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Evaluating the Implementation of Communicative Language Teaching at the Secondary Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to teach English at the secondary levels of education in Bangladesh is a relatively recent phenomenon. English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) jointly funded by the Government of Bangladesh and DFID of the UK Government developed the English textbook for classes nine and ten. The CLT approach is considered to improve the language abilities especially 'communicative competence' of the learners. But some researchers pointed out that CLT approach is not working well in Bangladesh. Proper implementation of CLT is now a challenge for the policy-makers of the country. The present study aims at exploring the challenges in implementing CLT at the secondary level of Bangladesh and the country's demand for such abilities in school and the workforce. Based on both primary and secondary sources of data and information, the study comprises of empirical survey (through questionnaires), classroom observation scheme, textbook evaluation, and so on. Classroom observation and interview of the secondary students and English teachers proved that communicative activities such as group work, pair work, individual activities, role play, and simulation do not happen in the classes due to the negative attitude of both the teachers and students towards CLT. As a result, implementation of CLT is facing challenges all over the country especially in the non-government schools of rural areas. In most of the cases, the lack of proper knowledge of CLT and motivation of both teachers and students are the cause of failure of CLT approach and a threat to the advancement of English Language Teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh.

Keywords: communicative language teaching (CLT), English language teaching (ELT), secondary level

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1. Introduction

People today need to speak with speakers of different languages and from different countries more regularly for a variety of reasons due to the advent of globalization. Consequently, the goal of learning a foreign language has shifted, with communication now standing as one of the main objectives. The development of language skills in speaking, listening, and writing is emphasized in communicative language teaching (CLT) (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2014). CLT has spread throughout the world as a popular approach to teaching languages (Canale & Swain, 1980). It seeks to impart linguistic proficiency as well as context-specific language usage skills. Both the government and the general public in Bangladesh view English as a tool for development as well as change. It is essential to trade, foreign communication, government, judicial, and education. English is also viewed as a passport to the outside world, and as it promotes trade and remittances, this access is anticipated to boost the country's economy.

To accomplish these aims, a communicative method to learning English has been mandated by Bangladesh's educational policy and curriculum. It is commonly claimed, nonetheless, that this strategy is ineffective (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). This article reviews important research studies, looks at the local and global demands for developing communicative skills, reports a study that looked into how CLT strategies are implemented and varied in practice—or not at all—and provides a discursive analysis of important issues and their ramifications.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The following issues deserve attention: First, there has been a limited body of research examining the actual communicative competency of the students and also the ability of the teachers to train the students need lot of improvement. Despite language policies and the apparent need, research studies and media reports consistently claim that graduating students lack basic awareness of English grammar structures, lack confidence in their ability to use the language, and particularly lack the ability to speak in English (Alam, 2018; Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). According to the study's findings, improving English Language Teaching (ELT) requires addressing a wide range of impediments. These impediments are not examined yet thoroughly to understand the actual scenario of CLT strategies of the teachers and also the students' motivation to enhance their EFL capabilities. Second, there might exist shortages of research on teachers' way of teaching after introducing the CLT method in the context of Bangladesh. The English for Today textbook (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2018) are being used in certain observed circumstances, but not in the intended communicative ways. As an illustration of how the exercises were employed for mindless repetition rather than as cues for conversational participation. To explore the exact condition of the classroom CLT method both from the teacher and the student point of view further study is highly recommended. Last but not the least, examination system, the necessity of teacher preparation, professional development, and teaching materials need to be examined for the establishment of ideal CLT environment in Bangladesh.

Hence, the current research thought to qualitatively explore the impediments on the way to improve English Language Teaching (ELT) that could improve the communicative competency of Bangladeshi students. English instruction is now required in all Bangladeshi schools due to the country's growing understanding of the necessity for its citizens to communicate and compete on a global scale. According to the Ministry of Education (2010), education helps students grow intellectually and morally, appreciate culture and history, and position themselves well for employment across the globe. Since English is regarded as the primary language of the world, its efficient usage is believed to make a significant contribution to human capital and, consequently, to economic development.

The national textbooks that offer contexts for practicing the four language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing—typically in an interactive mode and in real-life situations—as well as the current policy requiring CLT are products of the need to enable learners to communicate effectively in English (National Curriculum, 2012). English proficiency is also seen as a prerequisite for postsecondary education and employment overseas, making it a pathway to study and work overseas. Despite language policies and the apparent need, research studies and media reports consistently claim that graduating students lack basic awareness of English grammar structures, lack confidence in their ability to use the language, and particularly lack the ability to speak in English (Alam, 2018; Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

For this reason, it is a time worthy requirement to conduct a detail study to find out the impediments on the way of attaining communicative competency of the Bangladeshi students and also to find out the short comings of the teachers

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in this regard. The following Primary Research Questions (PRQ) and Secondary Research Questions (SRQ) were formulated according to the problems stated and implication of the study mentioned above:

PRQ 1: Are the CLT approaches implemented properly in Bangladeshi schools?

PRQ 2: What are the main challenges and barriers in the process of CLT implementation in Bangladesh?

SRQ: Is there any discrepancy found between the students' comprehension of the curriculum expectations and their real practice of English learning in Bangladesh?

2. Review of the Literature

This brief review of the literature seeks to highlight key themes in previous studies on CLT in Bangladesh and point out areas that still require investigation. Teachers should adopt teaching methods that emphasize active student participation and collaboration. Continuous monitoring and sincere attempts to adapt materials considering the necessities of learners, well-designed assessment systems, and arranging teachers' training are some prerequisites to upgrade this country's overall English teaching-learning process (Rahman et al., 2024). It also emphasizes the benefits of using English outside of the classroom setting to increase students' confidence in the language (Aldizeeri et al., 2023). Despite the acknowledgement of the significance of CLT in English teaching, noticeable changes have not been accommodated in the implementation of this method in actual classrooms.

Moreover, in spite of the confessed teachers' belief in implementing CLT, their teaching practices do not reflect such beliefs (Pitikornpuangpetch & Suwanarak, 2021). The main problems related to instructional materials were non-diverse, insufficient, and ineffective teaching aids, so the participants required teachers to use diverse instructional materials and integrated web-based technology in English classes (Oeamoum, & Sriwichai, 2020). It is the high time to align the curriculum and test format, and also the training and logistic support for the teachers to overcome the issues surrounding the CLT implementation in the rural context of Bangladesh (Mahmadun et al., 2019).

Numerous studies on the teaching and learning of English in Bangladesh (e.g., Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; McKay, 2011; Rahman & Pandian, 2018) document shortcomings in the application of the policy-mandated communicative approach and in the development of communicative competency. Researchers (Ahmed et al., 2007; Alam, 2016; Rasheed, 2017; Salahuddin et al., 2013) have noted that students frequently avoid virtual learning, exhibit a fear of English, and often remain silent in the classroom. The examination method, which emphasises memorization and ignores spoken language, has been criticized by other studies (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018a). It has been determined that the widespread use of guidebooks and after-school tutoring, together with their instructional dominance (Alam, 2013; Al Amin, 2017; Rashid, 2016), support the test system and impede any form of communicative learning.

Allegations have been made time and again that students across the country are not becoming competent in English (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Islam, 2018); even English-medium schools are allegedly not offering opportunity for students to become proficient in the language (Roshid, 2018). Nonetheless, the literature reviews highlight an apparent disparity between affluent urban and rural subsistence populations, hence exacerbating social stratification. Furthermore, schools in affluent neighborhoods have qualified instructors as well as the supplies and equipment necessary to teach English well, something that isn't the case in rural communities (Ilon, 2000; Islam, 2018). Furthermore, politicians, the media, and many research studies have frequently criticized the general caliber and competency of instructors (Alam, 2018; Farooqui, 2014; Hasan, 2013). This research is primarily quantitative or built upon small-scale case studies. Previous research has questioned CLT implementation in Bangladesh so far (Ali & Walker, 2014; Chowdhury & Phan, 2008; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). Nevertheless, there is a paucity of research that thoroughly examines the application of CLT. Thus, a thorough and wide-ranging analysis of the various aspects that influence English instruction in Bangladesh is still required.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

By benefiting from a qualitative and interpretive research design, this study addressed English teachers' opinion on the English curriculum as it is, their applied methods in the classroom, and the difficulties they faced as educators. In other words, by conducting semi-structured interviews, this study provided a thorough description of the data as well

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as rich and detailed narratives about the backgrounds, perspectives on teaching, motivation to teach, daily practices, professional development opportunities, practical teaching barriers, strategies for overcoming those barriers, and other pedagogical and contextual factors that affect the participants' ability to teach.

3.2 Participants

A survey of 210 English teachers in secondary schools served as the study's initial step. When they completed the survey, a large number of the participating teachers had completed CLT training at several teachers' training institutes. Apart from this, forty-two students, thirty-five instructors, twelve teacher trainers, four principals, twelve parents, and fifteen other professionals—bankers, technical workers, migrant workers, government officials, and others who must use English at work—participated in the qualitative study. Moreover, for the purpose of interviews and observations, a wide range of English teachers were specifically chosen for the qualitative phase of the study from both urban and rural settings, as well as from richer and poorer socioeconomic backgrounds.

3.3 Instruments

There are two instruments used in this study - survey and semi-structured interview. Those are explained as follows:

3.3.1 Survey

The results of an emergent design (Robson, 2011)-based, primarily qualitative research project (Al Amin, 2017) are covered in this paper. They were questioned regarding their opinions of the English curriculum as it is, their methods in the classroom, and the difficulties they faced as educators. Significant differences between their opinions and their teaching actions were found in the survey results. Exam-driven instruction, a lack of qualified and experienced teachers, a lack of understanding of CLT, giving high priority to notebooks and guidebooks which include high-stakes test questions and practice questions, disregarding the NCTB-mandated textbooks, forcing students to attend private lessons at teachers' homes, crammed classrooms, a lack of financial and other benefits, and little opportunities for students to use English outside of the classroom were among the obstacles that participant experienced. But, in any research work, survey doesn't always represent the actual behavior of the respondents. For this reason, the follow-up of the survey was further expanded on the qualitative analysis conducted for this study. Moreover, these educators were identified by virtue of their involvement in training courses to get the real picture of the English learning in Bangladesh.

3.3.2 Semi-Structured Interview

To investigate the teaching experiences of English teachers in their classrooms and also to get the feedback of different professionals, the study invited chosen participants to participate in semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews, as suggested by Mackey and Gass (2015), involve a predetermined set of open questions that encourage discussion, while also allowing the interviewer to delve deeper into specific themes or responses. Ary et al. (2014) highlighted the key aspects of semi-structured interviews, establishing it as a significant research methodology in qualitative studies. Firstly, the interviewer and participants engage in a formal interview setting. It is important to note that the interviewer prepares and utilizes an interview guide, which consists of open-ended questions and topics that need to be addressed during the interview. The open-ended nature of the questions allows for both the interviewer and interviewee to delve deeper into certain topics. The guide often includes prompts to assist the interviewee in providing answers, and the interviewer follows the guide while also exploring relevant lines of inquiry that may deviate from the guide when appropriate. Dornyei (2007) further supports the use of semi-structured interviews by emphasizing the researcher's ability to prompt or motivate the interviewee for additional information or when their responses are intriguing. This approach grants the researcher the flexibility to inquire further or explore new areas of interest based on the interviewee's input. Semi-structured interviews also provide participants with the liberty to express their perspectives using their own language.

Hence, the English teachers in the current study were invited to take part in only sessions of semi-structured interviews. The interview sessions took approximately 30 minutes, and the time for conducting interviews were not obligatory and based on the teachers' and students' convenience. Interview questions were as follows:

1. Could you please provide a description of the classes how you conduct the English language classes in your institution following the present English curriculum? (to teacher)

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2. What are the barriers you have faced to provide quality English teaching in the rural area? (to teacher)

3. Why has English language learning become of significant importance in the present context? (to different professionals)

4. Could you please express your plan to improve your children's English language learning? (to different professionals)

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected for three weeks using semi-structured interviews. Prior to the initiation of the interview procedures, the related studies on English curriculum and the existing practice were scrutinized to reach to a well-organized sets of questions, which were then validated by the experts and academicians of English teacher. Initially, after obtaining the legal permissions from the target high schools of Ghatail area of Tangail district, 35 English teachers were selected. The researcher held a general session for the individual teachers to explain the objectives of the study, and their informed consent form was also duly filled up and signed. Then, each teacher was interviewed by the researcher in person. It is worth mentioning that each interview session almost lasted for 30 minutes. The interview sessions were audio-recorded for further qualitative analysis.

3.5 Data Analysis

In the process of analysing the data, we analysed and recorded the experiences of the participants (Smith et al., 2009) as well as searched for emerging themes and individual participant tales (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Riessman, 2008). Ultimately, a rich narrative was produced by triangulating several types of data. Gathering the personal narratives of each participant was a crucial component of the study since it highlighted the contextual, human, and experiential elements of the information. Here, passages from the stories are used. Every name is a pseudonym. Two previous publications from this research have explored the impact of the examination system on education (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018a), and another has questioned whether the current teacher training provisions can meet the Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) of the United Nations (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018b). The discussion of these findings, which highlight the factors influencing communicative English language instruction and the practices that are now in place or absent, is the main focus here.

4. Findings

4.1 Perceptions Regarding the Communicative Language Curriculum

Participating teachers in the survey demonstrated awareness of the purposes of the curriculum and suggested implementation procedures, as indicated in Table 1. The majority of respondents said that their actions aligned with the objectives of the curriculum.

Table: 1 Teachers' appreciation of the intended objectives of the curriculum and their methods

In Bangladesh, an effective teacher is someone who……	**Strongly Agree**	**Agree**	**No Opinion**	**Disagree**	**Strongly Disagree**
fully comprehends the goals and objectives of the English Curriculum.	42.0%	51.6%	3.2%	2.8%	0.4%
allows their students to speak during class most of the time.	22.8%	40.0%	9.2%	24.2%	3.8%
sets up group projects on a regular basis.	35.3%	51.0%	4.6%	8.2%	0.9%
during a single lesson, assigns equal weight to each of the four language proficiency skills—speaking, writing, listening, and reading.	32.7%	33.4%	3.7%	20.6%	9.6%

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Teaching practices and beliefs					
In my class, I allow most of my students to speak.	12.6%	40.4%	10.7%	32.7%	3.6%
In my class, I encourage students to work both 'in groups' and 'in pairs.'	29.4%	47.7%	12.6%	8.7%	1.6%
Using lectures as a teaching method helps my students learn more.	5.6%	22.6%	7.3%	48.0%	16.5%
During my teaching, I make use of a variety of teaching tools, including audio, video, and flash cards.	27.8%	51.9%	7.9%	9.8%	2.6%

More than 90% of respondents agreed (strongly agree or agree) that a teacher of English should be proficient on the aims and objectives of the curriculum in order to be effective. Although the percentage was lower, the majority still said that oral and written skills should be prioritized in every lesson. A majority of respondents felt that a good teacher should promote student conversation throughout the lesson, and nearly 90% thought that effective teachers should use group work. When asked about their methods, slightly more than half of the respondents stated they let their students speak most of the time, and almost 80% indicated they employed a variety of teaching aids and pair and group projects. Less than 30% of respondents said that lectures from teachers helped their students study more. Answers to surveys aren't usually a good representation of real-world behavior. The follow-up expanded on the qualitative analysis conducted for this study, and additional research demonstrates that rote learning and lecturing are still all too widespread in Bangladesh. Furthermore, these educators were identified by virtue of their involvement in training courses. Nonetheless, the survey's results show that the teachers knew what to look for in a communicative language teaching strategy and generally considered it to be desirable. The discussion of obstacles to implementing such a strategy follows later in this article. A few of the communicative methods that the participants employed in their instruction are covered in the section that follows.

4.2 The Practice of Communicative Approaches

At first, author conducted interviews with instructors in both rural and urban areas throughout the qualitative phase of this project. These teachers provided explanations and frequently provided examples of how to apply a communicative approach to language learning. Some excerpts from interviews are given below:

> Zarif: I've noticed that my students are really eager to talk in class. Being a village school, not many deserving students attend. I set up speaking exercises and maybe a discussion with my students at least once a week.
>
> Omar: One of my responsibilities is to plan a class debate in English. Next, I get in touch with other English teachers in the district to arrange a debate competition between the schools.
>
> Rezwan: Students believe they are in the ocean when I bring them to the language lab. They truly enjoy watching English-language movies and other programmes, and they love to practice speaking the language.
>
> Sayem: I organise a speaking hour where students converse in English with one another outside of their classroom while enjoying some small refreshments.
>
> Sadat: Every unit [of the textbook] includes several communicative classroom exercises as well as pertinent images and sample questions to ignite students' interest.
>
> Saifan: If they adhere to the recommended methods in the books, even novice teachers can impart knowledge in a communicative manner. Every session includes opportunities for practicing each of the four abilities.
>
> Shaon: In my classes, I employ both audio and visual resources. I downloaded to my laptop many lesson.

The teachers approved of the communicative prompts provided in the textbook and talked about a variety of communicative techniques. These show that some teachers are comfortable using CLT, regardless of their relative quantity or the caliber of their individual work. The fact that a large number of Bangladeshis are proficient English

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speakers and writers also shows that effective communicative English language instruction does take place in some settings. We contend that in order to develop models of the best practices for communicative language instruction as models in Bangladesh, it would be helpful to look at other instances of effective practice.

4.3 Perceived Necessity for Communicative Abilities

The study discovered widespread and diverse views about the reasons why active, communicative abilities are necessary for both individual career advancement and national growth, as will be demonstrated below. The nation's metropolitan billboards, newspapers, and media websites all did a great job of promoting English's status as a social status and wealth indicator. Furthermore, it was discovered that the English language predominated in job advertisements. Parents discussed the value of their children being able to communicate in English and the efforts they made to help them acquire the language.

> Shamima: He requires extra tuition in the school, and we must hire qualified home tutors for him. Since none of the schools where I reside offer an English version, I visit the capital almost every week. Nevertheless, we are glad to take this pain for our child's bright future. English is now the main language of instruction in almost all the Bangladeshi universities. And in the future, perhaps, he will get the opportunity to study abroad.

Additionally, a lot of teachers emphasized the value of participatory English:

> Shaila: You may need to travel abroad for employment or study; if you don't know English, how will you communicate with others?

Graduates also pointed out the need of improving the ability of using English actively:

> Fatima**:** When I was in university, English was a major consideration. The medium of examinations and assignments were only in English.
>
> Ayesha: No matter the position, candidates' English proficiency is tested. Obtaining a high score on the English test is my biggest obstacle.

Graduates who wished to pursue careers in business or overseas employment also mentioned the importance of having true English proficiency and, due to lack of this they always face difficulties:

> Rasel: I have lots of difficulties with the English language throughout my life. I took private lessons, and I found English to be a difficult subject. During my first month in the UK, I had trouble understanding people who were natural British speakers. I currently work in Bangladesh and must communicate with a variety of people. English is the official language at my bank.
>
> Sohel: I was aware that in order to make decent money, I would need to go abroad. My English was quite poor. I encountered the first challenge of the journey. I knew the air hostess was asking what I wanted to eat when she arrived, but I remained silent because I had no idea what to ask for or even what the dish's name was. I found living abroad to be really difficult initially. In everything, I needed assistance. English seems to be a major obstacle in my career that hinders me from moving up. My current status might not be as high as it could be if I had improved my English.
>
> Romel: Actually, English is the language that is spoken in my bank.

Working in many foreign countries requires proficiency in English, which means bringing money home through remittances. Moreover, Bangladesh's economy greatly benefits from the remittances that come from employment abroad. In 2012, for example, it reached a peak of 11% of the Gross Domestic Product (The Global Economy, 2018). However, Buchenau (2008) pointed out that a lot of migrant workers faced difficulties in getting access to legal and medical assistance due to their poor English. However, Rubdy and McKay (2013) discovered that workers from Bangladesh were less effectively employed since they scored lower on the English proficiency scale than workers from Malaysia or the Philippines.

The predominance of English in commerce, tourism, administration, science, technology, media, the internet, satellite television, emails, and travel has been recognized by a number of academics (Imam, 2005). English proficiency is required for both admission into the Bangladeshi civil service and for further study. Both the Supreme Court and the

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High Court of Bangladesh utilize English. English communication skills are necessary for involvement in UN peacekeeping missions, interacting with the World Bank and Asian Development Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and negotiating with lenders and donors. Proficiency in English communication is essential due to the garment industry, which holds significant national importance, and the growing number of large international corporations operating regional offices in Bangladesh. English is essential for international academic publishing. In addition, a decent amount of journal of Bangladesh, for example science and agriculture, medicine, technology, and engineering—are published in English as they provide a means of communicating findings to a larger audience.

4.4 Rote Teaching Practices

It's a common misconception that most teachers use rote memorization of materials from textbooks and coaching centers, despite the emphasis on the importance of having good communication skills in English and the efforts of some teachers to use a communicative approach for imparting the language. This study's observations and interviews also revealed a lack of communicative skill development and repeated instances of rote learning. Below are some examples. Many teachers would practice grammatical points from different reference books and practice exam papers rather than even trying to use the textbooks.

> Amir (teacher): I have what I need in my memory, thus I don't need a textbook. I check the textbooks and other books solely in the event that the curriculum has changed. Everything else is in my head.
>
> Raiyan (student): The teacher gives us his worksheets. The teacher clarifies anything we don't understand and provides the right response for each of us. Each and every sheet matters for the test. For instance, we have all the tasks for correct forms of verbs on one sheet, which come from different reference books, and we try to learn as much as we can from them. There are other similar sheets for other significant exam questions, which we practice and answer.

Amir's remarks suggest a lack of concern for the government-issued resources, such as the communicative English textbooks. He continues to teach in the same style as before, based on the criteria set by the exams, which are still mostly focused on grammatical patterns and permit the writing of passages that have been memorized. Raiyan and other students feel that they just need to understand what they will be tested on.

It was frequently observed that abstracted grammar rules were taught for the duration of the lesson, as opposed to communication exercises. In one lesson, for instance, Sarkar spent a lot of time explaining a verb tense that his students didn't seem to grasp. He told the observer what he planned to teach the class, but he kept it a secret from the students. Instead, he scribbled the words "Present Perfect Continuous Tense" and highlighted them on the board.

Then he composed a few lines that demonstrated the tense's structure. Next he handed some Bangla sentences to the students, asking them to translate them into English while adhering to the structure. After that, students began to raise their hands and pose inquiries. Generally, what they would say is, "I apologise, sir, for not understanding." With the exception of the sentences he had written in English on the board, not a word was spoken in English. It seems like he was always looking at the whiteboard. It may be argued that his instruction had little bearing on the goals or procedures of CLT.

The English for Today textbook (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2013) would be used in certain observed circumstances, but not in the intended communicative ways. As an illustration of how the exercises were employed for mindless repetition rather than as cues for conversational participation, consider the following observed classroom interaction.

> Siraj: (quoting from the course material) Examine the image. Why are people in this place? When is this type of work done by people?
>
> Students: (together, repeating after him) Examine the image. Why are people in this place? When is this type of work done by people?

After that, the teacher asked the class if anyone could translate something into Bangla. He translated himself when no one else raised their hand. He then asked each student to read aloud while pointing out pronunciation errors and translating each sentence into Bangla at the end. As a result, the interactive communication exercises in the textbook were modified to become an oral reading exercise.

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According to the survey, instructors regretted that the national exam pressure prevented them from teaching solely from the textbook.

> Monjur: The issue arises when I teach classes IX and X. Students are not motivated to study anything from the textbook if there isn't a passage chosen for the test. They are aware that the material I am teaching them from the textbook is irrelevant and won't come up on the test.

4.5 Impact of the Examination

This study followed the trail of evidence that demonstrated the influence of exams on dictating and restricting what takes place in English classrooms. Al Amin and Greenwood (2018b) state that the English examination, which has little to do with the goals of the national curriculum, has turned into a reinforcer of social stratification and a transformer of the intended curriculum into the de facto curriculum that is taught in most Bangladeshi classrooms. Here are a few examples that demonstrate how educators perceived the effects of exams.

Teachers have criticized the manner that memorization of predictable themes is the basis for high stakes examinations.

> Moazzem: Better memorizers receive higher grades, but students who attempt to rely solely on their own writing abilities struggle to do good.

> Hossain: Students' current perception that they can learn the answers by heart is a major obstacle to their ability to write better.

The statements made by the students illustrate how the belief that rote learning would guarantee their success acted as an obstacle to teaching aimed at fostering the development of communication abilities in speaking and writing. It is difficult for teachers to maintain their practice in the days leading up to exams, even when they lead speaking exercises with confidence.

> Hossain: It gets harder to keep up these exercises when the test gets closer. Students want to study only the material that will be relevant to the test closer to that time.

According to Rahman (2015), schools are currently encouraged to use school-based assessments to evaluate students' speaking and listening abilities. The results will be added to the students' final grades. Despite the legal mandate, a lot of instructors and schools find it difficult to conduct these kinds of assessments. As a result, even though schools are now required to evaluate students' speaking skills internally, they don't usually. Furthermore, oral proficiency is not evaluated in Bangladesh's high-stakes public exams. One participant reported:

> Saifullah: I've observed that teachers frequently fail to evaluate their student's speaking and listening abilities. All they do is calculate an average score using the written English scores.

4.6 Divide in Urban-Rural Area

The influence of the test on education can be clearly observed in rural areas, where more than 70% of people live. While English is widely used in highly populated urban areas, it is rarely heard or seen in rural areas, despite being a required subject in all schools. As a result, there is no encouragement or background information available for rural residents to use English for communication. English is a foreign language to the majority of rural families. In this study teachers discussed how teaching conversational English is impossible.

> Karim: The majority of the students were unable to comprehend me if I spoke to them in English during the English lecture. Thus, Bangla was my only option.

Still, parents and students agree that passing the national exams at least at the first level is necessary. According to Hasnat (2017), students from rural areas who frequently miss school to assist their parents in their work, come back to school to be ready for the Class VIII exam. To pass the test, they plan to memorize example answers; learning English is not a top concern, and it is seen very unlikely that they will use it in the future.

The current study's emphasis on rote learning was brought to light when the rural students displayed their well-worn commercial guidebooks and revealed that they could hardly recall where they had put their textbooks. While instructors and head teachers claimed that they had to make accommodations for the pressures brought on by rural poverty, the students said that their teachers did not use the textbook. For example:

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> Jamshed: The majority of our students come from really low-income families, and many of them don't attend class regularly. Students' attendance only goes up a few days prior to the test. Upon their arrival, their primary concerns are related to the test questions and the knowledge they must acquire to ensure they pass the exam. They have little interest in studying anything that is not pertinent to the exam. We frequently have to cut the length of our classes. There are very few students in the class if we continue after lunch for the entire day. Many of them return home in the afternoon to assist their families. By doing this, we attempt to conclude by 1.30 pm rather than the required 4.30 pm.

A contributing component is how realistic it is to get students through the exam. An additional factor is the comparatively low number of English-speaking teachers in rural areas. However, because of the benefits to both them and their kids, qualified educators are drawn to city schools. An example is provided:

> Karim: I was assigned to a small, rural institution after being promoted to assistant professor. However, I remained at home and continued to teach instead of moving there. It took me 1.5 hours to travel and 1.5 hours to return, however living there would not be feasible due to the lack of amenities. I was allowed to transfer back to my home city after a period of six months. I won't have access to any of the opportunities available in the city if I dwell in that rural region.

When there is a shortage of qualified teachers, rural schools are forced to hire recent graduates who speak weaker English and who have never had any pedagogical training. Such inexperienced teachers find it simple to emulate the common practice of rote teaching in preparation for an exam.

A famous Bangla daily, The Daily Ittefaq, published an editorial on June 22, 2016, stating that education in Bangladesh has become a commodity based on people's purchasing power. Rich city dwellers can afford private education and after-school programs, but rural people cannot afford these things and therefore have less access to education. Top-down instructional teaching and the emphasis on rote learning greatly reduce opportunities. In rural schools, communicative activities are uncommon in any topic, but particularly in English (Al Amin 2017; Alam, 2016; Rasheed, 2017). The top-down instructional approach, rote learning emphasis, and teacher selection and training. In rural schools, communicative activities in English are rare (Al Amin, 2017; Alam, 2016; Rasheed, 2017).

A lot of teachers enter the field of teaching in public schools as they do not score a good result in the qualifying exam of Bangladesh Civil Service (BCS). Without any teacher training, the school administration hires a large number of teachers in remote areas based only on their general degree. It’s possible that the degree only covered a few English courses. Training is typically only made available to teachers once they start their classes. Even while graduates frequently enroll in the one-year Bachelor in Education (B.Ed.) programs offered by Teacher Training Colleges, many of them do not plan to become teachers. The teacher trainers also stated how their students were frequently driven by goals other than teaching.

> Parvez: Some students enroll in TTC's B.Ed program after being unable to find employment. Therefore, they believe that taking a course is preferable than idly wasting time because it might be useful in the future. If these students receive any form of job during their time in the course, they frequently drop out.

> Kabir: They have the chance to stay in the city, which makes it easy for them to look for work, as well as stay in the college hostel.

The other professional ambitions that the students acknowledged as well.

> Zakia: Since it allows me to remain in the city's safe and secure college hostel, I registered in the B. Ed programme at the TTC. Subsequently, I may conveniently attend the coaching center for job recruitment.

One issue that is evident in the teaching field is the lack of basic teacher training. Nonetheless, a large number of teachers in the current study stated that they were ill-prepared to teach English in the manner that the current curriculum demands. Many further admitted that in order to earn a living wage, they must provide private instruction. In a similar vein, Hasnat (2017) documented teachers who acknowledged that, following two hours of early morning individual lessons, they were frequently too exhausted to concentrate on their classroom instruction.

The most popular method used today to introduce teachers to the usage of communicative language teaching techniques is offering in-service training in the form of short courses. Various reports regarding the efficacy of these

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courses were found for this study. A few of the participating teacher trainers discussed their deliberate dedication to their jobs. Nazrul elucidated his approach to cultivating enduring connections with his recent grades of short courses.

> Nazrul: Social media helps me stay in touch with people, and it has advantages for all parties. They are sometimes necessary for my research subjects. A few of them get in touch with me directly to share how the training has helped them. Many of them tell me that they believe they need to learn more in order to become better teachers after the training. They tell me about their teaching methods, including using the assigned textbook in the classroom and how much their students like participating in various interactive activities like language games, puzzles, group and pair work.

Nevertheless, some of the participants expressed disapproval towards the methods used in the classes. To cite one example, an experienced instructors criticized trainers for putting off their primary teaching responsibilities in favour of giving short courses for financial gain.

> Kawsar: Teachers who are committed to their work are quite rare. Some teacher trainers are more engaged in instructing brief training courses than they are in the activities within their organizations. They serve as guest lecturers for a variety of training projects, and teachers often work on several projects concurrently.

Some teachers had good things to say about their short course training, like in the following example:

> Moniruzzaman: To improve our skills, there is no substitute for training. Being an experienced teacher, I was not acquainted with CLT. I gained knowledge about CLT during the training, including what to do in the classroom and how to use it to teach. Giving our teachers the training they need should be our top priority if we want to enhance education.
>
> Rahman: I will get the opportunity to spend nearly a month with English teachers from various districts and schools thanks to the training. We talk about teaching and share ideas even in our free time. More significantly, it's a chance to converse in English with other teachers, which increases everyone's ability to speak the language.

Other teachers who were questioned noted the disparity between the demands of rural teachers and the course curriculum. For example:

> Hasib: I work as a teacher in a school which is in a char. This area is devoid of electricity. During my training, I created some digital content and received instruction in the use of ICT and communicative language education. Our school is equipped with a laptop, but no multimedia projector. However, we are unable to utilize our laptop for extended periods of time. We have to travel to the local market, which has a solar electricity plan, each time we need to charge the laptop. We return to the market to refuel it whenever the charge runs out.
>
> Jewel: In the village, passing the test is the only thing on students' mind; speaking and listening are not important. The 40–45 minute class period is extremely short, and it is not possible to complete the training's recommended tasks in that time.

Furthermore, out of the 35 teachers surveyed, 26 said they had not been given the chance to participate in any kind of training, not even a short training course. Individuals who participated in the course said that there were no provisions for post-course professional development or school-based support systems to enhance their comprehension and application of communicative language teaching procedures.

4.7 Overseas Financing

Participants made several remarks criticizing the foreign-funded programs for creating CLT as well as the fact that British and other foreign sources provided the majority of the inservice training and initiatives for introducing CLT. The nation's education policy makes it clear that adopting a CLT-based curriculum is mostly motivated by the desire to engage in and compete in international markets. Furthermore, institutions such as the American Centre and the British Council actively advocate for the value of English. Furthermore, the majority of Bangladesh's English language development initiatives involve British institutions which actively in some capacity, including financing, implementing, providing training, and working as advisors.

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The British government provided partial funding for the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP), one of the first ELT initiatives in Bangladesh. The British Council and other British organisations were important partners in the project. Similarly, the British government's Department of Foreign Investment and Development (DFID) provided some funding for English In Action (EIA), and a number of British organisations are involved in the project's execution. Communicative Language Teaching was introduced in Bangladesh as one of the main projects of ELTIP, and English textbooks for secondary and upper secondary education were prepared while a group of writers was undergoing training in the UK, supervised by British experts. British consultants are involved in each of these roles.

A number of individuals who were intimately involved in educational development projects questioned the necessity of international training as well as the expertise of training facilitators.

> Sohan: We must consider the amount of money we waste on projects and the amount we lawfully send overseas for foreign training. Is it possible to cut down on the amount of money wasted on these projects? We are not able to spend extravagantly. These projects are necessary, but we also need to cut down on financial waste. We must consider further if there are initiatives that could be substituted for these projects.
>
> Wasif: Training facilitators are frequently hired by the hosting institution; these individuals are not typically on staff and volunteer to work because they were not employed by the school on a regular basis at the time. The value of participating in training led by these instructors is debatable.

Accounts by Shamim (2011), Kerr (2009), Biygautane (2016), Hunter (2009) and others, who have all addressed instances of development initiatives that are not sustainable, perhaps validate their questions. Furthermore, one problem mentioned by Greenwood (2019) is "incomplete negotiation and agreement about goals and processes" (p. 111). Another is the lack of funds for continuation following the end of the first sponsored term, which is usually a start-up phase. It is also debatable whether CLT techniques in English should continue to rely on foreign visions and projects, but instead should be grounded in local realities, needs, and growing resources.

5. Discussion

The survey results and the qualitative inquiry indicate that teachers who were trained in communicative language approaches knew that interactive processes involving speaking, listening, reading, writing, and encouraging students to converse in casual settings about subjects that are important to them should be included in the curriculum. Nonetheless, these teachers mentioned obstacles to putting their understanding into reality. The way exams, which promote memorization, establish a de facto curriculum in the classroom was the most striking of these. Additionally, they noted the dearth of expertise, inadequate resources, and remote circumstances where poverty lowers school attendance and English is a foreign language. In addition to the dedication of certain teachers, the study discovered that rote-based instruction is still being taught, that textbooks and question-and-answer sheets are widely used, and that there is frequently a severe lack of materials, teacher expertise, and resources to support an interactive communicative approach to language instruction. In rural regions, this was particularly true. It was discovered that the majority of training took the form of short courses, particularly for inexperienced teachers, and that both trainers and trainees had different views about the worth and effectiveness of the curricula. There doesn't seem to be a smooth transfer from global CLT projects to models that work for Bangladesh. Most crucially, it was discovered that the incentive for teaching or learning using CLT approaches was compromised by the current examination model.

The results are summed up in Figure 1, which also lists the main barriers to CLT implementation in classrooms as well as the justification for teaching English as a communicative tool. It is important to remember that, despite the fact that a variety of opportunities and pressures brought about by the global market contributed to the creation of a curriculum policy emphasizing the need of developing effective English communication skills, the policy is just one of many elements that influence what actually occurs in classrooms. This suggests that policy changes alone will not enhance classroom practices. Rather, the enhancement ought to focus on the wider array of elements that have been documented and explored in this article.

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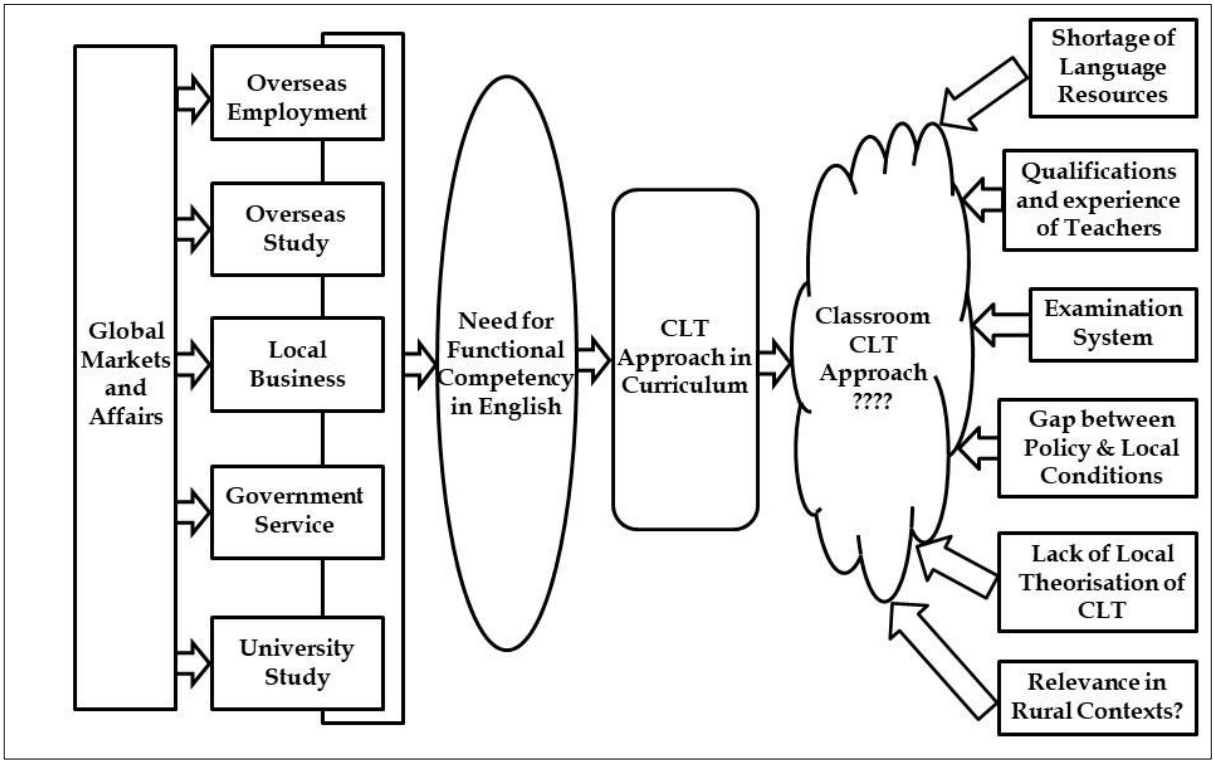


Figure 1. Factors influencing CLT classroom practice

The question of whether CLT or grammar-based methods are better teaching aids for English is one that comes up frequently in the media and in scholarly publications (Alam, 2018). We would contend that the complexity of language development is being overlooked in this discussion. Grammar is crucial for assisting students in understanding language structure, but without meaningful situations and developing abilities, it is frequently unintelligible. Among other things, Cummins and Davidson (2007) stressed that form-based instruction should be incorporated into primarily meaning-making techniques, and Spada (2007) emphasized that "language learning cannot be reduced to a one-dimensional set of prescriptions." CLT can incorporate a variety of approaches and tactics; the most important thing is that the focus be on efficient communication. We contend that in order to develop pedagogical models for how this can be accomplished most effectively, research on successful practices is needed. This will, in turn, lead to theorizations of communicative teaching that are grounded in the realities of Bangladeshi classrooms, as well as ongoing professional development for teachers and enhancements to teaching materials. Destroying the examination system that violates policy and curriculum and substitutes a memorization-based curriculum for effective and communicatively useful language acquisition is also imperative.

6. Conclusion

The results of the study demonstrated that, in Bangladeshi ELT, communication frequently seems to be a missing component. It was discovered that most classes are silent, and rote learning predominates. Nonetheless, a notable deficiency in communication exists between policymakers, educators, and instructors who are tasked with putting policies into practice. To bridge the gaps between desired policy and actual classroom realities, this kind of communication is necessary. Furthermore, there are insufficiently efficient methods for promoting teacher development and inquiry, as well as for sharing research on the successful CLT instruction that is being provided.

We contend that there are no immediate solutions for enhancing instruction in any subject area, including English. Development is an extended process that calls for ongoing critical analysis and flexible planning. While assigning blame for the implementation of a CLT method may present a convenient means of scapegoating, it fails to address the significant consequences of an unsuitable examination system or the necessity of teacher preparation, professional

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development, and teaching materials. In order to fulfil the demands of the contemporary global context, it also does not negate the necessity of providing Bangladeshi learners with appropriate English communication skills.

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