

Teaching “English for Life”: Beliefs and attitudes of secondary school English teachers in rural Bangladesh

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Abstract

In rural Bangladesh, most people speak English with a regional accent which is generally not intelligible to Non-Native Bengali Speakers (NBS). Although NBS understand each other; this type of pronunciation creates problems for many Bangladeshis, like handicapping students studying abroad, professionals migrating to Anglophone countries, tourists and businessmen, government officials and diplomats, communicating with their foreign counterparts, at home and abroad.

This investigation was undertaken with a view to bringing this serious problem to the attention of relevant stakeholders of English education in Bangladesh such as teachers, researchers, course planners and policy makers. One of the key aims was to find out if secondary school teachers would accept English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and intelligible pronunciation and be prepared to learn and teach their students simplified versions of English pronunciation and spoken English, which would be not just easy to learn and teach, but also a cost-effective and engaging approach.

The study leads to the conclusion that the ultimate goal should be to teach English-for-life instead of the current approach taken by teachers which is English-for-exam pedagogy.

Keywords: *English as a Lingua Franca (ELF), Native Speakers of English (NS), Non-Native English Speakers (NNS), Native Bengali Speakers (NBS), Intelligible Pronunciation, English-for-Life.*

1. Introduction

Today while English is widely accepted as a Global Language, it is also acknowledged that Britain is no longer the sole owner of the language (Brumfit, 2001; Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 2006; Widdowson, 1994); nor does it have the prerogative to regulate its norms of use. In postcolonial times, different pronunciation standards have evolved such as the British English (BrEng) or Received Pronunciation (RP), (Roach, 2010; Cruttendon, 2014), General American (GA) (Celce-Murcia, Brinton, Goodwin, 1996), Australian (Harrington,

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Cox, Evans, 1997), which are followed by so-called Native English Speakers (NS) and some non-native English speakers of English (NNS) as well. Next, we saw the emergence of World Englishes (WE) (Kachru, 1992) with people speaking Indian English, Nigerian English, Singapore English, which are now sufficiently developed to be considered as distinct varieties of English. WE was followed by a turn towards English as an International Language (EIL) (Widdowson, 1997), later known as English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) (Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2015). More recently research is being done on English as a Multilingua Franca (EMF) communication (Jenkins, 2015), in which interlocutors mix words from their own languages or other Lingua Franca with ELF to communicate with each other. Both ELF and EMF are free from any ‘standard’ norms and codes and belong to no single country.

Such multiplicity of standards of existing Englishes and emerging new forms are bound to create problems for national language policy makers, learners and teachers. Which standard or form of the language to use and how to go about training the thousands of teachers and learners, at different levels, in the chosen standard/form quickly, without spending too much money, but still getting the desired result, remains a debate.

We refer to the current way of teaching English in schools as *English-for-exam* pedagogy because English is taught as one of many other subjects and students seem to be unconcerned about whether it will be used or needed after one leaves school. All they aim for is to pass the exam. We propose another approach and call it *English-for-life*. As the name of the approach suggests teachers have to first of all make students aware that the subject is not to be treated like the other subjects they study. Teachers have to teach it like the vernacular language Bengali is taught and instil in the learners’ minds that the language is to stay with them for ever, like their mother tongue.

In the following section after a brief background about Bangladesh, the status of English pedagogy, past and present, in the country is provided with proposals for the future.

Status of English in Bangladesh

In the former East Pakistan, in secondary schools (class VI to X), English traditionally received major emphasis (Ahmed, 2016). From year 11 onwards, the medium of instruction was exclusively English. After the independence of Bangladesh, which had its roots in the Bengali Language movement of 1952 that culminated in a 9-month long war in 1971, Bangla was declared as the official language for all communication and the judiciary and it is no surprise that Bengali, which “still plays a sentimental role in national identity formation” (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014, p. 9), was also declared as the language of instruction at primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education. This led to the gradual deterioration of the standard of English in Bangladesh over the past 47 years. Currently, 76% of English teachers in secondary schools have an English competence of less than level 6 in a 13-point assessment scale of Trinity College London, in spoken English (English-In-Action, 2008). The following statistics may help readers appreciate the enormity of this problem.

Of the estimated 158 million people, 72% live in rural Bangladesh; 98% of the population speak Bangla, and 18% speak English (Euromonitor-International, 2010). There are about 30,000 secondary schools, of which 98% are private schools. There are about 120,000

English teachers in secondary schools and an estimated 86,000 English teachers in rural secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2017; Billah, 2017).

Currently, English is a compulsory subject in schools, from year 1 to 12, and taught as a foundation course in Dhaka University (Chowdhury & Farooqui, 2011; Habib, 2013; Khan, 2000) although still the phenomenon of unintelligibility of English pronunciation looms large.

The study topic and its significance

This investigation was to study The beliefs and attitudes of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh towards English as a Lingua Franca (ELF) and intelligible pronunciation. There has been neither any study on learning/teaching/using ELF and intelligible pronunciation in Bangladesh nor on what English teachers/learners think about pronunciation standards such as the so-called British English (BrEng) or General American (GA).

The findings from this study will provide information to planners and course designers about gaps in the knowledge and skills of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh about English Pronunciation in general, and about ELF and intelligible pronunciation in particular. The planners may use such knowledge to develop and implement national policies on English Pronunciation pedagogy. Researchers and academics on the other hand may develop long-term professional development programs for English teachers of rural schools, while it is hoped that the Government may allocate funds, and its education and training wings may arrange appropriate training for teachers.

2. Literature Review

The review of literature presented in this section has been arranged into four themes.

a. Pronunciation Pedagogy

According to Jenkins (2000), 60% of breakdowns in communication occur due to pronunciation problems. However, Pronunciation Pedagogy is neglected and still treated as the “Cinderella of Language Teaching” as Kelly pointed out back in 1969 (p. 87; see also Baker, 2011). Teaching English Pronunciation is complex mainly for the following reasons:

1. Mismatch between spellings and pronunciations of English words like “rough”, “dough”, “czar”, “mnemonic”, “women”, “psalm” etc.
2. Existence of different pronunciation standards, Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA).
3. Segmental and supra-segmental are two important features in English Pronunciation (Roach, 2010) and the debate surrounding which feature to teach first. Features like intonation are dependent on individuals and it is not possible to isolate them out for teaching all beginners - Jenkins (2000) suggests a ‘balanced’ approach.

Maniruzzaman (2008) argues that the subject of Pronunciation teaching is neglected in Bangladesh and notes pessimistically,

Firstly, the absence or exclusion of EFL pronunciation from the curriculum/syllabus is indicative of the fact that the curriculum/syllabus designer has deliberately or ignorantly

overlooked its significance. Hence, the curriculum/syllabus designer's qualifications, expertise and honesty could be seriously questioned.

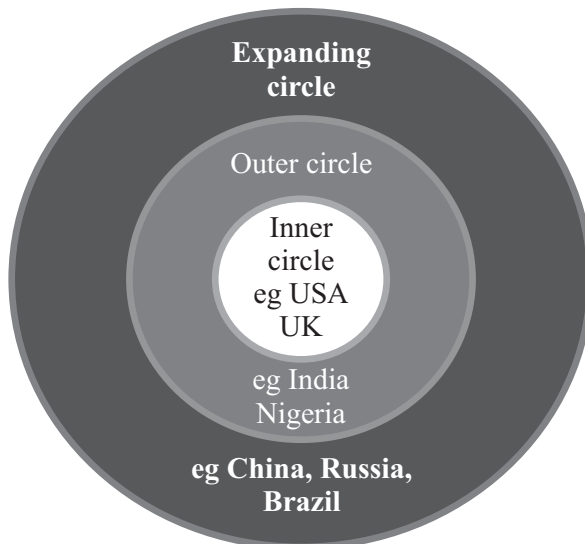
Secondly, the locally produced materials and/or the imported overseas ones used to teach/learn EFL do not usually embody pronunciation components and lessons. This indicates that the local materials developers are either unaware of the importance of pronunciation or not capable of designing pronunciation materials or just blindly confined to the syllabus devoid of pronunciation components.

This argument may be countered as the Bangladesh National Curriculum Text Book Board's (NCTB), series of text books, *English For Today* for different classes (Kabir et al. 2014, 2015) and others, which were developed for 30,000 secondary schools (BANBEIS, 2017); these contain pronunciation teaching materials. They have lessons on English sounds and intonating techniques; songs, poetry, and English plays serve as indirect materials. While teaching English pronunciation to NBS, the first author noticed that different students learn differently. Some learners, who have difficulty in making/learning individual new English phonemes, manage to pronounce the same sounds when they appear in words in English poems or songs.

b. English as a Lingua Franca (ELF)

A lingua franca is a common contact language used by people who speak different first languages and do not understand each other's native languages. The term 'lingua franca' originates from the Arabic 'lisan al farang' meaning language of the foreigners (House, 2003). Over the years, a large number of scholars have been championing ELF and promoting ELF research (see for example, Bayyurt, 2017; Björkman, 2008; Cogo, 2009;

Figure 1: Kachru's three concentric circles for World English



Source: Kachru, B (1992)

Canagarajah, 2007; Dewey, 2011; Holzman, 2014; Hülmbauer, 2009; Jenkins, 2000; Kirkpatrick, 2010; Mauranen, 2012; Seidlhofer, 2004; Sifakis, 2015; Walker, 2015).

Crystal (2003) gave the following estimates of the number of English speakers in Kachru's three concentric circles (1992) – Inner circle – 400 million; Outer circle – 430 million with NS competence (the figure is higher if English speakers with medium level of conversational English are included; and Expanding circle – 750 million with medium level of conversational English (Figure 1).

Thus, as many as 1.2 billion people in the Outer and Expanding circles (NNS-NNS) could use ELF communication. They could also communicate in ELF with 400 million people of the inner circle countries (NNS-NS) because ELF, although meant for NNS-NNS communication, does not exclude NS-NNS or NNS-NS communication. However, it may be noted that the NSs of English do not represent a reference point, as summarized below:

ELF emphasises that people have something in common rather than their differences; it implies that mixing languages is acceptable- and thus there is nothing inherently wrong in retaining certain characteristics of the L1, such as accent; finally the Latin name [lingua franca] symbolically removes the ownership of English from the Anglos both to no one and, in effect, to everyone. (Jenkins, 2000, p. 11)

ELF does not endorse, espouse or promote any particular pronunciation standard. It can be a subset of either Received Pronunciation (RP) or General American (GA) or indeed any other standard (Jenkins, 2012) in which the non-mandatory parts of pronunciations of the standard, on which it is based, are removed.

According to Jenkins “the focus of ELF1 was mainly on form, beginning with my] own research into ELF phonology/phonetics” (2017c, p. 2). The aim was to identify an ELF variety or varieties that could then be codified, taught and used instead of ‘standard’ British or North American native English, which were generally too complex for NNS. Next, the focus of ELF research shifted from ‘form’ to ‘variety and variability’ due to the requirement of negotiation of meaning among different ELF speakers who belonged to different speech communities. Jenkins (2017c) called this “a complementing paradigm” and reconceptualised ELF in terms of “communities of practice”, or CoP, and termed this as ELF2 (p. 2). She proposes further re-conceptualisation of ELF based on research on multilingualism and multilingual communication where people knowing more than one language communicate with each other mixing different languages where English may be one of them. This is stage 3 of ELF (ELF3) and is still in its early stages of research. Jenkins (2017c) calls this English as a Multilingua Franca (EMF).

With the shifting of ELF towards ELF2 and ELF3, the need to codify ELF became irrelevant. According to Jenkins, “in general, ELF researchers have argued that it is for English language teaching practitioners to decide what is appropriate for them and their learners to take from ELF research and apply to their classrooms.” (2017c, p. 10). Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015), two academics from Turkey and Greece respectively, adopted Jenkins’ cue on ELF pedagogy, which was not to dictate to teachers what and how they should teach ELF, but let them decide how to use their ELF knowledge for more effective teaching, and design lesson plans accordingly.

c. Intelligibility

ELT researchers have been trying to problematise the term intelligibility for long. Cruz compared the definitions by different scholars from 1950 to 2003 (Cruz, 2007) who all took different factors into account. The simple definition “being understood by a listener in a given situation” by Kenworthy (1987, p. 3) is in alignment with Rahman’s (2014) analogy of serving and drinking of tea with intelligibility. Another very essential component of ELF communication is ‘mutual intelligibility’ (Jenkins, 2012; Kirkpatrick, 2014). For this there is need for applying accommodation strategies (Dewey, 2011). Cogo and Dewey (2006) and Hülmbauer (2009) discuss the use of accommodation theory towards effective ELF communication.

According to Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015) “ELF-aware teachers should become conscious of the need to develop in their learners the capacity to communicate intelligibly with other speakers, despite the inevitable existence of [grammatical] errors” (p. 13).

d. Beliefs and Attitudes

Dalton-Puffer et al. (2007) argue that ‘attitudes’ are a social phenomenon. Jenkins (2012), in her book on English as a *Lingua Franca: Attitude and Identity*, devotes separate chapters on (a) language attitudes, where she looks at accent attitudes research (p. 87), and (b) literature review on research on ELF attitudes, which considers prospective teachers’ ELF attitudes (Jenkins, 2012) to different nationalities. Sifakis and Sougaris (2005) looked at Greek teachers’ attitude towards ELF. According to them many use the terms ‘beliefs’ and ‘attitudes’ interchangeably. However, Jenkins (2012) differentiates between them explaining that “attitudes operate below the level of awareness while beliefs refer to ‘overt categories and definitions’ that people have over linguistic matters” (p. 106). Bayyurt and Sifakis (2015), in their ELF-TEd project surmise that “central to any examination of the implications of ELF research for teacher education is a concern of teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards ELF-related issues” (p. 3).

3. Methodology

In conducting this study, the following step-by-step approach (Creswell, 2014, p. 58-70) was taken. First, *the unintelligibility of English pronunciation in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh* was identified as a problem. There was a need for this research because (a) The Medium of instruction in 30,000 non-English medium (NEM) schools in Bangladesh (BD) is Bangla (BANBEIS, 2017), (b) Teachers in BD NEM secondary schools are not fluent in spoken English (Maniruzzaman, 2008; Billah, 2017), (c) 70% of NEM schools (21000) are in rural Bangladesh (Euromonitor- International, 2010), (d) BD rural school teachers are not trained to teach English Pronunciation (Maniruzzaman, 2008), (e) BD rural school teachers do not have access to English Pronunciation programs and Pronunciation experts, and (f) no research has been done on this topic. So, it was decided to research this problem because it would add significant knowledge to educational practices (Creswell, 2014, p.62) in Bangladesh.

Sampling type

As it is typical in qualitative research of this type to perform an in-depth study of a few individuals or site (Creswell, 2014), ‘purposeful sampling’ (Creswell, 2014, Dörnyei, 2007)

was employed. Such sampling helps researchers to understand the cause of a phenomenon (Creswell, 2014, p. 205). Therefore two participants were selected from two secondary schools from two dissimilar regions, where people speak different dialects of the Bangla language. The sampling technique was in alignment with the two categories of ‘purposeful sampling’ – (a) Extreme Core Sampling and (b) Typical Sampling as discussed below.

Validity and trustworthiness

The notion of validity is not typically used in qualitative research; instead researchers attempt to achieve data trustworthiness. In Bangladesh, volunteering is not very common, therefore the two teachers who volunteered can be considered to be spokespersons and true representatives of their respective regions who can bring to the fore the problems as well as aspirations of their community. This in turn means that their responses can be considered as trustworthy. Accuracy and validation check was done by the strategy known as ‘member checking’, (Creswell, 2014) - participants were given copies of the summary of their interviews, to confirm and/or comment, which they did.

Data Collection

Creswell (2014) and Dörnyei (2007) suggest that samples should be different in as many ways as possible to enable assessing how the phenomenon or the study question appears to a heterogeneous instead of a homogeneous group. This is known as ‘Extreme Core Sampling’.

The two participants were different as shown in Table 3.1

Table 3.1. Difference in characteristics of the two participants

Characteristics	Naim	Raihan
Age	41	48
Education	BA Honours English	BA and B.Ed
Teaching Experience	MA English	25
Dialect Spoken	14 Jessore/Khulna dialect - /j/→/z/ ; /i/ intermix /i/ ad /e/	Rangpur/Rajbanshi dialect – makes heavy use of nasal sounds like /n/ and /ng/, /m/; Pronounces /r/ like a vowel. /ɔ:/→/ ɒ/
Work outside their teaching school	Helps NGOs as interpreter. Teaches grade 9 and 10 in neighboring schools when requested	Runs English teaching clubs, in several places within the Rangpur division aided by his trainers he trained
Type of school	Girls	Mixed

The two interviewees selected were ‘typical’ teachers, who love teaching, and came from teaching families (Creswell, 2014; Dörnyei, 2007) as shown in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2. Teachers in the family of the two participants

Naim	Raihan
1. Father was head teacher in primary school	1. Wife is primary school teacher
2. Three brothers are primary school teachers and one brother is teaching in a government college	2. Youngest brother is head of Autistic school and wife is Assistant Head Teacher in same school
3. Sister is primary school teacher and brother-in-law is teacher in secondary school	3. Another brother's wife is primary school teacher
4. The school was founded by uncle	

From the above we may conclude that both interviewees were from teaching families, and teaching is 'in their blood'. They are highly respected community members and it could be said that in a sense they fall in the same class as Brahmins of the ancient Hindu traditions (Sivan, 2005).

Selection of participants and sites

First, Ethics clearance was obtained from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee (MUHREC) for conducting the interviews in a low-risk project for which the only identified risk was some minor inconvenience. Help was sought from an NGO, Volunteers Association for Bangladesh (VAB) for selecting rural schools in two different regions – one in the North-western part and the other in the South-western part of the country. An Explanatory Statement (ES) about the project was sent to the headmasters who circulated it to their English teachers meeting the selection criteria. Selected volunteers were given further explanations about the study; dates, time and venues for the interviews were agreed with each.

Interviewing

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English based on 10 pre-written questions (Appendix A). Each interview lasted about 50 minutes. Interviews started with an introduction and warm up session followed by the ten questions and follow-up questions, ending with the winding up session. Participants could take toilet and prayer breaks. The interviews were audio-recorded which was later transcribed into English text using a transcription software called TRANSCRIBE. Transcribed text of the two interviews were summarized and sent to the interviewees to receive confirmation from the two interviewees as validity check of the interview transcripts. Pseudonyms were used throughout to maintain anonymity of participants. Interviewees were given the option to withdraw.

The above steps were taken to maintain rigour and uniformity in the two interviews.

Analysing the data

There is no single best approach (Creswell, 2014) for analysing data. A researcher should use one that is convenient and suits him. Dörnyei (2007) suggested 'latent content analysis', which bases its analysis on coding for common themes in the data contents. Creswell (2014, p. 237) suggested that while interviewing, the researcher should keep thinking about analysing the data that he is receiving and make real-time mental and physical notes of different themes that crop up during the course of the interview.

Coding data

The two audio data sets - interview questions and answers, were played several times, with breaks in between, with the aim of arriving at some themes (Creswell, 2014). The aim of this exercise was to arrive at common themes and find out in which of the common themes the uncommon themes could be included. In section 4 a basic summary of findings from these two interviews has been given in a tabular form.

4 Findings

Table 4.1, categorised by response themes, shows both common and different characteristics between the two interviewees' responses to questions.

Table 4.1. Table showing summary of findings by themes

Theme	Raihan	Naim
Believes Pronunciation teaching is important	Teaches English pronunciation regularly, although not required by job	Teaches English pronunciation to school students.
Accents	Finds both British and American accents tough. However perceives British accent 'easier' compared to GA. Has regional accent. Would like to change it.	Likes British accent and would like to speak with British accent. Finds it easy to follow. Not acquainted with American accent. Has regional accent. Would like to change it.
Intelligibility and 'good' and 'bad' accents	Considers British Accent as 'good accent'. Considers any accent which is not intelligible as bad accent	Considers Intelligible accent as good and non-intelligible accent as bad.
ELF and intelligibility	Discusses ELF and Intelligibility with students. Has accepting attitude towards ELF and Intelligible pronunciation. Believes that ELF and intelligible pronunciation training is good. Prefers training in ELF over British and American standard pronunciation in teaching	Is ready to accept ELF and intelligible pronunciation Has positive attitude towards ELF and Intelligible pronunciation. Believes that ELF and intelligible pronunciation training are good. Prefers training in ELF over British and American standard pronunciation in teaching
Community Leadership	Respected by the community, college/university teachers and graduate students at universities as an 'expert' teacher of English. Many join his 24-week long, 24 hour morning/evening courses to improve their spoken English.	Known within schools and community as an 'English expert' and often called to act as interpreter for foreigners

5 Discussion

a. Pronunciation

From the interviews it was obvious that both participants have a positive attitude towards good pronunciation and believe that teaching pronunciation is extremely important. Raihan mentioned that he had tried to teach IPA and found it ineffective and that learners found it difficult and felt bored. At the time they were not asked what books and dictionary they used for teaching/learning IPA and English. However, contrary to Maniruzzaman's (2008) comments that there are no pronunciation teaching materials for Bangladeshi schools, in NCTB's EFT books for classes IV, V, VI (Kabir et al. 2014, 2015), there are specific lessons with guidance and practice words to teach/learn pronunciations of (a) Consonant sounds, /f,v,s,ʃ,z,ʒ/, (b) vowel quality and vowel quantity of monophthongs, (c) diphthongs, and (d) how to intonate.

Besides these lessons, in all EFT books, poems and plays which, if recited and enacted, should help students to learn both segmental and supra-segmental features of English pronunciation (Roach, 2010). Billah (2017) seems to think that the situation of poor pronunciation still exists in Bangladesh. That suggests that the pronunciation lessons available in NCTB text books are either ignored or skipped by teachers as both annual class exams and board exams, JSC and SSC, do not require students to demonstrate their skills in English pronunciation.

It was observed that the two participants were both aware that people of different countries speak with different accents. They were able to recognise (a) regional Bangladeshi accent, (b) British English accent, (c) American Accent and (d) Indian accent. They reported having been more exposed to British pronunciation - which they preferred - compared to the American accent. During the familiarisation session during the interview, both participants were told that approximately 50 varieties of accents are spoken in the UK, and only 3-5 % of the British population use the RP accent (Crystal & Davey, 1975). Many people from one region of the UK do not understand the accent of another region. It is likely that if the two participants had told this to their trainees and NBS English learners became aware of this phenomenon, they would feel less guilty of having a regional accent.

b. ELF and Intelligibility

Raihan was found to be familiar with the term *Lingua Franca* and its use. He explained the term to his trainees by demonstrating how the Bangla language is used by people of different regions of Bangladesh who speak different dialects, and also by some tradespeople who have their distinct sociolects. Raihan tried making his trainees aware that communicating outside one's community using a common language is actually using a 'lingua franca'. This suggested that Raihan and his trainees had taken the first step in becoming ELF-aware and he and his English learners may be preparing for an ELF and intelligible pronunciation. At this stage, it should be sufficient to let Bangladeshi teachers become familiar with the aforementioned first two stages of ELF, i.e. ELF1 and ELF2 (Jenkins, 2017a, 2017b) before they are made fully ELF-aware when they could be taken through an ELF-Ted program (Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015). ELF1. This is already in use in Bangladesh. Bangladeshi Regional English, though not codified as Indian English and Singapore English, is spoken and understood by English users from different regions of Bangladesh.

c. Intelligibility

As we have seen in the review of literature above, researchers have been trying to define the term ‘intelligibility’ for more than 50 years (Firth, 1996). Different researchers took different factors into account in their definitions, some of which are not very easy to conceptualise. Their aim seems to be to try to satisfy everyone with one definition by taking the ‘*one size fits all*’ approach.

Our goal was less ambitious. We use a very simple definition of ‘intelligibility’ - it is a speech by a speaker, which is understandable by his listeners. By this definition, if a Bangladeshi speaks English with another Bangladeshi in a regional accent, and the listener understands the speaker, it will be considered intelligible speech for that purpose or environment (ELF1). This is in alignment with Kenworthy’s (1987, p. 3) definition – i.e., “being understood in a given situation” (1987, p. 3). However, when a Bangladeshi speaks English in a regional accent with a non-Bangladeshi, the latter may not understand him. In this case the Bangladeshi has to speak at a *different level* of intelligibility, which may involve him learning and using a different accent (ELF2). Such speakers may find it appropriate to ‘code switch’; they may use regional Bangladeshi accent when speaking with a Bangladeshi and switch to another accent when speaking with an NBS.

It was noticed that both participants had a positive attitude towards teaching people to develop a clear and globally understandable accent. It was encouraging to learn that these two teachers, who came from two very different regions of Bangladesh, both agreed that they should develop and speak with an accent understandable by one and all, which fit our definition of intelligibility.

d. Beliefs and Attitudes

The frequently cited paper by Sifakis and Sougaris (2005) looked at the attitudes of teachers in state schools in Greece about their pronunciation beliefs and practices. Sifakis teamed up with Bayyurt of Turkey, on a joint project on ELF-Education for Teachers (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015). The main aim of their project was to make teachers “ELF-aware”. In the first phase of this project, they developed a teacher education program called ELF-TEd for which they proposed an ELF-TEd syllabus. In the second phase they used action research, and made teachers design lesson plans using their ELF knowledge in their respective schools (p. 7). The final phase involved peer reviewed evaluation of the plans. The ELF-aware project suggests changing the deeper beliefs of teachers about their teaching practices (Sifakis, 2015, p. 3) and expects teachers to decide how and what they should teach. They are not to be dictated by ELF researchers (p. 4). According to them an ELF-educator is to be a facilitator of ELF trainees. In recent articles, we see Jenkins (2017c, p. 2) also taking this view about letting teachers decide about how they should teach their students. This is a shift from her original position when she attempted to codify ELF by designing her famous ELF core model (Jenkins, 2000).

e. Community Leadership

Introducing a novel concept like ELF and Intelligible pronunciation to teachers and students who are used to using some regional pronunciation for decades is not an easy task. It requires acceptance and support of stakeholders, school authorities, colleagues, students, parents,

community leaders and local and national political representatives. Making such a paradigm shift in ELT pedagogy needs a leader who is trusted by all within a community. He is to take learners to new places and heights in English Pronunciation and spoken English. Jenkins (2017a, p. 2) argues that it is the duty of ELF-aware teachers, not ELF researchers, to suggest ways of teaching and designing test plans. This may require each group or individual to modify her LFC to suit their individual needs and environments. Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015) are of similar opinion, however they have gone a step further. They got 10 teachers from Greece and Turkey and tried making them ELF-aware with their ELF-Ted program. They then asked the trainees to design lesson plans for teaching within their respective environments. Next, these course participants were asked to evaluate each other's plans armed with this new knowledge. The British Council, which normally runs training courses on Pronunciation using the British standard, has also, it seems acknowledged the recent changes in people's conceptions about pronunciation. It has also developed a Free online course (Hall et al., 2013), aimed at making trainees become ELF-aware.

From the personal experience of conducting training courses for different groups in rural Bangladesh, including teachers, the authors believe that community leaders who permanently reside and interact with community members are most suitable for leading such ventures to success. Bringing experts for a short time from the British Council, the American Centre, English in Action, DFID, BRAC, other NGOs, or even university professors, to run courses on ELF and Intelligibility for school teachers and awarding them certificates may not achieve the desired results. From empirical evidence one can say that such training by external bodies aim at numbers and statistics, rather than real changes in teaching and learning. Organisations are interested in the number of persons they trained and not on the final outcome, while attendees are interested in increasing their collection of certificates.

From the two interviews, it was obvious that both Raihan and Naim are special Community Leaders, highly respected by everyone for the good work they have been doing within their schools and respective communities in different ways, to enhance their skills in English, particularly spoken English. The results so far have been positive. With their present beliefs and enthusiastic attitudes on ELF and intelligible pronunciation, if and when they get ELF-aware as suggested by Sifakis and Bayyurt (2015, 2017) and Hall et al. (2013), they should be able to start developing their individualised ELF-education programs for use in and around their neighbouring villages. It appeared that they were both intelligent and conscientious enough to know when they have taken a wrong turn and need to back-track or when to ask for help and advice on related matters from somebody they can trust.

6. Conclusion

The phenomenon that prompted this study was the phenomenon- *unintelligibility of English pronunciation of teachers and students in rural Bangladesh*. To solve this problem, the research question that was posed was '*What are the beliefs and attitudes of English teachers in secondary schools in rural Bangladesh towards ELF and intelligible pronunciation?*' To our knowledge, this is the first investigative research that explores beliefs and attitudes of secondary school teachers in rural Bangladesh about ELF and intelligible pronunciation.

Research outcome

The study revealed that the two participating teachers believe that teaching of Pronunciation to learners is important, and should be done, even if it is not part of their job. They also demonstrated a very favorable attitude towards ELF and intelligibility. Both participants had heard of ELF and were keen to learn more about it. It was interesting to learn that if they were asked to make a choice between two courses, (a) English as a Lingua Franca and Intelligible Pronunciation and (b) one of the two international pronunciation standards – like the British standard or American standard, they would choose the first course. The two participants were found to have a slightly varied degree of awareness about ELF but similar beliefs on intelligible and non-intelligible speech. This is a positive sign which may be exploited further.

Even if Maniruzzaman's arguments (2008) about the non-existence of pronunciation teachers and pronunciation materials in the school curriculum are correct, at least these two teachers are reifying pronunciation teaching, though on a very small scale. It is quite possible that there are individuals in other parts of Bangladesh who, with similar beliefs and attitudes, are trying to address the phenomenon of this study in their own ways, which may be worth tapping into.

The participants also believe that it is extremely difficult to learn to speak with a BrEng or GA pronunciation standard; these are time consuming, costly and difficult to master. Therefore, they would not consider teaching either of these standards to their students. However, they believed in the usefulness and benefits of teaching intelligible pronunciation to their learners, which was less difficult. The interview transcripts (subject of a follow-up paper) show that they believe in exposing them to the supra-segmental features of English pronunciation through English songs, recitation and films. They want their students to understand NNBS and NNS English pronunciation and enjoy English news on TV and radio. They engage their trainees in these types of activities for which they have received the 'go-ahead' signal from their respective headmasters. They also have the consent of parents, and guardians and prominent community members who have seen positive results emanating from such activities.

Observations and reflections

While talking to an NNBS, an NBS will be well advised to stop using local varieties of English sounds, particularly for consonants like /f,v,z,ʒ,w/. He should also utter English words using the correct vowel quality and quantity (Roach, 2010; Rahman, 2016a) and intonate words in phrases and sentences to make them more meaningful. The useful finding that came out from this study was that both participants believed that it was necessary for them and their learners to attain an appropriate level of intelligibility for global communication. This cannot be achieved overnight and will require teachers and learners to become aware of *global* intelligibility, change their beliefs and attitudes about the need to attain such intelligibility and get necessary training to learn to utter new sounds and other features of English Pronunciation as ELFC (Jenkins, 2000) or ELFA (Rahman, 2014), as the case may be.

With a well-designed ELF-awareness training program, including exposing trainees to English speakers or accents from different NS and NNS countries (ELF-EXP), it is possible

to improve the current situation of *non-intelligibility of English Pronunciation of NBS*. This is in alignment with Sifakis and Bayyurt's current work (Bayyurt & Sifakis, 2015; Sifakis & Bayyurt, 2015, 2017) on the topic and British Council's publication on *Changing Englishes* (Hall, Wicacsono, Liu, Qian and Xiaoqing, 2013).

Roach's book (Roach, 2010) is used at universities in Bangladesh for teaching phonetics and phonology – not Pronunciation. Parts from this book may be used for familiarising learners to the 24 consonant and 20 vowel sounds in RP. For a more practical approach, Underhill's English Pronunciation Workshop video may be used (Underhill, 2011). Rahman's *English Pronunciation Guide-Book* (Rahman, 2016a), written in Bengali to serve as a self-study guidebook for NBS English learners who are not yet comfortable reading English books, which is the case in rural Bangladesh. This may help teachers and students who are interested in improving their skills in English Pronunciation.

For finding pronunciations of newly encountered English words, currently the most popular dictionary is *Students' Favourite Dictionary* by AT Dev (1993), which gives incorrect pronunciations of some words as it uses characters from the Bengali alphabet to represent English sounds not present in the Bengali language. For example, the pronunciation of "zoo" is given as /dʒu:/. This problem is being rectified by some schools (Zaman, 2017) which use the English Pronunciation Dictionary for Bangalis (EPDB) (Rahman, 2016b). The EPDB employs Bengali Phonetic Alphabet (BPA) (Rahman, 2016 a) to transcribe the RP pronunciations of some 29,500 English words.

Currently, in primary and secondary schools in rural Bangladesh, English is treated by teachers and students like all other subjects in the curriculum. Teachers strictly follow the syllabus and prepare their students for exams. Most students want to pass the subject to go to the next class while high achievers memorise to score good grades, which unfortunately does not guarantee admission at top universities when there are written entrance exams (Haque, 2017). This is *English-for-exam* pedagogy.

The authors believe that English should be taught so that learners think of it as a subject that will come useful later on in their professional and working life. They should learn to use it like learning to drive a car. This is *English-for-life* pedagogy.

Recommendations for further research

Pronunciation is a practical subject. Merely reading from Roach (2010) and answering questions set in the exams is not enough. Short-term course providers may start running two to three day practical workshops on ELF Pronunciation and intelligibility. Such courses should be based on the competency based model (Rothwell, 2010) where learners should be asked to practically demonstrate that they have learned each element in all the units before receiving their Competency Certificate.

The knowledge and skills in ELF and intelligible pronunciation of teachers of Greece and Turkey as discussed above (see section 4. Findings) should not be too different from that of Bangladeshi secondary school teachers. It would be ideal if some Bangladeshi university took the initiative and carried out a similar action research and developed a one year long ELF-TEd program with a practical curriculum to make Bangladeshi school teachers ELF-

aware. In such a course it would be good to include an ELF-EXP component, where students would be exposed to ELF communicators from different countries. Also, teachers should be prepared to run *English-for-life* instead of the current trend of *English-for-exam* courses. Trainees undertaking such a program should be required to demonstrate their ELF-awareness to their teachers and peers and, as part of their requirement to complete the course, develop a lesson plan for teaching English in their schools with ELF-emphasis.

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Appendix A

Interview Questions

1. Do you teach English Pronunciation?
2. Would you like to speak English with a British accent?
3. Would you like to speak English with an American accent?
4. Would you like to continue speaking English using the accent you have? What do you term that accent?
5. What do you consider a “good” English accent?
6. What do you consider a “bad” English accent?
7. What do you think of undertaking a training on ELF pronunciation and then practising it to master it?
8. What do you think of teaching ELF and intelligible pronunciation to your students after you have mastered it?
9. How will you benefit if you speak English with an ELF pronunciation?
10. Do you think that given the required resources you can promote ELF and Intelligible pronunciation? Do you need specific resources to promote and teach ELF and Intelligible Pronunciation?

Time: 1 hour for each interview.