



## EXPLORING ENGLISH TEACHING IN THE CLASSROOMS OF SECONDARY LEVEL IN BANGLADESH

\*Md. Hasan Shahrear<sup>1</sup>, Faisal Mia<sup>2</sup> and Md. Nasim Mahmud<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

The study is conducted to explore teaching methods, materials, classroom activities and interaction between teacher and learners in secondary level of education in Bangladesh. English language teaching must aim at all four skills i. e. speaking, listening, reading, and writing. A teacher can only transform these four skills to students when the teacher is using interactive teaching approach/method. To support the teaching approach innovative classroom activities must be ensured along with appropriate teaching materials. In the class there must be enough teacher student interactions as well. But most often an inefficient; teaching system is in practice in which learning English is viewed as memorizing a list of words and a set of grammatical rules. Furthermore, when the class is not interactive students do not feel at all being involved in the lesson. The study has been conducted by collecting data from seven secondary schools. It has been found that most of the teachers are using Grammar-Translation method and in most cases communicative English language teaching is missing. In classrooms, teachers hardly use group work, pair work, and dialogue activities to teach. Teachers do not generally have any own made teaching aids because they are busy all day with different classes. Even the study has found the interaction between teachers and students is not quite satisfactory. Teachers are helpful and students are not afraid of asking questions related to their study. The study depicts a typical picture of secondary level English classroom of Bangladesh.

**Key words:** Teaching method, teaching materials, classroom activities, classroom interaction, secondary level education.

### Introduction

In Bangladesh, English is taught as a foreign language. Though, the people of Bangladesh can realize that without English any nation cannot stand beside the well up countries. The problem of studying English in Bangladesh hasn't begun today rather it began before our independence. The consequences of it are still being faced after all these years. Above all none can deny the importance of English nowadays. Even English is spoken by more than 380 million people in UK, USA, and the former British colonies; it is the largest of the Western languages. In present world English has played a significant role for developing society and knowledge. English language teaching in Bangladesh is still traditional and not satisfactory. Inside the classroom of our school it has been found that the teachers and the students have no significant idea about the importance of English language, rather a fear always haunts them. The reason for being unable to speak and to write in English is the lack of proper teaching methods, materials, classroom activities and teacher-student interaction. In this study the problems of teaching methods and the other issues which create barriers to get English as foreign language have been explored. Specially, the teenagers are facing the problem because of improper teaching methods, lack of materials, classroom activities, and the

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\*Corresponding Author Email: h.shahrear@gmail.com, faysalahammedprottoy@gmail.com, nasimmahmud565@gmail.com

1. Senior Lecturer, Department of English, Royal University of Dhaka, MPhil Researcher at Bangladesh University of Professionals, Bangladesh.

2. Assistant teacher of English, Bhairab Udayan School, Bhairab, Bangladesh.

3. Assistant teacher of English, M.P.M Ideal Academy, Narsingdi, Bangladesh.

insufficient interaction between teacher-students.

The purpose of the study is to find out teaching methods, materials, classroom activities and teacher-student interaction in secondary level's English classrooms in Bangladesh

### Research Questions

This research aims at finding out the teaching techniques used at secondary level English classes in Bangladesh. Teaching method/approach and used activities will be observed. This study also queries about which method and activity can produce how much students' interaction. From primary data this study will provide answers to the following questions;

- i) Which teaching approaches/methods are used in secondary level English Classrooms?
- ii) Which materials are used in secondary level English Classrooms?
- iii) What classroom activities are used?
- iv) How much participation do the students have in the class?

### Methodology

To conduct the research mix method has been used. To determine the quantity of classroom activities, teacher student talk time ratio, used teaching materials, and for other qualitative dynamic issues qualitative research method has been used. To understand the quality of teaching method/approach, classroom activities, used materials, and for other related descriptive issues qualitative research method will be used.

The population of the study was 14 secondary level schools of Bhairab Upazilla. The sample size of the study was randomly selected 7 secondary schools.

The following table shows research tools:

| SL | Research Tool                  | Number of tools   | Data analysis technique   |
|----|--------------------------------|---|---|
| 1  | classroom observation schedule | 2×7=14<br>(2 English classes have been observed in each sample)                               | Quantitative data analysis techniques and software has been used.             |
| 2  | Teachers' interview            | 1×7=7<br>(1 English teacher, whose class was observed, has been interviewed from each sample) | Qualitative data analysis techniques and triangulation of data has been used. |
| 3  | focus group discussions        | 1×7=7<br>(1 FGD has been conducted in each sample. In every FGD there were 10 students.)      | Qualitative data analysis techniques and triangulation of data has been used. |

The study was conducted by using classroom observation schedule, teachers' interview, and focus group discussions with students.

For classroom observation schedule quantitative and qualitative data analysis method has been used. For teachers' interview and FGD qualitative methods have been used.

### Literature Review

Linguists have been working to improve and to modify new methods just for easy acquiring of a foreign language. Different research reports of ELT situation in Bangladesh are showing that the ELT situation is gradually improving but there are lot of areas in English teaching where significant improvement can yet to be done (Hamid, 2011). Teaching learning of English language has been increasing continuously in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh (Hossain and Tollefson, 2007) English language is a vital tool for economic development employment, to increase production and fulfilling personal and national needs, Coleman (2011a, 2011b). It classifies division. There is belief that it also removes poverty and creates employment. It increases educational opportunity and social equity.

Teaching English has changed in relation to teaching method, teaching materials, use of classroom activities, and interaction pattern. Bangla as our mother tongue and official language was the medium of instruction for higher education (Banu and Sussex, 2001) and this was not helpful in English

classes. In late of 1970 Ministry of education formed a special task force because standard of English language in action and education was falling. Nationalistic fervor was weakening. In 1991 English was introduced as a compulsory subject from grade 1 and Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced (Farooqui, 2008). In an English speaking environment with appropriate teaching methods and teaching materials, English language learning outcomes are better in English medium schools than Bangla medium schools (Hamid, 2006; Hamid & Jahan, 2015).

Most of the students and teachers of Bangladesh have poor proficiency in English as the grades and results are not dependent of their functional proficiency of English (Ali et al., 2011). The principle of learning English in our country is that good English brings prosperity to the individuals; so it should be accessible to all but the fact is everyone cannot take equal advantage or quality of English language teaching equally (Hamid, 2011). It is necessary to take into account the resource and personal policies required for implementation, revealing the weakness of commitment that will goal to the pedagogic action. And then teacher's professional skills and their potentiality to put impact on student learning (Kaplan et al., 2011).

### Data Analysis

Language policy makers (Menken and Garcia, 2010) examined that teaching ideologies from the grammar centered into communicative approach are being conceptualized those are the impacts of language on teacher's education resources and practices. From the found data a positive change in teaching learning of English can be found.

### Teaching method

**Methods:** Teachers use grammar and translation technique and sometimes make it a communicative approach with no success. Especially grammar has dominance in teaching. Participants did not mention any particular name of teaching method. They deductively enforce to the memorizing of grammar rules and translating from native to English and vice versa.

**Reason to choose particular teaching method:** the syllabus of secondary level in Bangladesh is designed to learn grammar rules and to write answer of comprehensive questions. So, Grammar-Translation has got prominence to teach English as a subject in classroom. Grammar-Translation method fulfills the basic needs to pass out the examination according to the curriculum of secondary level of education of Bangladesh. Besides, teachers have less training about teaching method and they hardly know the methods to teach English better in this existing syllabus and curriculum. They do not have any idea about Communicative Language Teaching method (CLT). Teachers said that they do not have any particular method to teach English language in the class and they use an approach which they named as need based approach. They explained that whatever need raised by the students, teachers try to satisfy that particular need. Teachers also mentioned that all through the year they are busy preparing the students for examination. So, the teaching is almost preparing the students for passing in examinations and they hardly have anytime to teach them four skills of language separately in the class.

**Implementation of their teaching methods:** Teachers are using grammatical method to teach. Teachers try to teach in a communicative way but they fail because teachers speak most of the time in classroom. Students have only one motive that is to learn deductively grammar rules and write those in papers. Teachers teach deductively grammar rules and students have to memorize them accordingly, even they have to memorize vocabulary list from the text.

**Merits of the methods:** In Bangladesh, English is not taught as a language but as a subject. That is why those used methods are helpful to the students to pass them out in the examination. Students can learn grammar rules easily and are giving positive output in examination, but in the long run they are failing to fill the purpose of learning a language. Students of Bangladesh have little skill on speaking or listening after long years schooling in English as a subject. But they gain good level abilities to read and write English. But, they still fail to learn English in a communicative way.

**Covering four skills of English language:** Literally, the most used grammatical method has rarely impact on speaking and listening skills. It only focuses on grammar rules and accuracy in writing. So, speaking and listening skills are absent. Though teacher's lecture helps to acquire the listening part a bit, but this also fails to cover because medium of instruction is native language. Students fail



to understand when someone speaks English to them. After completing secondary level, most students fail to communicate using English language. Even they fail to introduce themselves in English.

### **Classroom Activities**

**Main activities in classroom:** Mainly the classrooms are conducted in lecture method. Teachers give lecture and students follow lectures. Students mostly remain as passive listeners. Besides, giving and checking home work is another traditional activity in secondary level classroom in Bangladesh. Providing lectures in native language and checking accuracy of home works are the two main performed activities in English classroom. Teachers take most of the time of a single class. Classrooms are teachers' centered, so it hardly happen to perform any other activities. Although teachers try to make students able to perform extra classroom activities, such as; group work, pair work but most of the time teachers fail to do these.

**Other activities in a classroom:** Group discussion, pair work, dialogue, presentation are the common extra-activities those are taken in a class. But it's not always possible to perform these activities in every class, because there are lot of students in a single classroom that run by only one teacher. And the duration of the class is not good enough to perform all those activities after providing a long narrative lecture to make the students understanding the comprehensive passage or any particular grammar rules. But teachers try to imply those activities as much as possible to make the lessons interesting.

**Impact on four skills:** Students cannot learn more than 10% because of the traditional and old syllabus from education board. But if teachers get training about methods and planning to teach, learning can be easier and effective. Students have to learn lessons and to write in papers. Students do not want to afford much time in classroom activities. They request teachers to follow and to finish the syllabus before the examination. Though these extra-activities put impact on four skills, but the rate of practicing those activities inside classroom is very poor. Besides the performances are done using native language. So, the outcome is very low to acquire four skills of English language.

**Classroom activities increase percentage rate of attendance:** It is a good sign that some of the students take part in class because they are fond of extra activities though they have less interest in extra activities. It is thought that gradually they will like to take part in extra classroom activities. For this, the curriculum should be modified and marks of examinations should be added on performing extra activities in classroom. It will increase the attendance of students and students will also be interested to take part in extra classroom activities. This can improve the speaking and listening skill also.

**Students are taking part in activities:** The ratio of students who are taking part in classroom activities varies from teacher to teacher. The rates are 65%-90% according to the participants. Students have less intention to take part in extra classroom activities. Teacher has to force them to take part in those activities.

### **Materials**

**Materials to teach in classroom:** Traditional text books, board, marker are used to teach. Multimedia projectors are used once a week in classroom. Basically, teacher reads comprehensive passage and grammatical rules from particular text books; and students listen to it carefully. Students are told to write vocabulary list and to memorize. So, text books and paper are mainly used materials for English classroom.

**Materials of their own:** They create contents to teach in classroom. As they give prominence to grammar, they make sheet of grammar rules describing in native language. They cannot make any other materials or tools to teach language, because they remain busy taking a lot of classes. Besides teachers should have proper time, training and investment to make their materials.

**Duration of using materials:** The whole class is divided into two parts Input and output. In input, lecture is given with the help of their sheets by teacher and text books given by education board. Teachers use marker pen to write on board to describe grammar rules and translation. Students follow the sheets those they are given while listening the lecture. In output, paper and pen are used to



write by students. Students read out from the text books and sheets and they write in papers both in classroom and examination.

**Materials are appropriate with syllabus:** These materials are created according to the requirement of syllabus. The syllabus requires teaching grammar rules, comprehensive answering questions and vocabulary memorizing. Materials are much relevant to the syllabus. Used materials give full impact on teaching learning English as a subject in secondary level education in Bangladesh.

**To make the materials creative:** The materials can be improved by using different methods, even with this existing syllabus and curriculum. Teachers can prepare lesson plan to take speaking test and to make students comfortable for free hand writing. Teachers should have enough opportunities to get proper training to teach English language by creating materials.

### **Teacher-students interaction**

**The picture of interaction of a classroom:** Students are friendly. Teachers try to reduce the obstacles to communicate. Teachers motivate students and make them confident to speak with teachers. But this happens rarely, because teachers speak the most part of a single class. Students are not allowed to speak anytime. They are given a chance at last part of the class.

**Students asking questions:** There are opportunities to ask questions for students. They feel easy to ask questions to teachers in classroom when they have their part. And in that time they ask their questions. Teachers try to answer their questions but it is not always possible to listen from every student and to answer them because of the less duration of class and large number of students.

**Duration of using English language in teaching:** Different participants have different views and target. Participants try to use English maximum while teaching. But it is not possible to run the class in English fully because they have to consider the capacity of most of the students besides teachers have less fluency to speak English through the class. Moreover, students are also not interested. The syllabus encourages students to memorize and to write in examination.

**Obstacles to interact with students:** There is an acute problem in making communication with students. Classroom is fully controlled by teachers. So effective communication between students and teachers is quite unsatisfactory, in the classroom only teachers give lecture almost the full time, and students remain as passive listeners.

**Solution of obstacles teachers face:** Teachers try to keep students busy with writing and listening. If students are not attentive, they try to be very harsh and at one point the teachers get involved in gossiping with them. It is mentioned that teachers often speak about the personal problems of students as they find it is necessary. Teachers always try to reduce the affective filter of students to learn inside the classroom.

### **Findings of the study**

The study gives a clear picture of English teaching methods, classroom activities, materials, teacher-student interaction in secondary schools in Bangladesh.

Research Participants didn't mention any particular name of English teaching method, but their descriptions lead us to Grammar-Translation method. They try to use grammatical method in a communicative way but with no success. Traditional materials; such as books, board-marker are used to conduct English classroom. Multimedia projector is used once a week but it does not help to teach language, because teachers are not well trained to use multimedia projector to teach in language teaching. Teachers cannot use self made tools to teach as they have less time after class and they have less training and experiences to create tools. Lecture is the only way they adopt in classroom. The ultimate target is to make the students able to pass the examination. The study has got little prospect in this part. Students are comfortable to ask questions about their lessons when they get their chances. But teachers cannot run the class in English language. They often claim that students are not comfortable to listen English but the fact is teachers cannot properly speak English enough to run a class.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that teachers deductively teach grammar rules, they use traditional materials, text

books, also use native language for classroom instruction. They hardly try to make the lessons interesting by giving classroom activities as pair work, group work, and role play. Even classroom activities cannot make them interested because they are keen to pass the examination by answering grammatical and descriptive questions as syllabus encourages them to do so. There is no speaking test in the examination so, teachers are not interested to teach English speaking and students are also not interested to learn English speaking. For these reasons they are passing secondary level but cannot write and speak in English properly. Teacher-student interaction was found but teachers interact with students mostly using native language.

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