy was revoked in 2012 for, amongst other reasons, concerns about Malay (Gill, 2012). This ambiguity can be seen in higher education as well. Although the Government values the role of English for Malaysia's place in a globalized world, it also finds it difficult to promulgate English-medium instruction policies within the context of Malay nationalism. It has therefore followed the strategy of leaving medium of instruction issues with individual higher education institutions (Ali, 2013), thereby recognizing the role of sub-national level agency in LPP (Chua & Baldauf, 2011).

The politics of national language plays out somewhat differently in Bangladesh. The country maintains clear divisions between the public and the private sectors and this has had a considerable impact on the teaching and learning of English. For the public sector, educational authorities have pursued what is called a balanced planning of Bangla and English (Hamid, 2000) to make sure that policy emphasis on English does not undermine Bangla, which is at the centre of the discourse of nationalism and national identity. In the private sector, on the other hand, the Government has shown laissez-faire attitudes to language issues. For example, while public sector educational institutions cannot exclusively focus on English, private sector institutions do not have to pay heed to nationalist concerns and can decide on language policies independently (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). Two clear examples of this are private universities and English-medium schools which operate exclusively in English (Al-Quaderi & Al Mahmud, 2010; Hamid, Jahan, & Islam, 2013). Thus, one parental strategy that will ensure that children learn English is to

bypass public sector schooling altogether and send children to English-medium schools, provided families can afford the cost. This alternative school choice for the wealthier class means that public sector schooling can be the object of both community and policy indifference since the privileged class does not depend on this sector for their children's education.

Outside the political terrain, it appears that the general populace – including people in rural areas where English exists primarily in textbooks and the four corners of the classroom – have positive attitudes towards English, as evidenced by several studies including, Erling et al., (2013) and Hamid & Baldauf (2011). Many of the common discourses that associate English with knowledge, technology, human capital, employment, income, social mobility and economic development found in the literature (e.g., Alhamdan, 2014; Coleman, 2010, 2011; Crystal, 1997; Hamid, 2010; Nino-Murcia, 2003; Seargeant & Erling, 2011) are also dominant in Bangladeshi society. It is this perceived value of English that led a poor woman in a rural village who did not have formal literacy either in Bangla or English to self-reproach because she did not have the means to purchase private English lessons for her daughter:

> If I had some poultry, I could sell eggs and give her the money. She could then pay an English teacher and get some private lessons. (in Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009, p. 297)

In another study undertaken in rural Bangladesh, some of the participants with limited formal education thought that they would gain more respect in the community if they knew English, and so factors of prestige play a significant role as well:

> It would have been better. I could go to superior places. I could talk with good 'sirs' if I had some more proficiency in English… I could mingle with anyone anywhere … I would have been highly evaluated. (Devika, Cleaner, Shak Char in Erling et al., 2013, p. 16)

Thus, there appears to be an alignment between community ideologies of English and the enhanced English access policy in the country (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). Although community consultation in ELT policy making or basing polices on evidence is unheard of in this context, grassroots desires and top-down efforts have converged, which can be compared to polities such as Puerto Rico where the Spanish-based community has taken a firm stance against English resulting in unsuccessful implementation of English language policies (Resnick, 1993).

However, it is likely that the poor outcomes of English learning will eventually disillusion parents and communities. This could either result in them turning to private education or private English language tutoring, if the resources are there. Or, if they are not, they may abandon hope in the material promises of English altogether, as is the case with a parent reported in an Indonesian study:

> Why should I be bothered sending my children to university [for higher education and English learning] and spend a lot of money? A lot of graduates are unemployed. When someone finishes university, s/he only wants a white-collar job and would prefer being unemployed to working in a garden. I do not have anyone who can help my children find work in a government office, and I do not have enough money to bribe them (in Pasassung, 2003, p. 145).

11 Financial Limitations: English as "A White Elephant"

The politics of language apart, another factor that constrains English in education is limited financial investment or what Kaplan and Baldauf (2003) call an inadequate 'resources policy'. The very small percentage of 2.2 % of the GDP that Bangladesh can afford to invest in education is not surprising given the level of its socioeconomic development. However, what is surprising is the level of national commitment to English in the face of this—the access policy (Kaplan & Baldauf, 2003). Providing English for all appears to be a particularly ambitious policy when taking into account the requirements for policy implementation discussed by Kaplan and Baldauf (2003). This gap between what the nation can realistically spend on English and the sort of commitment that it has made to English has given rise to the case of "policy without planning" (Pearson, 2014).

Although some other polities in Asia have also introduced English from Grade 1 (see Baldauf & Nguyen, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2012), the Bangladesh case stands out when levels of socioeconomic development are taken into consideration (see Hamid & Honan, 2012). The policy of English for all may have been motivated by the principle of social justice: if English brings good to individuals, it should be made accessible to all. However, what seems not to have been considered is that there is no guarantee that everyone can take equal advantage of learning English or that the quality of English language teaching would be equal across the country (Hamid, 2011a, 2011b).

Language policies, by definition, are optimistic (Ozolins, 1996), but when policies are uninformed by affordability, these appear to be a mere political eyewash aimed at impressing the electorate with false promises of English (Hamid, 2003). The situation has been aptly described using the metaphor of a "white elephant" – a burdensome policy which consumes scarce national resources but cannot be disposed of despite the fact that its costs outweigh its usefulness:

> [t]he present state of English language teaching in Bangladesh represents a significant misapplication of human resources, time and money' (Allen, 1994 […]. The overwhelming presence of English […] thus can be argued to be the case of a 'white elephant' which consumes precious national resources but hardly produces any desirable outcomes… (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008, p. 22)

The consequences of the limited investment in English are conspicuous, particularly in rural areas where schooling in general and English teaching and learning in particular are met with harsh realities in terms of infrastructure, logistics, teacher skills and expertise and students' educational needs including textbooks. As Haq's (2004) baseline survey of secondary schools in rural Bangladesh reported:

> Physical conditions of most of the schools were miserable: poor classroom environment, poor furniture (inappropriate, broken and inadequate), insufficient (or non-existent) library and laboratory facility and finally poor and uncared surroundings. (p. 52)

In such schools where there may not even be a sufficient blackboard with chalk, teachers often have gruelling schedules with up to 100 students in a classroom. Electricity may not be available, and when it is cuts are commonplace (see Hassan, 2013).

This issue was also picked up by a participant in a study of the role of English in rural Bangladesh, who noted that English language learning needs to be contextualised within wider development issues:

> … I am not denying the importance of English learning. There are many advantages of learning English. But prior to this, it is necessary to improve general education. (in Erling et al., 2013, p. 17)

12 International ELT Projects

As mentioned above, NGOs and internationally funded development projects play an important part in the implementation of language education policy in Bangladesh. This can be linked to many aspects of the Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) framework including personnel, resources and materials and methods policies. At the same time, these project initiatives illustrate the agency of LPP actors at the global level (Chua & Baldauf, 2011; Zhao, 2011). Internationally funded projects have in fact been a major source of English language reforms, curriculum and materials development and teacher development programs in the country, as demonstrated above. And, as already discussed, these projects have met limited success despite limitations due to constrained budgets, environmental and political factors.

While acknowledging the very difficult constraints under which these projects function, it may be that they could work more efficiently for greater benefits of the teaching and learning of English than has been possible so far. As discussed in Hamid (2010), the short-life span of projects and their limited scope of intervention may result in an imbalance in the cost and effort of such projects and their positive outcomes. And since several projects tend to run at the same time, and the links and cross-over between them is not always clear, this seems to result in a waste of infrastructure, logistics and expertise. For instance, as both Hunter (2009) and Hamid (2010) have argued, the expertise developed through one project is not necessarily called upon in the next one. And similarly, project-based teacher development activities usually take place outside universities and teacher training institutions, so these traditional sites of teacher education remain underutilized (Hamid, 2010).

While previous projects have struggled to reach the large number of teachers across the country in need of professional development, particularly those in hard-to-reach areas, the English in Action project has seen some success (Walsh et al., 2013). In particular, innovative uses of technology to support a school-based model of supported open and distance learning may be harnessing new potential that could facilitate the training of teachers at scale. However, until other factors like the national exam system can be changed, and teachers' salaries, working conditions and professionalism are enhanced (discussed further below), any classroom-based change will be hindered.

13 English Teacher Professionalism

Another reason that the system in Bangladesh has limited success – and this is of course linked to financial limitations – is because of the lack of professionalism among English teachers regarding their language proficiency, content knowledge and pedagogical skills; in other words, there is an inadequate personnel policy. This is why enhancing teacher professionalism is generally the focus of the international development projects discussed above. Focusing on the gap between the necessity of teacher professional skills and the reality of teachers' existing skills and their potential impact on student learning outcomes, Hamid (2010) observed that policy makers in Bangladesh 'have not taken into account the resource and personnel policies required for successful implementation, thereby revealing the weakness of [the] state's commitment and political will to transform policies into efficient and goal-oriented pedagogic action' (305). Teacher issues have been highlighted as a major source of ELT failure in many studies from Asia and other parts of the world (Hamied, 2012; Kaplan et al., 2011; Shahab, 2013). In the case of Bangladesh, the issues are complex.

First of all, many of those who enter the profession through teacher education and training are found deficient in language skills because they are also the product of an education system which is incapable of developing English proficiency. As mentioned above, baseline studies have found a large number of teachers' skills in English only to be slightly above that of their students (EIA, 2009a). In a study conducted on the difficulties of implementing quality English language teaching in rural Bangladesh, Hassan (2013) found that none of the teachers he observed had a degree either in English literature or English language. One of these teachers thus noted:

> I do not have any qualification in English language. My knowledge in English is very limited. I am strong in English grammar, but truly speaking, I have weaknesses in English skills. I face problems if I speak English in the class. How can I conduct the class in English? (in Hassan, 2013, p. 149).

Not only do teachers have limited education in English, but many of them are also teaching with very little pre-service or in-service teacher training. None of the participants in Hassan's (2013) study had received pre-service training, and while three of the five had received some kind of in-service training, this was deemed to be patchy and inadequate.

Secondly, teachers, like their students, do not have opportunities to use the language for improving their communicative skills in an environment where communication in English is impractical and inauthentic creating a situation called the "communicative paradox" (Hamid, 2006b).

Thirdly, in the absence of incentives for continuous learning of teachers on the one hand and the lure of making money through private tutoring in English on the other (Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009; Hassan, 2013), teachers may not be motivated to engage in learning and professional development. In fact, an issue appears to be the prevalence of a professional culture that cannot provide learning for teachers (Thornton, 2006).

14 The National Assessment System

Another factor that strongly influences the teaching of English in schools is the national exam system, which is related to Kaplan & Baldauf's (1997) evaluation policy. School instruction is dominated by what is tested in the examination (Farooqui, 2008)—aspects of grammar and reading and writing. Moreover, the Bangladeshi system, as some other systems in the world including Vietnam (Nguyen, 2012), does not assess speaking and listening skills and so these are rarely focussed upon in the classroom. Also, due to the importance of the exam in dictating classroom activity, discourses of English that are prevalent in society such as English for employment or English for spreading Islam are rarely activated in the pedagogical domain, as is also the case in Saudi Arabia (Alhamdan, 2014). In a society where school grades mark social pride for children and their parents which also influence which institutions they will have access to in the next stage of their education, educational competition lies in seeking higher grades, although such grades do not necessarily index higher levels of proficiency in English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; see Ali, Hamid, & Moni, 2011 for examples from Malaysia).

15 Dysfunctional Schooling and the Private Market

In addition to a lack of professional capacity and teacher expertise and the generally dismal state of Bangladeshi schools, particularly in rural areas, there are influences from the existing social and political order that have affected the functioning of schools and have contributed to the rise of the private market. While the latter reflects the dominance of neoliberalism on a global scale, as previously noted, ineffective schooling in English can be seen to have resulted from an inadequate attention being given to Kaplan and Baldauf's (1997) policy implementation requirements in the context of socio-political and economic realities. For instance, the frequent strikes called by political parties mean loss of crucial teaching and learning time that affects the academic calendar. Public exams also interrupt the school schedule and pull teachers out of classrooms (Hassan, 2013). Similarly, using teachers by authorities as educational data suppliers and for other non-teaching activities affects academic delivery and teachers' plans and priorities (see Tietjen et al., 2004).

To further complicate matters, teachers in schools have to worry about making additional income outside school because one salary is simply not enough for a decent living. Many of them thus turn to private tutoring, which has spread all over the country as in some other parts of the world, particularly in East Asia such as Japan, Korea, and Hong Kong (Bray, 2006; Bray & Lykins, 2012; Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009). Social and educational competition for high grades and exam success coupled with the dysfunctional state of school education, particularly in rural areas, lead increasingly more parents and students to resort to private tutoring in English. Its dominance has emerged as a threat to the function of the formal sector,

since students with financial ability in rural areas consider going to school as a waste of time which can be better utilized by receiving lessons from private tutors at home. This phenomenon has emerged as a national concern and as a result the Government has recently imposed ban on private tutoring for teachers to their own students. However, it is common knowledge that this ban will prove to be ineffective in the context of declining levels of parental confidence in the formal system. Moreover, in an environment of growing competition for college/university places and employment, parents with sufficient economic and cultural capital may not risk their children's education and future by relying exclusively on ineffective formal schooling.

Since access to private tuition is mediated by socio-economic factors, its practice raises questions of education and social justice, as those with limited financial ability are denied access to this alterative learning opportunity (Hamid, Sussex & Khan, 2009). While the learning outcomes of taking part in private tuition have yet to be measured, students seem to have internalized the social belief that it is impossible to obtain higher grades without it. As a Grade 10 student (Tuhin) reported to the first author (R) in a rural sub-district in Bangladesh:

> R: Are you satisfied with the lessons given by him [private tutor]?
> Tuhin: Yes, satisfied.
> R: Do you go to any coaching centre as well?
> Tuhin: Yes.
> R: Now. . . do you think you could or would do well in your studies without the private lessons in English from your tutor and the coaching centre?
> Tuhin: You mean without private lessons or coaching, just depending on school [English]? Certainly not. (Hamid, Sussex, & Khan, 2009, p. 297)

16 Students' Perspectives

With this in mind, it would be remiss to comment on English teaching and learning in Bangladesh without taking into consideration the "agency" of students—the most important LPP actors (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011; Zhao, 2011). However, student-related factors have traditionally been understood with reference to psychological resources, giving minimal attention to socio-political and economic factors (Hamid, 2009; Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). Moreover, these actors are so diverse in terms of psychological, social and economic issues that generalizations can be meaningless. Nevertheless, identifying some broad outlines together with the grounds of diversity may be useful.

Students from all streams have positive attitudes towards English and are willing to learn the language which they consider important for their futures. However, it can be argued that their experiences of learning and learning outcomes are strongly influenced by two key factors: parental socio-economic status and geographic location of the family which are crucial in mediating children's access to good schools

and language resources at home and the community (Hamid, 2011a; Hamid, Sussex & Khan , 2009; Hossain, 2009). Nevertheless, there is also evidence that shows that despite significant social and economic barriers, some students are able to cross class boundaries by exercising their agency (see Hamid, 2009 for examples).

17 Conclusion and Recommendations

As we have illustrated in this chapter, English in Bangladesh is located in an extremely complex web of history, geography, politics, political economy and individual and social psychology. By analysing the motivations and interactions of these multi-sited actors from critical LPP and language ecology perspectives (Kaplan & Baldauf, 1997; Lo Bianco, 2014; Pennycook, 2000; Tollefson, 1991, 2013), we have discussed the issues that have impacted the implementation of language-in-education policy and policy outcomes. However, given the complexity of the situation, it is difficult to establish cause-effect relationships between each of the factors and the outcomes.

It cannot be denied that English in Bangladesh, as elsewhere in Asia, has been informed by discourses of English and mobility and development in the context of globalization and the perceived value of English in nations' global competitiveness (Pennycook, 2000; Ricento, 2012; Seargeant & Erling, 2011). Policy making seems to be discourse-induced—rather than evidence-based, and policy makers don't seem to have taken into account critical discourses of English and globalization nor the financial realities of implementing such policies. An obvious consequence has been the existence of ambitious policy aspirations unmatched by the realities on the ground which has led school instruction in English to a dysfunctional state. Those with financial means can bypass this unproductive system by either opting for English-medium schooling, or by hiring private tutors. This makes the principle of social justice and equality behind the introduction of English for all mere official rhetoric (Hamid, 2011a).

It is fortunate that Bangladesh, like other developing nations, has had a regular access to NGOs and international donors to support the implementation of their language-in-education policies. However, until now, Bangladesh has not been able to fully utilize this external support for national capacity building in English language teaching and attaining self-sufficiency.

The complexity of the situation highlighted in the chapter may discourage suggesting recommendations that may appear simplistic. Therefore, our list of suggestions is headed by a call for recognition of this complexity and the avoidance of seeking uncritical and simplistic solutions.

- Recognising complexity of the situation;
- Delivering clear and honest messages about the value of English and what it can do for people, within certain constraints (along with general education, digital literacies);

- Bring together all actors and ensuring continuity not only between and across education projects, but also across all development projects (i.e. recognizing that education is embedded in a complex web of other environmental, social and political factors);
- Utilizing ELT projects for attaining sustainability and self-dependence;
- Making use of new technologies and new architectures of teacher professional development, as illustrated by EIA.
- Continuing to focus on government schools and giving attention to madrasa education;
- Working at a high level of policy such as pre-service teacher training programmes and examination system; and
- Supporting the professionalism of teachers, also teacher salaries and working conditions.

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