Emerging Trends in Global ELT: Implications for ELT in Bangladesh

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Abstract

This paper analyses the key emerging trends in global English language teaching (ELT) and discusses their implications for ELT in Bangladesh. ELT has become a worldwide profession, and its focuses are shifting over time. The emerging trends include the use of postmethod orientations, greater role of digital technologies, critical pedagogy, development of learners' intercultural communicative competences, teachers' continuing professional development, localisation of ELT, development of learners' autonomy and their sense of social responsibility and well-being, and increased use of formative assessments. ELT in Bangladesh cannot ignore all these emerging trends in global ELT. This paper, consequently, discusses the implications of these emerging trends for ELT in Bangladesh. It strongly argues that all the ELT stakeholders in Bangladesh must play a planned and active role in reflecting these trends in their practices.

Keywords: Global ELT, trends, implications, Bangladesh

Introduction

Human society is changing fast globally and so are education and English language teaching (ELT). Some of the conspicuous features of modern times have been "internationalisation, global interdependence, and interconnectivity" (Pakir, 1999, p. 104). Globalisation and free market economy are reshaping the mode people interact with one another for different purposes. English language (EL) has been playing a vital role in this globalised world, and it has long been seen as a language of opportunities (Jeon, 2009). It is the dominant language of the Internet as well. This global dominance of the EL is not going to end in the near future as claimed by Graddol (1997) "no single language will occupy the monopolistic position in the 21st century that English has—almost—achieved by the end of the twentieth century" (p. 58). Crystal (2003) also claimed that "There has never been a language so widely spread or spoken by so many people as English" (p. 189). However, there have been continuous changes in global ELT over the time. EL teachers in Bangladesh must get updated and equip learners with the required knowledge and skills considering these changes so that they can confidently compete globally for employment (Michael, 2017).

In Bangladesh, teachers followed the classic Grammar Translation Method for classroom teaching for a long time. Then, in the mid-'90s, there was a paradigm shift to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) (Rahman, 2015). However, it appears that we have got 'stuck' with the CLT approach. We cannot ignore the trends in global ELT that are informing policy making and teachers' pedagogical practices. Moreover, language policies, curricula, syllabuses, textbooks, and other ELT materials need to reflect these emerging features of global ELT. Considering all these, this paper aims to examine the key emerging trends in global ELT and discuss their implications for ELT in Bangladesh. The first part of the paper examines the key emerging trends in global ELT, and the second part discusses their implications for ELT in Bangladesh.

Emerging Trends in Global ELT

This section discusses the key emerging trends in global ELT which include the postmethod pedagogy, use of digital technology, intercultural communicative competence, critical pedagogy, teachers' professional development, localisation of ELT, learners' autonomy, social responsibility, and well-being, and formative assessments.

Embracing the Postmethod Condition

A method is always prescriptive and situated in a particular context, and in that sense, it is also limiting. So, for a long time, there has been a quest for "an alternative to method rather than an alternative method" (Kumaravadivelu, 1994, p. 29) which has resulted in the postmethod condition in ELT. No single method can meet the language needs of all learners across the globe. If a particular method does not align with the local contexts, teachers do not show their interest in that method. Considering the contextual factors and learners' language needs, teachers are combining techniques and procedures from different methods for effective classroom teaching (Bell, 2007). This has developed a new approach to language teaching known as eclectic or postmethod or hybrid approach that includes both online and offline teaching (Finardi, 2015; Karn, 2007). Teachers can engage learners in explicit or implicit grammar practices, collaborative work, dialogue practice, project-based learning, content and language integrated and task-based learning as their contexts demand. They use varied contents following an interdisciplinary approach so that learners learn both the contents and language concurrently. As Bell (2003) argues,

> method and postmethod can also be seen as inevitable and necessary dialectical forces: the one imposing methodological coherence, the other deconstructing the totalizing tendency of method from the perspective of local exigencies. In other words, method and postmethod together can liberate our practices. (p. 334)

However, it must be noted that language teaching methods are not dead as claimed by the postmethodologists (Bell, 2003). Many teachers in their selection of methods are being more willing to consider their "situational realities" (Waters, 2012, p. 448) and applying what Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 27) called "principled pragmatism". One main aspect of postmethod condition is to strike a balance between teachers' autonomy and much needed guidance for classroom teaching.

Enhanced Use of Digital Technology

We are now getting new digital technologies (DTs) at an unprecedented pace, and these technologies are having an impact, to a varied extent, on educational settings across the world (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018). The integration of DTs, e.g., Web 2.0, video lectures, YouTube, podcasts, mobile devices and apps, blogs, augmented and virtual reality, social media technology and game-based learning in EL teaching and learning has been a notable feature of global ELT (Dudeney & Hockly, 2012; Finardi, 2015; Hockly & Dudeney, 2018; Inayati, 2015; Michael, 2017), and this has provided teachers and learners with various affordances. By using different DTs, teachers and learners can easily access required information, gather standard language materials, gain stimulating audio-visual experiences, join MOOC and online learning communities, establish worldwide networks and collaborate with one another sitting comfortably inside their classrooms (Karn, 2007). DTs also help learners to be more autonomous in their approach to learning (Michael, 2017). Sun (2017) commented "Appropriate integration of technology in the classroom encourages students to use language in many different ways and bring world issues into the classroom" (p. 26). However, the mere presence of technology does not guarantee their effective use in classrooms. Indeed, in their use of technology, learners need to be guided by their teachers so that they learn how to assess information and use different language materials online in a secured way. We also need to be aware of the digital divide across the world, and find out ways of eliminating this divide (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018).

Developing Learners' Intercultural Communicative Competence

English cannot be treated as a language of any particular nations, groups, or regions anymore. New varieties of English are emerging across the globe with their distinct linguistic and cultural features (B. Kachru, 2004). One dominant trend is increasing intercultural communication among non-native speakers of English across the world where native-speakers are not at all involved (Akbari, 2007; Warschauer, 2000). Only knowing about the cultural communication norms of the inner circle countries is not going to serve the communication needs of learners. As pointed out by Nault (2006), "... English educators should adopt and promote a more cosmopolitan outlook that recognises and accepts other ways of life, modes of thought, and styles of English usage beyond Great Britain and the United States" (p. 324). So, learners must be aware of and respect the diversities in intercultural communication. They must know about the cultural beliefs and practices of people across the world so that they can attain global cultural awareness in this age of cultural globalisation. Another aspect is that the rigid idea of native-speakerism is losing its appeal (Holliday, 2006), rather the focus is now on intelligibility among the speakers (Warschauer, 2000). Upholding their own cultures while learning English as an international language is also essential for learners.

Using Critical Pedagogy

Critical Pedagogy (CP) is not a theory rather a way of classroom teaching for transforming societies and ensuring social justice through education including L2 education (Akbari, 2007). Similarly, Pennycook (1994) argued that "critical pedagogy is fundamentally concerned with questions of schooling and inequality" (p. 691). It highlights the political, cultural, social, and economic dimensions of ELT, and how teachers can address the issue of inequalities in societies through classroom activities (Molina &

Quintero, 2021; Jeon, 2009). Moreover, CP asks questions about the dominant ELT discourses and tries to create a balance between those and the local realities. According to CP, the non-native speakers need to use English for serving their own interests, not the interests of the pacesetters. It is no more acceptable that hegemonic discourses of ELT will dominate teachers' classroom practices and professional development (PD) activities. It encourages reflexivity and critical examination of the ELT approaches and methods as proposed by the inner circle countries and their modifications for meeting the local requirements (Jeon, 2009; Shahidullah, Shahid, & Hasan, 2020). It acknowledges that different groups of learners have different needs, and those needs can be addressed using diverse teaching materials and methods. It also emphasises the inclusion of learners' own cultures in teaching materials. Teachers must be aware of those issues that are faced by the poor, marginalised, and minority groups in EL classrooms (Akbari, 2007).

Teachers' Professional Development

> It has been said that teachers who have been teaching for twenty years may be divided into two categories: those with twenty years' experience and those with one year's experience repeated twenty times. (Ur, 1996, p. 317)

Teachers must update themselves continuously and know about the latest developments in their respective field (Khan, 2009). Continuing professional development is a life-long and multi-dimensional experience both inside and outside one's workplace (Hayes, 2014). It mainly focuses on deepening and expanding their professional knowledge and skills (Wiseman, 2021). As teachers substantially impact learners' learning experiences, EL teachers' professional development (PD) is given growing importance (Ambler, 2016). Mizell (2010) argued that "good teaching is not an accident" (p. 18), rather the result of practices, PD, and experiences. As different aspects of ELT are changing fast, teachers must engage themselves in PD. They must be life-long learners and continuously update their knowledge base (Ambler, 2016). Involvement in PD can help teachers uphold their professionalism by ensuring the standards of their practices as well (Sachs, 2016). Through systematic reflections on their teaching practices, they can find out their strengths and weaknesses. The important thing is whether teachers can or are willing to apply whatever they have learned from PD activities in their real classrooms.

Localisation of ELT

Though the geopolitics centring around English as an international language and neoliberal policies demand global standardisation of ELT (Torres Rocha, 2019), it can no longer ignore the contexts in which the EL is taught (Rahman, 2015). ELT coursebooks and other materials produced by the global ELT industry try to spread political, economic, and cultural neoliberal ideology in a covert way (Copley, 2017). Assimilating into the cultures of the inner circle countries is no more obligatory (Kachru, 1992). The appropriacy of imported methods, approaches, and materials has been questioned in relation to local contexts by authors like Phillipson, Pennycook, and Canagarajah (Block, 2004). As learners are not familiar with the cultures of native speakers, they may feel uncomfortable with learning the EL if they are pressurised to learn the target culture. When ELT materials incorporate local cultures, learners can easily make connections between the EL and their everyday experiences which ultimately facilitate language learning (Yahya, Ibrahim, Ramli, Md Yusof, & Othman, 2017). Besides, learners can base their EL learning on their experiences of L1 learning and use.

Learners' Autonomy, Social Responsibility, and Well-Being

At present, learners are trained to become independent learners, and they are supposed to learn a language according to their individual learning strategies and styles with the help of their teachers and peers. The

COVID-19 pandemic has also highlighted the significance of learner autonomy. Then, developing learners' EL skills is not the sole target of language teaching-learning anymore; rather, being aware of significant global, regional, and national issues would help them work as "social change agents" (Sun, 2017, p. 19). They will put every effort to be highly proficient in the EL, but simultaneously they will learn how to address issues of social concerns creatively and critically. Furthermore, ELT is now an ecology, and all stakeholders concerned need to practise the idea of well-being. Learners must learn how to take care of themselves and develop their awareness of different social and global issues (Mercer, 2021). They need to understand that nobody can be happy ignoring their immediate societal and contextual constraints.

Increased Use of Formative Assessments

More and more teachers are using innovative and formative assessments (FAs) for developing their learners' EL skills (Sun, 2017). FAs let teachers know their learners' present level of language knowledge and skills and make efforts to enhance those. FA is basically learner-focused, and any activities that help build learners' EL skills, e.g., speaking activities, interactive tasks, and project-based learning can be used for it. Individual learners can gauge their language skills through 'can do' or 'cannot do' statements using self-assessments as well. In FAs, teachers can provide learners with individual or whole-class immediate and actionable feedback. Thus, learners can easily overcome their weaknesses in the EL and enhance their confidence. Unlike summative assessments, FAs do not provide learners with a grade that does not guarantee their real competency in using the EL. Teachers are also using digitised formats of assessment and testing with the help of artificial intelligence. One type of digital testing is the computer adaptive test where test items are set according to the level of test takers. Another positive aspect of digitised testing is teachers can add varied test items including audio and visual ones (Wiseman, 2021).

Implications for ELT in Bangladesh

This section discusses the implications of the emerging trends in global ELT for Bangladesh.

Applying Principled Pragmatism in Teaching

Teachers cannot stick to any single method in this postmethod era as every method has its advantages and disadvantages. So, they must embrace a pluralistic view as far as teaching approaches and methods are concerned. Knowing about different methods and considering available resources, cultural and other local aspects would help them select effective classroom techniques. They can combine and use techniques from CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning), TBLT, and other methods. At present, we are mostly following a strict top-down approach as far as methods and materials are concerned. Teachers should be given some freedom in their selection of classroom techniques and materials. Thus, they would have some autonomy and own whatever they do inside classrooms. Moreover, the curriculum and syllabus designers in Bangladesh can take a critical stance towards the methods that they prescribe. National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) in Bangladesh, for example, promotes a view that "teacher is the best method" (NCTB, 2012, p. 25). However, teachers' classroom practices must be informed by what Kumaravadivelu (1994, p. 27) called "principled pragmatism". They cannot do whatever they like inside the language classrooms. That said, sometimes we become too rigid about applying a particular method, and forget that our main business is developing learners' communicative competence in the EL.

Providing Digital Technology and Ensuring Effective Use

As digital technologies (DTs) have become an integral part of EL classrooms worldwide, and most of the current learners are digital natives, teachers have no other alternative but to use DTs in classrooms. Two

things must be ensured in this regard: availability of digital technologies, and their effective use by both teachers and learners. In Bangladesh, many of the educational institutions do not have the DTs needed for classroom teaching, and many work only with a single computer and a multimedia projector (Rouf & Mohamed, 2018a). However, availability of technology does not mean that teachers will automatically use them in their classrooms. In general, teachers in Bangladesh use DTs as an add-on in classrooms, and many of the EL teachers are not very skilled in technology use as they lack technological pedagogical knowledge (Rouf & Mohamed, 2018). Teachers should not use DTs in classes for presentation of images and information only. Moreover, it is not about using the latest technological tools in classrooms, rather critically and creatively integrating DTs in instruction that helps developing learners' language skills (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). Intensively training teachers in the selection and effective use of DTs is essential (Hockly & Dudeney, 2018). Developing teachers' technological pedagogical knowledge and technological pedagogical content knowledge would help teachers make effective use of DTs in their classrooms (Mishra & Koehler, 2006). It also must be properly monitored whether they are using DTs in classrooms. Technologies change really fast, so teachers must get themselves continually updated (Mishra et al., 2012).

Focusing on Intercultural Communicative Competence

Bangladeshi EL learners need to develop their intercultural communicative competence (ICC). They would communicate with both the native and non-native speakers of English for different reasons. ICC will help them communicate with different people in culturally acceptable ways. Teachers must let learners know about the diversity of different cultures across the globe. They can include contents on cultural norms of different countries in their lessons and ask learners to discuss those cultural norms in groups and later make oral presentations about various aspects of those cultures (Liton, 2016). Learners can be taught the subtleties of ICC through audio-visual materials as well. Watching movies from different countries can help develop their ICC. Then, teachers can select diverse materials from different writers (Sun, 2017) that reflect the cultural dimensions of different contexts. At present, learners can easily collaborate with their peers from different regions of the world using DTs to enhance their ICC. Schools can establish exchange programmes with different educational institutions across the world so that teachers and learners can visit and stay in different countries and learn about their cultures. Learners do not need to copy the native speakers for communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds, rather they must ensure intelligibility. Moreover, learners can be involved in projects where they will try to know about different aspects of their own cultures and write a short report on them.

Promoting Social Justice through ELT

Different aspects of critical pedagogy (CP) can be applied in EL education and classrooms. Teachers and learners cannot only be the end-users of ELT products that are mass developed for global use by the ELT industry predominantly controlled by the inner circle countries. They must be critical about the associated 'cultural baggage' that is carried by English. Using CP, teachers can decide what aspects of different methods and materials would work considering the contextual realities in Bangladesh (Canagarajah, 1999) and ensure that they do not reproduce social inequalities. In a country like Bangladesh, the EL works as a gatekeeper as it opens up opportunities for those who are skilled in it. Developing learners' critical ability through classroom activities and practices must be given a high priority so that they question the existing inequalities in Bangladesh and feel interested in eradicating those. In classes, teachers can ask learners to discuss the differences in societies. Thus, CP would help learners develop pluralistic views of their societies. Teachers can discuss the cultures and traditions of the ethnic minorities in Bangladesh along with the problems they usually face. There should be a conscious effort by teachers to encourage learners for practising moral values and ethics (Haberman, 2010). Again, by using CP, teachers and learners can develop their human identity as articulated by Freire (1996).

Ensuring Teachers' Professional Development and Well-Being

In Bangladesh, teachers' professional development (PD) is not given considerable importance. Teachers must be engaged in continuing development of their professional knowledge base and skills. Attending one or two training programmes over their whole career won't simply work. Again, teachers need to be proactive and take personal initiatives and collaborate with their colleagues for their PD (Rouf & Mohamed, 2017); they cannot rely on the government agencies only for their growth. They can form and join teacher networks for collaboration (Niesz, 2007). They can also use DTs and online materials if they cannot manage time and other resources for attending on-site PD activities (Shohel & Power, 2010). Besides, developing the habit of reflections on their classroom practices would also help teachers improve professionally. Teachers' PD requirements must not be dictated by bureaucrats and other external players following a top-down approach. Rather, teachers themselves should decide what type of PD activities they want considering their individual needs. At present, teacher training programmes are project-based and heavily depend on funds provided by different foreign agencies. A permanent and effective mechanism must be established for teacher development. Implementation of new ideas in real classrooms is the key challenge along with changing teachers' traditional beliefs. As the educational resources are very limited in Bangladesh, school-based technology-supported PD activities can help teachers significantly (Mahruf C. Shohel & Banks, 2012). On a different note, the issues of teachers' professional needs, their anxiety, stresses, financial security, and status must be addressed for ensuring their well-being (Mercer, 2021).

Contextualised Language Teaching

Teachers need to position teaching and learning of the EL within their own contexts. They should focus on developing learners' awareness of local cultures and love for their country along with their linguistic competence (Shahidullah et al., 2020). They can develop, adopt, and adapt ELT materials considering the local cultures and needs of their learners. Materials on local foods, clothes, movies, ways of live, and historical days and places can be included in lessons (Nault, 2006). As for the methods and approaches, teachers can decide what aspects of a particular method will work in their contexts by applying their discretion. They may use the Context Approach that focuses on learners' learning purposes, styles, strategies, language needs, and local materials and cultures. Teachers will decide what to teach first according to the needs and proficiency level of learners – grammar, speaking practices or vocabulary (Bax, 2003). Moreover, learners' L1 can be used prudently in classrooms to facilitate EL learning, especially in the areas of discipline management, task instructions, and complex aspects of grammar and vocabulary. However, teachers must not use L1 for classroom instruction (Akbari, 2007), and L1 use must be methodical to ensure that it helps learners comprehend difficult contents in the EL and ultimately develop their EL skills.

Developing Learners' Autonomy, Social Responsibility, and Ensuring Well-Being

Culturally, Bangladeshi learners are excessively dependent on their teachers. However, for language learning, a teacher-centred hierarchical approach is very unlikely to yield the best outcomes. So, a viable option is enhancement of learner autonomy (LA). LA does not mean that learners will learn the language alone, rather they will be systematically guided by their teachers and peers using different strategies. First, learners should be encouraged to take charge of their own learning. Second, EL learners can decide their language needs and set their goals and objectives accordingly. Third, they can develop their own learning styles and strategies. Fourth, they can select resources, keep themselves motivated, assess their learning progress, and reflect on their overall learning (Neupane, 2010). The cultivation of strategies that help develop LA can also facilitate the process of becoming life-long learners. Moreover, learners must be made aware of the issues that affect their surroundings and the world. Teachers can integrate issues like

climate change, militancy, illiteracy, and early marriage in their lesson plans and design classroom activities on them. Learners can be engaged in community services once or twice a month. Moreover, considering ELT as an ecology, both teachers and learners should involve themselves in those practices that ensure well-being of the whole community.

Reforming Language Assessments

At present, the EL assessment and testing framework in Bangladesh is predominantly based on testing. Serious concerns prevail over whether the normative grades given in these exams correspond to learners' operational skills in the EL. Moreover, no mechanism exists to assess the speaking and listening skills of learners both in the public examinations and at schools (Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, & Khan, 2014). This is a serious barrier to developing learners' communicative competence as articulated in the national curriculum. However, testing the listening and speaking skills in the SSC and HSC exams would not be a viable option considering the required logistics, time, human resources, and the big number of test takers. We need to introduce more formative assessments (FAs) in classrooms and ensure their reliability and validity. Some teachers may get biased in scoring as far as FAs are concerned. There should be a coordination and monitoring cell at each school so that FAs are carried out in a transparent manner. Again, during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was observed that many teachers did not know how to carry out online assessments (R. Khan, Basu, Bashir, & Uddin, 2021). They must be trained in both offline and online assessments. More importantly, we must promote and cultivate a culture across the country where all stakeholders concerned would appreciate the contributions of FAs in developing learners' EL skills. If the examination system in Bangladesh is not reformed, then the EL teachers will continue teaching to the test.

Conclusion

This paper examines the key emerging trends in global ELT and discusses their implications for ELT in Bangladesh. It is obvious that the focuses in global ELT are shifting. Considering the present global status and widespread use of English, and Bangladesh's target to produce skilled human resources for employment in the local and global markets, we cannot ignore these emerging trends. Rather, we need to incorporate these emerging global trends in Bangladeshi ELT bearing in mind our local contexts. Otherwise, our EL learners will lose competitiveness at the global level. So, the stakeholders concerned must review the current ELT provisions in Bangladesh considering these trends and redesign the national education policy-2010, national curriculum, teaching methods, English syllabuses, contents, and materials used for classroom teaching. We also need to immediately restructure our teacher education programmes, teachers' professional development mechanism, and the examination system. Since we know, from experiences, that our main problem lies in the implementation process at the micro level, we must ensure, along with policy reformations, that the policy initiatives are properly implemented and monitored to reflect these trends in the classrooms and beyond.

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The author declares that there is no conflict of interests.

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Ethics Statement

I, hereby, state that I have conducted the research and prepared the manuscript following the protocol of research and publications ethics. I am solely responsible if any deviation or mistake (in content and language) is identified in the manuscript.

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