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University English: Issues and directions for curriculum development

Richard Kiely *, Department of Lifelong Education, Policy and Administration at the University of Georgia, USA.

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Abstract

This paper examines University English as a TESOL curriculum context. It outlines three approaches to university English: English as L1, where the focus is primarily on linguistics and literature; English as L2, where there is an advanced language learning component as well as a focus on linguistics and literature; and English for non-English majors, where the focus is on functional language use skills. The paper is in three sections: the first section takes stock of recent developments in the university sector with particular attention to English as a feature of the globalisation of higher education. The second section sets out a typology for English Major programmes, using a curriculum benchmark framework for the study of English on the one hand, and the study of languages on the other. The third section presents a case study of curriculum development in a public university in Bangladesh, showing how the three types of university English establish a baseline for understanding the curriculum and developing strategies to improve it. The ways in which the University English curriculum might be developed and researched further are discussed at the end of the paper.

Keywords: English, curriculum, TESOL, L2.

*ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: **Richard Kiely,** Department of Lifelong Education, Policy and Administration at the University of Georgia, USA. *E-mail address*: elr-cornell@cornell.edu

1. Introduction

University English (UE) has different curricular forms. It can be taught as a subject in its own right, as a tool for learning in other subject areas, or as a skill valued in the graduate workplace. Traditional English as a second of foreign language major programmes typically incorporate high level language skills development with engagement with literature and cultural studies fields related to English, while general English programmes for all students focus on a high level of functional skills as a core graduate attribute (Graddol, 1997; McArthur, 2001; Coleman 2006). While the former are typically taught within academic departments and the latter within language centres, the learning goals, in terms of society and employer expectations, are largely similar. The curriculum for both has, in recent decades, been buffeted by higher education trends and policy developments, with substantial and increasing investment in enhancing the English language skills of all students, and questions about the specific relevance of much more resource heavy English language major programmes.

However, there has been very limited systematic analysis of UE programmes as contexts of curriculum development. In this article we seek to unpack some of these issues. First we document key features of English language teaching in the university sector. Second we explore two major contexts – English as L1 and English as L2 – drawing on the UK subject benchmarks as a heuristic which helps understand curriculum divides in other contexts. Third, we explore these ideas in relation to initial findings from a curriculum development research project in Bangladesh. This is a context where there has been little systematic research into curriculum development, but which has been experiencing questions about the role and efficacy of English in the education system as a whole (Ali, 2010; Abedin, 2012; Huda, 2013). This discussion illustrates the complexity of practices in University English, and the ways in which any one curriculum draws on different traditions, and how these traditions can be linked to processes of curriculum development (Markee, 1997; Graves, 2008; Nation & Macalister, 2010; Kennedy 2011; Maley, 2012). This discussion is contributing to our work in the case study context in Bangladesh, in particular in establishing a direction and framework for curriculum development. The specific issues arising are:

- The strengthening of the language skills component of the undergraduate programme, and accommodation of differing entry points for school leavers;
- The role and purpose of literature in the programme, especially study of the traditional 'canon';
- The role and purpose of linguistics in the programme, in particular study of technical research frameworks; and
- The development of learning process and outcomes dimensions of the curriculum, especially the role of online learning and the formats of assessments.

We see these as issues in UE in many contexts, and our discussion of theoretical frameworks and articulation of specific issues in the case study will contribute to understanding and practical initiatives elsewhere.

2. ELT in the University sector

To start, we can identify two contexts of UE: first, English major programmes, and second, programmes which seek to enhance the functional English skills of all students. The English major programme is the traditional context of high level language learning in universities around the world. A major dimension of this tradition, which predates the global role of English as the language of fields such as business, science, media, travel and sport, is the prestige of English literature, as a body of intellectual capital, in which all universities should have an expertise. English major programmes have students who have already been successful learners at secondary level, and have both the aptitude and commitment needed for high levels of learning achievement. The programmes are often constructed within a humanities framework. They tend

to include, in addition to direct English language instruction or support language skills development, components on literature, area studies and linguistics. In one way such programmes are a form of layered curriculum where there is investment and success in the target language as a grammatical and lexical system before achievements in the language as a means of communication (Marton, 1988; Brumfit 2004). In another way, such programmes, which focus on study of subject areas such as literature, linguistics, film and media, might be considered successful instantiations of Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) (Marsh & Laitinen, 2005; Wolff, 2009).

University English programmes for all students are a more recent phenomenon. They result from workforce skills policy development and educational policies designed as a response to increasingly globalised economic activity, and the use of English as a Lingua Franca in such fields as business, science and technology, and media (Phillipson, 1992; 2001; Wright, 2004; Graddol, 2006). The programmes often run in parallel to students' subject study, and may focus on general English, or English for Specific Purposes. The language curriculum may be aligned to a discipline focus, or to English for Academic Purposes (EAP), where the focus is on learning through English, as well as enhancing proficiency skills. Increasingly, these programmes include blended learning elements, where they draw on uses of technology to improve teaching and learning. Despite the policy priority of such programmes, the expected goals are difficult to achieve, and, in addition to frequent claims in the media in contexts such as Bangladesh, Hong Kong and Malaysia that weak English skills of graduates and others are a threat to economic development, there is a growing literature on the challenge of effective language skills development in the context of such programmes in Asian contexts (Gao & Benson, 2008; Al-Issa 2007; Walker, 2008; Wei, 2008).

There is a dearth of discussion and analysis in the literature on how these contexts of University English shape curriculum design and learning experiences, and how they construct opportunities for curriculum development. Though there is a lot of ELT research carried out in university contexts (Knagg, 2011), and studies such as those cited above document the individual problem-analysis and creativity of teachers, it is not always clear which context of University English they are based on, that is, whether studies are in English major classrooms, or in classes for non-English majors (AUTHOR nnnn). In this paper, we examine the constructions of University English as 'curriculum'. We elaborate tentative models which may be useful for further exploration, and relate these to a current research project on curriculum development in University English programmes in one university on Bangladesh.

There are a number of key differences and tensions which show that as learning contexts, University English (UE) programmes vary in a range of ways. The following table summarises these differences in terms of factors generally considered to shape the curriculum and the nature of learning experiences within programmes (Dubin & Olshtain, 1997; Graves, 2008; Narion & Macalister, 2010).

Table 1. Summary of key features of two contexts of University English

	English Major programmes (UE)	English for all (UE all)
Students	English language learners who have been high achievers in school	All students
Previous experience	Successful pre-university experience of learning English	Often unsuccessful experiences of learning English in schools, especially when compared to achievements in other subject areas
Motivation	Committed, engaged, and ready to be active agents in their own learning	Mixed: high aspirations, but with negative attitudes and low confidence
Identity	Strong cultural affiliation, with English part of a strong learning identity, and future graduate identity	English as an aspiration but future graduate identity aligned to main subject area
Curriculum space	English is the main focus of learning, supported by language-related study	Limited, with English as an additional learning area, alongside main subject study
Learning focus	Becoming expert in English as language system, cultural construct and means of communication	Meeting minimum curriculum requirements, such as passing examinations.
Institutional location	Department within a faculty	Language Centre outside, or non-academic part of a faculty
Teachers	Academics and aspiring academics in subjects related to English	Teachers of English rather than academics
Language of the classroom	English as Medium of instruction is easily achieved	Pressures on the teacher to teach and explain in the L1
Curriculum content	Varied, and intellectually demanding	General English, often with a focus on communication and functional use

These assumptions are of course, very broad brush characterisations. Nevertheless they reflect our experience of University English contexts in Bangladesh and a wide range of university contexts in different countries. The general picture will hopefully resonate with readers of this journal who work in University English contexts, and will enable them to further their engagement with the curriculum development issues.

For students and teachers, successful English language learning is much easier to achieve in English major programmes. As set out in the table above, the students are likely to be positive about their learning potential and identity as successful English language users, and the curriculum is varied, rich and engaging. However, this intensive learning experience, for relatively small groups of elite language learners is not seen as meeting emerging national development and workforce needs, or the aspiration of many universities. In many contexts, functional English language skills are seen as a core feature of 'graduateness'. Wright (2004) illustrates how English language skills in higher education are a core element of globalisation in the sector, and Coleman (2006) finds similar policy developments in Europe. Wilkinson (2004), examining the challenges of integrating English into the university curriculum, notes how substantial this goal is. The *English for all* option is seen at a policy level as cost effective and efficient, in terms of time, compared to English major programmes. In many ways, however, the two contexts of learning are very different, as the descriptions in Table 1 illustrate: the student and teacher participants have different learning histories and identities; the institutional locations position them very differently in terms of status; and the curriculum in terms of time and content vary significantly in terms of richness of learning opportunity.

To progress the analysis of curriculum in UE, it is useful to focus on curriculum goals and learning outcomes. In the context of *English for all* UE, learning outcomes tend to be articulated as levels of proficiency determined by international tests such as IELTS, or local assessment frameworks, increasingly calibrated with the Common European framework of reference (CFER).

English major programmes claim, implicitly, if not explicitly, to achieve more. As a way of understanding the value added to language proficiency, we explore in the next section, two contexts of English major programmes: those designed for students whose L1 is English, and those designed for English as L2 users. We draw on the UK subject benchmarks for English and for modern languages for two reasons. First, these frameworks articulate learning focus, activities and outcomes relevant to university level language study from, on the one hand, an L1 user base, where a sophisticated competence in the language system is starting point, and on the other, from an L2 user base, where some measure of success in the school curriculum has been achieved. Second, these frameworks have been used in discussions with English department academics and teachers in the case study context in Bangladesh, and this have some validity in reflecting curriculum goals in contexts where such detailed benchmarks are not available or used. Thus the reason for using this this curriculum framework as a heuristic in this paper, derives from its convenience for our purpose here, rather than on any notion validity in terms of language curriculum theory, or superiority over other approaches.

3. University English – a typology

We can identify two sub-categories of English major programmes: those designed for English as L1 students and for English as L2 students. The former, of course, are not limited to L1 recruitment: rather it is a curriculum that builds on L1 level knowledge and intuitions in developing capacity for analysis. It has a focus on literature study, and more recently creative writing. For historical and sociolinguistic reasons, English as L1 is significant in social and policy contexts where English serves a range of official and communication roles. In many cases there is a British or American colonial heritage, which has had a role in developing the university system and curriculum. The context described in the case study in this paper, Bangladesh, is arguably one such context. Professor Aali Areefur Rehman, a senior English Studies academic interviewed for Akhter (2012) describes English education as 'one of the "great gifts" that the British gave to the subcontinent […] not without its darker side, [… it] eclipsed and destroyed much that was good in the native system that it usurped' .

English as L2 may have the same goals as English as L1 – linguistic and literary analysis of language in contexts such as literature and creative writing – but it also draws on traditions of second and foreign language curriculum models. The latter curriculum model does not assume that the tacit, intuitive knowledge base of the L1 user is already in place, but rather has to establish this in the context of extending language analysis skills to levels appropriate for university credits and awards. The UK benchmark statements, developed for the study English and Modern Languages (which includes the study of English as a second or foreign language) as university undergraduate subjects, guide the construction of HE curricula, and provide a useful articulation of the distinction here.

Table 2. from UK University benchmarks relevant to University English

English as L1	**English as L2**
http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/English07.pdf	http://www.qaa.ac.uk/Publications/InformationAndGuidance/Documents/languages07.pdf
An undergraduate education in English and cognate subjects should […] engage students imaginatively in the process of reading, analysing and/or producing complex and sophisticated literary and non-literary texts and discourses […] problematise the acts of reading and writing so that students can reflect critically upon textual production and reception both in history and in their own practice […] offer students a knowledge and appreciation of contextual approaches to the production and reception of literary and non-literary texts and discourses […] promote the understanding and practice of verbal creativity and the formal and aesthetic dimensions of literary texts	*The study encompasses four complementary dimensions – language as:* a medium of understanding, expression and communication, described here as the use of the target language a means of access to other societies and cultures, described here as intercultural awareness, understanding and competence an object of study in their own right, described here as the explicit knowledge of language a gateway to related thematic studies, comprising various bodies of knowledge and methodological approaches, described here as knowledge of the cultures, communities and societies where the language is used

The English as L1 curriculum focusses on the analysis of texts from critical and aesthetic perspectives. It draws on traditions of learning in the humanities and literature study, with increasing attention recently to creative and expository writing. The English as L2 curriculum focusses on analysis of language forms and contexts of use, drawing on traditions of foreign language study, for example, Hawkins (1999) and perspectives from Applied Linguistics, for example, Kramsch (1993).

We have then, three types of University English, each with its own tradition, rationale, and context of implementation and development:

Type 1 – University English L1

Type 2 – University English L2

Type 3 – English for all

These three types of curriculum are being realised in universities in many contexts. English language teachers may teach courses within two or even three types. Where universities are seeking to rationalise provision, there may be proposals to merge courses, or consider a focus on investment on Type 3, and the expense of Type 2. It is important to recognize that each type has its strengths, and a direction and framework for development requires detailed examination of these strengths, that is, how each type constructs learning opportunities. It is the assumption of this paper that analysis of these strengths and areas for improvement in each curriculum context is the starting point for curriculum development, so that the English language learning outcomes are more effectively realised. The following section of this paper present an account of a curriculum development initiative in a university in Bangladesh.

We regard this framework as a useful starting point for analysis of the university English curriculum of an English programme in Bangladesh. Historically in the Bangladeshi context, undergraduates in the English department would have accessed university study through an English-medium schooling system, thus prepared for study in a programme which had many of the features of the Type 1 framework. More recently however, students have been entering the programme with more limited competence in English: Abedin (2012) and Huda (2013), for example, provide recent analyses of the limited success in developing communicative English language schools in the Bangladeshi High school system. In the universities, there have been

some curriculum changes focussing on language skills development, along the lines of the Type 2 curriculum. At the same time as this focus on development of the curriculum for students of the English department, there are initiatives to improve the English skills of students across the university, either through teaching through English or through certification on exit. One option is to develop Type 3 as an offshoot of the current Type 1/Type 2 provision. Another is to establish a new unit, such as a language centre, to specialise in developing a separate Type 3 curriculum. Thus, the curriculum development questions converge on how to find the most appropriate mix of the three types of University English outlined above. The next section of this paper describes the research activities of the project and draws on this data to examine the ways in which English as L1 and English as L2 combine in this curriculum, and the extent to which each framework constitutes a way forward in terms of curriculum development.

4. Context

The context of curriculum renewal discussed here is an English major programme in a public university in Bangladesh. The research was carried out within the Curriculum Renewal in University English (CRUE) project funded by the British Council INSPIRE (International Strategic Partnerships in Research and Education) collaborative research programme. The CRUE approach to curriculum renewal has three focal points:

i) Understanding the key features of the current learning experience of students;

ii) Analysis by teachers of current practices of teachers in the programme;

iii) Analysis of assessment practices in the programme and their impact on learning.

In 2011 and 2012 strands i) and ii) were initiated, and this paper draws on data from these activities. Thus, this paper examines the perspectives on University English provided by students and teachers in order to understand the curriculum model of university English at play in this context, and to use this analysis to elaborate a framework for curriculum development which enriched the teaching and learning experience of current teachers and students, and prepared ongoing and emerging institutional developments.

5. Research design

The CRUE project was developed with two core strands: understanding current practices and developing new courses and pedagogic strategies, with the former constituting a platform for the latter. Data was collected via a questionnaire study and focus groups and from students on their perceptions of their learning and the features of the course which facilitated and limited this. A second strand explored teacher perspectives on their practice, drawing on narratives of their practice which they developed.

The questionnaire was developed as an instrument for course evaluation by students. It has three sections: first, demographic information including a self-assessment of English language proficiency. Second, using a five-point Likert scale, student expressed their attitudes to, and evaluations of features of the curriculum, such as content, teaching, learning activities, and assessment formats. Third, students were invited to describe their use of resources, specifically library and online resources, to support their own learning. The focus groups with students were carried out during INSPIRE workshops in the university. Initially led by the UK partner (first author of this paper), the format involved discussion with groups (12-20) of volunteer students on three open questions (displayed on a Powerpoint slide):

- How is learning English in University different from school?
- What learning do you do out of class?
- What would you like more of?

As students proposed responses, these were noted on a white board, which a volunteer student copied down. In addition, another student made notes on comments by students. These written records were typed up and presented to academic staff in a later meeting.

To complement these student perspectives on the curriculum, teacher accounts were also developed. Teachers in INSPIRE workshops were asked to describe their practice, through reflection on these dimensions of their work:

- Planning: How do you plan? [last year's class; text; activity; interaction; test; …..]
- Classroom: How many; layout; language used; management [attendance; noise; phones]
- Resources: What ss use; what you refer them to; what you ask them about
- Feedback: From senior teachers; HoD; students
- Reflection: your sense of effectiveness

Six teachers participated in these workshops. Their initial accounts were commented on, with requests for additional information, examples, and incidents which constituted a rich description of pedagogical phenomena, without a particular focus on evaluative comment.

6. Some findings

6.1. Student perspectives

The students were positive overall about their learning experience. The key themes in the data are set out here in the context of the three topic areas of questionnaires and focus groups. The first topic for discussion was on how learning English at university was different from learning in school.

The students were particularly positive about these features of the university curriculum:

- A focus on aspects of English other than grammar rules;
- The lack of memorisation of texts;
- Knowledgeable, well-qualified teachers;
- Academic lectures rather than lessons in the classroom;
- The opportunity to study literature, such as Shakespeare.

These positive views seem to derive in part from the sense of being undergraduates in a prestigious university, and taught by senior and well-qualified tutors. In the contrast with school based experiences, UE with its lectures in large classes constituted a rich opportunity for learning. This pattern in the feedback was echoed in the questionnaire responses, and in data from first year students (for whom memories of school were particularly fresh), and third year students. The appreciation of the traditional literature curriculum and being taught in large classes were unexpected: it had been assumed that a direction for development would involve changes in these areas. Some tutors had felt that students gained little from difficult literary texts, and would benefit from smaller classes and more opportunities for communication.

On the second topic area, out of class learning, the students indicated they make use of a range of media sources for using and learning English:

- Internet
- TV & movies in English
- Reading in English – novels & magazines
- Computer games

We have no detailed data on patterns of use here, such as the extent to which access to such media in English constitute language learning opportunities. There is very little use of digital

technologies or media by tutors, so the students' excursions into this these areas are independent or peer-led. Tutors were surprised that students were engaged in such activity: they felt many students were dependent on tutors for learning activities, and did not have the resources or skills for digital learning. The opportunities for access to such media are not through institutional provision, rather through personal devices and mobile internet connections. On the one hand, such a level of institutional provision seems a limitation which requires action. On the other, the limited institutional provision may in fact be promoting autonomous learning strategies and peer activities where students act independently to construct their engagement with the wider world of English.

The third major topic in the focus groups centred on the changes the students would like in the programme. Again there was no shortage of ideas:

- More books to borrow
- Computers available to students
- Drama (in movies) as part of the curriculum
- Guidance on reliable sources (internet)
- Monthly tests for feedback
- Global approach to English
- Contemporary literature
- Literary club for students
- Resources on Shakespeare

The ideas here can be understood as reflecting both shortcomings which students have experienced and aspirations shaped by those experiences and by awareness of possibilities from wider experience. A key theme is resources: the students would like to have more books and resources. A second theme relates to issues to do with the English curriculum and pedagogy: more tests for feedback on learning achievements, and also attention in the curriculum to 'global English' which students characterised as the ways English is used in different countries. This latter point may illustrate a commendable curiosity, and constitute a platform of readiness for development of the curriculum in a typically Type 2 (UE as L2) way. However, this is not to be achieved at the expense of the Type 1 focus: students value the focus on literature, and would like this extended and developed as well.

Overall the data from the students was positive. The questionnaire study revealed general patterns of satisfaction, and the focus group discussions provided more detail on attitudes and patterns of activity. While further research is needed to gain a deeper purchase on how the curriculum provided by the institution, and enriched by students' values interests and independent activities, two messages emerge. First, the views of students on some issues for development, such as class size, and the inclusion of challenging literary texts, run counter to prevailing theory and principle in language teaching. It may be that these features of the curriculum in this context which are valued and thus foster investment in learning, promote language learning in ways which might not be the case in other contexts. Second, the students on this programme are those who were successful at school level, even though the pedagogy there might not have been ideal – the responses to the first discussion topic in the focus group suggest that school based learning focussed on grammar rules, drilling and memorisation. As naturally successful learners, who have experience of a somewhat unsupportive curriculum, their views might not be well-informed. After experience of a different kind of institutional provision, their perspective on what benefits them might be different.

6.2. Tutor perspectives

The data from the tutors was in the form of dialogic narrative accounts of practice. Six teachers completed a questionnaire which afforded a rich descriptive account of their practices as teachers – what they planned, what they implemented, reasons for this, and some instances in terms of activities and issues which had arisen in the recent past. The lead researchers (authors of this paper) met with the teachers who completed the questionnaires, and discussed the phenomena in the accounts. They also added questions and comments in the text. The questionnaires were subsequently expanded, provided detailed, reflective and reflexive accounts of teaching and managing learning. This data collection strategy was not as rich as an observation and interview approach (which our resources would not permit), but did provide detailed accounts of teachers' work and the factors which were salient for them. A limitation in the data collection was the focus on English language and linguistics teachers – the four teacher participants did not include literature specialists who teach many of the courses.

The teachers described macro and micro strategies for dealing with classes of 100 or so, in classrooms with 12-14 fixed benches, eight students on each. Lectures are 45 minutes long, and teacher-led, with occasional participation of students in the context of answering questions and coming to the board to write something. Despite the teacher-led lesson structure, the main objective seems to be skills development and practice in the four skills – listening, speaking, reading and writing. Teachers tend to work in isolation from each other, and consider the students as dependent of tutor input and classroom experience for learning, a view reflected in other studies of English language teaching in Bangladesh, for example, Islam (2000), Wasiuzzaman (2012), and Huda (2013). To illustrate the limited opportunities for collaborative learning, a Speaking and Listening tutor described the challenge of getting students to engage in groupwork, partly because of their limited listening skills and partly because they feel they should only speak to or listen to the teacher. She quoted a student who responded to her suggestion that they do pairwork with the query:

'Do you mean to say, Mam, we simply have to speak and listen to each other throughout the course?'

This teacher described initiatives she has led in different classes to promote collaborate learning. These includes tasks involving 'personal information; problem-solving; telling stories; debates'. What tends to work best in her view, is a mix of classroom performance by individual students and error correction by the teacher, designed to extend the students' speaking and listening skills:

'I feel speaking in front of the whole class gives them the courage and confidence to speak and gradually their vocabulary increases, pronunciation, use of language also improves to a great extent'

The practice developed by this teacher may illustrate an accommodation of the expectation of students that they work with the attention of and direct guidance from the teacher in the classroom, a practice noted by Huda (2013) as typical of English lessons in schools in Bangladesh. Four observations can be made. First, the extent to which teaching in the university differs from lessons in schools may not be quite as reported by students. Indeed a dimension of the positive evaluation of students may derive from the continuity with practice in schools. Second, what looks like teacher-led practice, may in fact be student-led, in that it reflects what the students expect rather than what the teacher considers as desirable in an ideal world. This aligns with a consensus view of practice: what tends to happen is what the participants expect to happen. Third, the status of the teacher may be reflected in their role as assessor of performance. Students perform for the teacher, and get feedback, something valued more highly than performance for or with peers. Fourth, the consensus and coherence in the way teacher and students construct classroom activities may indicate effectiveness at a social level, but it is based on assumptions about limitations: on the teacher's part a sense that students are not capable of learning without the teacher's guidance and control.

A Writing Skills teacher described how responding to students' needs involved a focus on writing grammatically correct sentences on the board and discussing the grammar rules which underpinned them:

'We do not have any separate course on grammar – there is no formal teaching of grammar in the classroom – through writing classes I try to make them aware of grammatical rules'

The practice described by this teacher may reflect a move away from the development of writing skills, and towards a focus on sentence level grammar. While this could be viewed as a limitation in terms of the functional nature of the curriculum (UE Type 3), it might also reflect a language analysis/language awareness (Svalberg, 2007) approach. The teacher's construction of the students as wholly dependent on the classroom process is a significant strand in the narrative here too, aligning with the perspectives on Bangladeshi classroom culture in AUTHOR (nnnn) and Huda, 2013) for example. The tutor regularly advised students to do homework and to read in the library, but noted that 'they rarely do'. On a more positive note, this tutor felt the strategy was successful:

'When they first come to the department, they do not have any idea about organisational techniques or cohesion and coherence. But gradually qualitative changes in their writing are clearly visible'

Three observations can be made here. First, the focus on sentence level grammar may be a valuable focus for the students, and constitute an indirect approach to developing a functional competence in English. Second, the teacher's perception of learning and change may be significant, and a basis for further research. Third, there may be less positive motivations as well: the continuity with typical school practices; the focus on grammar as a comfort zone for the teacher; and a construction of students as dependent on the tutor. We take up this mix of factors in the next section.

7. Discussion

There are four key findings in this preliminary study which merit further research in this context and perhaps more widely in contexts of UE. These are the UE construct, the student contribution to learning, the role of English tutors, and directions for curriculum development.

8. UE construct

It is useful to consider the three types of University English as a starting point which helps identify where the students are, which aspects of the curriculum are working well and which can be developed further. Types 1 and 2 in the Bangladesh university case above, illustrate the complex way in which UE works as a curriculum. A recent innovation has been the introduction of skills courses (LSRW) in order to enhance the functional and practical abilities of students. The tutors however, appear to focus on language accuracy within these courses, which may at a surface level represent a lack of alignment with course goals. However, it may also represent a level of complexity in the curriculum: the tutors are maintaining the established value of accuracy as a feature of UE, while also extending capacity to use it. A similar complexity may be evidenced in the maintaining of a literature focus in the curriculum: this is clearly supported by students, who, perhaps with limited understanding of how it works, have a sense of the value of literary understanding as part of the UE study and award. The tendency for language learning in large, lecture-type contexts may represent an unavoidable feature of the context, which teachers make work, as the teachers in Holliday (1997) do. UE as a construct has the potential to identify opportunities for curriculum development, which build on existing practices, and socially important features of this context.

9. The student contribution to learning

The students, as reflected in the data for this study, are aware and have agency (van Lier, 2007). In the context of using technology, they are both skilled and aware of learning possibilities. At the same time, they are constructed as dependent and reliant on a teacher-led lecture style programme. It is likely that while they may not be fully aware of the chains of reasoning, volition, and intuition which shape their participation in this programme, they are 'appearing' reliant on tutors, in order to 'allow' the kind of classroom experience which they value. Some students, and indeed it may be a minority, may value and be benefiting from lectures where they appear passive and teacher-dependent, while also driving their language learning through use of media resources outside the classroom. The data we have at this stage do not fully support this hypothesis: however, it is an important line of enquiry to explore further, and to consider when designing and implementing further change.

10. The role of English tutors

The tutors in this context are managing a fine balance: they are orienting their work to communicative principles, but in a way which looks like traditional teacher-led focus on form or, possibly, focus on forms (Ellis, Basturkmen & Loewen, 2001). The classroom practices generated by this strategy are successful in terms of familiarity and student expectations. When students come from high schools they recognise the English classroom as a context of learning. But they also feel it meets their expectations of university study, with its focus on literature, and using rather than memorising language. Thus, the teachers are successful in one essential way: their contribution resonates with students, and sustains their belief in the learning value of their classes. The classes may appear teacher-led, and the teacher performance in this is a context of teachers showing their expertise, which students wisely observe is a particularly important resource in the context of the whole programme and institutional provision.

11. Directions for curriculum development

Based on the limited data set accrued so far, it might be considered reasonable to recommend more collaborative learning, smaller classes, and greater structured use of resources outside the classroom. However, such recommendation could not be easily implemented, and might disrupt a key element of current practice: the values and investments of students and tutors. Arguably, the current curriculum is aligning with the core principles of curriculum development outlines in Nation and Macalister (2010): the teachers provide meaning-focused input, push meaning-focussed output, emphasise language-focused learning, and promote fluency development.

Maintaining the status quo however is not a tenable position for two reasons. First, the wider discourses in the context – for example, the increasing marginalisation of an English Studies curriculum based on the traditional English literature canon (Akhter 2012), and the weak and possibly declining standards of English in Bangladesh, including within universities – suggest there is room for improvement. Second, the successful operation of the curriculum may prevail for only a limited number of students, and with some changes, many more could benefit. What is needed, is not an externally driven set of innovations, but rather analysis of current practice by teachers and curriculum leaders, identifying, building on and extending what works well. We recommend a micro-analysis rather than a broad brush approach, guided by three principles:

- Identification by teachers of what works well;
- Involvement of student stakeholders by teachers as part of this process;
- Anchoring of curriculum changes in what can be easily implemented.

These principles can be guided by Type 1 and Type 2 UE as outlined above, to push learning towards both functional and aesthetic goals. Teachers in an ongoing analysis of their classrooms, can fine tune and extend their practices so that the classroom continues to lead the learning. In

this way, the foundations can be laid for an approach to UE which can work effectively in achieving the longer term goal of Type 3 – English for all.

12. Conclusion

This study has set out a framework for understanding the University English curriculum. The three broad categories reflect different learning emphases which are constructed by traditions of university teaching and assessment, and by teachers through practices within programmes. Each type has strengths in terms of curriculum constructs and also areas to develop. As a framework for English language curriculum analysis, the typology facilitates engagement with learning purpose and pedagogical processes as a means of achieving greater effectiveness, efficacy and efficiency. The context studied is an illustration of how the different curriculum types blend in implementation. The blend is complex, managed separately but possibly with underlying complementarity, by the tutor and student participants. In this paper, we have established a framework that can help teachers understand how the UE curriculum works. The framework is one that can be used for mapping other university curricula, and where there are greater research resources than we have had in CRUE, test the hypothesis about how the different curriculum strands construct learning opportunities.

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