

# **Pre-departure Beginner Level English Course for Bangladeshi Female Migrant Domestic Workers**

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for Bangladeshi Female Migrant Domestic Workers**

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**Summary**

This is a two part dissertation. Part one presents a contextual and theoretical rationale for the ELT materials (a teacher's book and student book) which were submitted as part two of this dissertation project.

The rationale begins with a discussion of the contextual background to the materials. This background acknowledges issues to do with population in Bangladesh, its status as a post-colonial country and the historical and current role of English in Bangladesh. The global role of English is also discussed.

Tanya then describes ELT initiatives in Bangladesh linked to English for development, especially for girls and women. These initiatives reflect government policy which focuses on the needs of women migrant workers. The need for the materials is presented not just in this geo-political context but on empirical evidence - a survey of women in Bangladesh which reported that women linked improved English to better jobs.

Next Tanya discusses research related to relevant factors in SLA (motivation and other affective factors) with clear references to the Bangladeshi context. Educational experiences of Bangladeshi learners with particular attention to areas of difficulty in learning English – grammar, lexis, spoken English - for this set of learners are considered. This neatly feeds into a discussion of the role of English as an international language (EIL) in ELT materials such as those presented by Tanya.

The rationale then justifies the use of three approaches to English language teaching for the course – TPR, a lexical approach and either a weak or strong form of CLT. Tanya also makes a principled case for bilingual teaching on the course – a realistic approach considering the circumstances of the target learners. Most would not be able to access or afford native or highly proficient speakers of English as their teachers.

The materials aim for a balance of localised and international content when it comes to, for example, domestic appliances and domestic practices.

While the word-count for the rationale left no room for an explicit discussion of syllabus, progression, rubrics etc., Tanya approached these in a principled manner in supervision sessions and the materials evidence this.

## Potential for Impact

We feel that this is an exceptional set of materials aimed at a section of the population who may not otherwise have access to learning a language which has become essential for economic participation. In terms of English for work, there seems to be a pecking order with males in post-colonial countries doing better, both in accessing courses and acquiring the necessary language. This is particularly true of men and women aiming for entry-level and semi-skilled jobs. As Tanya gives a principled rationale as well as a teacher's book, these materials can easily be adapted for use in other parts of the world to prepare migrant workers going to low level jobs in a country other than theirs. The materials could certainly be used as they are in India and Pakistan and to some extent, in the UK.

Tanya's dissertation shows sensitivity to the socio-economic and sociocultural realities of the target learners and the status occupied by them in Bangladeshi society. The rationale as applied to the materials, evidences an understanding of a breadth of global socio-economic contexts plus specifics of language learning, teaching and aspects of language itself e.g. particularly lexis. Therefore, they could serve as sources of teacher development for bilingual teachers of English in particular.

It is not often that we see as much thought going into tailoring materials for the needs of a group which is not part of the 'ESP market'. The methodology takes into account the cultural expectations and educational experience of low-level learners in this context. Tanya makes a strong and convincing case that the three approaches adopted will meet the language learning needs of the students in the context described, especially TPR and the lexical approach.

In terms of content, the student and teacher books are thorough and well planned, containing language the students will need when working as domestic staff in households in the Gulf. The language content of the materials makes them useful for migrant workers in other parts of the world as well. For example, the units on household jobs, clothes and laundry and the section on kitchen utensils and food containers/ packaging will be particularly useful for these future domestic workers. The lessons have manageable amounts of new language, with realistic aims for target lexis and the instructions are clear enough for the target group of teachers. We feel the teachers' book is one which can be picked up by the target teachers and used in the classroom with minimum preparation.

The materials are also a welcome step towards enabling bilingual teachers of English with limited training to begin using CLT. With there being more bilingual than mono-lingual teachers out here in the world, it is useful to see a clear role for L1 in the classroom and to show ELT materials which give examples of how to do this. Overall, Tanya's dissertation brings theory, practice and contextual knowledge convincingly together to produce high quality ELT materials which will be of great benefit to a group not traditionally catered for.