



EXPLORATION OF BANGLA MEDIUM BACKGROUND LEARNER'S EAP NEEDS IN PURSUANCE OF HIGHER STUDIES

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ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the problems of Bangla Medium students' struggles for the pursuance of higher studies in English instructions. It also unfolds the needs of these learners with a view to developing the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at tertiary level. Skills that are practiced and those are required to the inclusion of study plan are discussed thoroughly. The specific EAP requirements are hypothesized for this group of learners in terms of reality. Finally the research brings out some strong recommendations for these second land language learners in contextual aspect Bangladesh.

Key Words: Bangla Medium, EAP, higher study

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I. Background (Introduction, statement of Problems, Situations)

English is the instructional language in the higher study of Bangladesh. Therefore, students when admitted are introduced with the syllabuses, texts and assignments and projects in English with their respective specialized subjects including disciplines from Arts, Science and Engineering. But as these students are basically from Bangla Medium background, they face a lot of difficulties to adjust them with the new English Instructions. Throughout their educational background they only learned English with two hundred marks carrying in each level of secondary and higher secondary education. By the knowledge and competency that they get at their early time of education are whether capable of making them competent to study at the higher study is a matter of long debate and questions as they are usually chosen with an admission test. Therefore, when the reality of classroom begins, students find problems in reading texts, understanding them and

answering questions from them as most of the higher study materials are written in English. Not only that but also students faced difficulties in understanding the lectures in English, as they practices Bangla lectures at their schools and colleges. When they go for their subject based presentation they find the difficulties in delivering the presentations in English because of related vocabularies and fluency. Here, EAP or English for Academic Purposes is a significant issue in perusing higher studies in Bangladesh like many other universities in the world particularly in second language situation. Creating skilled human resources for global arena depends on an organized and effective education system and a analyzing the needs are a crucial part of them. There are many problems in existing English teaching at universities as it has failed to some extent to develop English proficiency in a large extent. Students are still poor in English language performance in carrying out their higher study. Among four basic skills listening

and speaking both skills are totally ignored. The question remains uncertain how the students are fit with this limited English in this globalized modern world. Most importantly as most of the students are from Bangla Medium Background, do they require better English planning for their development is a matter of question for both teachers and students. The problems of existing needs to be sorted as it lack to satisfy the necessities from studies to career life. This research extracts the existing limitations in details and also survey the student's needs and expectation in learning English. Finally, it will suggest an updated need assessment which contributes for the development of English language learning and overall higher study process. If this proposed research become successful, other institution, universities of Bangladesh will also be benefited as he learners background in most cases are similar to it. This doctoral research will underpin the struggles and challenges of those students in public and private universities of Bangladesh.

II. Literature review: Right education for the beginners can empower human beings to liberate individual mind from the curse of ignorance and darkness. It represents the cornerstone in the development process of any society and the key indicator of the people's progress and prosperity (Haq, 2004:12). As Berman and Cheng (2001) stated, at the universities where the medium of instruction is English, international students particularly the non-native speakers of English, have to overcome various challenges throughout their academic studies including English (learning), mostly at the beginning of their academic studies. To cope with academic demands, these students need to be competent in certain language areas and skills. In addition, the level of studies and the subject areas these international students study would determine the difficulties they face (Berman & Cheng, 2001). Bangladesh is country with many young peoples who are studying at university level. The mother tongue of this land is Bengali by which students use at their primary and secondary level of education. When they enter into the university they need EAP course. The demand for EAP courses is increasing globally due to the fact that such courses are necessary not only for educational purposes in

countries where English is the mother tongue language, but also in other countries (like Malaysia) where English is the medium of instruction in universities (Eslami, 2010).

Research evidence suggests that limitations in language ability may hinder students from expressing and exploring complex concepts (Met & Lorenz, 1997; Airey, 2009). The first year experience of a partially English-taught bachelor's degree programme has revealed major challenges regarding lack of integrated language provision and support, language competence level in students and staff, and mixed-level groups (Elvira Barrios*, Aurora López-Gutiérrez, Clotilde Lechuga, June 2016). Like many other countries in the Asia, Bangladeshi students at the beginning of the university face lots of difficulties.

"The English-taught degree programme requires a language plan of its own, which will be complementary to the larger university policy and plan... it is a necessity for ensuring a smooth and collaborative transition into English medium" (Marsh, Pavón- Vázquez, & Frigols-Martín, 2013, p. 15). Regarding the medium of teaching and when discussing and interacting with the students, teachers found it difficult to cater for a mixed-level group; this particular challenge has also been detected in other research studies (Marsh et al., 2013; Strotmann et al., 2014).

Here comes the course EAP. It's very hard to define with exact fabric what EAP means extually. EAP is defined by the scholars in many ways. However, EAP refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans and St. John, 1998). EAP is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing English for their academic courses. In fact, the primary objective of EAP is to provide the language support to students for pursuing studies of other subjects in English (Jordan, 2002) . According to Jordan (1997:4), the purpose of such courses is not specific. If we look at English syllabus of PUST, it is mainly for passing semester examinations. English for Academic Purposes (EAP) refers to any English teaching that relates to a study purpose (Dudley-Evans and St John, 1998). It is taught generally within educational institutions to students needing

English for their academic courses. EAP is a research field as well as an area of English language teaching, and there is a significant body of research into its effective approaches, methods of analysis of the academic language needs of students, and analysis of the linguistic and discourse structures of academic texts (Hamp-Lyons, 2001). In the words of Jordan (1997:56), designing a syllabus involves examining needs analysis and establishing goals. It then entails the selection, grading and sequencing of the language and other content, and the division of the content into units of manageable material. Goodwin (2001:261) emphasizes that an EAP course "must focus on students' academic needs". She also figures out that numerous needs analysis have examined the academic demands placed on university students. According to Carroll (1981), Different patterns of communication will entail different configurations of language skill mastery, and therefore a different course or test content. From practical aspect, language loses its exterior of unity and must be taught and tested according to the specific needs of the learner (p. 8). Jamil (2010) mentions the pre-course planning part generally starts with the assessment of learners' capacity and proficiency levels. To do this, learners' age, academic interest and educational background are needed to be understood (Nunan, 2001). This stage is crucial in EAP course designing as it helps compare and combine learners' academic needs and their learning expectations.

III. Justification of the study

The study is significant because it covers the Bangla Medium Students' need as a foreign language learner. Every year there have been a large number of students entering into the universities. Required skills and needs are still to be sorted out properly as they are struggling to advance themselves EAP Courses. The the number of students' universities are approximately 23, 40000. So these students will directly be benefited from this research in pursuing their higher study.

IV. Objectives (Research questions and hypothesis)

The research questions of this paper are:

Do Bangla medium background students have different EAP needs than other background students?

Does present EAP syllabus and curriculum at the universities cover the requirements of the four skills?

What are present pitfalls in English Language learning at the Bangladeshi Universities?

How does secondary and higher secondary schooling system mold the language efficiency for the higher study? Is it effective or not? What are the lacking do it contain?

V. Methodology and Data Collection

The methodology of this research is questionnaire based to its population comprising 500 students at tertiary level at different universities of Bangladesh randomly. It also includes both qualitative and quantitative analyzing tools. The study also implements class observation and interviewing techniques both for the students and teachers. There are open ended questions and closed questions. All interviews and FGDs are documented as written hard copies and an audio recording device will be used during interviews and FGDs so that the data can be transcribed accurately later.

VI. Results and Discussions

The findings of the study can be described from three different sources: observations, responses of the questionnaire and information collected through interviews. (See Appendix A) The findings of this study might be useful in developing a well developed EAP course.

It is found that almost ninety percent of them shared that their instructional language in schooling and college was Bangla. When they arrived at the stage of tertiary level, almost eighty percent of them face difficulties in adjusting themselves with English medium instructions. It is due to their proficiency level of English. When the research investigated, it is found they find it problematic in listening the lectures in English. It is shared by sixty percent of them find difficulties in note taking. They also face problems in answering questions in English. When the teachers ask them to present something in English before the classroom, seventy percent of them shared that they find

problems in groping exact vocabularies and expressions. They have little problem with the content but presenting it in English becomes difficult. As they are asked to which skill, they should include in their EAP syllabus. Sixty percent of them shared that there should be more focused on listening and speaking skill. Others also put emphasis on all the skills. Almost sixty percent of them shared that the students lack listening and speaking skill at their secondary level of education which is a shocking discovery. It is discovered that students' exam system at the secondary level does not encourage listening and speaking test. As a result the focused mainly reading and writing. Almost ninety percent of them shared that they want all the four basic skills to be included in their EAP course and also to be evaluated on the basis of their skills.

VII. Recommendations

Based on the literature review, responses of the questionnaire, interview results and observations the following understanding and recommendations can be made:

1. In secondary schooling system English teaching should be modernized and it should include listening and speaking activities for making the students fit for the higher study.
2. Listening material should be provided at EAP course at university so that the students develop the capacity of note taking and understanding the lectures.
3. To develop presentational skills, students should be provided with speaking activities at their EAP course.
4. All other skills also should get importance at EAP course.
5. They are concerned about the duration and credit of the EAP course. They think it should cover six credits instead of only three credit present course.

Existing EAP course should be more focused on the students discipline so that it can help in the academic procedure of the students. The fundamental principle in this type of learning should be to recognize that every student has his or her own personal experience and interests along with

emotional, educational and communicative necessities.

VIII. Conclusion

The research brings new understanding for the implementation of EAP course in a proper way in Bangladeshi Universities especially with the Bangla medium Students. It will also unlock a door for those second language learners who are pursuing higher study in English. It discovers the real English language problems of the Bangladeshi undergraduates. It will make an apprehension for a better understanding for language teachers how to approach them properly. It discloses the existing contexts that are responsible for the low performances in English Language at secondary level with learner's background analysis. Finally this research brings some possible recommendations that can be implemented to solve those problems. It will largely contribute to the total higher education system of Bangladesh.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire

1. What was their instructional language at secondary and higher secondary education?
 - a. Bangla
 - b. English
 - c. Arabic
 - d. other languages
2. Do they find problems in adjusting themselves with present English instructions at higher education?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
3. What are the problems do you face while studying your subject at English? Please mention at least five common problems that you face :
4. What are the skills included at your secondary English learning?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
 - e. Listening and Speaking
 - f. Reading and Writing
5. Which skills do you think necessary for your EAP course at University?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Speaking
 - c. Reading
 - d. Writing
 - e. Listening and Speaking
 - f. Reading and Writing
 - g. All

6. What skills did you lack at your secondary level?
 - a. Listening and Speaking
 - b. Reading and Writing

 7. Are you satisfied with your present EAP course at university ?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

Explain why yes and why not:

 8. How much do you feel the necessities of four skills
 - a. I feel it should be included
 - b. I feel it should not be included
 - c. I feel nothing
 - d. Others

 9. Does your existing EAP course help to develop presentational Skills?
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
 10. Do you have any particular suggestions to develop your EAP course? What are they?
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