

## ***Bangladeshi English Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Practice***

**Obaidul Hamid**

*University of Dhaka, Bangladesh*

The emergence of Critical Applied Linguistics as an accompaniment of, among others, the introduction of the Linguistic Imperialism hypothesis in the early 1990s has led to increasing demands for inquiry into the socio-political aspects of English language teaching. In light of such demands, this empirical survey looks into English teachers' perceptions of their professional practice, the impact of their practice on the local language and culture, on their learners, and the global spread of English, from the Bangladeshi ELT context. Qualitative results show that teachers perceive these contentious issues in different ways, but there are discernible patterns which suggest that Linguistic Imperialism is, to a great extent, unrepresentative of these teachers' views and is not a satisfactory way of capturing the current issues of English and ELT in Bangladesh. The study, however, affirms that the results can inform and alert practicing English teachers to the political and ethical character of their profession.

**Key words: professional practice, language and culture, linguistic imperialism**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This article presents an appreciation and analysis of English language teachers' perceptions of their professional practice in terms of specific socio-

cultural, political and ethical issues in the Bangladeshi ELT context.

The socio-political dimension of language teaching has struggled for a front position in applied linguistics since the early 1990s. Certainly, the publication of *Linguistic Imperialism* (Phillipson, 1992) was a watershed in this major shift, which, with all its criticisms, tremendously influenced subsequent critical developments towards the formation of Critical Applied Linguistics (CALx) as a field. Formative influences from other areas such as critical pedagogy, critical social inquiry, postcolonial studies, and contemporary epistemologies such as post-structuralism and postmodernism should also be recognized in this regard (Pennycook, 2001). As a burgeoning field, CALx demands a wider scope for applied linguistics to look into larger social, political and cultural issues of languages and language teaching with constantly skeptical questioning (Pennycook, 2002) of the traditional givens of mainstream applied linguistics. Its ultimate goal is to localize theory-building and pedagogy for social transformation (Crookes & Lenher, 1998; Lin, 2004; Pennycook, 1999, 2001).

The present investigation aims to show how Bangladeshi English teachers working at post-secondary institutions perceive English language teaching in the face of an increasing demand for English globally and the critical agenda of this disciplinary shift.

As a point of departure, it can be assumed that Bangladeshi ELT practitioners are comfortable in the niche of mainstream applied linguistics and are busy solving “real-world language-based problems” (Grabe & Kaplan, 1992, p. 3). A recent ELT event held in the Bangladeshi capital city, Dhaka, provides some evidence to what has elsewhere been described as traditional blinkered stance of ELT practitioners, which narrowly focused on pedagogical techniques, eschewing “political, social and historical questions” (Pegrum, 2004, p. 9). In July 2004 the Bangladesh English Language Teachers' Association (BELTA) organised a national conference with support from the British Council to discuss *English Language Teaching in Bangladesh:*

*Emerging Issues*<sup>1</sup>. The purity of the mainstream applied linguistics focus of the conference might have been obvious to a critical applied linguist from the papers presented, forums and discussions held, topics covered, problems posed and suggestions provided in the two-day gathering of ELT experts and practitioners from all over the country. The issues that emerged were probably not critical enough in CALx terms; they were, rather, customary issues of the importance of English, its falling standards in the country, the lack of resources, the shortage of trained teachers, language teaching methods, the role of grammar, and communicative methodologies.

In terms of such professional concerns, however, Bangladeshi ELT practitioners may not be different from their colleagues in other 'developing' countries, although not much empirical work has focused on their views of their professional practice, particularly from critical perspectives. This is not to bypass the ever-growing body of literature on critical approaches, which, in addition to theoretical and conceptual issues, has taken up questions of educating future TESOL practitioners from critical perspectives (Auerbach, 1995; Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Crookes & Lehner, 1998; Lin, 2004; Rivera, 1999). Despite complaints that there was a 'lack of guidance on practical issues' in implementing critical approaches (Ewald, 1999), implementation issues were not entirely left to 'benign neglect' (see, for instance, Crookes, 1999; Wink, 1997). However, questions of whether ELT practitioners were informed about such critical perspectives, and whether those trained in critical schools shouldered the challenge of implementing the lessons learnt, needed more research attention.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

We now review relevant work that has problematized English and its teaching and learning, for instance, in Judd's (1987) proposal to connect

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<sup>1</sup> The conference was held on July 15-16, 2004 at the British Council auditorium in Dhaka.

socio-political issues with language teaching. She argues that ESOL teaching is a political act because English teachers are involved in the very political process of implementing decisions made by political authorities in society. Consequently, they are often faced with moral dilemmas regarding their involvement in language shift, global promotion of dominant languages, maintaining the status quo, and other issues of political and moral substance. Importantly, her critique focused on both the micro and macro processes of language teaching. She did not theorize those processes and issues, neither did she mention 'linguistic imperialism'; and yet her critique covered some concerns of CALx. However, her programmatic paper lays out only a preliminary dimension of political and moral issues in ESOL teaching; these issues still awaiting empirical demonstration.

Johnston *et al.* (1998) took up the moral dimension of ESL teaching in their action research in the United States. Analysis of qualitative data generated by such means as classroom observation, audio recording, teacher journals and content analysis of handouts and syllabuses confirms the researchers' basic claim that "ESL teaching, like other forms of education, is fundamentally moral in nature" (p. 179). They also state that "the moral dimension of ESL teaching is complex and multi-valued and the moral meanings are often ambiguous" (p. 179).

While the findings of this action research give some validity to Judd's (1987) arguments as presented above, the study is of limited value because the moral perspective itself, as adopted in the study, is limited. Certainly, the value of the study would have been augmented if the researchers' moral perspective had been applied in conjunction with socio-political issues of ESL teaching.

A study more relevant to our concern is Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas (1999), which investigated Englishization as a manifestation of globalization in academic discourse in Denmark. By a questionnaire survey among teachers of the University of Roskilde, these critical researchers elicited the respondents' views on a wide range of issues, including their competence in Danish, English, French, German and other languages; the use of these

languages in their professional publications and conferences; and their evaluation of the increasing use of English in Danish academia. The researchers did not explain how the data were analysed, but the findings enabled them to divide the participant teachers into three groups in terms of their language competence and use: *English-only*, *Danish-mostly* and *multilingual*. The results showed that “multilingualism is entrenched in Danish higher education, but that the general, although by no means sole, trend is towards a strengthening of English” (1999, p. 28). The researchers concluded that Englishization processes were occurring in Danish academic life, and therefore there were growing anxieties in the media and professions about the ‘invasion of English’.

However, closest to the present study is an empirical investigation by Cox & Assis-Peterson (1999) which was carried out in Brazil. In this study the researchers wanted to determine whether Brazilian ELT practitioners were aware of critical pedagogy, which was first propounded in Brazil by Paulo Freire, and whether their practice reflected an awareness of its principles. They interviewed 40 teachers of English who taught at different levels, to elicit their views on English and its position in the contemporary world, their teaching methods and practices, their role as teachers of English, and their professional commitment to society. To complement the data gathered by such interviews, the participants were also asked to comment on two written passages which reflected what the researchers called *integrative discourse* (ID) and *empowering discourse* (ED). ID was linked to an ideological formation of neo-liberalism and ED to a more socialist, ethical ideological formation.

The researchers showed data based on “some of the French School’s principles of discourse analysis,” which conceived “discourse as a set of statements supported in a same discursive formation” (1999, p. 440). Results showed that only 5 of the 40 teachers (12.5%) were aware of critical pedagogy and designed their instruction in line with this critical approach. The rest (87.5%) were unaware of this pedagogy; they mainly followed communicative and/or grammatical approaches to instruction, and denied any

political or neo-colonial dimension to their profession or practice. They considered themselves rather as “altruistic agents of good, in that they prepared students to be successful in the international world” (1999, p. 449). Similarly, most of the participants subscribed to ID and justified the teaching of English and its importance even in the face of an aversion to English and/or occasional resistance from their students. They also related to the dominant ideological discursive formation of English as “God-given, civilizing, noble, a vehicle of the entire development of human tradition, not ethnic or ideological, the world’s first truly global language, of universal interest” (Phillipson, 1992, p. 276). The researchers clearly identified themselves with critical pedagogy and called for action so that this pedagogy was not doomed to be another ‘fad’ in the ELT market (p. 449).

Putting aside contentions that research findings are what the researchers want to see (see Holland, 2002, p. 9), we can note that a clear pattern emerged from the investigation, which suggested that English teachers were in the process of promoting ideological discourses of English and were utilizing them as tools for dissuading potential resistance in the context of unequal power relations in the classroom. These findings stand in direct contrast to those of Canagarajah’s (1993; 1999) critical ethnography, which revealed practices of resistance to English linguistic imperialism in the Sri Lankan EFL class, though, more recently, such resistance of itself was deemed insufficient (Skutnabb-Kangas *et al.*, 2004). What is therefore suggested is a ‘disciplinary reorientation’ of ELT which will allow a dialogic engagement with the *local*, give space to *local knowledge* in the mainstream, and build “networks of multiple centers that develop diversity as a universal project and encourage an actively negotiated epistemological tradition” (Canagarajah, 2005, p. 20). The Brazilian study, and its comparison with the Sri Lankan one (Canagarajah, 1999), would justify further inquiries from other EFL contexts to generate more insights into socio-political aspects of teaching English.

### **The Present Study, Its Participants and Methodology**

The data for the present study were collected by means of a questionnaire survey<sup>2</sup> among practising English teachers at five different universities in Dhaka. Four of the universities are privately run and were established in the last ten to twelve years. The fifth is a public university, the largest and the oldest in the country. The selection of these universities was guided by convenience: I am affiliated with one and I personally knew a few teachers in four other universities, who introduced me to other colleagues. They also occasionally gave reminders to other informants on my behalf to return the questionnaires. I had decided to distribute questionnaires to all English teachers of these institutions, but I was able to reach 55 out of about 100 during my visits. I visited the universities at least three times for this purpose in November-December of 2004. 37 teachers returned the questionnaires by the date targeted. The response rate was 67%.

All the participant teachers had at least an MA in English literature or TESOL or Applied Linguistics & ELT or TEFL. Three had MPhils, two PhDs, and another three were working on their PhDs in British and Australian universities. The majority of 29 had been in the profession for one to twelve years and the remaining eight teachers had worked for thirteen years or more.

The questionnaire (see the Appendix) focused on a wide range of issues related to the English language teachers' views of the English teaching profession, the spread of English all over the world, and its impact on Bengali and local cultures. As can be seen, apart from a few questions on background professional information, all other questions were open-ended, and participants were encouraged to make their replies as detailed as they

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<sup>2</sup> The questionnaire presented in the Appendix is actually one section of a larger questionnaire for a longer-term project. Another part of the questionnaire provided data for this author's article 'English teachers' choice of language for publication: Qualitative insights from Bangladesh' which was published in *Current Issues in Language Planning*, Vol. 7(1), 126-140, 2006.

wished. Despite the challenge involved in interpreting and analysing free-form qualitative data, this in-depth type of inquiry was preferred for two reasons: 1) these were politically sensitive questions and I did not want to *control* teachers' views and perceptions by giving them subjectively preconceived options; 2) since a single instrument for data collection was used, giving respondents freedom to express their views in the format of open-ended questions would make up for the absence of a follow-up interview or group discussion which, however desirable, could not be arranged because of practicality constraints.

## **DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS**

I analysed the data by doing a manual content analysis. I thoroughly read the participants' replies to any particular question, summarized the views expressed and tabulated them on a word-processor. I divided the summaries of the participants' responses into as many categories as they were amenable to and counted the numbers in each of the categories. This is not to give the impression that the teachers' responses automatically fell into this or that category. In fact, their responses to the questions varied and some were occasionally marked by inconsistencies and contradictions (see Discussion below). However, closer readings of the responses, cross-comparing and categorizing aided in translating the raw data into interpretable findings. I will now present these findings for each of the questions. A summary is also provided in Table 1.

### **Why Choose ELT as a Profession?**

This was a closed question which contained eight different options for teachers to choose one or more, plus an additional option of writing their own response in the space provided. 24 teachers said that they chose this profession for its flexibility, freedom and dignity. This was followed by

eighteen responses for option one, which was related to teachers' art, skills and passion for teaching English. The teachers' own personality was also noted by some as a factor for choosing this profession, while some others were guided by what is called *laissez-faire liberalism* (Pennycook, 2000, pp. 109-110): *I felt that everyone should learn English in the contemporary global context and I wanted to help people in my country in doing so* (Q. 4, option 8 in the questionnaire). Only one respondent volunteered to write his<sup>3</sup> own answer in addition to choosing the option about freedom and dignity. He was guided by the belief, he wrote, that teaching English language and literature would enable him to learn and then disseminate great thoughts and ideas which were 'liberal, radical and scientific' (R15)<sup>4</sup>.

### **View of the Profession**

The teachers expressed diverse views on their profession in terms of its neutrality or otherwise. 20 teachers commented that the profession was not entirely value-free or neutral because it led them to teach Western cultures, manners and worldviews. They added that English as a language was biased towards Western values and that it was culturally hegemonic. Some of the responses of this group were:

Though not consciously, semi-consciously, aren't we bringing the empire back?  
(R6)

One has to understand that languages are cultural. The power and politics of a language can't be ignored. Neutrality is an effort to hide the politics of language and its epistemic violence. (R2)

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<sup>3</sup> The questionnaire did not ask for biographical information from respondents, but some of them voluntarily provided their names and other data. Respondents' gender identification, where mentioned, was based on biographical data provided by them.

<sup>4</sup> These codes R15, R7, R37 etc. are used to refer to the respondents of the survey.

Simultaneously, most of these respondents, as well as some others who held liberal pragmatist views on English, emphasized the scope of resistance, appropriation, and localization of Western norms and values embedded in the profession, and even representation and promotion of local cultures. They also placed a high premium on the teacher's agency, which they believed actually controlled which cultures and values were represented and promoted in the course of instruction. In contrast, a group of eight teachers believed that the profession was itself value-free and neutral and did not have a particular bias towards any particular culture because it could transmit and promote many different cultures (cf. Chew, 1999; Conrad, 1996). For instance, one respondent belonging to this group argued that an English class might talk about *pahela baishakh* (Bengali New Year) as comfortably as the Gregorian New Year, according to the discretion or preference of the teacher concerned. Lastly, four teachers said that the question was controversial, but they did not provide details, while a lone respondent noted that the profession was not value-free, but this did not bother him because he let his students decide what was good and what was bad in English.

### **Impact on Bengali and Bengali learners of English**

A majority, 30 respondents, noted that the profession required them to use English, but they considered this logical because they were English teachers, and it was only in the classroom that students had some exposure to English. However, one respondent noted:

In my workplace [private university], several faculty members have been fired because they used Bengali more than English! (R8).

It is to be noted here that private universities in Bangladesh provide higher education through the medium of English, and there is no space for Bengali in the curriculum (Hamid, 2006).

**TABLE 1**  
**Teachers' Responses to the Questions Surveyed**

Questions	Question no. in questionnaire	Summaries of responses	No. of informants <sup>5</sup> (Total 37)
Why choose ELT?	Q. 4	a) Flexibility, freedom and dignity (option 4)	= 24 <sup>6</sup>
		b) Art, skills of teaching (option 1)	= 18
View of the profession	Q. 5	a) Not value-free or neutral	= 20
		b) Value free and neutral	= 08
Impact on L1 and L2 learners	Q. 6 & 7	a) No negative impact on L1, L1 culture or L2 learners	= 20
		b) Acknowledgment of superiority of English over L1	= 11
		c) Both negative and positive impact	= 03
Ethical issue involved in ELT?	Q. 7	a) No question of ethical concerns	= 25
		b) ELT involves ethical issues	= 07
Whose interests ELT serves?	Q. 9	a) English and English-speaking nations	= 10
		b) Not English-speaking nations, serve learners and their own country	= 14
		c) Both a) and b)	= 05
Global spread of English	Q. 8	a) Not natural, neutral or equality-ensuring	= 13
		b) Natural, neutral or equality-ensuring	= 06
		c) Natural but not neutral	= 05
		d) Both natural and neutral but not equality ensuring	= 06
		e) Natural now, but was not so in colonial period	= 03
Formation of ethical code of conduct	Q. 10	a) Oppose the formation of an ethical code of conduct	= 24
		b) Approve of the formation	= 07
		c) Not an ethical code, awareness-building about politics of English	= 05

<sup>5</sup> Not all questions had responses from all 37 respondents. The Table also does not show isolated responses.

<sup>6</sup> Respondents were asked to choose as many options from a list as appropriate for this closed question.

However, 22 respondents did not perceive any potential threats or negative impact on Bengali as a result of English and its teaching and learning in the country. The most common reasons for this position provided were a) students had little exposure to English, b) there was no clash between English and Bengali, c) English teaching reinforced learning and respecting Bengali as well, d) English could in fact help in learning and enriching Bengali, and e) teaching put emphasis only on the instrumental value of English and more emphasis on the value of personal identity and its constituents. One respondent covered many of these issues in a motivating example:

I always tell my students that people who really helped enrich Bengali were Bengalis who were invariably well-versed in English (R8).

However, three teachers perceived both positive and negative impact of English, as one respondent noted that some students would lose their identities in the process of learning English but others would not. This was followed by a group of eleven teachers who remarked that their teaching of English led them to acknowledge the superiority of English over Bengali, because the former was a language of 'power' which manifests itself in its 'control of economy, education and media as well as our persistent betrayal of colonial mindsets' (R15). Only two teachers of these groups expressed deeper concerns, one of whom wrote:

It is a matter to be regretted that we always talked about the importance of learning only English, not Bengali. If this tendency continues, I think, in course of time, our mother tongue will turn into a dead language (R11).

This concern should be contrasted with an anglicised position represented by one respondent: '...when I get a class full of "proud Bangalese" then it becomes really hard to do [i.e. English-only]. The latter [Bengali] is no match for the former [English]' (R25).

On being asked whether the English teaching profession involved ethical

or moral concerns, given its impact on Bengali and L2 learners, 25 teachers denied any ethical question as, they explained, they were aware of their role and did not work consciously against the local culture, language and learners. However, seven teachers admitted that there were ethical or moral concerns because unconsciously they might be paving the way for English to take over Bengali and local cultures. They also pointed out that these issues needed to be addressed, while five teachers refrained from giving their views. One of these teachers challenged the very concept of ethics and found its attachment to the profession irrelevant:

What is ethics? I don't think there [are] any global criteria of judging such things as ethics (R2).

### **Whose Interests?**

'Whether willingly, or unwillingly, we are serving the interest of the English language and the English-speaking countries by our professional practice' (R11).

A group of ten teachers subscribed to this or similar views as were encoded in such phrases as 'serving the empire' and 'not entirely innocent role-player'. However, some teachers pointed out that in their practice they tried to be 'as neutral as possible', which by itself would imply that neutrality was not granted in the profession. Some teachers noted that they were willing to accept the 'dominion of English because we are a poor country' (R10); some reported having worked for awareness creation (R19), while some mentioned having 'put English into perspective' for students (R22). On the other hand, fourteen teachers denied serving the English or its empire; rather, they pointed out, they served the nation by helping students in their self-realization and material advancement. The in-between position of these two views was also taken up by five teachers who said they served the interests of both English and their own country. Finally, two respondents noted that their teaching served English, but not English-speaking countries. These two

teachers probably meant that English was not solely owned by the traditionally known English-speaking countries, and therefore there was no question of serving these countries by teaching English. The rest of the teachers did not reply to the question.

### **Global Spread of English**

Thirteen teachers strongly opposed the naturalness, neutrality and equality-ensuring view associated with the spread of English globally. Details provided by this group of teachers included such thoughts as the close connection of English to on-going globalization in favour of capitalism, conscious efforts of UK, USA, a political necessity in the present global context, deceptive appearance of English, and English as a power struggle. However, three teachers considered it a 'complex phenomenon' in which, as one of them noted, the demand for English from the periphery was an important factor for the spread of English (R22). Again, some viewed the spread of English as natural but not always neutral, while some others said that it was both natural and neutral but it did not necessarily ensure equality among peoples. Three informants also noted that the spread of English was natural now but it had not been so during the colonial period. On the other hand, six teachers mentioned that they firmly believed in the naturalness and neutrality associated with the spread of English, and they underscored the importance of learning English in the era of globalization. Several people also noted that they were not worried whether it was natural or neutral, because they could claim ownership of English as it spanned the globe.

### **Ethical Code of Conduct?**

Twenty-four teachers opposed the formation of an ethical code of conduct for ELT practitioners ratified by the Government and the mainstream professional body. They pointed out that the teachers' consciences should be their guide and that there must be respect and freedom for practitioners. This

finding thus corroborated the dominant view presented earlier, that many teachers chose this profession because it offered freedom and dignity. In contrast, seven teachers approved of the suggestion of an ethical code. Two teachers did not completely rule out the idea of a code of conduct, but they pointed out that government intervention would actually exacerbate the situation because the government would impose its own political ideology in the codes and would control the professional group and for its own party-interests. The rest observed that awareness-building about the politics of English would be more feasible and effective than having a government-sponsored ethical code of conduct.

## **DISCUSSION**

The views expressed by the informants regarding the contentious issues were rich and diverse, but some broad tendencies are discernible. We will now discuss these with several caveats. For a start, six participants were inconsistent and contradictory in their responses. To take an example from R14. In one place (Q. 7) this respondent unhesitatingly noted that teaching English led him/her to acknowledge the advantage of English over Bengali ('surely it does'), and/but in response to the second part of the same question on ethical involvement s/he wrote: 'But I don't see any ethical issue involved'. The same respondent, however, suggested 'a set of ethical codes' in response to the last question. Another respondent (R37) directly admitted self-contradiction. In her responses, she underscored the agency of the teacher and the possibility of appropriation and localization of English teaching practices in favour of local cultures and values and denied any negative impact on L1 from L2; and yet, in answer to the question on global spread of English, she started:

Well, I might sound to be contradicting myself, but my answer is no (R37).

The 'no' here meant that the global spread of English was not natural, neutral or equality-ensuring. Connected to this was another point of some interest. In their responses eight teachers were found to represent dual identities: *collective* and *individual*. For example, some respondents used the first person plural 'we'<sup>7</sup> to express their personal views, which would imply that *collectively* they (represented by *we*) were serving the interests of English. But at the *individual* level, 'I have been able to pursue my profession without serving the interest of English language and English-speaking countries' (R7, emphasis added).

Keeping these caveats in mind, we can observe that the teachers perceived and conceptualized the socio-political questions under investigation in many different ways. Table 1 above shows that rarely were there any absolute majorities, except in two cases. 67% of the teachers believed that teaching English does not involve any ethical issues (cf. Pennycook, 2001, pp. 136-138) even though, as the study by Johnston *et al.* (1998) reviewed above showed, it has a moral dimension. 65% of them were unsympathetic to the suggestion of formulating ethical codes of conduct for guiding teaching practice in the country. They thereby threw up a challenge to existing Government policies: 'Teachers' associations should formulate a moral code of conduct for teachers and make sure that the code is followed. The Government can take [the] initiative in this regard' (Ministry of Education, 2000, p. 62)<sup>8</sup>.

Just over 50% of the teachers believed that the profession was not value-free or neutral. Their assessment of the profession is comparable to Ramanathan's evaluation (2005), though the reasons provided are different. For these Bangladeshi teachers, the reasons lay mainly in the profession's bias towards English and its hegemony; for Ramanathan, the reason was the profession's perpetuation of unequal power relations at the intra-national,

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<sup>7</sup> The use of first person plural ('we') to mark collective identity was distinguished from its use as an authorial position.

<sup>8</sup> This code of conduct as reported in the Government policy document was meant for all teachers in general and not specifically for ELT professionals.

inter-class levels (2005, p. 87). And yet, on the other hand, about 50% of the teachers did not see any negative impact of English on L1 and L2 learners. Finally, the group (10 teachers) which directly denied serving English and its empire by their profession was not much smaller than the group (13 teachers) which perceived imperialistic forces at work in the global spread of English (see Table 1).

However, despite the diversity of the views, the findings were different from those of the Brazilian study as discussed above. Using such labels as *integrative discourse* and *empowerment discourse* to divide this group of Bangladeshi teachers would be inappropriate and impractical, because their views did not allow for such binary categorizations. However, more than half of the teachers were characterized by their awareness of the geopolitics of English, its promotional discourses and, at the same time, their understanding of the importance of English in a country like Bangladesh. They were also at least aware, if not pursuing in their praxis, of the notion that resistance to the hegemony of English and its appropriation for maximizing local interests was within their professional authority and control.

The BELTA conference theme (see Introduction above), however, did not reflect this critical awareness of the teachers. One probable reason for this is that teachers knew that it was one thing to *talk about* critical agenda and a different thing to get this agenda *officially ratified as curricular components and then implement them* at the micro-level. Second, they probably considered that the unavoidable reality for ELT practitioners was that every working day they have to enter large English language classes with a lesson plan and a prescribed textbook in hand to work their best with limited resources, to prepare learners for examinations which would determine the latter's future education and career paths. Such institutional needs override any aspirations that teachers may have about social transformation (cf. Sower, 1999, p.743). As we noted above, most of the informants believed that their *consciences*, rather than a top-down code of conduct, should guide their practice, which can be taken to mean that they preferred to leave the social change agenda to the *individual practitioner's* ambition and realization.

What light do these results and the discussion shed on the Linguistic Imperialism hypothesis? Linguistic Imperialism as defined by Phillipson (Phillipson, 1992; Phillipson & Skutnabb-Kangas, 2001) did appear in the participants' understanding of the global politics of English, but not very prominently. A number of teachers talked about the macro-level structural forces that were at work behind the spread of English, but others had different views and interpretations of the global development of English. More importantly, none of the informants undermined the need of English or viewed it as an imposition, despite its introduction in the country as a colonial language. The theory of Linguistic Imperialism is, to a great extent, unrepresentative of these ELT practitioners who would probably find it one-sided and over-deterministic (Anderson, 2003; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Canagarajah, 1999; Friedrich, 2001; see Pennycook, 1994; Skutnabb-Kangas *et al.*, 2004). Their views imply that Linguistic Imperialism was not a satisfactory way of capturing the current issues of English in Bangladesh as are perceived by these teachers and therefore its reappraisal is required from larger-scale empirical studies with their focus on all different stakeholders of the language in the country.

## CONCLUSION

Admittedly, the case study involved a small sample, and therefore the findings should be interpreted cautiously. However, the interpretive study was not aimed at any theory-building. The exploratory initial study was carried out to understand ELT teachers' views and perceptions on some contentious issues in the discipline — issues which had not previously been posed in this context. The investigation provides some qualitative results and some emerging patterns on how this cohort of Bangladeshi teachers viewed themselves and their profession, and took stances on these issues.

The teachers' views, marked occasionally by self-contradictions, the contradictions in the patterns that emerged, and finally, the absence of any

sweeping patterns indicate the complexity of the issues on the one hand and the diverse ways of the teachers' perceptions of the same on the other. Future researchers need to be aware of this complexity while making their tools of inquiry more diverse, sophisticated and topic-sensitive.

Finally, it is expected that the qualitative results and insights gained from the survey will inform and alert ELT practitioners to the political and ethical character of their profession.

### **ACKNOWLEDGMENT**

The paper was presented at the 4<sup>th</sup> Malaysia International Conference on Languages, Literatures and Cultures (April 23-25, 2005) organised by University Putra Malaysia. I would like to thank Prof Roly Sussex and Prof Nannette Gottlieb for their valuable comments and feedback on earlier drafts of this paper.

### **THE AUTHOR**

Obaidul Hamid teaches in the Department of English of the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. Currently he is a PhD student in the School of Languages and Comparative Cultural Studies at the University of Queensland in Australia. His PhD research concerns sociology of language learning. His recent publications include 'Identifying second language errors: How plausible are plausible reconstructions?' (*ELT Journal*, 61(2), 107-116), and 'English teachers' choice of language for publication: Qualitative insights from Bangladesh' (*Current Issues in Language Planning*, 7(1), 126-140). Email: m.hamid@uq.edu.au

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

1. *What is your highest professional qualification?* Please tick as appropriate.

PhD	MA in Applied Linguistics & ELT
MA in English Lit.	MA in TESOL
MA in ELT	Others (Please specify) .....

2. *At what level do you teach English?*

Tertiary level	College level
School level	Teacher training college
Other (Please specify) .....	

3. *How long have you been teaching?*

1 to 3 years	4 to 8 years	9 to 12 years
13 years and above	Other (Please specify) .....	

4. *Why did you choose this profession?* Please choose the appropriate one(s).

I felt that I would do my best in this profession because I loved teaching and I had necessary arts, skills and qualifications to be an English language teacher.

I did not find any other job and so I chose it

My family situations led me to choose it.

I like the flexibility, freedom and dignity of this profession and so I chose it.

I think I was destined to be a teacher because I studied English at the university

I chose it because it is in great demand in the country and also it would fulfill my financial needs.

This is the only profession that suited my personality and social status.  
I felt that everyone should learn English in the contemporary global context  
and I wanted to help people in my country in doing so.  
Other (Please specify) .....

5. Do you think the English language teaching profession is value-free and neutral and does not have any bias towards any particular language, culture and values? If yes, could you explain why? If no, which culture and values does your profession encourage or promote? Do such culture and values conform to your learners' own culture or to a different culture?
6. Does your teaching of English have any negative or positive impact on your learners' mother tongue and their culture? Could you explain it?
7. Do you think your teaching of a foreign language (English) leads you to a position of acknowledging an advantage of English over Bengali? If yes, would you say that this involves an ethical issue?
8. Do you think the global spread of English is a natural and neutral phenomenon and it ensures equality among different nations and classes of people?
9. Have you ever thought or perceived whether you are serving the interests of the English language and the English-speaking countries by your professional practice? Please explain.
10. Considering your answers to the above questions, would you support the suggestion that English teachers' professional practice in any country should be guided by a set of ethical codes decided by the mainstream professional association and approved by the government?