

# Residual Cultural Imperialism in Primary Textbooks in Bangladesh: A Critique of the *English for Today* Textbooks

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## Abstract

It has been assumed that with the rising importance of English as a global language (Crystal, 1997) that 'the centre' (native English speaking countries) produced ELT materials have become tools, using which linguistic as well as cultural imperialism may take place in 'the periphery' (non-native English speaking countries) contexts marginalizing local needs and cultures (Phillipson 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006). Therefore, the authorial ownership of materials can be given to local experts who know about the culture, needs and realities of local communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). Taking these issues into account, this paper aims to examine how far the locally produced textbooks, *English for Today* (Class 1-5), have been able to resist cultural imperialism at the primary level in Bangladesh. The analysis of the cultural contents of these textbooks reveals that though these locally produced materials have been able to resist cultural imperialism to some extent, they still have some limitations regarding the way exposure has been provided to the local as well as the target cultures.

## 1. Introduction

It is argued in certain parts of applied linguistics literature that this is an age of empire and globalization, (Kumaravadivelu, 2006) and English is the dominant language of this globalized world (Crystal, 1997). With the rising importance of English, it has been assumed that the centre (native-English speaking countries) have been producing English language textbooks that are becoming tools using which neo-imperialism is taking place in English as a foreign language (EFL) or in English as a second language (ESL) contexts (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 2006).

From this viewpoint, the use of these textbooks in the EFL or ESL classrooms has been considered as one of the mediums through which the centre is engineering cultural imperialism in the periphery (non-native English speaking) countries; in the process marginalizing local cultures and languages (Phillipson, 1992). To face this assumed threat of cultural hegemony and to decentralize textbooks, the authorial ownership of materials can be given to local experts who know about the cultural variations, needs and situations of local communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2006).

As Bangladesh is a developing country, its government has also become interested in getting more access to this global language which may be considered as the gatekeeper to the global economy and the key to higher education, science and technological advancement (Seargeant & Erling, 2011). The government of Bangladesh believes that the large population of the country can be turned into human capital by acquiring communicative competence in English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Therefore, the Bangladesh government has introduced a competency-based curriculum at the primary level (Classes 1-5) in 1992. That curriculum was revised adopting "communicative language teaching" (CLT) as the official methodology, replacing the traditional "grammar translation method" in 2002 so that learners' basic communication skills in English could be developed (Hamid, 2010). This curricular innovation led to the redesigning and restructuring of primary textbooks by local-experts. The publication of these textbooks was also carried out by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of the country. As a result, it can be hypothesized that these locally produced ELT materials will be able to reflect the cultural variations, needs, beliefs and situations of local communities successfully.

This paper aims to examine how far the locally designed and produced textbooks have been able to resist cultural imperialism at primary level classrooms in Bangladesh in view of these developments. The first section of this paper focuses on the theoretical underpinnings of restructuring textbooks. The second part highlights the primary ELT scenario of Bangladesh. The third section discusses the cultural content of the textbooks, and the last part includes some recommendations and the conclusion.

## 2. Theoretical Underpinnings of Restructuring Textbooks

### 2.1 ELT and Cultural Imperialism

According to Richards (2008, p. 2), critical theorists have taken 'the status of English, the drain on education resources it demands in many countries, and its role in facilitating domination by multinational companies' into account in 'this age of change', and found that ELT may have underlying political attachments. ELT activities have been viewed as the reincarnation of colonialism of the centre from this strand, and this hegemony has been seen to be promoted by the marketing of the British and American textbooks in periphery countries (Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994; Canagarajah, 1999). In this way, countries of the centre are perhaps trying to impose their own culture disregarding local cultures which are related to the values, beliefs, purposes and activities of local communities. Therefore, Phillipson (1992) has argued that ELT can be seen as the facilitator of linguistic imperialism and mentions that "the tenets of ELT have ideological and structural consequences. They serve to strengthen the hold of the centre over the periphery" (p. 192).

Pennycook (1995, p. 43) has also declared that English can be seen as 'the language of international capitalism' and due to that factor it may promote the supremacy of English discourse (written or spoken) over all other languages of the world. Thus the superior image of the native speakers can be established in the periphery countries. This kind of imperialism may result in inequalities in all fields including economics, politics, education, culture and communication. He, therefore, has argued that "the expansion of English language education is ... both a continuation of the racist hierarchies of colonial rule and of the colonial construction of the inherent superiority of the native speaker" (Pennycook, 1998, p. 194).

Similarly, Fairclough (1989, p.43) has pointed out that English discourse may have 'power in and behind' it and inferred that this type of discourse in the social milieu may lead to further imperialism. From this perspective, when learners start acquiring English, they may also start accepting the cultural, political and economic values of the dominant group to gain mastery over the target language (TL). This kind of acceptance can occur because teaching and learning always involves the 'transfer and negotiation' of some kind of values and interests (Canagarajah, 1999, p.17). This transmission in different ELT contexts may lead to cultural homogenization and pave the way for cultural imperialism (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

Therefore, cultural imperialism (cf. MacDonalization cited by Ritzer, 1993) has been viewed as a process whereby the centre may try to win over second language (L2) learners by gaining their 'empathy towards and appreciation for' TL communities (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 268). SL learners may give into this homogenization and integration process by adopting the norms of the target culture by assuming that detailed knowledge about the target culture and its communities will help them to gain mastery over English, the 'linguistic power' (Kachru, 1986, p.1). Thus, cultural imperialism may take place in ESL or EFL contexts.

However, Phillipson's (1992) views on linguistic imperialism has been criticized by Bisong (1995) who has argued that users of English in periphery countries may have the ability to choose languages independently considering various sociolinguistic realities of local communities (e.g. Nigeria). Therefore, the promotion of ELT in these countries may not be a practice of linguistic hegemony; rather, it may have been facilitating the communication process in multilingual contexts. Similarly, Conrad (1996, p. 20) has also considered that Phillipson's (1992) framework of linguistic imperialism is built on an assumption of power asymmetry, and it presumes that 'to learn a language is to become dominated by it'. Therefore, following this kind of framework can lead to committing 'empirical errors' in any studies.

In spite of these criticisms, Phillipson's (1992) arguments about linguistic imperialism have raised questions which can clarify the ethical dimensions of ELT. And it can make the ELT practitioners more sensitive to their own cultural and national priorities.

## 2.2 Risks of Using Global Textbooks

With the rise of worldwide interest in English, the textbook publishing industries of the centre have concentrated on marketing global textbooks which have been 'designed' to serve ELT all over the world (Block & Cameron, 2002, p.10). Thus they are probably meeting the demands of thousands of copies of textbooks produced in English and generating a great deal of wealth (Gray, 2002). *Headway* (Soars & Soars, 1986, 1991, 1996, 2003) and *Cutting Edge Intermediate* (Cunningham & Moor, 2005) are good examples of these textbooks. The publishers of the books have often gained an easy access to local markets because though ELT is now being practiced widely all over the world, the approaches, methods, materials and techniques of ELT and its supporting teacher-training programs are still generally directed by the center to periphery countries

(Canagarajah, 1999; Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In this way, the centre's 'firm grip over textbook authorship and production' may have been tightening in periphery ELT communities (Kumaravadivelu, *ibid*, p.15).

Moreover, the use of global textbooks can have many other adverse effects. Since these textbooks can be "used by students at a particular level and age group anywhere in the world regardless of culture" (Ranalli, 2003, pp. 3-4), they usually portray native speaker-oriented standard English disregarding local as well as other varieties of English (Pennycook, 1994; Gray, 2002). The underlying intention of these textbooks may even be to connect people by promoting target culture-oriented homogeneity around the world (Kumaravadivelu, 2003).

The connectedness of these textbooks, therefore, can be seen as one of the manifestations of the globalization process as it has been argued that "globalization merely implies greater interconnectedness and deterritorialisation" (Waters cited in Edwards & Usher, 2008, p. 23). Moreover, nowadays content of these textbooks may have been 'deterritorialized' by including not only native speakers' settings but also international contexts to show 'English as an increasingly global language' (Gray, 2002, p. 157). Still, these textbooks may discriminate between the centre and the periphery countries because these books can convey 'ideologies' from the 'culturally dominant' countries to the 'less dominant' countries through the medium of 'English in any of its countless world varieties' (Derbel & Richards, 2007, par. 3).

Moreover, according to Gray (2002) global textbooks mainly focus on 'aspirational' content by including topics such as traveling, holidays and shopping which may encourage learners' to 'aspire to' such activities (p. 161). Though this type of content may have drawn lots of learners' attention, they can breach the learners' bonding with their local cultures. Thus, they may raise learners' integrative interest in knowing the 'cosmopolitan cultures' of 'materialistic' lifestyles portrayed in these books through English (Brown cited in Gray, *ibid*, p.160). Therefore, these books may not only carry cultural trappings with them but also have an 'one size fits all' approach in terms of their topic choices (Gray, *ibid*, p.159).

Tomlinson (2008, p. 3) has also criticized these global textbooks. He argues that these textbooks may not be able to provide L2 learners with 'the provision of opportunities for acquisition and development' because these books have not been designed according to learner's individualistic needs and learning styles which are conditioned by their local environments and learning culture.

Consequently, many EFL and ESL learners may fail to achieve a satisfactory level of competence in English. Therefore, Tomlinson (ibid) has pointed out that local and well-designed non-commercial materials will be better in comparison to global textbooks for teaching English in EFL or ESL contexts.

Additionally, teaching materials should reflect 'the reality of language use' (Tomlinson, 2003, p.22) and try to raise learners' critical awareness and sensitivity (Byram & Flemming, 1998). However, the producers of global textbooks may have not taken all these issues into account since these books may not emphasize the local realities (Gray, 2002). Therefore, ELT textbooks produced locally can be considered as a better option for teaching the TL rather than global textbooks.

### 2.3 Textbook Content and Raising Cultural Awareness

Kumaravadivelu (2006, p. 17) suggests using English only as a tool for communication in periphery ESL or EFL communities in the face of these assumed hegemonic threats from global textbooks. This can be followed by the 'transformative restructuring' of teaching English as a second language (TESOL) activities from philosophical, pedagogical and attitudinal perspectives. From a pedagogical viewpoint, he advises these communities to design their own ELT materials by portraying mainly local cultures. Similarly, Markee (1997) and McKay (2003) mention that the local culture can play a crucial role in the choice of the appropriate methodology and teaching materials for a particular community, thereby producing great support for carrying out curricular innovation.

Therefore, a question could be raised: what type of critical awareness should be nurtured through locally produced materials? Fairclough (1992) suggests raising learners' critical language awareness (CLA) by making "language itself the object of critical scrutiny – both language as social practice and language as social process, evidenced in reading and writing texts" (Wallace, 2002, p.112). Thus, L2 learners will become conscious of the idea that TL can be modified and used only as a tool for communication to meet their diversified communicative needs in both local and international contexts. This critical awareness will help the learners in 'sensitizing' themselves to the 'social inequalities that confront' them and develop their 'necessary capabilities for assessing those inequalities' regarding language use (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, p. 164).

Kramersch and Sullivan (1996, p. 210) also proposes promoting an 'appropriate pedagogy which would, at the same time be a pedagogy of

appropriation'. This pedagogy will take into account both global and local needs of L2 learners according to learning contexts. It will disregard the native speaker-oriented authentic pedagogy that mainly aims to foster the use of a particular variety of English across diversified socio-cultural contexts by ignoring learner's needs. Therefore, though Byram (1997) suggests nurturing learners' critical cultural awareness by making them aware of the importance of negotiating meaning, social roles and relationships according to their L1 and L2 cultures, Baker (2012) argues that only L1 and L2 oriented cultural awareness will not be helpful for functioning in a globalizing world. To survive in such a world, learners will need to acquire intercultural awareness which will prepare them for taking part in intercultural communication in multilingual and multicultural contexts. Therefore, local experts should take all such cultural-awareness related issues into account while designing teaching materials.

#### **2.4 Raising Cultural Awareness among Young Learners (YLS)**

Fairclough (1992), Vickov (2007) and Nieto (2010) particularly recommends raising the CLA of children because cultural ideologies can play an important role in conditioning children's cognitive and social development. According to Vickov (2007, p. 108) 'developing the awareness of learners' own cultural identity and nationhood should be given more importance in case of YLS because this would help them to form ideas about their own cultural identity and serve as 'a basis for understanding' other cultures in the long run. Therefore, in EFL classes, YLS' familiar concepts based on their local culture and environment can be introduced earlier than the target culture which will help them to understand new concepts in relation to their L1 (Vilke cited in Vickov, 2007, p. 108).

Additionally, Tomlinson (2003) and Hill (2003) point out that selection of culturally appropriate visuals is very important in designing materials for YLS. Since these learners may have very limited experience about the outside world, unknown words or concepts can become meaningful to them mainly through such visuals.

Therefore, Cortazzi and Jin (1999) emphasizes including three types of cultural information in English language textbooks for raising learners' cultural awareness. According to them, textbooks can portray the source culture i.e. learners' own local culture; the target culture, i.e. the culture of native-English speaking countries; and the international target culture which will be the combination of cultural elements drawn from both English and non-English speaking countries around the world. Even then, the portrayal of local culture

may create some new problems. As Holborow (quoted in Bisong 1995, p. 126) points out, firstly, it might be difficult to decide which one would be the real native language of a country due to a process of continuing linguistic assimilation; secondly, the promotion of native language may introduce its own 'oppressive strategies' to dominate over other varieties of languages used in a local community. Thus in attempting to remove one kind of perceived hegemony, there is the risk of putting another one, which will also be harder to resist. Therefore, material designers will have to be very conscious in selecting the content of textbooks used for teaching YLs.

In the light of the above discussion, the next three sections focus on the primary level ELT context of Bangladesh and tries to find out whether locally produced textbooks have been able to restrict the intrusion of cultural imperialism at the primary level in Bangladesh.

### 3. Primary ELT Scenario of Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a decolonized country. However, when the sun of the British Empire set in Bangladesh in 1947, it was still a part of Pakistan. English was taught as a compulsory subject at the primary level here till Bangladesh achieved independence in 1971. Subsequently, Bengali (L1) was emphasized, suppressing English in the educational and administrative domain to further on the decolonizing and nation-building processes (Ahmed, 2005).

However, this situation started to change in 1990s when the Bangladesh government decided to initiate a curricular change. In 2002, a revised curriculum included four English language competences which were not taken into account before 1990s. Those are:

- (i) Listening to and understanding simple commands/instructions/requests in English and carrying them out.
- (ii) Speaking and understanding simple English according to students' age.
- (iii) Reading and comprehending textbooks according to students' age group and level.
- (iv) Writing alphabets, words, numbers, simple sentences, passages, paragraphs, informal letters and numbers according to students' age groups and levels.

(Ahmed, *ibid*, pp. 21-22)



In spite of this newly alleged interest to developing English language competences, Bengali continued to be emphasized in the nation's political and cultural identity formation and English was generally viewed 'as a language of international and to some extent national currency in business, education and culture' (Banu & Sussex, 2001, p.137).

According to the Directorate of Primary Education (DPE, 2008), around 3,66,000 teachers are working at the primary level in Bangladesh. Since almost 75% of the primary level students (1,63,12,907) go to schools in rural areas, the teacher-student ratio in these schools (1:52) are higher than that in urban schools (1: 48). Though there are a large number of primary students, there are not enough trained teachers in these schools due to 'inadequate infrastructure and limited institutional capacity' for teacher training (Hamid, 2010, p. 289). 80% of these teachers received one year long general certificate-in-education training and only 28.5 % of them received 5 days long subject based training (DPE, 2008). Even this training experience can be considered as 'wastage' because this limited exposure may not be able to achieve the desired result due to these teachers' poor English skills (Hoque cited in Hamid, 2010, p. 296).

#### 4. Discussion on *English for Today*

*English for Today* (EFT), Class 1- 5 (NCTB, 2010, 2011) constitute a series of textbooks which are used in Bangladesh at the primary level. These books were designed with the help of the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) of Bangladesh (1997-2005) which was initially funded by the UK government's Department for International Development (DfID) and Ministry of Education, Bangladesh, and was later funded by NCTB and the seven education boards of the country. The lessons in these books tend to provide learners with opportunities for practicing different skills through individual, pair and group work. Thus these textbooks have focused on promoting active learning in a learner-centered way, following the CLT approach.

However, most primary teachers still follow the traditional teacher-centered approach in teaching large classes. Even though some of them show interest in applying CLT techniques, they usually do not have easy access to the teachers' guides designed in accordance with the EFTs. In addition, their limited training experience is not often enough to provide them with knowledge required to initiate learner-centered activities (Ara, 2009). As a result, they depend heavily on the textbooks than on any other materials for teaching YLs. Therefore, designing local context appropriate textbooks has become a crucial factor in the primary

sector of Bangladesh in making up for the deficiencies of teachers and in producing more socio-culturally appropriate content than imported ones.

#### 4. 1. The Cultural Content of *English for Today*

EFT books have promoted not only national identities but also tried to emphasize the religious and political priorities of Bangladesh. The visuals of these textbooks introduce figures (flower, poet, bird and animal) related to Bangladesh's national identity and the map of the country in Class 1 (Lesson 30, p. 48), 2 (Lesson 11, p. 21) and 5 (Lesson 11, p. 35; Lesson 13, p. 41- 43). Furthermore, since most Bangladeshis are Muslims, many visuals of bearded male characters representing the Muslim communities have been included in these books. In addition, the whole country has been described in detail in the EFT book of Class 5 (Lesson 20, pp. 61-62) with a visual of rural Bangladesh where a mosque, a church and a temple can be seen in the same frame, depicting the political view that people of all religions are treated equally in Bangladesh. All these elements can raise YLs' knowledge about the national identity of Bangladesh. Dat (2008) has also found this type of cultural representation in locally produced materials of Vietnam, Malaysia and Thailand.

Additionally, EFT books have tried to raise YLs' awareness of the target language as well as global communities by introducing characters from neighboring countries (Nepal, India, Japan) as well as native English speaking countries (UK, Australia) in Class 3 (Lesson 12, p. 31) and 4 (Lesson 17, p. 42). Some of these characters are at times similar to them in respect of age or sex but also differ from them in terms of costumes and hobbies. Furthermore, the EFT book of Class 5 (Lesson 26, p. 83) presents an adult English speaking character from Australia who has been learning Bengali, and has Chinese, Italian and French speaking friends. In these ways, these textbooks have attempted to raise YLs' sensitivity regarding the existence of different nationalities and languages in the world. According to Tomalin and Stempleski (1993, pp. 7-8), this kind of exposure helps YLs to realize that people can act differently depending on social variables such as age, sex, social class, and place of residence.

Other characters introduced in the EFTs are familiar to YLs due to their activities. This kind of content has no doubt been included to acquaint YLs with their society (Tomlinson, 2003). Therefore, the EFT of Class 3 (Lesson 30, p. 80) includes a poem about three characters (a cobbler, a tailor and a policeman) from different occupations. In addition, the visuals of farmers have been incorporated in the entire series clearly to emphasize the fact that farming is the main occupation in Bangladesh.

The topics of these books can also be related to YLs' personal lives. For instance, the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 10, pp. 22-23) describes the daily routine of a urban boy whereas the EFT of Class 5 (Lesson 8, p. 25) depicts the daily activities of a rural boy so that YLs can personalize their learning while communicating in the TL (Pinter, 2006). Moreover, these textbooks have reading passages on describing families which can enable YLs to talk about their own family lives as well.

Additionally, EFT books emphasize YLs' socio-cultural values, beliefs and behaviors. These books present joint (Class 3, Lesson 9, p. 24) as well as nuclear families (Class 1, Lesson 5, p. 5) with no more than three children probably to show that having fewer number of children is one of the keys to having happy families. Moreover, the necessity of raising students' sense of respect for women is stressed by EFT. Therefore, the EFT of Class 3 (Lesson 23, p. 62) focuses on the demanding daily life of a mother who is a home maker, and the EFT of Class 5 includes a reading passage on a woman who works as a shop assistant (Lesson 7, pp. 20-21). In addition, the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 21, p. 56) describes the hardship of a farmer so that YLs can become more considerate about people who serve the country selflessly by growing crops for all.

Moreover, different issues, such as, how to maintain a healthy life and the meaning of traffic signals have been taken into account in the EFTs of Class 3 (Lesson 10, p. 27 & Lesson 11, p. 30) and 4 (Lesson 5, p.12) so that YLs' general knowledge and sense of responsibility towards the community can be awakened.

The linguistic contrasts between the YLs' L1 and TL have been addressed in these books mainly by including lessons on pronunciation practice from Class 1 to 5. Some of the English consonant, vowel and diphthong phonemes (/p/, /f/, /s/, /l/, /i/, /æ/, /e/, /l/, /i/) which pose difficulty to EFL learners have been presented in these lessons with their phonetic symbols, and the different contexts in which these phonemes can occur (Class 1, Lesson 17-22, pp. 35-40; Class 3, Lesson 4, p. 6 & Lesson 17, p. 50; Class 4, Lesson 6, p.13, Lesson 11, p. 27, Lesson 28, p. 73; Class 5, Lesson 11, p. 33). Additionally, the EFT of Class 4 presents the phonemes (/i/, /æ/, /e/, /s/, /l/) and their equivalent Bengali sounds.

The dissimilarities between the YLs' source culture, the international cultures and the target culture are illustrated through the mention of the names of different meals (Class 4, Lesson 3, p. 7) and religious festivals (Class 5, Lesson 25, p. 79-80 & Lesson 26, p. 83) in these textbooks. Revealing these contrasts are

very important for EFL textbooks as Savignon (2002, p. 10) observes 'just knowing something about the target culture will not suffice'. She argues that textbooks should expose students to different linguistic and cultural contrasts. This experience could raise their consciousness about their own culture and help them develop a flexible attitude towards other cultures.

Additionally, all EFT books provide YLs with exposure to different communicative functions of English such as greetings, describing and introducing people, asking and answering questions, giving commands and instructions, making requests, talking about times and days, and buying things from a shop through different conversational cues. All these transactional and interactional functions of English (Brown & Yule, 1983) have been exemplified to show English as a communicational tool important for textbooks promoting the CLT approach (Richards, 2008).

#### 4.2 Limitations of *English for Today*

In spite of connecting the content to the local contexts, EFT books have some limitations. For example, these textbooks have overemphasized the maintenance of the politeness principles of the centre. Thus, the EFT books of Class 3 (Lesson 19, p. 54), 4 (Lesson 12, p. 30; Lesson 16, p. 39; Lesson 24, p. 63) and 5 (Lesson 2, p. 4; Lesson 10, p. 30) have included five lessons on making requests. These lessons have presented various adjacency pairs and asked students to use these models while playing roles and writing dialogue. For example, the EFT of Class 4 uses the following examples:

- i) W   ould you lend me your English book, please?  
O   f course. Here it is.
- ii) W   ould you open the window, please?  
S   ure. I'll be happy to.
- iii) C   ould y   ou pass the sugar, please?  
S   ure. Here you are.

*(English for Today, Class 4, Lesson 24, p. 63)*

Since children at this stage may learn everything by relating it to their L1, this kind of exposure may appear strange to Bangladeshi learners. Confusion could occur because Bangladeshi YLs do not make requests in such a structured way (e.g. would you....please, could you...please) in their L1. Therefore, this kind of structured representation of any speech act may indicate the inherent supremacy

of English discourse to students (Pennycook, 1995). Maintenance of these principles can therefore be seen as a kind of imposition on YLs.

Moreover from the pragmatic viewpoint, EFT books may not have been able to provide YLs with sufficient exposure to different conversational strategies (e.g. repair, negotiation of meaning, comprehension check) needed for managing successful oral conversations (Richards, 2008). The conversational cues, group works and pair works included in these textbooks may not provide learners with challenging contexts where they will need to take communicative risks and get feedback on their performance (Celce-Murcia & Olshtain, 2000). Most lessons have introduced the form of embedded teacher initiated cues at first and only ask students to practice applying these cues. Therefore, these textbooks may not be able to fulfill YLs' individualistic needs and may not reflect the realities of language use of local communities (Tomlinson, 2003).

If the interaction patterns presented in EFT books are considered, it can be argued that the conversational cues included in these textbooks may show an unequal distribution of power between a teacher and his or her students. The teacher can be seen as an authoritarian figure possessing the sole power and knowledge of English, and the students may be viewed only as eager submissive learners. For example, there is a lesson on 'Commands, Requests and Instructions' in the EFT of Class 5 (Lesson 2, p. 4-7), where a female teacher brings in a packed box full of utensils, a stove and some necessary ingredients for making a cake in a class and asks students to help her out in preparing it. The model for using English for giving commands and instructions and making requests have been applied through their dialogue in this lesson. However, what the pedagogical purpose behind creating this scenario in the class has not been clarified to the students by the teacher, and very little negotiation of meaning takes place during this example of teacher talk (Cullen 1998). This kind of exposure may shape an uncritical attitude in learners towards the centre because this can make them assume that English language proficiency may have connection with power and control for which the teacher is playing an authoritative role and they may give in passively (Kachru, 1986; Van Dijk, 2001). Therefore, these stereotypical cues may represent the power play of English in the EFL classroom influencing YLs' perception of the TL. YLs may also speculate that the TL is more powerful than their L1 since their Bengali textbooks do not have such representations.

These textbooks also depict the inter-relationship between the target culture and the source culture in a way that may not be comprehensible to YLs who have very limited knowledge about the outside world (Pinter, 2006). For example, the EFT of Class 1 (Lesson 23, p. 41) has a rhyme that talks about a pussy cat which has visited London, and has met the queen. Since the very little YLs of Class 1 may not have any idea about the underlying relation between London and the queen, this kind of inter-cultural connection may seem quite vague to them. Besides, the images of the queen (symbolizing power) and London (the centre) can be taken as a representation of the resistance of imperialistic element as well. In addition, the rhymes on a teddy bear who goes to a government primary school in a rural setting wearing polished shoes (Class 1, Lesson 8, p. 8), and the visuals used in the rhyme 'Humpty Dumpty' (Class 2, Lesson 31, p. 57) to show the king's men and horses may also have cultural implications pertaining to the centre which will be difficult for YLs to understand.

In addition, the local community's life style may have not been presented in a satisfactory way in these textbooks (Banu, 2009). For instance, if YLs compare the simple items of a poor ill-clad village farmer's daily meals with that of a urban middle class family's lavish daily meals, snacks and dessert depicted in the EFT of Class 4 (Lesson 3, p. 7 & Lesson 21, pp. 56-57), they will get the impression that there is extreme economic stratification in society which impacts on people's daily life styles. Similarly, there is another lesson in the EFT book of Class 4 describing a picnic where an urban family is 'having fun' amidst nature by having different kinds of local dishes (Lesson 7. P. 16) whereas there is another lesson in the same book where a poor farmer says that he does not have enough food at home but consoles himself by saying that 'May be I will have better luck next year' (Lesson 21, p. 56). On the one hand, this type of representation of people's daily life may enrich YLs' knowledge about different communities. On the other hand, this type of exposure may seem quite insensitive to YLs who belong to low income families. In addition, some of the visuals which have been used for describing a urban boy's bedroom (Class 3, Lesson 28, p. 73) and daily routine (Class 4, Lesson 10, pp. 22-23) showing different aspects of his well-furnished house may induce rural students' towards materialistic gains in life.

Moreover, the EFT books presents Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh, as a place where children have easy access to the zoo (Class 5, Lesson 36, p. 118), flyovers (Class 5, Lesson 27, p. 85), multi-storied buildings (Class 5, Lesson 15, p. 47), and children's park and museum (Class 4, Lesson 27, p. 70). These places

can draw YLs' attention quite easily. In contrast, village life is shown as a place where no such modern facilities are available though the children can enjoy the company of nature there by flying kites (Class 3, Lesson 24, p. 65), chasing frogs (Class 1, Lesson 32, p. 50), and playing on the swing (Class 4, Lesson 31, p.77). This comparative representation may provide an image of Bangladesh where villagers are deprived of the modern amenities of life. This exposure can raise YLs appreciation for cosmopolitan culture and make them detest their local identities. Such attraction may gradually turn into an obsession with global communities when they grow up. Consequently, such lessons may lead to an inferiority complex as well as identity crisis among YLs who live in rural areas (Banu, 2009).

Though these textbooks were based on the CLT approach which is supposed to give utmost importance to the negotiation and communication of meaning (Richards, 2008), they tend to focus more on the forms than on the content. As the education system of Bangladesh is examination-oriented and students' reading and writing skills are what is assessed, these books may be prioritizing preparing YLs for examinations as the target need (necessity) and performing well in the examination as the learners' learning needs (Hutchinson & Waters, 1987) by concentrating primarily on fulfilling these needs. This viewpoint may have led these books to include explicitly stated rule-based discussion on phonological and syntactical aspects of English. Therefore, it can be said that these textbooks have given a form-focused exposure to CLT in order to accommodate the needs of local communities including teachers who also need this kind of support from teaching materials.

Additionally, these textbooks may have overemphasized centre-oriented standard pronunciation. Though maintaining the conventions of the centre is not important any more in order to use English as a communicative tool in this global era (Alptekin, 2002), these books include eight lessons on the rules and practice of using stress (Class 4, Lesson 14, p. 36; Class 5, Lesson 32, p. 108), intonation (Class 4, Lesson 22, p. 59), and punctuation marks (Lesson 18, p. 44; Lesson 25, p. 65; Lesson 26, p. 67 in Class 4 & Lesson 17, p. 53; Lesson 22, p. 72 in Class 5). Inclusion of these topics may indicate to YLs that they may need to conform to foreign norms while using English. Therefore, this overemphasis on maintaining these norms can be seen as the target culture's intrusion at the primary level. Thus, YLs may become intimidated as they may think that the use of the TL will not allow any kind of modifications according to contextual variations and needs of local communities. This may lead to learners' forming negative attitude towards TL, and they may find it difficult to use the TL outside

the classroom. In addition, the topics related to practicing stress and intonation could even prove to be difficult to teachers who have poor English language skills.

Finally, though 1.5 percent of the total population of Bangladesh belong to indigenous communities (UNHCR, 2008) these textbooks have not represented their lives at all. As a result, many YLs will not be able to attain any insight into these communities from these books.

## 5. Recommendations and Conclusion

Based on the discussion in the previous section it can be concluded that though the EFT books might have been successful to some extent in representing the local culture, values and beliefs, these books still have some limitations regarding the manner in which exposure has been provided to the TL and to local culture. Firstly, the norm-oriented exposure to the TL in these books may make YLs think that the TL cannot be used fully to accommodate to local contexts, and whoever will have the knowledge of how to communicate in English fluently, will possess the power to dominate over the less knowledgeable others. Secondly, the social discriminations which have been portrayed in these books about local communities may raise YLs' aspiration for power and materialistic gains. Thus YLs' social and cognitive development might be affected, and they might find it difficult to understand that the TL could be used only as a tool for communication. Therefore, the following initiatives can be taken for making these textbooks more culturally appropriate to the primary level context of Bangladesh.

Firstly, the content of these textbooks can be simplified by reducing explicitly stated rule and by including conversational cues and activities which will present YLs with situations, posing the challenge of negotiation of meaning and taking risks. Thus, YLs will be able to learn from what they experience in class and how they construct meaning by noticing salient features of the TL input (Cameron, 2001; Tomlinson, 2008). This exposure will help YLs' to accept English mainly as a tool for communication. Thus, they will realize that FL learning is not all about learning rules and conforming to standards, and there may be no hidden agenda in acquiring the TL.

Secondly, these textbooks can try to exemplify the inter-cultural relationship between Bengali and English in a more culture-sensitive and age-sensitive way so that it may appear meaningful to YLs who may have just started forming attitudes towards the target as well as other cultures (Ellis, 1985).



Thirdly, since the teaching materials may play an important role in cultural transmission between the education system and the rest of society (Cunningsworth, 1995) the content of the textbooks can focus on maintaining an appropriate balance among local rural, urban and indigenous communities' life styles and cultural variations.

Fourthly, primary teachers can concentrate on developing their language skills so that they can become more confident in teaching English and make better use of these textbooks. The government and donor-funded projects can help them in this respect by providing them with practical guidelines and local context and culture-oriented effective training.

Finally, it can be said that though the locally produced primary textbooks of Bangladesh may have been able to restrict cultural imperialism to some extent, the NCTB still needs to focus more intensely on how the local culture as well as the target culture can be represented in a more sensitive and balanced way.

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