# Intercultural Exposure through English Language Teaching: An Analysis of an English Language Textbook in Bangladesh

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The treatment of culture in foreign language textbooks is comparatively a new trend in English Language Teaching (ELT) which is based on the growing consensus that language textbooks should attempt to raise students' awareness of international culture as well as that of their own. Being influenced by this thought, Bangladesh too like many other countries has incorporated intercultural contents in English language textbooks at secondary and higher secondary levels as a part of a reformation process in the ELT sector. The present study examines the proportion and kinds of intercultural contents in one of those textbooks, *English for Today* (*EfT*), which is produced locally by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), Bangladesh. It also aims at investigating intercultural awareness and abilities promoted through such input.

**Key Words:** English Language Teaching (ELT), intercultural exposure, language textbooks, intercultural awareness and abilities

## 1 Introduction

In modern-day civilization where international understanding plays an integral part of English use as a 'lingua franca', the concept of intercultural communication has become an essential ability to survival in the global world. Especially after the Second World War, it has become a major means to meet the growing challenge of politics, science, technology, higher education, trade and commerce. The fact that English has been the world language rather than the property of any particular country (Crystal, 1997; Talebinezhad, 2001) has created significant changes in the methodology, practice and materials in English Language Teaching (ELT). As a result, the inclusion of international cultures in language teaching textbooks has been the focus of language educators, researchers and material writers. This has facilitated today's textbooks to include a wide variety of cultures for raising awareness that the world should be made accessible to all. The use of English as a 'lingua franca' by the people, who do not speak it as first language in international situations rationalizes the inclusion of international cultures in language teaching textbooks (Cortazzi & Jin, 1999).

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Bangladesh as part of its reformation in the ELT sector has introduced new curriculum and textbooks, *English for Today* (*EfT*) series, at the secondary (classes 6-10) and higher secondary (classes 11 and 12) levels (Shams 2000; Roy 2004). *EfT* series is produced locally by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) of Bangladesh and compulsorily followed at the secondary and higher secondary classes in the mainstream education system. The books have been designed and developed for practising four basic language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing following the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach. This is to note here that the new curriculum of Bangladesh accepts the need of introducing internationally diverse contents such as foreign society, culture and customs to students through the medium of English (NCTB, 1995). Hence, unlike the contents of the older textbooks, the new textbooks (*EfT*s) have not only included information about foreign characters or incidents but also created opportunities for students to interact with elements of international culture.

This study sets out to examine the ways in which international cultures are presented in the English textbooks there at the **secondary** level. For this to work, *EfT* (9-10), the textbook for classes 9 and 10 is analysed as a case study. The main focus of which is to respond to the following questions:

a. What proportion of local and international contents can be found in the textbook?
b. What kind of intercultural issues are promoted through such input?
c. How can these intercultural contents contribute to students' intercultural awareness and abilities?

Now a brief discussion follows to rationalise the study. Then with a view to answering the above questions, the study gradually discusses the importance of intercultural approach in foreign language education, and the findings of the study referring to the above *focus questions a*, *b, c*. Finally the study ends with a conclusion.

## 1.1 Rationale behind this study

Any kind of research or study on any textbook is likely to help future curriculum designers and textbook writers to think and work toward qualitative improvement in this regard. Since incorporation of cultural contents in language textbooks is quite a new trend in the mainstream textbooks in Bangladesh, this case study may lead future textbook designers to think more of the way of implementing intercultural competence as well as to what extent and in what ways this skill is being taught via the textbook-teacher partnership. It is hoped that this would ultimately create better

opportunities for producing more effective teaching-learning materials in English as Foreign Language (EFL) and/or English as Second Language (ESL) context.

## 2 The Importance of an Intercultural Approach in Foreign Language Education

The relationship between language and culture has led to numerous debates in English language teaching and learning. In discussing the relation between language and culture, Byram and Fleming (1998) assert that learning a language, spoken by a particular group, is learning the shared meanings, values and practices of that group as they are embodied in the language. In relation to the selection and development of language materials, as Brown (1990) points out, without having a fair amount of cultural knowledge, one cannot fully understand what is said or written.

It has been said in the introduction that there is a growing consensus that English is no more a language of the 'native speakers'. Rather, people from different regional and cultural identity, where English is not the first language, are using English for different purposes. Therefore, any effort to impose certain cultural aspects only from few countries where English is spoken as mother tongue would be a kind of imposition to other cultural group, and might be considered as 'language hegemony or linguistic chauvinism' (Talebinezhad, 2001, p. 5). Those who are involved in curriculum designing or material writing should realise that 'non native speakers of English may also use English to express, react or even propagate their ideas to affect a relatively larger part of the world, including native speakers' (ibid, 2001, p. 5).

Thus, the changing role of the English language has made the question of intercultural abilities more important. Much of the debate over how cultural questions should be incorporated into the teaching of English has been linked to a discussion of the increasing role of English due to the impact of mass media, the globalization of technological progress, multiculturalism and postmodernism (Cherrington, 2005, as cited in Laaβ, 2007). In this context, intercultural contents may play an important role in learning English as a second or foreign language. Scollon and Scollon (2001) argue that we need intercultural abilities in order to meet cultural challenges, and bring them out of the feelings of frustration in communication across a number of cultural differences. To this end, English as an International Language (EIL) pedagogy should be 'one of global appropriacy and local appropriation' (Alptekin, 2002, p. 63) and this should prepare learners 'to be both global and local speakers of English and to feel at home in both international and national cultures' (Kramsch & Sullivan, 1996, p. 211; Alptekin, 2002). Although English is a global language, it is always realized in local context and this is why learners need to be exposed to a variety of 'others' to develop new perspectives on their own cultural ways to counteract prejudiced

attitudes and ethnocentrism (Kramsch, 1993, 1997). The more learners are able to see that different cultures represent equally valid ways of looking at the world, higher is the chance for them to act like international citizen. The idea is also supported by Bao (2006a) who emphasises 'interculturality' in language teaching, and raises the questions as to whether learners should only interact with native speakers of English when they stay in the UK or the USA, or if it would be desirable for a Korean and a Vietnamese to try to act like Americans when they communicate with each other in the USA. He argues that in such cases intercultural competence enables one to act politely and adequately with the interlocutor. Here, it can be argued that when English is more and more considered as a means of communication in a cross cultural situation, an intercultural approach in language learning helps learners to develop insight into other cultures, and positive attitudes towards other people with a growing awareness of their own culture as well. Parallel ideas are also found in Cunningsworth (1990, 1995), and Bao (2006a) who believe that a thoughtful incorporation of culture in textbooks may help learners to communicate effectively in cross-cultural situation and assist them in becoming tolerant and receptive to values of other cultures.

All these catalysts influence curriculum designers and material developers to incorporate intercultural contents in language teaching. In Bangladesh a decade is gone after the new textbooks are in practice. Section 4 will analyse how the intercultural contents are used in Bangladeshi textbooks along with the objectives behind. Before that, now let us see the types of cultural contents generally used in language textbooks.

## 3 Types of Cultural Contents in Textbooks

Textbooks vary in content and approach to cultural treatment. Aliakbari (2005) observes that the representation of culture in textbooks seems very complex. It is evident that some textbooks include a range of non-English or local cultural contents giving importance to the use of English internationally, others include target culture or English cultural contents for the same purpose. The followers of the latter group believe that the target language should be practised in a cultural context where it is really used. However, there are also trends to blend learners' own culture with that of the international community to use English internationally. The following sections explain the individual category with little more detail.

### 3.1 Local contents

Sometimes English as a Foreign Language (EFL) textbooks which are produced at a national level for particular countries use local contents or source culture rather than target cultures. The reasons for using the source culture are to help students become aware of their own cultural identity

(Cortazzi & Jin, 1999). In such textbooks, the images of speakers, and sometimes the topics, are usually familiar to the students, but presented in the target language. Some examples of such textbooks are *El libro de inglés* in Venezuela; *Spot light on English*, an EFL textbook for Turkey; and *English for Saudi Arabia,* a textbook for Saudi Arabia.

## 3.2 Target culture

In contrast, a large number of EFL textbooks include target culture, which is the culture of English speaking people. An example of this approach is the textbook named "Success- Communicating in English" which is designed in the United States and marketed worldwide (Aliakbari, 2005). This book portrays the multicultural nature of American society. Books like the *new Headway Series* published by the Oxford University Press can be another substantial example in this regard. These types of English teaching materials which are designed for global marketing frequently use English names and try to teach English culture and values (Krishraswamy & Aziz, 1978, as cited in Aliakbari, 2005).

## 3.3 A blend of local and international culture

On the other hand, the third category of EFL textbooks includes a wide variety of cultures set in English-speaking countries and in other countries where English is used as a second or foreign language. The cultural content of this category shows characters from all around the world who use English for global communication and the aim of these textbooks is to develop the intercultural skills of the learners (Cortazzi, 2000).

However, there are criticisms against the textbooks only focusing the local culture or target culture in ESL/EFL situation. Bao (2008, p. 268) views that 'An overdose of local-culture ingredients can easily damage learners' curiosity and novelty'. On the other hand, Altan (1995) argues that the 'globally' designed textbooks are mostly Anglo-centric. They fail to draw on local varieties of English and have not gone very far in recognizing English as an international language. He agrees with Prodomou (1992 in Bao, 2008, p. 268)) that a multicultural approach is more appropriate where English is assumed as global language and suggests that topics which are part of today's international society (e.g., human rights, interactive media, business practice etc.), mainly with a purpose to increase the learners' general knowledge of the world they live in, should be used as the content for practice in the receptive skills of listening and speaking. He further argues that this practice should relate to the learner's own socio-cultural context.

The following section investigates the proportion of the above mentioned cultural contents used in *EfT* (9-10). It also studies the kinds of these cultural contents and their underpinning objectives. At the same time, it

probes into any gray area in the presentation of these cultural contents. The section ends up with revealing the intercultural abilities promoted through intercultural contents.

## 4 Findings of the Study

This section first examines the proportion of local and intercultural contents in the *EfT*, and then progressively illustrates the types of intercultural issues offered in developing students' ability to interact internationally.

## 4.1 Proportion of local and international contents in *EfT*

To identify the proportion of the local and international contents (*focus question a* at the introduction), the lessons of *EfT* (9-10) have been divided into three categories, which are:

a. *Lessons with local reference:* The study considers characters, incidents, places or anything related to Bangladesh as local cultural reference. Such references include, for example, any story or activity that can facilitate communication among local characters without much consideration of foreign cultural elements.

b. *Lessons with international reference:* References related to specific countries outside Bangladesh are included in this category. This category also includes references widely known, accepted and applied around the world; myths and fables of other countries, and literature written by famous poets around the world.

c. *Lessons with both local and international references:* Lessons with local and foreign characters, places, incidents or intercultural communication/interaction are selected in this category. International issues or crises common in Bangladesh as well as other countries around the world are also added here.

d. *Lessons with neutral content*: Some contents cannot be categorically determined as reflecting local or international culture but rather they are associated with general knowledge of life skills, science, technology, or some other aspect/s of human civilization. These are specified as neutral. How to use a library, how to open a bank account, how to write a CV, how to find out a place from a map, or talking about light and camera are some examples of lessons with neutral content.

An analysis identifies how these contents are assimilated in *EfT* (9-10) and it shows that out of 119 lessons in the textbook 31 lessons contain local

references, 26 lessons contain international references, 43 lessons contain both local and international contents, and 19 lessons contain neutral content. Thus it seems that the textbook provides sufficient references of international culture. Figure 1 presents the proportion of the cultural contents in this textbook in a pie chart that shows *EfT* (9-10) has more international than local contents. 22 percent international contents in contrast to 26 percent local contents are not insufficient in any consideration. However, the percentage of international culture increases as the textbook has 36 percent local and international contents.

Figure 1. Proportion of cultural contents in *EfT* (9-10)
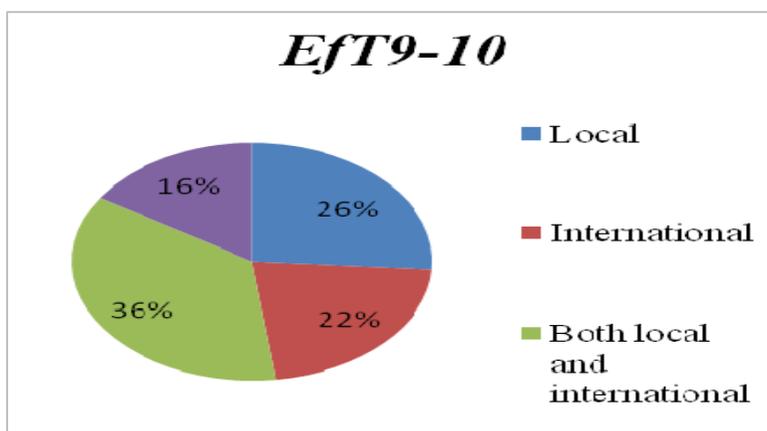


## 4.2 Kinds of intercultural issues presented in *EfT*

This section discusses the categories of international culture represented in *EfT* (9-10) through highlighting intercultural exposure and thus responds to the *focus question b* (at the introduction).

### 4.2.1 Category 1- Intercultural attitudes

As an essential component of intercultural competence, intercultural attitude refers to 'curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own' (Byram, Nichols, & Stevens, 2001; Mennecke, 1993). It enhances readiness to communicate with others.

An example of this is identified in Lesson 1 (Unit 4, p. 31) where the instruction for students is '*Discuss the different things that you see in the picture'*. In fact, with a given picture here students are asked to compare the people they see in the picture with some Bangladeshi people. In doing so, the lesson attempts to help students develop curiosity for newness and build tolerance toward differences mentioned above.

The book also tries to discover the unknown which is also important in building a positive intercultural attitude. In this connection, two Bangladeshi and a British student are found visiting and exploring some new places in Bangladesh and Nepal in Lesson 1-7 (Unit 19, pp. 189-200). Here, learners are guided to discover new places different from their own.

Cortazzi and Jin (1999) observe that intercultural attitude is furthermore important to develop personal identity as well as that of others. It sharpens learners' ability to understand one or more cultures and the social identities of whom they are interacting with (Byram & Fleming, 1998). In other word, it is a kind of 'otherness' that can be developed by talking about different lives or different groups of people around the world. In Lesson 10, Unit 4, pp. 46-47 learners are asked to identify the differences between two countries (i.e., Bangladesh and Singapore). The lesson offers a Bangladeshi girl's experience in Singapore that she shares with her family. Similarly, lessons 1-4 (Unit 17, pp.172- 179) represent ethnic groups of Bangladesh and other countries around the world. These lessons encourage students' competence of intercultural attitude and induct them into a better understanding of and respect for people whom they do not know. Not only that, pictures (pp. 172, 178) in the textbook demonstrate people of two ethnic groups (Maghs and Monipuri) in Bangladesh. The lessons in this unit discuss the lifestyles of these two groups as well as the lives of Eskimos and Hopi Indians. It aims at expanding learners' awareness of the differences even within a culture.

### 4.2.2 Category 2 - Intercultural knowledge

Byram et al. (2001, p. 6) believe that intercultural knowledge combines the 'knowledge of social processes, and knowledge of illustrations of those processes'. They suggest that one should have the knowledge of social groups, their products and practices as well as those of others'. This comprises the knowledge about other people, country, culture, cultural practice, social manners, behaviour, and life style. The following discussion will give attention to the intercultural knowledge and their status in *EfT* (9-10).

A British girl, Becky, in her diary writes her feelings about Bangladeshi family life and culture (Lesson 2, Unit 1, pp. 3-6; p. 7-8). Impressions from a foreigner's point of view about local culture and family reveal how one's own culture may feel like to a member of other culture. In another occasion, Becky is surprised to hear about the traditional Bangla New Year celebration (Lesson 4, Unit 1, pp. 7-8) and its cultural value from Masum, a Bangladeshi boy. Becky then reads a newspaper article on it. The lessons thus explicate cultural diversity as well as the emotional attachment of Bangladeshi people to their own culture and heritage.

In addition, Lesson 1 of Unit 10 (p. 101) shows that Becky, during her visit to Bangladesh, goes to a village and is introduced to a woman. Becky

experiences the struggles of a Bangladeshi rural, poverty stricken woman by speaking to her. The lesson endorses the rural life of Bangladesh, Bangladeshi women's fights against poverty and their gradual empowerment. Furthermore, Lessons 1 and 2 (Unit 9, pp. 93-96), are specimens of cultural exchange where a British businessman buys a painting by a famous painter of Bangladesh, and another British journalist expresses his likings for Bangladeshi foods.

The textbook additionally introduces new kinds of food and food habits, which are unfamiliar in Bangladesh. Lesson 3, Unit 1, p. 6 describes the food habits of a British girl, Becky, who keeps her daily records in a dairy. For example,

> a) *I had my usual breakfast with cereal and milk.*
> b) *We had our lunch at Macdonald's.*

(Lesson 3, Unit 1, p. 6)

Knowledge of new places and new social practices are also found in the textbook. Lesson 1 (Unit 2, pp. 9-10) engages students to compare different lifestyles. Here they experience the daily routine of a typical working mother in England, which they compare with that of a working mother in Bangladesh. Similarly the daily routine of a British businessman and his holiday plan (e.g., *we may go hiking in the Rockies and visit Vienna*) familiarize students with a different lifestyle in another culture (Lesson 1, Unit 9, p. 94).

### 4.2.3 Category 3 - Intercultural communication

Collier and Thomas (1988) define intercultural communication as communication between two persons who identify themselves as distinct from others in a cultural sense. Jandt (2001) refers to intercultural communication as face-to-face interactions among people of diverse culture. This category thus includes direct communication between members of local and other cultures. In this study, intercultural communication is observed from Byram's (1997, p. 22) point of view where intercultural communication means an interaction

- between people of different languages and countries where one is a native speaker of the language used; and

- between people of different languages and countries where the language used is a lingua franca.

In Lesson 1, Unit 1 (p. 1) of the textbook a British student arrives in Bangladesh to participate an international scout jamboree. A Bangladeshi student and his teacher welcome the British student. The lesson shows how introduction takes place between people from different countries.

Furthermore, travel to other countries with confidence, enjoyment and interest is shown, when a Bangladeshi girl visits Singapore and interacts with some people there (Lesson 5, Unit 4, pp. 38-39). The lesson provides students with some interesting information along with a visual image of the new place. The activities here lead them to a simulated situation. Later they are asked to describe their tour with the following instructions:

> *a) Would you like to visit another country? If so, which one and why?*
> *b) What would you do if you visited another country?*

(p. 38)

### 4.2.4 Category 4 - Intercultural skills

Intercultural skill is a key component of intercultural competence. Byram et al. (2001) identify this skill as the 'skills of interpreting and relating', and the 'skills of discovery and interaction'. They define 'skills of interpreting and relating' as the 'ability to interpret a document or event from another culture, to explain it and relate it to documents or events from one's culture', where as the 'skills of discovery and interaction' refer to the 'ability to acquire new knowledge of a culture and cultural practices and the ability to operate knowledge, attitudes and skills under the constraints of real time communication and interaction' (ibid, 2001, p. 6).

Literary pieces in textbooks can play an important role in promoting intercultural skills. Literature being a kind of social document reflects overall culture of a particular time in a particular society and works as a bridge between that society and readers through its contents. It also shows how language is used in different contexts. It also provides opportunities for reading, comprehending, inferring, or interpreting a text which is also important for an intercultural speaker. Han (2005) observes that teaching literature is essential as it reveals people's ideas and dreams in the most creative and imaginative way. He further argues that creative or intellectual tasks like literature not only provide with some 'anxiety free zone' for learners, rather they can compare and contrast their own culture with that of an alien country. By the same token, myths and fables (pp. 201-206) in literature with universal appeal ultimately contribute to learners' emotional development by fostering positive interpersonal and intercultural skills.

In *EfT* (9-10) a whole unit is provided with English literary works. Unit 16 in the textbook (Lesson 1-6, pp. 162-169) includes some poems and

an extract of drama. Poems are presented for students' enjoyment as well as for their evaluation. They are also devoted to giving students a considerable amount of experience about world literature.

Adapting behaviour in an intercultural situation is also important as an intercultural skill since it promotes survival skills in unknown circumstances. It is important to realize that 'the beliefs, values, and behaviours of a particular speech community are deeply embedded within them and can cause reactions toward and rejection of others as they may conflict with others' beliefs, values and behaviours' (Byram, Gribkova & Starkey, 2002).

Lesson 9 (Unit 4, pp. 44-45) can be presented as an example to promote survival skills where a Bangladeshi girl, Neela, experiences a mishap of being mugged in a street of Singapore and reports to a police officer there. The lesson not only teaches how to report to a police officer but generally equips students with crisis management skills or adapting to a new situation. Similar ideas are also found in Lesson 3 (Unit 4, p. 35) when Neela on her first visit to the new country, Singapore, collects information from a receptionist in a hotel as well as from a travel agent there. The objective of this lesson is to guide a student to learn how to behave in a different country.

Arguably, intercultural skills involve the ability to bring the culture of origin and the foreign culture into relation with each other (Byram et al., 2002). In the intercultural situation, the achievements of other countries should be taken positively and may be seen as exemplary to others. Moreover, interest in foreign countries, cultures, and lifestyles as well as the willingness to see one's own country and culture in a broader context are also important skills for learners to acquire intercultural competency. Knowledge of difference (skill of comparison) is thus found when a Bangladeshi girl discusses her visiting experience in Singapore mentioned above, and students have the opportunity to think about the differences between two countries.

. Likewise, Lesson 8 (Unit 7, pp. 79, 81) highlights the significance of a religious festival, i.e. Eid day, which is one of the biggest religious festivals in Bangladesh. Lesson 9 in the same unit describes Christmas in England and gives students a chance to compare it with a similar occasion in Bangladesh. This type of activities ensures learners participation in an intercultural experience, prepares them to act in the Global village as responsible and thoughtful adults, as Gupta (2003) asserts.

Awareness for common humanity, mutual cooperation, and understanding can also be considered as a part of intercultural skill. In this regard Byram et al. (2001) maintains that the purpose of teaching should not be to try to change learners' values but to prepare them in a way so that they acknowledge human dignity and equality of human rights as the democratic basis for social interaction. There are a few lessons in *EfT* (Lesson 1-5, Unit 18, pp. 180-188) which discuss some globally observed events (e.g. The International Women's Day, The International Mother Language Day, The International Day of Elderly, May Day). Through these lessons students

improve their knowledge on world humanity irrespective of their cultural differences. Similarly, discussions on some global issues (Lesson 1-7, Unit 22, pp. 213-226) as well as local challenges to environmental protection should raise students' awareness of important concerns such preventing pollution, and cooperation among nations.

## 4.3 Stereotyping

However, though *EfT* (9-10) has ample opportunities to utilise intercultural issues toward intercultural abilities, some lessons fall under the category of 'stereotyping'. In case of stereotyping, characteristics of a group are not only overgeneralised but they are also taken to have some overestimated negative or positive value (Scollon & Scollon, 1995). Collins (1995, as cited in Bao, 2006b, p. 70) also defines stereotyping as 'generalisations about a group of people which are often based on insufficient evidence.' This creates rooms for fragmentary, one-sided and superficial information resulting in misinterpretation about a certain group of society. It gives way to flawed thinking about people and cultures and tends to provide an inaccurate picture of the real world (Bao, 2006b).

There are a few lessons in *EfT* (9-10), where stereotypical descriptions have been made. The description and visual images of houses and cloths of Eskimos as presented in the textbook (p. 174) do not seem to provide up-to-date information. Eskimo life is much different now. Most of the people live in towns or small settlements. They wear modern clothing, live in modern houses, and eat food purchased from stores (Griffin, n.d.).

The lessons thus fail to present recent information on a social group to the students and portray a 'historical perspective of life' rather than presenting the 'contemporary facts' (Cunningsworth, 1984, p. 62). Oversimplifying the information prevents learners from receiving new and accurate views of a society and stereotypical descriptions cause damage to their thinking (Bao, 2006b). Therefore it is necessary to repair overgeneralization of cultures by allowing the texts and visual images to demonstrate the current information.

So far, section 4 has demonstrated kinds of intercultural issues presented in *EfT* (9-10). The following discussion aims at exploring how these intercultural skills are promoted through the textbooks towards learners' intercultural abilities that will eventually enhance their language competencies in the real life situation.

## 4.4 Intercultural abilities promoted through the sample textbook

The major intent in this analysis of *EfT* (9-10) is to investigate the contribution of the textbook to improving students' intercultural ability or competence. The above discussion focuses how students are given to develop

their own identities as users of a foreign language, how the textbook exposes learners in international culture and how it aims at preparing the target learners by developing their knowledge, skills and attitudes in the target foreign language classroom. It is evident that this exposure has been done in two ways-

1. *through reading about other cultures in which students are directly equipped with information about foreign countries*. The issues of general knowledge and global education fall under this criterion.

2. *through experiential learning as different lessons and tasks lead students to widen their knowledge on international issues*.

The following examples and discussion will investigate how the newly learnt customs and lifestyles contribute to their own experiences. Parallel discussion also follows to highlight what type of intercultural abilities the learners are expected to gain from this and how. It will attend to the focus question c in the introduction.

*Example 1:* Students are asked to read a Bangladeshi boy's experience of living in England that he expresses in his letter. After they have read the letter, students are asked to make a list of the foods the writer used to have in England. Later, they are asked to discuss in pairs what their feelings would be if they had to eat those kinds of foods (p.13).

*Example 2:* It has been described in Section 4.2.4 of this study that Lessons in Unit 4 in the *EfT* presents a Bangladeshi girl's (Neela) experience in Singapore. In these lessons students are involved in series of simulation where they imagine themselves in similar situation and exchange dialogue with their partners or share opinions with their peers. For example,

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*Imagine that you are travelling to Bangkok. Write a dialogue between you and the person at the information desk in a Travel Agency.*

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(Lesson 3, Unit 4, p. 36)

*Example 3:* The ability of 'sharing information' is highlighted in a lesson in the textbook when students are asked to share knowledge about their own culture with a member of other culture. For example, students are asked to work in pairs in a simulated situation where one student is a foreigner visiting Bangladesh and another student is introducing Bangladeshi food, and eating habits. In turns they talk about the foods and food habits of Bangladeshi people (p. 41).

*Example 4:* In the textbook, the process of social interactions is sometimes promoted through visits to friends in a foreign country. The lessons comprising such contents enhance students' understanding of a different culture. They generate appropriate knowledge, skills and attitudes to interact with interlocutors from another country and culture. Here students are also asked to talk about their likes and dislikes with their partners. Such activities not only help students know each other better, but also ensure diversification of thinking, and recognition of the value of differences in background, behaviours and beliefs in their peer groups (Lund, 2006).

*Example 5:* Page number 200 in the *EfT* offers some Bangladeshi students along with their British friends visiting many interesting places in Nepal and enjoying the experience there. The lesson not only presents a story of some Bangladeshi and British friends but also introduces a new country and culture to students. Even the exercise (given in the table below) also facilitates them internalising the content to narrate their own experience in the target language.

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*Imagine you have visited a particular place. Write about your experience using the following questions.*
*- How did you plan your visit?*
*- Where did you go?*
*- When did you go?*
*- How did you travel there?*
*- How long did it take?*
*- How long did you stay there?*
*- What did you see?*
*- What did you like best?*

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(p.200)

*Example 6:* Description of cultural encounters can be motivating for students. Lesson 3 (Unit 4, p. 35) discusses a picture of Singapore and asks students if they have seen such modern structures in Bangladesh. The underlying idea here is to encourage Bangladeshi students to learn from others to make the country prosperous. Furthermore, the overseas study experience (Unit 9, pp. 97-98) of a Bangladeshi boy can also be inspiring for students for their own achievements. The lesson on how to use the Internet equips students with modern technology (Unit 8, pp. 88-90) while the security tips given in a hotel in Singapore allow students to prepare for own safety in a new situation (see the following text as an example in this regard).

> *After filling in the form, Neela is given the key for her room. In her room, Neela reads the security tips given below. Read them and say why you think these measures are necessary.*

(Unit 4, p. 37)

*Example 7:* It has been said in section 4.2.4 that there are some fictional texts including poetry in the textbooks. They intend to develop learners' interest in creative writing, and encourage pleasure reading besides familiarizing them with the life and culture of different societies. Unit 16 (Lesson 1-6, pp. 162-169) includes some poems and an extract of a drama. Poems are presented here to make further comments. For example, after they have read the poem, *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening* by Robert Frost, the students are asked to answer the following questions:

> *1. Write an imaginary dialogue between the speaker and his horse.*
> *2. What do you know about the speaker's attitude towards nature from this little poem?*
> *3. Where do you think the speaker is going to? Why is s/he going there?*

(p. 169)

Therefore, summarizing the above discussion it can be said that the intercultural contents in the *EfT* (9-10) are intended to contribute to students' ability to:

1. relate new knowledge to their context or experience (example 1, 5).
2. share information *(example 1, 3).*
3. compare values *(example 2, 3, 4).*
4. diversify perspectives *(example 4).*
5. adjust to new environment *(example 1, 2, 3).*
6. learn from others to improve themselves *(example 6).*
7. accept cultural diversity *(example 1, 3, 4, 5).*
8. make contribution in the global community *(section 4.2.4).*
9. be curious about new values *(example 3, 5).*

## 6 Conclusion

*EfT* (9-10) has fairly used intercultural contents. In a transition from the traditional grammar translation method to the much talked about CLT, the

intercultural contents used in the textbook could be interesting and fruitful to Bangladeshi learners in their language acquisition, provided the contents are professionally exploited. In spite of some disparities and weak areas (such as stereotyping), the inter-cultural contents used in the textbook have opened new possibilities to contribute to learners' awareness about the world around them. In addition to that, the language presented through these contents should enable learners to use their target language in the real life situation. It may be hoped that these will help them develop a sense of global citizenship and compare and contrast their own country and culture from a global perspective.

Besides it can be said that in describing the potential for gaining intercultural abilities through exposure to international cultures, the study also inspires critical inquiry into future curriculum documents and new generations of textbooks. Since Bangladesh is currently undergoing a reformation phase in the ELT sector, the present study could contribute more to the development of intercultural awareness in the days ahead. The study equally aspires that future textbooks will properly address the issues raised here to equip Bangladeshi learners with better English and better intercultural learning in the process of their being global citizens and competing in a global world.

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