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**Evaluation of Text-Based Native English Materials at the Tertiary Level  
of English Language Teaching in Bangladesh:  
An Intercultural Communicative Competence Perspective**

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**Abstract:**

This study evaluates the efficacy of text-based native English materials as pedagogical tools for fostering Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) among Bangladeshi English language learners at the tertiary level of education. ICC, encompassing linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competencies and the ability to navigate cultural differences, is increasingly vital in Bangladesh's globalized educational and economic landscape. Through a qualitative analysis of the content, structure, and exercises of the text-based native English materials and teacher interview, this research examines its alignment with ICC principles and its applicability to Bangladeshi learners' needs. Findings suggest that while the materials excel in grammatical instruction, the lack of explicit intercultural content limits the capacity of the materials to fully develop ICC in this context and provide **valuable discernments for policymakers, curriculum developers, and educators** to bridge the gap between linguistic competence and intercultural awareness so that ELT in Bangladesh **prepares students for effective global communication**.

**Keywords:** Text-based native English materials, Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), intercultural content, cultural relevance, global communication.

**1. Introduction**

There are two widely used text-based materials (real names are not revealed here) written by native English authors which are popular at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh for teaching English language, offering structured lessons of grammar, vocabulary and skills development across various proficiency levels (Basic, Intermediate, and Advanced). English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh predominantly relies on **text-based materials sourced from native**

**English-speaking contexts** (Rahman, 2019). While these materials enhance **linguistic competence**, they often overlook the **intercultural aspects of communication**, leading to **a gap between theoretical knowledge and real-life language use** (Kramsch, 1993). The truth is language learning extends beyond grammatical accuracy to include Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), which is pivotal for global interactions (Byram, 1997). ICC consists of linguistic, sociolinguistic, and discourse competence, along with cultural sensitivity (Kramsch, 1998). This study explores how these text-based materials support or fall short in this domain for Bangladeshi learners, whose cultural and educational contexts differ significantly from Western frameworks often embedded in such materials.

### **1.1 Research Objectives**

- To evaluate the extent to which text-based native English materials foster ICC in Bangladeshi learners.
- To identify gaps in intercultural competencies within the content of the materials.
- To suggest improvements or supplementary materials that enhance ICC in language learning.

### **1.2 Research Questions**

- How effectively do the text-based native English materials incorporate ICC principles for Bangladeshi learners?
- What are the limitations of the materials in addressing intercultural competencies?
- What supplementary strategies can be implemented to enhance ICC?

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

This study provides insights into how text-based native English materials may either facilitate or hinder students' ability to engage in meaningful cross-cultural communication. **By giving practical recommendations** for integrating ICC into language education, the study contributes to more inclusive, practical, and globally applicable English learning strategies, ensuring that students are better equipped for diverse communicative contexts.

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) refers to the ability to communicate effectively and appropriately in intercultural situations (Byram, 1997). It comprises linguistic, sociolinguistic, and pragmatic competences that allow learners to navigate global interactions (Fantini, 2006). The ultimate goal of language teaching and learning is to be able to communicate in another language. Communication is not however just a question of grammar and vocabulary, it is also a question of culture (Crozet, 1996). Every message a human being communicates through language is communicated in a cultural context. Cultures shape the ways

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language is structured and the ways in which language is used.

Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC), based on **Michael Byram's (1997) model**, plays a crucial role in learning a language efficiently. It goes beyond grammar and vocabulary by integrating cultural understanding, communication skills, and critical thinking. Developing ICC helps learners **engage meaningfully with native speakers**, understand cultural nuances, and adapt their communication appropriately.

**Byram's (1997) five dimensions of ICC**

**i. Savoir (Knowledge of Culture & Language Contexts)**

Learning a language efficiently requires understanding the culture where it is spoken. It provides Exposure to traditions, customs, and everyday expressions which improve contextual understanding.

**ii. Savoir Comprendre (Skills of Interpreting & Relating)**

It helps learners interpret cultural meanings and understand idioms, gestures, and humor and encourages the ability to relate one's own culture to the target culture, fostering deeper comprehension.

**iii. Savoir Apprendre/Faire (Skill of Discovery & Interaction)**

This skill inspires active engagement with native speakers and real-life situations and aids learners adapt to different cultural communication styles, improving fluency.

**iv. Savoir Être (Attitudes: Openness & Curiosity)**

It fosters a positive attitude toward different cultures, reducing fear of making mistakes and promotes curiosity and willingness to learn beyond textbooks.

**v. Savoir S'engager (Critical Cultural Awareness)**

It denotes the reflection on cultural differences and ethical issues in communication and facilitates the learners to understand how language reflects cultural identity and power dynamics.

So, the developing **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)** is **essential for mastering a language efficiently**. It enables learners to **communicate effectively, understand cultural nuances, and engage meaningfully** with speakers of the language. By integrating ICC, language learning becomes **more natural, immersive, and effective**.

## **2.2 Text-Based Language Learning and ICC**

Textbooks play a crucial role in shaping learners' exposure to language and culture. However, many language learning materials focus primarily on grammatical competence, often neglecting the cultural and pragmatic dimensions of communication (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Effective language instruction should integrate real-world communication contexts to enhance ICC (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

## **2.3 Grammar Instruction and ICC**

Traditional grammar instruction often focuses on linguistic competence

while neglecting cultural and pragmatic dimensions (Larsen-Freeman, 2015). Effective language learning should integrate real-world communication contexts to enhance ICC (Celce-Murcia, 2007).

### **2.4 Bangladeshi Context in English Language Learning**

English is taught as a second language in Bangladesh, primarily for academic and professional purposes (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). However, language instruction often lacks contextualized communication scenarios that support ICC development (Khan, 2021).

## **3. Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative content analysis of two text-based native English materials, focusing on grammar explanations, exercises, and contextual examples. The research also gathers data through interview from the teachers at the tertiary level of education. So, the qualitative data collection in this study aims to gather **in-depth insights** into how text-based native English materials are used in Bangladeshi tertiary-level classrooms and their effectiveness in fostering **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)**.

### **3.1 Data Collection**

This qualitative research employs:

**Content Analysis:** Evaluating grammar rules, examples, dialogues, and cultural references.

**Teacher Interview:** Collecting insights on the efficacy of the materials regarding ICC from 08 teachers of English language teaching from two universities in Bangladesh.

### **3.2 Data Analysis**

Dörnyei (2007) thinks that the thematic data analysis enables researchers to explore **learners' perceptions, teacher beliefs, and cultural influences** in language education. So, the thematic analysis approach is used to identify patterns related to ICC elements in the textbook, including linguistic competence, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence and cultural awareness based on content analysis. The key themes emerging from teacher interviews are also analysed.

## **4. Findings and Discussion**

Findings and discussions in terms of **intercultural communicative competencies** based on the data through content analysis are presented first. The **teacher interview** conducted for this research has also revealed **valuable insights** into the effectiveness of **text-based native English materials** at the tertiary level in Bangladesh, particularly regarding **ICC which is presented later**.

### **4.1 Linguistic Competence**

*The text based materials* provide clear grammatical explanations and structured exercises, which contribute to linguistic accuracy. For example, in the unit on tenses, the book provides structured rules for present perfect and past simple

usage, such as: “*I have lived here for five years* vs. *I lived here five years ago*”. This exercise strengthens linguistic accuracy, a core component of ICC. For Bangladeshi learners, mastering such structures is essential for academic writing and formal communication. However, the examples are primarily decontextualized, limiting exposure to real-life communicative contexts and intercultural scenarios.

#### 4.2 Sociolinguistic Competence

The textbook lacks engagement with variations in English usage across different cultural contexts, particularly in Bangladesh. For instance, while explaining modal verbs for politeness (“*Could you pass the salt?*”) the book does not include cultural variations in politeness strategies, which are essential for Bangladeshi learners engaging in international communication (Canagarajah, 2013).

Another book contains role-playing exercises that simulate real-life conversations. For instance, a dialogue on ordering food in a restaurant includes phrases such as “*Could I have the bill, please?*” However, these interactions are largely Western-centric and may not align with cultural norms in Bangladesh. There is little coverage of culturally diverse communication styles, such as how politeness strategies differ in South Asian contexts.

#### 4.3 Pragmatic Competence

The absence of explicit instruction on appropriateness in different communicative contexts affects learners’ ability to use English effectively in global settings (Thomas, 1983). A book introduces functional language, such as making requests and expressing opinions, but do not fully address cultural variations in indirectness and politeness. For example, while teaching modal verbs for polite requests “*Can you help me with this?*” the book does not explore how different cultures perceive directness. This omission may hinder Bangladeshi learners’ ability to adapt to various international communicative contexts.

Another book which is used here provides sentence in addressing people (forms of address) such as “*Hi, John, could you send me the email?*” In Britain the first-name basis is **common, even in professional settings**. In contrast to Britain, **titles and honorifics (e.g., Sir, Madam, Bhai, Apa)** are expected in most professional settings in Bangladesh. British speakers must recognize that **using first names may seem disrespectful in Bangladesh**, while Bangladeshis in Britain should adapt to a **more egalitarian address system** (Scollon & Scollon, 2001).

#### 4.4 Cultural Awareness

Cultural references in the books are limited, with minimal discussion on how grammar operates within various cultural frameworks. Unlike communicative-focused text-based materials, one book does not include intercultural dialogues or texts reflecting global interactions (Kramsch, 1998). For instance, one of the units of the book includes a reading about British leisure activities: “*On weekends, I go to the pub with friends.*” The Anglo-centric content lacks relevance to Bangladeshi cultural

practices (e.g., family gatherings or religious observances), limiting knowledge and attitudes toward diverse cultures.

The reading texts and listening activities in another book primarily reflect Western contexts. Stories about British lifestyles, such as “*A Day in the Life of a London Commuter*”, provide insight into English-speaking cultures but do not reflect the diverse realities of Bangladeshi learners. There is limited inclusion of global English variations, making it challenging for learners to relate to non-Western English speakers.

#### **4.5 Teachers' Insights towards the Materials**

The interviews with tertiary-level English teachers in Bangladesh reveal that while **native English materials effectively enhance students' linguistic proficiency**, they **lack cultural relevance**, making it difficult for students to relate to the content. Most of the teachers report that these materials primarily represent **Western cultural norms**, which often lead to **student disengagement and surface-level understanding** of texts. Furthermore, most instructors acknowledge the importance of **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)** but highlight **challenges in integrating it into their teaching practices**, including **time constraints, rigid syllabi, and a lack of institutional support**. Additionally, teachers observe that students frequently **struggle to interpret unfamiliar cultural contexts**, leading to **memorization rather than meaningful engagement with language and culture**.

So, these findings suggest that **tertiary-level ELT in Bangladesh needs a more balanced approach** that combines **native English materials with culturally diverse and localized content** to foster both **language proficiency and intercultural competence**. While exposure to native English texts is valuable, students require **contextualized learning experiences** that encourage **critical thinking and cross-cultural understanding**. To bridge the ICC gap, ELT curricula should incorporate **interactive teaching methods, culturally comparative discussions, and multimodal resources**.

#### **5. Recommendations**

It is evident that the text-based native English materials are a valuable resource for developing linguistic competence; they do not fully align with ICC principles for Bangladeshi learners. That is why while educators should initially complement the materials with supplementary resources that promote ICC, including interactive tasks, role-playing activities, and culturally diverse reading passages and intercultural activities, ultimately reformative measures through curriculum and syllabus design, all forms of materials development, changing the testing and assessment procedure, teacher training should be ensured to face the challenges and be successful in this ELT arena.

To enhance ICC, educators could supplement the texts with:

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- Contextualized grammar usage within intercultural communication settings (e.g., “If we visit Cox’s Bazar, we’ll enjoy the beach” instead of “If we go to Paris...”).
  - Activities encouraging reflection on cultural differences (e.g., comparing Bangladeshi and British social norms).
  - Using local media (e.g., Bangladeshi news clips) to enhance cultural knowledge and discovery skills.
  - Authentic dialogues reflecting diverse cultural interactions.
  - Explicit instruction on pragmatic, sociolinguistic competencies and cultural awareness.
  - Dialogues reflecting local and international contexts, fostering skills in cross-cultural communication.

A sample way that the materials can be adapted and supplemented incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence is given below

**A: Sample Unit Analysis**

**Unit:** Unit 4 (“Take It Easy”)

**Original Text:** “On weekends, I go to the pub with friends.”

**Evaluation:** Reinforces vocabulary (leisure) but lacks Bangladeshi cultural context.

**Adapted Version:** “On weekends, I attend a family picnic by the river.” (Aligns with local norms, enhancing ICC knowledge.)

**B: Proposed Intercultural Activity**

**Task:** “In pairs, discuss: How do Bangladeshi weddings differ from British ones? Use the present tense.”

**Objective:** Develops skills of interpreting/relating (savoir 2) and critical awareness (savoir 4).

**Sample Response:** “In Bangladesh, weddings involve many rituals, while in Britain, they are simpler.”

**C: Supplementary Resource**

**Prompt:** “Listen to a Bangladeshi podcast about Eid celebrations and compare it to a British Christmas description.”

**Purpose:** Enhances discovery skills (savoir 5) and cultural knowledge (savoir 1).

So, tailored adaptations and supplementation could enhance the relevance of the materials, aligning with global and local communicative demands. In addition, **teacher training programs must equip educators with ICC-based pedagogical strategies**, allowing them to **facilitate intercultural learning effectively**. Institutional support, including **curriculum reforms and policy adaptations**, is essential to ensure that **English language education in Bangladesh prepares students for global communication challenges**.

**6. Pedagogic Implications**

The pedagogic implications of this research highlight the need for a more

culturally responsive approach to English Language Teaching (ELT) at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. This study highlights the **cultural disconnect** in existing materials, which may hinder students' engagement and real-world communication skills. By advocating for the integration of **ICC principles** in ELT, this research contributes to curriculum development, pedagogical innovation, and policy reform, ensuring that learners not only acquire English fluency but also gain the intercultural awareness necessary for academic, professional, and social success in a globalized world. Additionally, the findings can guide **teachers, curriculum designers, testing and assessment reformers and policymakers** in creating more inclusive, contextually relevant learning experiences that cultivate globally competent learners who are both linguistically proficient and culturally adaptable.

#### **7. Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this research is its potential reliance on a **limited sample of text-based native English materials and institutions**, which may not fully represent the diverse range of tertiary-level English Language Teaching (ELT) contexts across Bangladesh. Additionally, while the study evaluates **Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)** in text-based materials, it may not extensively examine **other influential factors**, such as teacher competence, classroom interactions, and students' socio-economic backgrounds, which also impact intercultural learning. Furthermore, as ICC is a **dynamic and evolving concept**, the study's findings may need periodic reassessment to align with **changing global communication demands and ELT pedagogies**. Future research could address these limitations by incorporating **longitudinal studies, classroom observations, and learner feedback** to provide a more holistic understanding of ICC integration in ELT.

#### **8. Conclusion**

In conclusion, this study highlights the need for a more culturally inclusive approach to English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh by evaluating the effectiveness of text-based native English materials through the lens of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC). While these materials contribute to linguistic proficiency, they often lack cultural relevance, sociolinguistic competence, pragmatic competence, and diverse representation, limiting students' ability to engage in meaningful intercultural communication. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating localized content, pragmatic language use, and critical cultural awareness into ELT materials to better prepare students for global communication. By incorporating ICC principles into curriculum design and pedagogical practices, educators and policymakers can bridge the cultural gap in English language education, fostering a more effective and contextually relevant learning experience for tertiary-level students in Bangladesh.

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**Appendix**

**Teacher Interview Questions**

- i. What types of English textbooks and materials do you currently use in your English courses?
- ii. How effective do you find the text-based native English materials used here in developing Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC)?

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- iii. Do you think the contexts, examples and dialogues of the materials reflect Bangladeshi learners' cultural experiences?
- iv. What challenges do students face when engaging with culturally unfamiliar content in text-based native English materials?
- v. In your opinion, how can English teaching materials be improved to better support both language proficiency and intercultural competence?
- vi. What are the biggest obstacles to promoting intercultural competence in English language teaching at the tertiary level?
- vii. Why and what role should policymakers, curriculum designers, and institutions play in promoting ICC in English language education?

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