

Tertiary Level EAP Courses in Bangladesh: A Study of Current Practices and Curricular Reform for Quality Improvement

By

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A thesis submitted to the Department of English and Humanities in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of M.A. in English

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
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Abstract

The essentiality of undergraduate EAP courses is that they are necessary to improve students' English language proficiency for academic and professional purposes. Higher education institutions in Bangladesh are continuously changing to improve their quality of education, but their overall development efforts do not specify how it contributes to the improvement of the EAP courses. Although local research has pointed out the need for EAP courses and the shortcomings that current EAP courses have. Therefore, an overall needs-based evaluation of the EAP courses is imperative to map its specificity. Also, undergraduate curricular reform through the adoption of the OBE learning model will have a substantial effect on EAP education in universities. Moreover, Bangladeshi universities have been trying to secure a commendable place in global university rankings in recent years through multifaceted activities. Yet, at the core of the success of universities and its learners lies higher language proficiency levels as English is the global language of academia, business, communication, and research. For that reason, a specific EAP accreditation, in addition to the reevaluation of the EAP courses can contribute to the overall outcome-based goals of the university. In comparison to other research works on university EAP courses, this research used a qualitative framework to sketch the overall picture of current EAP practices and future potential of EAP courses. This was done by documenting university students' and teachers' experiences and opinions of doing EAP courses, EAP teachers' views about current higher education improvement projects, scopes of pursuing an international EAP accreditation parallel to the OBE curriculum and how the overall quality of higher education can be promoted.

Keywords: EAP, English language learning, university, belief, language learning experience, HEQEP, BALEAP Accreditation, EAP Accreditation, Medium of instruction, EMI, Outcome-based Education, OBE Model, Bloom's Taxonomy, Higher Education Institutions, HEI.

Dedication

Revelations, may be at hand,
but there is time before
the Second Coming arrives.
Unnatural follies, are
unknowing of old Gods,
It is not you; it is not us,
Not our creations, perhaps-
It is the space of language,
In this world of pretenses;
We lose the things we know,
Words here, become inchoate
And, we are yet to realize,
The way eyes see,
Only but, hint at a story.

- Sheikh Nahiyah, "The Space of Language".

I would like to dedicate my work to my Creator who gave me the ability to speak, my Mother and my Father, who gave me the life and my Mentor who showed me the light.

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

Historically, it was presumed that a lower average English language proficiency can greatly affect students' academic success at the tertiary level (Graham, 1987, p. 517). This was hypothesized by looking at findings of studies that predicted the academic success of native students in English medium universities (see Vinke & Jochems, 1983, Spinks & Ho, 1984). At the same time, the focus on ESP (English for Specific Purposes) research proliferated because of the increase in cross-border job and education opportunities. Owing to the fact that English became a global lingua franca, a well-to-do proficiency meant non-native English users had a chance of progressing their career and education. Therefore, EAP (English for Academic Purposes) emerged as an essential part of the universities' undergraduate curriculum. In non-native countries, government, international organizations, research think-tanks, and businesses—all stressed the importance of being proficient in the language. EAP research has hypothesized pedagogic practices, created specific curricula along with the creation of EAP-specific materials for learning-teaching. It also led researchers and practitioners to find alternative assessments using which students' ability to communicatively use language in real-life situations could be tested.

1.2. EAP, its Purpose and Relevance in University Education

The particularization of ESP refers to the teaching and learning of English either as a second or a foreign language with learners' goal being the ability to use it in “a particular domain” (Paltridge & Starfield, 2014, p. 2). In other words, an ESP course will able learners to use English for a functional purpose related to their everyday life so that their specific needs are

fulfilled. As mentioned already, EAP evolved from ESP in the academic context (both formal and informal academia) to teach English and assist learners' study or research in that language. The popularity of EAP courses from the four main geographical domains of the world is greatest in the second one (Flowerdew & Peacock, 2001, p. 8). These are former colonial territories of Britain where English is taught and used as a second language in education and workplaces. Thus, in ESL (English as a Second Language) countries (Kachru & Smith, 2008) such as Bangladesh, it is used as the medium of instruction for university education.

As a broad term, EAP covers all areas of academic communicative practices, especially in the pre-tertiary and tertiary level education (Hyland, 2006, p. 2). Therefore, undergraduate EAP courses make learners proficient in English, so their academic achievements are fulfilled. Researchers are trying to understand EAP's suitability and relevance "in terms of local contexts and the needs of particular students" (Dudley-Evans, 2001, p. ix as cited in Hyland, 2006, p.1). These local contexts refer to the non-native contexts where English is taught as a second and/or foreign language. Reports from such studies shows that students' perceptions, desire and needs to learn English in universities are have unique challenges and inhibitions in each country. For instance, the desire to acquire language skills in a specific area is often undermined in the event of their perceived language needs for another purpose of fulfilling their academic and professional goals. This was reported in a study conducted at a Taiwanese university on students' need of doing EAP courses (Liu et al., 2011). On the other hand, a study conducted in Malaysia found that Malaysian university students faced problems "in relation to vocabulary register, organization of ideas, grammar, spelling, and referencing" in an EAP writing course (Al-Khasawneh, 2010). These two researches illustrate the local needs and importance of EAP courses and how it differs in each country. The solution that will be useful for Taiwanese

university students will not be suitable for Malaysian university students. Thus, relevant and contextually appropriate learning-teaching practices for specific institutions in a specific setting can contribute better to EAP courses' essentiality and improve students' overall English competency.

1.3. Undergraduate EAP Courses and Its Importance in University Education of Bangladesh

The status of English in Bangladesh is ESL, and local research has reported that the type of English language teaching that occurs here is EFL (Ali & Walker, 2014). It must also be noted that the National Education Policy recognizes English as a second language and states that it should be taught as an academic subject from primary schools through secondary to higher secondary institutions (Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 21). Across the policy, it has been stated that in pre-primary and primary, educators should take appropriate steps from the beginning of a child's schooling to ensure that writing and speaking skills are taught continually with emphasis. Consequently, the policy states that English "will be taught as a compulsory subject at the degree level of all colleges," where the medium of instruction will be Bangla. Still, it can be English if the institution has the competency to provide EMI (English as a medium of instruction) (p. 21). However, a notable change is observed as the policy subsequently mentions that English should be the medium of instruction in higher education, and Bangla can be used within conjunction (p. 32).

The discrepancy in EMI across different levels of education is one of ELT's key predicaments that has given rise to various limitations, as reported in multiple studies on ELT in Bangladesh. Hamid and Baldauf Jr. described the ELT approach as "bogged down" because of the numerous complications relating to language policy, education policy, and pedagogy. They

write that most students at the end of secondary level education "have failed to develop minimal proficiency in the language" (Hamid & Baldauf Jr., 2008, p. 19) despite official insistence (in National Education Policy) on communicative English as quoted above. This is due to the lack of "learner-centered pedagogical practices," which contrasts to what the policy states (Hamid & Honan, 2012, p. 150). Unfortunately, the incongruity of age-old teacher-fronted local pedagogy and learner-focused foreign pedagogy (Hamid, 2010) is one of the causal difficulties affecting learners and their learning outcomes. Hence, Ali and Walker propose that the national ELT curriculum needs to be "empowered" to make "truly collaborative" (2014, p. 38) among different stakeholders whose actions affect ELT at different education levels.

These research findings frame that maximum students complete higher secondary education with lower English language proficiency levels than they are supposed to. Additionally, the most important functional role of being proficient in English for university students is their belief that it is a "mandatory part" of their future career and they "do not stand a chance of survival in the global world" without it (Akteruzzaman & Islam, 2017, p. 192). The findings from a previous research can explain why university students share that belief. Twenty-eight corporate employers opined that "a lack of English language skills seriously affected job prospects" of graduates as it is a "competitive and globalized" workspace where "company image" is important as it is upheld by "smart and English-speaking employees" (Khan & Chaudhury, 2009, p. 4). Then again, the most important functional role that English proficiency serves in universities is that it drives students' academic literacy. Academic literacy is when students need to know a language to "understand the teachers' academic texts and lectures of their area of concentration" (Doro, 2009, p. 82). Hence, better English proficiency contributes to greater academic success in university.

The EMI (English as a medium of instruction) approach followed in the HEIs (2010, p. 24) only demonstrates the problems of the previous education levels, especially in the context of students' English language proficiency. The reality is that as students learn English as an academic subject in schools, they do not receive adequate exposure to develop their overall English language skills. Hence, their proficiency level at most times remains very low. To be more specific, local ELT researchers have pointed out several difficulties that learners face while doing EAP courses.

Firstly, in an EAP writing course, students were focused on “adhering to and duplicating models in the correct language” (Hasan, 2011, p. 35), yet they failed to produce a good composition in the exam because they were unsuccessful in internalizing the structures of the text. This particular EAP course aimed to develop students' writing skills, yet the students ended up practicing writing strategies that they learned in previous education levels. For instance, they tried to “memorize” the rules of writing an essay “without internalizing the content,” which acted as an impediment in developing their writing skills. In another EAP writing course that was taken by non-English major students (n=89), it was found that “90% of students could not organize their ideas” in an essay. Their writings had spelling errors, grammatical mistakes (subject-verb agreement, tense), and writing fragmented or run-on sentences (Afrin, 2016, p. 107-108). Secondly, university students perceive speaking and listening skills as the most difficult to acquire (Hossain, 2015, p. 40). Moreover, in another EAP course on speaking and listening, 57% of students were dissatisfied with their speaking skills. Hence, the speaking classes were “somehow effective for the students” (Jahan, 2008, p. 165), pointing out that prior to the outcome-based learning model (which will be discussed in later parts of this paper) was implemented in universities, the EAP courses were not fully effective in achieving learning

outcomes. Due to this, most of the university students suffer from a “lack of confidence” due to their lower proficiency levels. These cases highlight the fact that the shortcomings of the EAP courses need to be addressed, in addition to looking at how current HEI curricular reformation is affecting learning outcomes of the EAP courses.

1.4 The Research Context

The current importance of EAP courses in university education and the essentiality of English language proficiency for academic and professional success is immense in Bangladesh. HEIs in the country are continuously trying to improve their quality of education, but their overall development efforts do not specify how it contributes to the improvement of the EAP courses. Local research has pointed out the need for EAP courses and the shortcomings that current EAP courses have. Thus, an overall needs-based evaluation of the EAP courses is already imperative to map its specificity. It must also be considered that Bangladesh HEI curricular reform through the adoption of the OBE learning model will certainly have a substantial effect on EAP education in universities. Moreover, Bangladeshi universities have been trying to secure a commendable place in global university rankings in recent years through multifaceted activities. Yet, at the core of the success of universities and its learners lies higher language proficiency levels as English is the global language of academia, business, communication, and research. For that reason, a specific EAP accreditation, in addition to the reevaluation of the EAP courses can contribute to the overall outcome-based goals of the university. In comparison to other research works on university EAP courses, this research used a qualitative framework to sketch the overall picture of current EAP practices and future potential of EAP courses. This was done by documenting university students’ experiences and opinions of doing EAP courses, comparing existing EAP syllabi with the suggestions of the BALEAP accreditation, how EAP

practitioners perceive the current needs of university students as, what is their view about a specific EAP accreditation within an OBE curriculum and how it can fulfill the goals of higher education.

Chapter 2:

Literature Review

As a narrative review (Bryman, 2008, p. 110), this chapter reports the current quality improvement efforts of tertiary level education in Bangladesh. The chapter discusses the HEQEP Project, followed by the Outcome-based Education (OBE) learning model that Bangladeshi universities are starting to adopt and its effects on the EAP courses. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Bangladesh have undertaken a global challenge to compete with the world's best institutions in terms of the quality education it provides. In the latter part of this chapter, the researcher discusses the potential of a specific EAP accreditation that can help fulfill the reformed curricula goals and overall agenda of higher education in Bangladesh, adding to this study's relevance.

2.1 Quality Improvement of Tertiary Education in Bangladesh: HEQEP, OBE and Its Implication on EAP Courses

2.1.1 HEQEP Project and Improvement of Universities in Bangladesh

Bangladesh's educational development and growth pattern have allowed international research and donor organizations to aid the country in enhancing the quality of education. The Higher Education Improvement Project (HEQEP) by the World Bank was a flagship, "first large project in the higher education sector" supported by the government of Bangladesh and

implemented through UGC (University Grants Commission). The project ran from 2009 until the end of 2018. It was part of the “first pillar of the World Bank’s FY2006–2009 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS),” and the project encompassed a set of critical activities. These were, firstly, provision of Academic Innovation Fund Funds (AIFs) for up-gradation of learning-teaching facilities, conducting self-assessment, and implementing university-wide developments.

Secondly, it built UGC's institutional capacity and all the universities by developing the Higher Education Management Information System (HEMIS), which also included professional development opportunities for UGC and university faculty and staff. Thirdly, it helped establish the Bangladesh Research and Education Network (BdREN) and the UGC Digital Library to improve Internet connectivity as well as access to global scholarly e-resources at the universities. Finally, a quality assurance (QA) mechanism was introduced at the national level through the enactment of 'Bangladesh Accreditation Act' and at the institutional level through the establishment of "Institutional Quality Assurance Cells (IQACs) at the universities" (Rahman et al., 2019, p. 6). The prime objective of these activities has been to improve the quality and relevance of learning-teaching in tertiary-level institutions to enhance institutional capacity, to produce graduates who have job-relevant skills and can aid in the overall development of the country.

2.1.2 Outcome-Based Education (OBE) and University Curricula Reform: Implications for EAP Courses

Current research practices in higher education have criticized the traditional education (TE) model as it "does not inspire learners to come up with their ways of approaching and solving problems" (Hassan, 2019). Globalization and employers' needs are shaping national and international marketplaces are constantly changing; hence, the "reinforcing pressure for quality

Teaching and quality assurance" in higher education (Henard & Leprince-Ringuet, 2008, p. 12) has influenced Bangladesh as well. As part of the quality assurance agenda under the HEQEP project, the Outcome-based Education (OBE) learning model is being implemented in the universities in Bangladesh. The three main tenets of OBE are, firstly, "all students can learn and succeed" at different times in different ways; secondly, "success breeds success" and learning institutions control the "conditions of success" (Spady & Marshall, 1991, p. 67). In brief, OBE allows students to graduate with the skills they need to contribute and work in real-life scenarios. Hence, UGC has informed universities to follow this "Transformational OBE" approach (Spady & Marshall, 1991, p. 70) so that students can use their acquired skills from their learning experiences upon graduation to contribute to the workforce efficiently (UGC, 2019, p. 19). Presently, the UGC formulated the "Template of Outcome-Based Education (OBE) Curriculum" that universities in Bangladesh should follow to restructure their curricula. This OBE framework, which maps the curriculum, instruction, and assessment with the institution and program's vision and mission, is shown in the figure below.

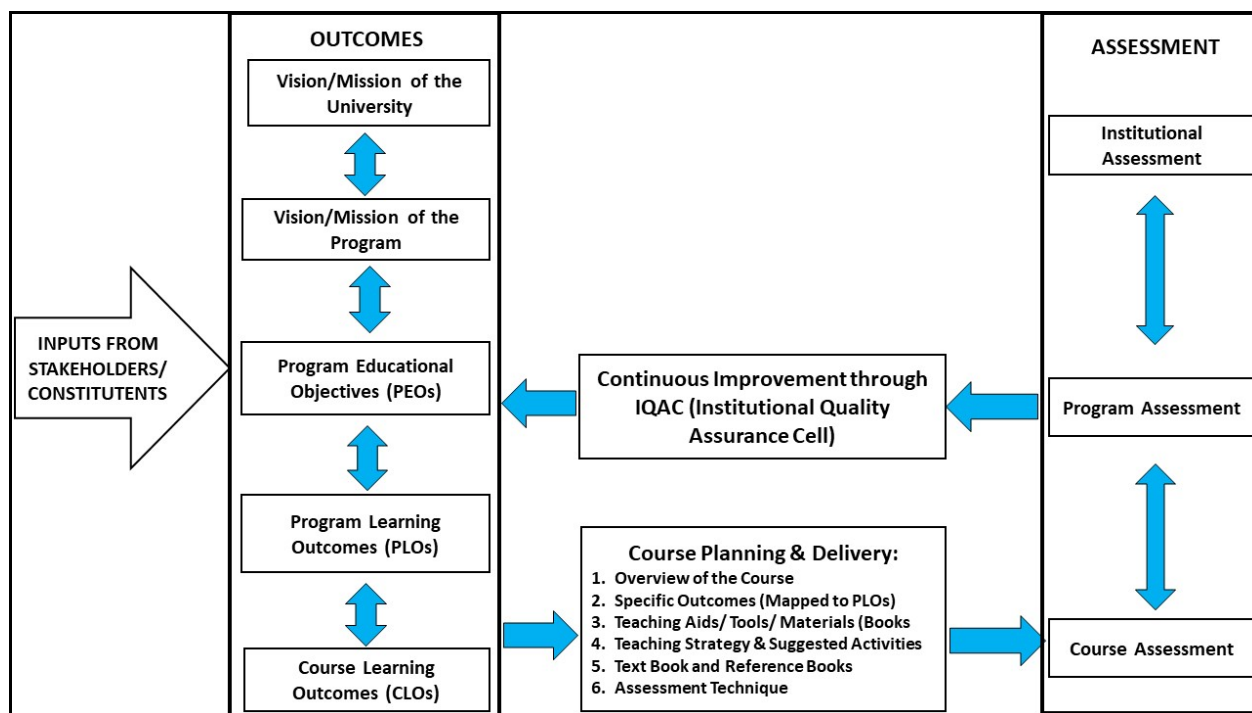


Fig. 1. Mapping of OBE

Spady (1994, p. 81) cites Bloom’s Taxonomy as the key model to restructure the objectives of what students learn in the classroom. Hence, UGC has cited the revised form of the model, which additionally contains “action words” (Armstrong, 2016, p. 4) to rewrite the Course Learning Outcomes (CLOs) (2019, p. 21). Fulfillment of CLOs through Course Planning and Delivery steps will fulfill the Program Learning Outcomes (PLOs), which will satisfy the Program Educational Objectives (PEOs) that specify what students are to achieve after graduation. The PEOs are based on the Vision and Mission of the undergraduate/graduate program, which is tied to the overall Vision and Mission of a university. Hence, universities from 2019 in Bangladesh have taken this task to restructure their curriculum by following OBE (Hassan, 2019).

The importance and necessity of EAP courses in undergraduate education of Bangladesh have already been highlighted in the previous chapters, and the OBE curricular reform shows

that the EAP courses have undergone curricular reformation as well. Other studies based on similar contexts have reported how the OBE learning model was adapted in undergraduate English education programs. Lixun (2011) noted how the OBE model was adapted in a language education course in Hong Kong where the aim was to restructure the course based on the following principles: to make the course attractive, so that students want to achieve them, to make teaching strategy comprehensible so that students can understand the meaning of the contents, to make the outcomes attainable so that students can achieve them and to make sure all of these are coherent so that they fit into the overall scheme of the program (p. 11). The participants were surveyed, and the results showed that the restructured “lectures, group work and other learning activities” had “a clear relationship to course assessment,” which reflected a “valuable relationship” with the learning outcomes of the course (Lixun, 2011, p. 15). However, Tuyen’s (2018) study of an EFL course in Vietnam found that even though the course was “outcome-based”, but most of the learning activities “implemented in the classroom did not support the students” for the achievement of the “intended learning outcomes” (p. 36). This implicates that, no matter what the context is, to achieve learning outcomes for an academic ESL in the university setting, the teaching strategy and assessment tasks must be adjusted. Hence, to implement the OBE learning model, EAP pedagogy must be reassessed.

2.2 Accreditation as a Quality Assurance System: Specifying Standardization of Tertiary Level EAP Courses in Bangladesh

2.2.1 Ensuring Quality through Accreditation in HEIs

Higher education has always been subject to global, national as well as local effects. Thus, stakeholders in higher education institutions (HEIs) put their efforts to strategize education and the institution's overall development. The "transnational mobility of students and academic

staffs," "internationalization of curriculum" (Vught et al., 2002) with the quality assurance schemes of the governing body of higher education, and inter-institutional (both local and international) cooperation in education and research are indicators of assuring quality in higher education to achieve global recognition. In this respect, the HEQEP project's completion is allowing universities in Bangladesh to realize OBE as an overall quality assurance scheme. However, it will take some time to witness the OBE learning model's overall outcome on the country's undergraduate education. Thus, during this period, the problem of lower-than-expected language proficiency levels of university students needs to be addressed as well. In language education, specificity is always essential for successful language learning. Based on this context, an accreditation scheme for the EAP courses taught in the universities can further specify these courses' standards. It is because during and after undergraduate study, students take language proficiency tests such as IELTS and TOEFL to apply for higher education abroad and strengthen their resume when applying for jobs. To prepare for it, they often go for private tuition in different coaching centers. This is both time-consuming, and students are spending extra money as well.

Hence, opportunities exist for the HEIs to help students prepare for the job sector and promote themselves in the global academic standings by opting for accreditation schemes. There are numerous benefits to this, firstly, it will contribute to the internationalization and standardization of university education. Hence, stakeholders of the institution (students, teachers, governing body) and industry-leaders will be assured that the institution provides globally-acknowledged quality education. Furthermore, in the context of ESP education, an accredited EAP course will not only advance students' language proficiency levels but assure them of global acknowledgment. Secondly, EAP accreditation will attract students to pursue an education

at the university through which they will benefit from the long-term benefits in both their academic and professional endeavors. Finally, universities in Bangladesh are lagging in global higher education rankings, for instance, it was reported that there were no Bangladeshi universities in Times Higher Education ranking's top one thousand universities of the world (Nabi & Shovon, 2019). Hence, a global accreditation specific to the EAP courses will benefit universities and its students in this manner that with higher language proficiency levels, students can perform better in their overall academic, research, and professional undertakings. It can build on what the OBE learning model is envisioning for the HEIs.

2.2.2 Accreditation of Undergraduate EAP Courses: The BALEAP Accreditation Framework

The British Association of Lecturers in English for Academic Purposes (BALEAP) is a global forum for EAP professionals that aims to enhance the quality of learning and teaching of EAP in HEIs. The BALEAP Accreditation scheme is a “peer-review quality assurance and quality enhancement scheme” initially created to develop the English language skills non-native students who went to Britain for higher education (BALEAP, 1998, p. 2). Over the years, this scheme has developed further. Its aims are to primarily “enhance the quality of learning and teaching of EAP,” ensure that the EAP courses “prepares students for academic study,” “assure standards in EAP provision” in HEIs, and support the professional development of those who are involved in administrating, preparing and teaching EAP in HEIs (BALEAP, 2018, p. 4). The accreditation is granted four years from the initial assessment visit in the multi-step accreditation procedure by the BALEAP Accreditation Scheme Committee (BASC).

he criteria for assessment are:

- Institutional Context

- Course Management
- Course Design
- Teaching and Learning
- Assessment, Evaluation, and Progression (of the EAP Courses) (BALEAP, 2018).

The institution must provide documentary evidence for assessing each of the criteria mentioned. The fact of the matter is that this accreditation is applicable in “the international context as well” (Kotarska, 2019, p. 64). Aforementioned, the IQAC (Institutional Quality Assurance Cell) in each of the universities in Bangladesh is tasked to maintain the overall standard and quality of tertiary education in that institution. Hence, a specific EAP accreditation scheme can be appropriate in this context as neither the OBE curriculum nor the IQAC specifies how EAP courses can be further standardized and internationalized. Therefore, this accreditation can be part of the overall quality improvement scheme of the HEI and play a key role in helping students achieve learning outcomes more aptly.

Chapter 3:

Methodology

In this chapter, the researcher briefly discusses the overarching methodology used to conduct this study. The chapter begins by briefly outlining the research design, the type of research methodology that was selected. This is followed by the theoretical framework that guided the researcher to select and mete the data collection and data analysis procedures. The section following this gives details about the participants, the process of selecting them, and how the instrumentation started. The researcher has tried to abide by research ethics; thus, ethical considerations have been reflected cautiously to collect and analyze this study's data. The researcher also briefs on the obstacles encountered to conduct this study, especially regarding the pandemic that has been ravaging the world currently.

3.1 Research Design

This qualitative study followed a narrative research design where the researcher was interested to “describe, collect and tell stories about the individuals” (Creswell, 2012, p. 22) and write their experiences. Therefore, the researcher followed a series of steps to collect and analyze the data. Firstly, the participants who took part in this study are university students and university English language teachers who primarily teach EAP courses. In the multi-step data collection process, students were interviewed initially, followed by interviewing the teachers. The researcher used a deductive process to develop and relate findings that emerged as code categories or themes from the student interviews. Additionally, the researcher used an inductive process to develop and relate findings that emerged from teacher interviews. These themes were used to discuss the answers to the research questions guiding this study.

This research has been designed to investigate the scenario of undergraduate EAP courses at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. The researcher has attempted to narrate the learning experience of students as well as the teaching experience of English language teachers teaching the EAP courses. Currently, the tertiary curricula are undergoing reformation by adopting an Outcome-based Education (OBE) learning model to improve the quality of higher education in the country. Hence, the researcher has tried to narrate teachers' views about this and what future implications it may have on the EAP courses. Additionally, the researcher has also tried to report on teachers' views about international EAP accreditation which can contribute towards improving the quality of undergraduate education as a whole.

3.2 Research Questions

The narrative review of existing research on the importance of EAP in university education in the previous chapter has shown students' essentiality to have a higher English language proficiency for academic and professional success. The OBE learning model is the brainchild of the World Bank-funded 'HEQEP' project with the Government of Bangladesh, which the University Grants Commission (UGC) has sought to implement across all universities in the country. Of the several agendas of this donor-funded higher education improvement project, one has been to improve the quality of higher education in the country. Existing EAP research at the tertiary level of Bangladesh has looked at particular instruction components to point out the needs and shortcomings that current EAP courses have. Based on this, an overall needs-based evaluation of EAP courses is imperative to map its specificity.

From the research gap shown in the previous chapter, this particular research used a qualitative framework to sketch the overall picture of current EAP practices and the future potential of EAP courses. Thus, the research questions this study addresses are:

1. What are the perspectives of students and teachers about undergraduate EAP courses?
2. What are the main factors that influence overall learning-teaching and improvement of EAP courses?
3. How can global EAP accreditation contribute to the overall development of tertiary undergraduate programs?

3.3 Participants of the Study and Method of Data Collection

The data for this research was collected from two groups of participants. The first comprises university students who are in their first, second, third, and final year of undergraduate education. Initially, the researcher piloted the open-ended interview questions with five participants. The participants shared comments about the questions, which helped the researcher edit and rephrase specific questions. Afterward, the researcher interviewed five participants and recorded the audio of the interviews. However, a recurring issue that arose was finding a suitable time for the participants to be interviewed. As they were undergraduate students, they had regular classes, and some students had part-time work as well. Hence, the researcher consulted with his supervisor, and on the suggestion of the research supervisor and participants, he opted to conduct student interviews over the internet. Again, finding a suitable time with the students was an issue; hence, the researcher used Google Forms to make these open-ended questions available to the participants. The researcher asked his peers, acquaintances, and friends to circulate the link among different university students. In this way, the researcher collected sixty responses using Google Forms.

The second group of participants comprised English language teachers teaching EAP courses at the same university, where the first group of participants is enrolled. The researcher requested two teachers from the language institute to help him get acquainted with the teachers

to interview them. The teachers helped the researcher and forwarded his request to five teachers who agreed to participate in this study. Additionally, the researcher sent an email to four teachers, from which three teachers responded to the email and agreed to participate in this study voluntarily. It must be mentioned that the year in which this study has been conducted is being ravaged by the global Covid-19 pandemic. Due to this, universities in Bangladesh are conducting their classes online. Everyone has been advised by the World Health Organization (WHO) to stay at home and practice social distancing (World Health Organization, 2020). Therefore, the researcher could not interview the English language teachers upfront. As they were busy conducting online classes, finding a suitable time for them to give interviews over telephone or Skype was not possible. Hence, the teachers opted to answer the open-ended questions online, and the researcher again used Google Forms to circulate the open-ended questions. The primary reason for using open-ended questions for both groups of participants was to elicit their “views and opinions” (Creswell, 2014, p. 190), which is the vital technique for data collection in the research design that this study followed. Thus, ten EAP teachers took part in this study voluntarily. Two tables containing information about the participants can be found below.

No.	Name of Participants	Department
1	Ahsan	Department of English and Humanities
2	Khan	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
3	Binte	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
4	Aktar	Department of English and Humanities
5	Tasnim	Department of Business Administration
6	Sathi	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
7	Paromita	Department of Pharmacy

8	Sabiha	Department of Law
9	Kabir	Department of English and Humanities
10	Kamrul	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
11	Aminah	Department of English and Humanities
12	Shafin	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
13	Sonia	Department of Business Administration
14	Shamim	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
15	Sumaiya	Department of English and Humanities
16	Fuad	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
17	Siddika	Department of Law
18	Mainul	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
19	Sazid	Department of Business Administration
20	Alif	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
21	Atef	Department of English and Humanities
22	Mehbub	Department of Business Administration
23	Zareen	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
24	Nower	Department of Pharmacy
25	Lutfu	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
26	Rashid	Department of Law
27	Merissa	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
28	Pranti	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
29	Sarah	Department of Pharmacy
30	Ishtiaq	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

31	Afrida	Department of Business Administration
32	Saina	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
33	Hossain	Department of English and Humanities
34	Samdina	Department of Law
35	Ishrak	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
36	Mehedi	Department of Pharmacy
37	Farha	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
38	Tabassum	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
39	Archi	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
40	Mou	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
41	Golam	Department of English and Humanities
42	Masud	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
43	Maliha	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
44	Hasan	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
45	Israr	Department of Business Administration
46	Haider	Department of Pharmacy
47	Nawar	Department of English and Humanities
48	Pranto	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
49	Sukanya	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
50	Akeeb	Department of Architecture
51	Tanvir	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
52	Alam	Department of English and Humanities
53	Shafwan	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering

54	Suhana	Department of Pharmacy
55	Newaz	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
56	Ashik	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
57	Labib	Department of Business Administration
58	Iqbal	Department of Pharmacy
60	Arka	Department of Pharmacy
61	Farah	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
62	Mayen	Department of Business Administration
63	Ruhin	Department of Electrical and Electronic Engineering
64	Wahab	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
65	Tanzim	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
66	Sadia	Department of Mathematics and Natural Science
67	Sohrab	Department of Economics and Social Sciences
68	Sajib	Department of Computer Science and Engineering
69	Bani	Department of English and Humanities
70	Neha	Department of Business Administration

Table 1: List of University Students Who Took Part in the Study

No.	Pseudonym	Gender
1.	Simanto	Male
2.	Paul	Male
3.	Ali	Male
4.	Morshed	Male
5.	Fazlul	Male

6.	Sohana	Female
7.	Dina	Female
8.	Zannath	Female
9.	Farhin	Female
10.	Sadaf	Female

Table 2: List of English Language Teachers Who Took Part in the Study

3.4 Data Analysis

There were two different stages of data analysis. In the first stage, the researcher analyzed data collected from the students. In order to specify the process, the researcher followed Creswell’s ‘six steps in analyzing and interpreting qualitative data’ (Creswell, 2012, p. 237), which included both the iterative and simultaneous process. The researcher initially followed the iterative process when examining the audio recordings of students’ interviews, where he made transcriptions of the data and grouped them. The researchers read through the data and obtained a general sense of the material. This action is identified by Kvale (1996) in the contexts of interpreting qualitative data as self-understanding and critical common-sense understanding (p. 214). In self-understanding, the researcher attempts to formulate in “condensed form” what participants understand to be the “meaning of their statements.” Additionally, in critical common-sense understanding, the researcher goes beyond reformulating participants’ self-understanding to interpret them using his or her knowledge about the “context of statements to place them in a wider arena” (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003, p. 155).

To further specify the process of data analysis, the researcher exported data collected in Google Forms for both groups of participants in separate MS Excel Workbooks. The tabulated data were then categorized by locating text segments and assigning codes to label them. The

researcher examined common occurrences in the data and grouped them into broad themes (Creswell, 2012, p. 243). This was followed for both groups.

In the second stage of data analysis, the researcher worked with data collected from the teachers. The researcher used “Emergent Categories” to analyze the data by rereading the data group, to find themes and issues that recurred in it (Taylor-Powell & Renner, 2003, p. 3). This technique of using Emergent categories is related to Emergent Design, pinned by Larson (1997) who showed that categories can be generated by examining qualitative data, and then refining them into fewer categories by comparing them with emerging (or new) categories (as cited in Creswell. 2012, p. 429). However, Taylor-Powell and Renner also stated that researchers can combine preset categories with emergent categories in qualitative data analysis (2003, p. 3). These categories are the characteristic ‘ordinary,’ ‘major and minor’ themes that the researcher found. These have been grouped with subheadings in the subsequent chapters that report the data analysis. This action is also described as ‘layering themes” by Creswell (2012, p. 251), who writes that researchers build on the idea of the ‘major and minor’ themes and organize them into ‘layers’ from ‘basic elementary themes’ to produce more ‘sophisticated ones.’ Hence, themes that have been reported in the subsequent chapters are interconnected to certain levels, and the researcher used the research questions as a guide (for the data collected from students) to include major themes under broader theme categories.

3.5 Ethical Considerations

As this research reports experiences, views, and stories of university students and teachers; hence, anonymity was a critical factor that the researcher abided by. Additionally, the time in which the research has taken place is a challenge for all society members due to the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Hence, the researcher requested the participants to confirm whether

they can take part in this study voluntarily. During that period, the researcher also informed participants that their names and the university they study or teach in would be anonymized using pseudonyms. The teachers were happy about this; thus, personal information that can be used to identify the participants in any way has not been used or reported in this research.

Chapter 4:

The Learning Teaching of EAP: Teachers' and Students' Voices

The chapter reports the findings from students' and teachers' interviews conducted online. In this chapter, the researcher has reported the themes that emerged from the students' interviews and the first part of the teachers' interview. The themes mainly focus on students' experience and views on EAP courses, followed by teachers' thoughts and opinions on EAP, its importance in tertiary level education, and how the course is assessed periodically.

4.1 EAP and Students' Development of English Language Proficiency

To illustrate, the first theme emerging from students' interview highlighted on their experience of EAP and how it helped develop their English language proficiency. Most of the students said their English language proficiency (ELP) significantly improved after doing EAP courses at the university. Khan said, "I come from a Bangla medium environment, where we learned English in a Grammar-based Translation way where we learned "আমি ভাত খাই" meaning "I eat rice" ... I do not think this is the right way, and I realized it only when I was doing the EAP courses". Other participants reiterated similar experiences and emphasized that EAP courses improved their English language skills for communicative purposes.

In the same context, Binte said, "my speaking teacher had more influence on my presentation skills because he helped me improve my fluency and intonation when I spoke English. As I was shy and introverted in class, my teacher helped me understand that I can overcome this and speak the language better". Similar responses were noted from other students as it was found that EAP courses helped develop students' oral proficiency. Their fluency developed, and they learned how to modulate voice and use different levels of intonation during oral presentations. As the agenda of EAP courses are to improve academic English capabilities,

thus, this exerted a domino effect by improving their performance in other academic courses too. Most students reiterated their enjoyment of the learning process in the EAP courses.

In the same context, academic writing skills development was another sub-theme that emerged within this theme. The students think that academic writing achievements are mainly dependent on the teacher teaching the EAP course. Aktar said, “I think that even though English teachers are responsible for giving guidelines on how to write properly, but it is up to the students whether he or she will rigorously practice it or not. In our country, teachers are expected to teach students how to write in a coherent and grammatically correct way”. Aktar’s opinion resonates with what other students said. This collectively supports the notion that teachers’ instructions are essential for a student before they practice writing on a specific topic or a specific style of a text. In EAP 01 course, students learned to write an argumentative essay. Regarding this, Paromita, Tasnim, Sajid, and Khan said that previously, they did not know about writing argumentative essays for academic purposes. Hence, due to the facilitation of the instructor of the EAP course, students came to learn this.

Additionally, students shared that EAP teachers truly act as facilitators by considering the strong and weak areas of students’ writing abilities and then guiding them accordingly. Aminah, Kamrul, Shafin, and Sonia shared that their EAP teachers motivated them to overcome their shortcomings initially in the course. Mainul, however, added that students must be given the freedom to be creative with their ideas while writing. In that way, using language to construct new meanings can boost morale and facilitate language learning while challenging them to stretch their current writing skills to learn something new.

The findings of a study at a Turkish university was similar to this comment where it was found that students with low-level writing apprehension performed “significantly better” in a

writing test in comparison to students who had “high-level writing apprehension” (Erkan & Saban, 2011, p. 181). Hence, findings from the current study are parallel to this study, as participants said that they learned a functional way of academic writing with the introduction of proper writing methods, including different forms of writing. They were motivated and driven to learn these writing structures, and in both EAP 01 and 02, participants learned the standardized way of writing reports and reading journals. Among them, Binte, Akter, Tasnim, and Paromita mentioned that it also helped them write properly in examination scripts.

Writing skills from the EAP courses also helped many participants prepare better for language aptitude tests such as IELTS and other aptitude tests such as the GRE examination. One such participant, Kamrul, said that he scored better marks in the writing sections of these tests due to the EAP courses. Other participants also mentioned that citation and referencing techniques taught in EAP 02 helped them when they wrote academic research papers in later periods of their undergraduate study. Hence, academic writing requirements such as maintaining a logical sequence, summarizing a critical journal essay, or writing a research paper require students to paraphrase or summarize. The participants could fulfill all of these because of the EAP courses.

4.2 Student Experiences of Classroom Pedagogy and Language Learning

The teaching style and classroom activities are two subthemes and enabling components of the theme- classroom pedagogy of EAP courses- which contributed to the students' language development. Most of the students shared that in most cases, the teacher acted as a facilitator, and this helped them greatly. Their facilitation included motivating students to interact with each other when doing group activities. The participants said that this helped develop their English-speaking skills as they had opportunities to practice through interpersonal communication.

Ahsan, a student, said that his EAP 01 teacher let students be creative in the writing class. Mainul and Sazid added that one-to-one interaction during oral presentation helped develop students' ability to speak impromptu.

Most participants expressed that cooperative learning through interactive group participation helped them prepare better for both future academic and professional endeavors. Shafin said, "in the writing class of EAP 01, the teacher showed us how to write a thesis statement when writing an argumentative essay. Although the teacher introduced sample topics and thesis statements with it, many of my peers seemed confused. I remember one of my friends going for an individual consultation, which helped them later on". This shows that often individual attention from a teacher is necessary even if cooperative learning practices exist. Aktar, Tasnim, among thirty participants, added that students' involvement in discussions with the teacher and peers interested them in sharing ideas and opinions. They emphasized on how teacher's interactive teaching style and classroom management kept everyone engaged and made students feel motivated. Shamim said that the teacher allowed the students to share their classroom problems, which proved beneficial for them eventually. It is because, in Bangladesh, most English classrooms in primary, secondary, and higher secondary levels are teacher-centered, and students cannot directly share their problems often.

Conversely, Khan's experience was somewhat different because, in EAP 02, the teacher was more rigid and did not let the students be creative in their writing. The activities did not allow them to experiment with their English language skills, and he thought that this hampered language learning greatly. Like Khan, other students said that as many of them were shy, they often faced difficulty comprehending the teacher's instructions. In such cases, the teacher failed to cater to these students' specific needs and this reduced rapport in the classroom.

The students shared several affective factors that significantly affected their language learning in the EAP courses. Most students came from a Bangla-medium background and had lower-than-expected English proficiency levels; therefore, they felt shy and nervous during group activities and oral presentations. Nower belonged to such a group, including Merissa, Pranti, and Sarah, all of whom faced difficulty in the EAP classroom. The majority of the participants also shared that group activity was not always helpful as many students often failed to create meaningful communication with their peers while doing the EAP courses. Ishtiaq said, “making groups was a difficult task for me as I found it difficult to interact with unfamiliar individuals. I recall that some of my classmates felt very shy and expected the teacher to ensure participation and cooperation from other group members. It was only in a few instances that the teacher ensured good participation through the group works”. Afrida and Saina shared similar responses and said that as students are shy and introverted learners, it is difficult for them to communicate effectively during group activities. Other participants such as Samdina and Ishrak said that language anxiety due to lower proficiency levels when starting the EAP courses affected their performance. Many participants also mentioned that students had a negative attitude and lack of motivation due to the lower proficiency levels. All of these, coupled with the teacher’s inability to give clear instructions, often created problems in the EAP courses.

4.3 Students’ Comments about the EAP Syllabus and Materials

Thirty-six students found the EAP courses syllabus to facilitate English language learning and develop their proficiency levels. Ahsan and Akib are among this group who said that the coursework required more advanced writing skills as they progressed with their undergraduate program. The syllabus of both EAP courses helped them achieve that to a certain extent. However, thirty-seven participants said that EAP 02 syllabus was a repetition of the EAP 01

syllabus. Khan said, “in both courses, we learned the same topics except for one topic.” These students felt that everything they studied in EAP 02 was similar to EAP 01. Mehedi’s comment was interesting as well as he said, “I did the EAP 02 course in my first year, and now in my third year I cannot exactly recall those topics anymore”. Mehedi’s response was similar to what Farha, Tabassum, Archi, and Mou shared. Aktar, Tabassum, Mayen said that materials and books on the English language were mostly grammar-based, where they had to learn rules and do exercises based on them in their previous levels of education. However, EAP 01 was different as it was oriented towards communication and classroom participation. Therefore, students said they felt EAP 01 had an interactive and engaging syllabus. Farah and Ahsan added that as EAP 02 is supposed to be a subsequent course to EAP 01, reading improvement methods and using them could be incorporated in the syllabus.

Consequently, most students said that the materials and activities for EAP 01 were interactive and interesting compared to EAP 02, which was boring. The students elaborated that EAP 02’s booklet was similar to EAP 01, so the activities and materials seemed monotonous. Ahsan, Farah, Aktar, Tabassum, Mayen said that students in their first year of undergraduate study do EAP 01, and the materials seemed up-to-date and helpful for them. It is because the majority of the participants, especially those who came from a Bangla medium, were not familiar with such type of materials and worksheets before. On the other hand, participants such as Khan and Ruhin said that the availability of supplementary e-materials in the university’s server, which gave limited access to the students, was inadequate. There were only very few interactive videos, and the teachers or the syllabus did not greatly emphasize on using these videos to learn a language item.

Twenty participants said that the worksheets used in the classroom seemed boring to them, and it was the same case for the materials that were given to complete tasks at home. Wahab was among this group, who said that most of the materials did not have a similar theme; and seemed arbitrary, as there was no variation in different types of reading texts. Ruhin was also among this group who added that “there were no poems but only short stories or newspaper articles or writings of ex-students of this course.” These participants think that if the EAP 02 course had newer materials that would help develop their critical reading skills of academic journal articles, it would prove beneficial. Aktar was one of the few participants who said that the coursebook/materials did not meet her expectations of learning outcomes completely because she felt they did not give her adequate opportunity to enhance vocabulary or by analyzing the contextual meaning of texts. In her opinion, materials that develop or enhance vocabulary can be beneficial. The only positive comment from the respondents was Farha’s, who said that the students were taught how to make a reading journal, which helped her later on in her academic courses.

4.4 Teachers’ Experience and Views about EAP Courses

Teachers’ experience and views about EAP courses emerged as a coherent theme from the data. All male and female teachers have been teaching the EAP courses at this university for three to twelve years. Only one female teacher has been teaching for three, and two male and female teachers have been teaching for four years. Additionally, the other teachers (both male and female) have been teaching EAP for more than ten years. As the teachers themselves had previously done EAP courses as students, they were asked to compare their views and experiences as ex-students as well as current teachers of Foundation and Academic English courses. Both the male (n=5) and female (n=5) teachers opined that the EAP courses are useful

for academic and professional purposes. They additionally emphasized that these courses improve students' overall communicative competency. Sadaf emphasized that these courses enhance students' writing skills. She added that she was introduced to the basics of conducting research and thinking critically. As a teacher, Farhin thinks that the EAP courses are immensely beneficial for students because it has 'learner-centered instruction' (Kashef et al., 2014, p. 39).

Although writing and speaking are emphasized in these courses, English's other skills are given equal emphasis too. The female participants added that as English is the medium of instruction; hence, the overall goal of the EAP courses is to equip students with the necessary language skills needed for success in higher education. Sohana and Dina reasserted that despite studying English for 12-years, most of the students lacked English speaking and writing skills necessary for the tertiary level. It is not an instantaneous process, but the EAP courses actuate students' determination in the milieu of tertiary education to improve their language skills.

Morshed asserted that if students are willing to practice and follow what the teachers advise, then developing English language skills will be prompter. Ali, Paul, and Simanto added that EAP courses fulfill the academic needs and allow students to become better users of English in real-life situations. Hence, all EAP teachers of this study said that the courses prepare students for the next stage of their lives. Whether students plan to pursue postgraduate education or seek jobs, they are equipped to use English for any purpose and need. Thus, starting from writing academic essays, business letters, listening to anyone delivering a speech, or speaking in English to deliver oral presentations – students can perform any of these tasks properly and efficiently. These courses also help learners develop certain generic skills such as note-taking or thinking critically to solve a problem, which is indispensable both for academic and professional success.

4.5 Teachers' Opinion on the Importance of EAP Courses

Both groups of teachers (male and female) emphasized that Foundation and Academic English courses are necessary, primarily, for students' academic studies. Students in their second, third, and fourth years are required to write academic papers. These include response papers, argumentative essays, and research papers. All students are required to either write a dissertation (thesis) or an internship report after interning at any institution (business, educational, or research) relevant to their academic field. It depends on the major or degree that the student is pursuing to write a thesis or an internship report. Hence, teachers opined that EAP courses introduce students with the basics of academic writing, which will be useful later on. Farhin and Sohana said that students' limited ability in listening and reading stems from the little exposure to the language in previous education levels. Hence, many learners need assistance to understand texts as understanding academic texts are crucial for students to find a research topic to work on.

All the teachers who participated in this study stressed the lack of exposure to academic vocabularies in students' previous education levels. They said that students need advice and guidance regarding word choice, and they often use contractions in academic writing, which must be avoided. Students, when enrolling in the university, take a placement test based on which they are assigned different EAP courses. For instance, EAP 00 courses are assigned to students whose writing and speaking skills need more improvement than students who were assigned EAP 01 courses. Regarding this, Simanto said that it is done for students' convenience so that they have a greater chance of improving their English skills. Ali, Morshed, and Fazlul added to this by saying that the opportunity to learn with students who have similar proficiency levels also boosts students' confidence, and they wish they could one or two additional EAP

courses. However, all the EAP teachers are aware that it is not possible due to the constraint consigned by the National Education Policy (2010) about the number of EAP courses that can be taught in the undergraduate curricula. Zannath added that even though the EAP courses are well-thought-out, students complain that the syllabi are rigid. She thinks that if there was any way to give the students more freedom to practice their writing style while adhering to the basic structure, it would be great.

4.6 Syllabus and Materials of EAP Courses: Teachers' Experience and Comments

The EAP teachers also shared that each instructor is responsible for noting down the subtle changes necessary in the courses' syllabus and materials. However, their suggestions to make any change is proposed to the group of teachers who form official teams that undertake the task of redesigning or introducing new materials to the coursebook. This specific group mainly comprises of senior teachers who reassess the syllabi under the university's course coordinator and stakeholders' supervision. Throughout the process they make sure that UGC directives are followed properly.

The process begins when EAP teachers suggest the changes in reflection meetings that are held regularly in the university between EAP teachers and EAP course coordinators. This suggestion is scrutinized, and if approved, it is implemented. EAP teachers such as Ali, Fazlul, and Dina, are aware that they must incorporate suitable materials for the learners. They know that most students have a deficient English proficiency, hence, a more advanced reading or listening material or a writing task may prove to be more challenging for them. Some of the EAP teachers who also work as course and material evaluators always use authentic, contextualized materials for the learners where they integrate language skills in cohesive theme-based lessons.

These themes are generally related to real-life situations, as the EAP courses' goal is also to develop students' communicative abilities.

4.7 Changes in EAP: Teachers' Comments About Pedagogy, Syllabus and Materials

Therefore, the key takeaways from teachers' comments were: firstly, to keep the EAP courses dynamic, frequent changes to the content are made. These changes in materials are made based on students' needs and may happen twice or three every year. In contrast, changes in the syllabus occur either every two to three years. Secondly, the changes in materials are brought based on contemporary issues. Sohana said that as argumentative essay writing is taught in the courses, the essays' topics are often changed. Zannath added that reading passage for paraphrasing and summarizing are also replaced often. All the EAP teachers encourage the students to choose research paper topics relevant to contemporary events and issues. Thirdly, the trending pedagogy of language teaching and learning are taken into account when changes in instruction are sought. For instance, teachers shared that three years ago, two EAP courses' syllabi were revised extensively where alternative assessments were incorporated. These included impromptu oral presentations and students' reflection on group projects. However, one characteristic feature of instruction in the EAP courses is flipped classroom techniques that teachers use. As mentioned by the participants, this technique is absent in previous levels of education in the country.

Fazlul, Farhin, and Sadaf said that EAP teachers and course coordinators when improving the course, focus on how the content can be clearer to the students and what type of learning would the students enjoy. This also evinces that in such ESL settings, content-based instruction is crucial for EAP programs to be 'content-driven' where language learning is a priority, and the

content is the vehicle to improve proficiency (Met, 1998 as cited in de Zarobe & Cenoz, 2015, p. 92). In short, all EAP teachers can suggest changes for improving the EAP syllabi, but only senior and experienced teachers undertake the task of modifying it. Then again, EAP teachers asserted that stakeholders are aware of the university's main requirements (vision and mission), which they must follow when adding, removing, or modifying anything that can be taught in the EAP courses.

Chapter 5:

Teachers' Views on Higher Education Improvement Projects and Their Effect on EAP Courses

The chapter reports findings from the teachers' interviews conducted online. In this chapter, the researcher has reported the themes that emerged from the second part of the teachers' interview. The themes mainly focus on higher education improvement projects, teachers' views, the possibility of an International EAP accreditation in Bangladesh, and how all of these can affect the learning-teaching scenario of EAP courses in undergraduate university education.

5.1. Higher Education Improvement Projects and Learning-Teaching of EAP Courses

The second part of the interview focused on documenting teachers' viewpoints about higher education improvement projects and teachers' opinions about it. The OBE Learning Model is being implemented by the universities to restructure their undergraduate curriculum. The World Bank-funded HEQEP Project has been the key to this curricular reformation in HEIs of the country. The EAP teachers said that the concept of OBE is logical. However, lack of resources is still evident, which can prove to be a barrier to truly implementing such a model. Farhin and Sadaf said that OBE makes learning outcomes very specific; thus, it helps instructors assess if their teaching is more meaningful. However, the teachers also stated that authorities need to formulate guidelines and training for EAP teachers to become more familiar with the model.

Ali, Fazlul, Simanto, and Dina expressed that the OBE learning model is an ideal step taken by the government to standardize and regulate quality at the tertiary level. The teachers said that this standardization was long due, and it will open better opportunities for students as well as universities to compete better in the global arena. They also added that a student-centered approach in classrooms is a typical instruction of TESOL and ELT education. However, other disciplines will not be able to overlook this instruction anymore as the OBE learning model is a university-wide implementation.

The teachers opined that EAP courses always focused on developing students' language proficiency levels. Therefore, the OBE learning model will not exert any radical effect on the Foundation and Academic English courses in the university where this study was conducted. They also added that some universities that follow a more traditional teaching style would benefit from the OBE learning model as their focus will be more learner-centered in the future. For that reason, Paul, Ali, Morshed, Sohana think that as the model is still in a trial-and-error phase for these universities, more time is required for practitioners to gain a more comprehensive understanding of its use. The teachers reiterated that rote learning is always promoted in previous levels of education because students often lack measurable skills. As student-focused as it is, the OBE model will also help students develop skills over learning through memorization. Quality in higher education has become more measurable as teachers and course coordinators can report to their respective higher-ups with specific reports on learning outcomes periodically. Fazlul, a senior teacher, mentioned that specific instructional strategies were required in this university when implementing OBE. This was done to ensure students achieve outcome lessons and the course overall. He shared, "we included additional instruction on technological skills for

submitting assignments following academic norms which focuses on deciding font size, creating an academic cover page, paragraphing, justifying text, and so on.”

5.2 Higher Education Improvement Projects and Improvement of EAP Courses

The teachers think that even though OBE is relevant for Bangladesh, it is strongly oriented towards assessment, so it may focus more on achieving grades and short-term goals. This only reiterates Sultana's (2018) observation that a test-oriented culture drives the country's education system. Sohana said that although language learning outcomes should be measurable, an added focus on achieving grades can hamper learning. Hence, Farhin and Ali think that such a standardized learning model at the tertiary level may become irrelevant if appropriate changes are not brought to the overall education system. However, they understand that it is a step in the right direction, and the overarching problems in Bangladesh's education system may finally be appropriately addressed in the future. Sadaf and Fazlul have a positive attitude towards its implementation as the OBE learning model has already been in practice in universities abroad. This model can pinpoint the limitations at the tertiary level currently, allowing stakeholders to overcome them accordingly. The teachers also think that OBE will contribute to increasing transparency in the education system.

Overall, the OBE learning model has not drastically changed or affected EAP teachers teaching practices. However, the teachers stated that as many aspects of the course had been unnecessarily simplified to fit the model, which has made the content somewhat repetitive and slow. Even if the learning outcomes have been made more specific by following revised Bloom's taxonomy, Fazlul, and other experienced EAP teachers said that their teaching experiences had not been affected that much. EAP teachers are trained to teach in a student-centered way, and

these teachers working together always try to focus on bringing relevant variation to their teaching practices to better cater to students' needs.

Chapter 6:

International EAP Accreditation and Its Contribution to Tertiary Undergraduate Education Improvement

In the following chapter, the researcher has reported the themes that emerged from the closing section of the teachers' interview. These themes focus on scopes of international EAP accreditation at the tertiary level and teachers' views regarding EAP accreditation in the country and how it can improve undergraduate university education quality.

6.1 EAP Teachers' Attitudes Towards Global EAP Accreditation

The pursuit of quality in higher education can be proliferated if a global EAP accreditation is achieved. With this notion, the teachers were asked to share their views on whether achieving an international EAP accreditation can be beneficial for Bangladesh and themselves. The teachers think it would benefit English language teachers in the long run as the BALEAP accreditation framework requirements are integral skills required for language teaching. On the other hand, they think that the time to achieve such accreditation may be a barrier. However, if that is overlooked, an international EAP accreditation will ensure that the aforementioned university offers world-class English language learning to Bangladeshi students. Additionally, the teachers' selfless attitude was evident Farhin said, "emphasis should be more on what would help the students because if getting an accreditation does not help the students ultimately, than the purpose of teaching will be lost." This shows that EAP teachers are aware of their context, and they think that only through appropriation, the BALEAP accreditation can be beneficial in reality.

On the contrary, the major challenge posited by Ali is providing teacher training and mentoring them. Indeed, teacher education and teacher training can advance teachers' careers,

but seeking an international EAP accreditation will require special training for the teachers. This may be difficult to implement, given the demanding workloads that EAP teachers already have. That is why Simanto and Ali think that pursuing an international EAP accreditation should be done with enough time in hand. As the changes expected may not occur within a year or two, but may take more time. Thus, patience will be a crucial factor in achieving an international accreditation of EAP.

The teachers also added that restated curriculum goals following the OBE learning model might need to be readjusted if an international EAP accreditation scheme is pursued. However, all the teachers opined that the accreditation body and the university stakeholders must sit together and discuss possible conflicts that may arise between the curriculum goals and the accreditation. Sadaf thinks that the OBE learning model is a requirement set by the UGC and the government. Thus, efforts to achieve an independent accreditation must not conflict with a requirement set by the country's highest authority. However, the teachers voiced that independent EAP accreditation will only increase the English language courses' credibility, promoting quality in language teaching at the higher education context in Bangladesh. Hence, EAP teachers observe that international EAP accreditation can be sought even if the curriculum follows the OBE learning model.

6.2 Global EAP Accreditation and Promoting Quality in Higher Education

The teachers think that the BALEAP accreditation for EAP courses is a well-rounded system. Although it is a certification provided by an independent body, it covers a multitude of areas and skills that teachers can acquire for pedagogic use. In that sense, it will be relevant to universities. The agenda of undergraduate EAP courses is to enhance students' language skills to fulfill academic needs. Hence, it will be relevant for the university in the long run as the overall

quality of undergraduate programs would improve as graduates will be better users of English. Sadaf said that as the university, she works aims to become a premier international university by establishing its credibility and impacting global research practices; hence, seeking accreditation will fulfill the institution's goals.

They think that achieving a global EAP accreditation will further update practitioners, course designers, and material developers both in terms of knowledge and skills related to language teaching. They think that the overall quality of the undergraduate curricula will be upheld. Sohana, Dina, and Simanto said they would participate in such initiatives by undergoing the required training. Farhin, however, shared a view different from them. She said that for the time being, the OBE learning model should be the main point of focus as it will standardize teaching across universities in the country. She thinks that much improvement is needed in the overall education system, and achieving international accreditation seems relevant for later on. Morshed said

Fazlul, Paul, and Ali shared similar views to Farhin as they stated that an accreditation agency's benchmark might not be culturally and contextually appropriate for Bangladesh. Hence, its suitability needs to be highly considered. The male teachers shared similar views as well, with only Morshed stating that the pursuit of international accreditation and our attitudes towards it must not be a continuation of a colonial mindset. This comment resonates with Kumaravadivelu's assertion that ESL communities must "unfreeze and activate its latent agentive capacity, and strive to derive a set of concerted, coordinated, and collective actions based not on the logic of coloniality but a grammar of decoloniality" (2016, p. 80-81). Even though the EAP accreditations are given by former colonialists, but concerting and coordinating

it to meet local needs can be the ideal step that educators can take here in Bangladesh if they want to pursue it.

6.3 Evaluating Quality in Higher Education Institutions

Academic quality is an essential characteristic of a higher education institution that contributes its credibility and value. Teachers think that a university should have a rigorous admission system with an appropriate placement test. This test can make the authority aware of newly admitted students' skillsets and the redesign of courses to fulfill their needs. Sohana said that universities should limit teaching students' academic content and take a diverse approach where students will learn to consider, explain, and address social issues through the knowledge they have gained in the university. Dina thinks that promoting quality in higher education is greatly dependent on instructors because if they are good at teaching, they can positively impact the students. Additionally, quality can be promoted by providing an environment that facilitates learning and teaching.

Quality is a never-ending pursuit; thus, Zannath thinks that university teachers should have access to training, resources, and facilities to improve their pedagogy. Sadaf thinks that EAP teachers should act as researchers as well. This idea of "teachers as researchers" can promote 'action research' (Chow et al., 2015), and English language teachers can adapt and experiment with teaching methods that may be relevant to their everyday classroom needs. Sadaf said that preparing capable and skilled graduates is the goal of higher education, and the OBE learning model being implemented currently can specify what students should aim for. If students are aware of their purpose for education and how their university is planning to facilitate it, then there will be a rapport between students and teachers, and learning will be enhanced. Paul thinks that higher education is essential in a developing country's context to create graduates

who will contribute to sustainable development. He mentioned that the IQAC cells established in each university of the country, along with current curricular reformation procedures, can provide useful input and monitor the output. Here, the input is the skills and teachings of the tertiary level, and output is the valediction of skilled graduates. These teachers stated that their university has been trying to accomplish this for a long time already. In brief, they said that higher education quality is a relentless quest for higher education institutions to transform students to be a complete human being whose development of cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains are absolute. This can be done by training teachers to facilitate the learning process and equipping students with skills to learn independently and attempt to find solutions to real-life problems.

Chapter 7

Discussion and Conclusion

The data collected from the two groups of participants: undergraduate students and university EAP teachers have been reported in the previous chapters, respectively. The themes reported in the previous chapters comprise of sub-themes that have been summarized in this chapter. The researcher has added his own comment and shown how the findings answer the research questions that guided this study. Additionally, this chapter outlines the limitations and scope of further research based on this study's findings.

7.1. Findings

7.1.1. The Learning Teaching of EAP: Teachers' and Students' Voices

This category of theme comprises of the following sub-themes:

- EAP and Students' Development of English Language Proficiency
- Student Experiences of Classroom Pedagogy and Language Learning
- Students' Comments about the EAP Syllabus and Materials
- Teachers' Experience and Views about EAP Courses
- Teachers' Opinion on the Importance of EAP Courses
- Syllabus and Materials of EAP Courses: Teachers' Experience and Comments
- Changes in EAP: Teachers' Comments About Pedagogy, Syllabus and Materials

As discussed in the previous chapter, these themes describe students' and teachers' experiences and views about EAP courses. From the findings, it is evident that all students benefit from the university's EAP courses, especially in terms of improving their English writing skills. It is because the EAP courses taught are specifically tailored to enhance students'

academic writing proficiencies. Teachers and students both opined that a teacher's guidance and students' dedication to teacher advice could significantly improve their proficiency levels.

Teachers stressed that students lacked exposure to academic vocabulary and language in previous levels of education. Thus, the EAP courses help students become familiar with such types of vocabularies and writing styles. Students also shared similar opinions. Many of them asserted that the EAP courses helped improve their academic writing and communicative abilities in general, and they ended up scoring better marks in specific examinations outside of the university. All the participants agreed that EAP courses' syllabus and materials are relevant and have cohesive theme-based lessons. Students agreed to what the EAP teachers shared that they use teaching and alternative assessment techniques that are absent in previous levels of education. Collectively, both groups of participants opined that current EAP courses are significantly contributing to help develop overall learning proficiencies.

7.1.2. Teachers' Views on Higher Education Improvement Projects and Their Effect on EAP Courses

This category of theme comprises of the following sub-themes:

- Higher Education Improvement Projects and Learning-Teaching of EAP Courses
- Higher Education Improvement Projects and Improvement of EAP Courses

These themes describe EAP teachers' overall views about higher education improvement projects and the recent curricular reformation that is taking place at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. All EAP teachers think that adopting the OBE learning model is a logical choice as it will make learning outcomes more specific. They also believe that this learning model will make tertiary level education to meet industry requirements better. The EAP teachers shared that EAP courses already have particular learning outcomes, so the OBE learning model will not

influence these courses much. Instead, the OBE learning model will help educators and respective stakeholders pinpoint better limitations present in the curriculum. The teachers also added that their teaching experiences had not been affected in any significant manner by adopting the OBE model.

7.1.3. International EAP Accreditation and Its Contribution to Tertiary Undergraduate Education Improvement

This category of themes comprises of the following sub-themes:

- EAP Teachers' Attitudes Towards Global EAP Accreditation
- Global EAP Accreditation and Promoting Quality in Higher Education
- Evaluating Quality in Higher Education Institutions

The findings in this theme and its sub-themes present that an international EAP accreditation can further contribute to the improvement of the overall quality of undergraduate EAP courses. An EAP accreditation is a specific quality improvement scheme for EAP courses, unlike the OBE learning model, which is uniform for the overall undergraduate program. However, teachers also noted that an accreditation scheme or a globally-renowned learning model would be useless if students do not benefit from it. They added that to pursue accreditation, the curriculum goals of EAP may need to be restated. It will put an added pressure on course designers to align course outcomes with the OBE curriculum model and the accreditation scheme at the same time. The teachers said that the possibilities and scopes achieving accreditation is endless but its suitability in Bangladesh needs to be seen. The teachers believe that academic quality is an essential feat that all higher education institutions are trying to achieve. In addition to curricular reformations and possible international accreditations, a suitable environment is also necessary to promote quality. This environment can be provided if teachers can undergo

professional development as at ultimately, they are responsible for equipping students with the skills they need to be successful in their lives.

7.2. Discussion and Recommendation

The findings from chapters four and five collectively answer the first two research questions that this study addresses, and from chapters five and six answers the final research question, respectively. The themes summarized in the previous section shows that the learning-teaching of EAP courses at the tertiary level in Bangladesh is relevant. It is also proving to be useful for developing students' overall language proficiencies. Although there are certain predicaments of EAP learning-teaching, EAP teachers think that current practices to improve the higher education curricula is contributing positively to the EAP courses. Additionally, they opined that an international EAP accreditation is a well-sought-out goal, but its suitability for the context of Bangladesh needs to be looked at. All EAP teachers are willing to undergo any special training if their institution decides to pursue the accreditation. The EAP teachers think accreditation will not only help the institution but also increase their credibility as language teachers. Therefore, based on the thematic analysis of the data, there are several recommendations that the researcher has listed below:

7.2.1. A Discipline-Specific Writing Course Subsequent to EAP 02

As the university has different streams of major in science, arts, social science, and commerce, therefore, a discipline-specific writing course after EAP 02 can prove to be useful for students when they are planning to write a dissertation on a research project or research topic. This will further galvanize their academic writing proficiency so they can write publishable researches. Findings from the students' data shows that many students lack the basic idea of how to write an academic paper or a dissertation which is an important culmination of their

undergraduate study. The EAP 02 course is done by students in their first or second year and due to this, students often lack specific writing skills that can be learned from a discipline-specific writing course.

7.2.2. A Teacher-Friendly Environment for EAP Teachers

All the EAP teachers who took part in this study have years of teaching experience; however, due to university education's growing demands, classroom management can still prove to be a challenging task. The researcher opines that as reformation in undergraduate curricula is being implemented throughout the university; therefore, EAP teachers should have on-the-job training facilities available so that they can better manage the classroom and teach the students. A university's quality improvement scheme should focus on reassessing the curricula and help teachers so that their teaching practices become enhanced. This can be done by providing teachers an environment where they can feel more motivated to teach and not suffer from teacher-burnout in any way.

7.2.3. Accreditation as an Opportunity for EAP teachers and the Institution

From the findings, it is evident that most teachers are open to the idea of pursuing an international EAP accreditation. The possible impact that it can have on teachers can be assumed to be positive. It is because accreditation will provide faculties with the opportunity to evaluate their own teaching across a period of multiple changes. Every teacher has their own style of teaching and undertakes the task differently. Other factors such as teaching experiences, gender, administrative position within their department, family status, and academic degree can influence how a teacher's teaching style can take shape. Faculty members with administrative positions and junior faculty members can all feel motivated to actively participate in the process of

accreditation. It is because accreditation can strengthen their credentials and make them better prepared to meet any challenges that can arise due to the internationalization of higher education practices at the university. Although the process can be challenging, but a collaborative effort from the teachers and the authorities can make the outcome to be favorable.

7.3. Recommendations for Future Research

The status of English as a global lingua franca (Seidlhofer, 2005, p. 339) has put English language proficiency at the center of higher education and requirement in the job market. This has been further proliferated due to Bangladesh's rapid growth and contribution to the global economy. As a whole, this means that future graduates will be tasked to work in a dynamic environment. Therefore, the role of EAP courses in undergraduate education holds extreme importance. The adaptation of the OBE learning model and overall curricular reform is centered around improving quality in higher education. Apart from the communicative needs of the job, research practices are also gaining importance in the country. Therefore, academic writing proficiency is another attribute that university student's must-have today. Language learning difficulties and limited English language proficiency levels among students are present due to discrepancies in the medium of instruction at different levels of education.

Throughout this research, this statement has been reiterated by existing literature as well as the participants of this study. Also, there are other problems in previous education levels that are hampering students' overall development in language proficiency. These include the inefficient pedagogic capacity of teachers, lack of administrative support, logistics, mismatch between syllabus and assessment practices, lack of effective use of digital tools to ensure language learning, and lack of exposure for practicing English speaking, listening, and academic writing. Although none of these issues can be overcome rapidly, the tertiary level is the

imperative medium, according to university students and English language teachers, that significantly improves students' overall language proficiency levels. The pursuit of quality in higher education is a continuous process and requires equal effort from all stakeholders to achieve it. This study attempted to exclusively document undergraduate students and university English language teachers' views and experiences about EAP courses. Additionally, it tried to document English language teachers' views about current quality improvement projects in higher education and the scopes of achieving an international EAP accreditation at a university in Bangladesh. The findings showcase that EAP courses can be better adjusted to cater to the students' ever-changing needs. An inter-university study can be undertaken about quality and accreditation where EAP teachers, course designers, material designers, and university authorities can be the participants of that where their views to pursue an international accreditation can be documented. In that way, an overall picture to find out the feasibility and suitability of pursuing an international EAP accreditation can be sketched. Additionally, the other predicaments in EAP courses' learning-teaching across institutions can be better pinpointed to paint an overall picture of all respective stakeholders' views, perceptions, experiences, and opinions about EAP courses at the tertiary level in a developing country's context.

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