

EXPLORING THE READINESS OF TEACHERS FOR LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION DEVELOPMENT IN PRESCHOOL

A thesis presented to the
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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Sir Fazle Hasan Abed, the founder and chairperson of BRAC, for his outstanding contribution in numerous sectors of social development including Early Childhood Development which can change the life of millions of children. His vision has created the opportunity for me to acquire knowledge and skills to serve young children of Bangladesh.

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Executive Summary

Teachers are the most influential persons for a child for whom teachers create the social context of learning. Teachers' contribution is part and parcel of children's life. Teachers provide the scaffolding for social interaction and learning at school; they foster child's development to ensure its persistence all through life (Riddle, 1999). To assist children's development, teachers need to have appropriate and adequate skills, patience and enthusiasm for interacting and dealing with children. Teacher's support and love can make a huge difference to the life of children (Hanson, 2012). They can significantly promote and stimulate the development of communication and language through different activities that help prepare children for interaction with society (Brock & Rankin, 2008). During the preschool years, language develops far more rapidly than at any other time. Children use language in different contexts according to the social and cultural needs.

Children's language ability affects learning and development in all areas of a child's development, because this developmental domain crosscuts other domains; e.g. cognitive development, which involves language, imagination, thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and memory (Becky, 2012).

Teachers in Bangladesh are routinely trained by different private and public institutions on different dimensions of pedagogy and early childhood development (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Whether this training prepares teachers adequately with necessary knowledge, skill, positive attitude and resources to facilitate language and communication development of young children is debatable. Considering a few unanswered question that arise from the existing situation in Bangladesh this study attempted to explore the readiness of the preschool teachers for language and communication development in preschool. The study looks into the

components of current practices, perceptions and challenges of preschool teachers in teaching language and communication.

In this study preschool teacher readiness has been explored by comparing with a set of acceptable standard practices constructed from global, regional and national level practices derived from relevant literature review. Thus, the main purpose of this study was to explore the readiness of the preschool teachers for language and communication development of preschool children in terms of standard practices in this respect.

This study used qualitative approach with an explorative study design in order to formulate a description of the issue and obtain a picture of the situation. The population of this study was preschool teachers of Dhaka city. Three government and three NGO (Non Government Organization) preschool teachers were sampled purposively as research participants. Two data collection instruments were used; i.e. i) an in-depth interview (IDI) questionnaire for interviewing teachers and ii) observation guideline to observe classroom situation. Data were managed in Atlas ti 5.2 and later analyzed using content analysis method.

Results from the analysis revealed that it is common for all teachers from all the preschool classes sampled to exercise listening, speaking, reading and writing practices through different kinds of play, rhymes, song, storytelling, reading and writing activities. Among all these practices, listening and speaking were found to be consistent with the acceptable standard practices that were listed in this study form literature review (*vide supra*). Play was identified as a valuable activity for language development, because of its multifaceted quality that provides opportunities for talking, listening, thinking and socializing. However, a minimum level of scaffolding by the teachers was found during play.

With regards to reading and writing practices, teachers considered the scope to be restricted to learning and practicing alphabet, numbers and words. In general writing practices fairly matched the standard practices, with the exception of the prewriting activities, where it was mostly absent in preschools despite its mandatory. Where it was mostly of the preschools have missed despite the requirement according to the listed standard practices. Reading practices also do not align well enough due to the lack of appropriate and adequate training of teachers and lack of appropriate materials. All the teachers' from non government preschools d reading and talked about books in the class. At least one of the teachers in the sample of NGO schools created an opportunity for children to explore books during free play. Contrary to this situation government preschool teachers are not able to create such opportunities for the students, because they are not instructed or guided. Although storybook is listed as a core material in Operational Framework of Pre-Primary Education (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008) and is also listed in the acceptable standard practices they are not able to utilize them properly due to lack of instruction or guidelines. This operational framework also mentions the illustrated book as supplementary material which was not found in any of the preschools. It is however, is considered a standard practice requirement.

While exploring teachers' perception, this study revealed discouraging impression about use of storybooks despite its emphasis of practice in the curriculum guideline. Most teachers assume that preschool children are too young to read storybooks. However, the common perception about language development of the teachers is that positive practices are needed for better development of language and communication within the curriculum they have. Bearing this understanding most of the teachers stated the need for teaching English and practiced it for preparing the students for next

level. Communication with the new students and non-Bengali students in the beginning of the school year, large class size and conducting continuous classes on every working day were identified as challenges in this study. Teachers, however, expressed strong confidence about facing these challenges. They mentioned that the source of their confidence is their experience and training.

This study evidentially documents teachers' practice and perception that are consistent to some extent with the acceptable standard practices, but in certain other areas teachers lack skills and resources. The study confirms that language and communication development of preschool children is highly dependent on teachers' readiness, which needs to be addressed by the appropriate authorities responsible for ensuring quality in the young child development agenda.

The recommendations include further study with a larger sample size covering more diversity; quantitative approach is needed for representation of a larger sample.

For better assessment of the situation, more and repeated class observations are needed in several contexts. Regarding positive steps to promote language development of young children, the required actions include: ensuring availability of storybooks and illustrated books to encourage reading in early years; arranging professional training for the teachers about the use of these books; and fostering and scaffolding play, especially for second language speaking students to engage them in interactive activities that offer ample opportunity for language and communication practice.

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Chapter I: Introduction and Background

1.1. Introduction

"I am your mother at school, because I care, love and teach as like your mother does at home." said my son's teacher. This impressed me very much -how easily and simply she described her role. Teachers are really the mother of the children at school, because they care, love, foster, teach and facilitate children's learning as parents do at home. At the school setting, teachers are the most influential person for the child, who creates the social context of learning for the child. Teachers' contribution is the part and parcel of children's life, because their scaffolding creates atmosphere of social interaction and learning at school. The major role of teacher is to foster a child's development which persists all through life (Riddle, 1999).

Social interaction happens through communication and use of language; these closely supplement each other. Language and communication form a domain that crosscuts other domain and contributes to the development of other domains. Development of language and communication at school is dependent on teacher's role and preparation. They can promote and stimulate the development of communication and language significantly through providing different activities that helps preparing children for society (Brock & Rankin, 2008).

Early years are the most crucial period for human life. Proper support, stimulation and environment ensure success and their absence has the opposite effect. According to Bronfenbrenner human development is an evolving interaction between the individual and the environment. In the first layer of his child development model, children learn

through face-to-face setting (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). This suggests that individuals who are directly involved with children, plays the most important role in their development. Their support, attention and affection help a child to grow in a healthy way. Their knowledge, skill, confidence, enthusiasm and leadership - all these positive characteristics work as a positive back-up for preparing themselves to ensure child's development (Cruz, 2008).

Along with these positive characteristics of teachers' readiness, it is also necessary to know about child's characteristics, interests and needs. Otherwise teachers cannot fulfill child's requirements to ensure proper development. To make sure of children's development, teachers need to know all about the issues and processes in early development of children. In addition teachers have to have enough skill, patience and enthusiasm for interacting and dealing with children. Teacher's support and love can confer a huge contribution to the life of children (Hanson, 2012). Teachers are the role model of early year's students; teachers have to be alert about their responsibilities, attitudes and behavior. All these underscore the importance of teachers' readiness for focusing on the process of child development, child's interest, learning style, and intelligence – taking a holistic view of children's development.

To authenticate the holistic development it is obviously necessary to focus on all developmental domains. But among all the domains, language and communication is cross-cutting, because it is the medium of all the activities of other developmental domains. For a wider use of this domain it deserves more emphasis and attention making the child more competent to use this domain. Children use speech and writing

as a tool to communicate what they learn from the school and society. The ELDS Bangladesh document has mentioned that,

Children use language as a tool to effectively communicate their needs, feelings, and ideas to others and receive, understand and interpret what people is communicating.

(Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2010, pg 89)

To ensure the effective use of language tool for understanding and interpreting the world, early childhood programs need to focus on the quality of communication and interactions along with the trained personnel. But, it has been identified that the existing programs have a shortage of trained and equipped personnel to deliver the quality ECD (Early Childhood Development) programs and also emphasis on children understanding, confidence, communication skills, dealing with changes, effective interaction etc. (Das et al., 2008).

With the intent of exploring teachers' readiness for ensuring effectual use of language and communication this paper is structured in five chapters covering introduction and background, literature review, methodology, result, discussion, conclusion and recommendations. Chapter I is the combination of the following sections: introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, significance of the study, research objectives and research questions.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

'The Readiness of Teachers for Language and Communication Development in Preschool' is vital. According to Vygotsky development is dependent on social interaction (Riddle, 1999). Language and communication development also occur

through social interaction that directly relates to the role of teacher as communicator (ERIC Digest, 2000). Different children deserve different level of communication and different types of engagement with different activities. All the roles of teachers' need a high quality interaction, communication and usage of language. Children's language ability affects learning and development in all area because this developmental domain crosscuts other domains; e.g. cognitive development involves language, imagination, thinking, reasoning, problem solving, and memory (Becky, 2012), as well as social development involves communication and interaction. This implies that this domain helps children to express their thoughts and ideas to attain their needs. Children who communicate skillfully do better in social competence. Without proper utilization of this domain children may not be able to learn and behave according to social and age standard.

Language development depends on the cumulative experiences that have gathered all through the life (Encyclopedia of Education, 2002). Therefore, providing standard experience is the key for ensuring the standard development. In school settings teachers are responsible for providing opportunities of positive experiences through engaging children in different learning activities, play and interaction. It is therefore required to know by the teachers that what and how they engage children in learning activities to ensure the language and communication development as well as the other domain.

Along with teachers' role, curriculum plays a very important role in language and communication development of children. A Curriculum is meant to consider a child's comprehensive development that also includes language. Therefore a curriculum

despite its diverse topic and pedagogic methodologies ideally would consist of adequate vocabulary as well as instructional methods in both its contents and pedagogic processes allowing the require development of language among children. Curriculum provides oral-rich environment that support language development and contribute positively to gain standard language (Combes, 2007). It also provides instructions and guidelines to the teachers for preparing and identifying plenty of opportunities for them that would facilitate the desired development. However, if the teachers do not meet a minimum standard close to the acceptable standard practices for developing language and communication domain, there may be a requirement for reforming the relevant educational system. More specifically, there may be a need for guiding the curricula and teachers training on what teachers need to know for imparting the knowledge and practices ensuring the achievement of an acceptable standard practices for development (Kagan & Britto, 2009).

In Bangladesh preschools have started from 2010, most of the teachers are not getting the proper training yet (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). However, despite this situation teachers have to teach and facilitate the language classes as well as other subjects using language as a tool. It has been stated as specific objective in the Operational Framework of Pre-Primary Education Bangladesh, that supporting language development of children through active interaction with children, creating opportunities for using language skills, develop and train human resources and support them effectively to carry out their work in early care and education of children (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008).

During the preschool years, language develops far more rapidly than at any other time. Because children use the language in different context according to the social and cultural needs. Considering all these discussions of the relevant context, this study has explored teachers' knowledge, attitude, belief and regular practices of language and communication development of young children through investigating teachers' facilitation skills of language and communication to the preschool students and their perception about this developmental domain. It was deemed essential to know the current mind set of the teachers as well as their curriculum practices that would potentially yield recommendations for holistic developmental strategies of preschool children through emphasis the language and communication development.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to explore the readiness of the preschool teachers for language and communication development of preschool children. For developing this domain teacher's role is significant and sensitive, so clear and vast understanding about communication and language development is required for the teachers' to interact, develop activity and model them as per the child's need.

Preschool age children are more imaginative and easily motivated by adults and usually make new words through combining sounds by their own imaginative way (Raising Children Network, 2012). So teacher's skillful communication with children encourages using language and communication skills with long words and different sounds. Subsequently teacher's readiness is the key to open up the way of language development at preschool level.

However, this study is intend to learn the current practice and the status of knowledge and attitude of the preschool teachers towards the language and communication development of preschool children which is highly relevant to Bangladesh Government's initiative of Preprimary Curriculum 2014.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Language development is the key to the development of other domain and teacher's role is very sensitive and important for developing the desired skills. Interaction, activity and teacher's modeling requires a vast and clear understanding of teachers about communication and language development. During the age of 5 to 6 years old children are more imaginative, curious and motivated to learn by the adults. So in school setting, teacher's skillful communication and interaction with children encourages children to use long words and become familiar with different sounds and words (Raising Children Network, 2012). So far teachers would need to have appropriate knowledge and attitude regarding the use of communication and language skill. In this circumstance this study may provide an overview of existing practices and perception of teachers about language and communication development of preschool children that may help to identify needs for further improvement.

Consequently a good curriculum ensures positive language development through creating opportunities where teacher creates chance and support students to express their thoughts freely; e.g. dialogic reading program shows significant increase of children's expressive language (Opel, Ameer & Aboud, 2009). Through exploring the practices, the result of this study may offer the reform of curriculum and its

implementation system to make certain the language and communication development of preschool children.

However, teachers in Bangladesh are routinely trained by different private and public institutions on different dimensions of pedagogy and early childhood development (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Therefore, school teachers are not devoid of the knowledge of skillful teaching using appropriate communications and language strategies. However, there is no evidence as to what extent has these trainings been preparing them for their pedagogic efficiency that focuses on using appropriate communication and language skills for preschool children. In other words, evidence lacks for identifying the scope of improvements or adjustment required to comply with international standards to use communication and language as one of the important pedagogic skills. While there could be several underlying assumptions such as - teachers possess adequate skills; this may not be entirely true and needs to be explored. From this study it may come out the need of modification and restructuring the professional development arrangement to ascertain the language development.

Results from this study is anticipated to provide evidence of the present attitude and practices of teachers and accordingly find out the gaps relevant to the readiness of teachers for implementing the different aspects of the language and communication as standard practices globally and regionally which may give insight to the to the respective authorities for shaping their pre-primary curriculum and the professional development curriculum.

1.5. Research Objectives

1. To explore the perception and current practices of preschool teachers in teaching language and communication.
2. To identify the challenges in introducing and applying language and communication in preschools.

1.6. Research Questions

1. What are the acceptable standard practices for language development at preschool level as determined by review of relevant standard and criteria from literature?
2. What are the current practices of preschool teachers in teaching language and communication?
3. How do teachers perceive language and communication development of early year's children?
4. What are the challenges to introduce and apply good practices in language (standards) and communication in preschools?

1.7. Operational Definitions

Teacher: The person who teaches, especially in a school setting is called teacher. A teacher is usually an individual who is involved in care taking process in school setting to ensure the achievement of learning goals, where they follow different strategies and activities to engage children in learning. Teacher (caregiver in school setting) provides the supportive practices that aim to nurture children's learning and development (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2010). For the purpose of this

study, only preschool teacher will be considered as teacher, who teaches the 5 to 6 years old children.

Perception: Perception means organization of information, thought and interpretation of understanding something. Perception develops through combination of sensory information, experience and knowledge. Teachers' own expectations, needs, unconscious ideas, and conflicts can influence their perception (Merriam-Webster, 2012). In this study teachers' perception will be defined through what teachers' perceive about some practices that are constructed by their own knowledge, experiences, culture, and values they had. Teacher's perception, beliefs, expectations help to be an effective teacher (Pajares, as cited in Chong, 2005)

Preschool Children: According to University of Illinois Extension 3 and 4 years of children are called preschooler. Jeffrey Tarwick Smith mentioned preschooler as 2 to 5 years children (Tarwick-Smith, 2006). The Operational Framework of Pre-Primary Education Bangladesh has defined the pre-primary age from 3 to < 6yr as the long term vision, but for the current years, due to resource constrain and to ensure the effective implementation by the government; the experts has kept the target narrowed down to 5 to 6 years (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008). In this study preschool children are defined as children who are in between 5 years to 6 years range, in alignment with the government.

Acceptable Standard Practice of Language Development: Many countries have developed their own learning and development standards for early age children in different developmental domains. Rigorous research, literature review, expectation,

needs, values and norms guided them to set their own standards. This study considered Acceptable Standard Practices as those practices which are derived from literature review as common standards or practices in different nations and are regarded as necessary for early childhood development, particularly, aged 5 and 6 years.

Scaffolding: The concept of scaffolding, popularized by Jerome Bruner, is based on the work of Russian educationist Vygotsky, who proposed that with an adult's assistance, children could accomplish tasks that they ordinarily could not independently. Scaffolding includes all the things that a good teacher would do to help a class or individual student overcome difficulties with a learning task. Typical examples are explaining and reviewing what has been done earlier at the beginning of the lesson or a brief review of key vocabulary at the end of a language lesson. It refers to different instructional techniques that can help move students progressively toward stronger understanding and, ultimately, greater independence in the learning process. Like physical scaffolding in building construction, the supportive strategies are gradually removed when they are no longer needed, and the teacher shifts more responsibility for learning to the student. Scaffolding can be regarded as an essential element of effective teaching; and all teachers—to the extent they are effective—use various forms of instructional scaffolding in their teaching (Education Reform, 2014).

Chapter II: Literature Review

This section is going to attempt to lay out a platform for the study, where the Global and Bangladesh's context of language and communication development and the teacher's readiness is briefly portrayed and establish the common standards and practices for language and communication development at an early age. Literature search and discussion reveal the influence of teachers' support; especially the effect of teachers' influence on child's language and communication development of early years as noted in this section. It is noteworthy that there is ample global research on communication and language development but this is scanty on how the standard practices support achievement of the targeted goal. This section sheds light on language and communication development as well as the global acceptable standard practices in language development and teachers' readiness.

2.1. Language and Communication Development in Early Years

Strong language skill is a pre-requisite for children's comprehension of knowledge and competent performance for any given subject as well as optimal social development. According to Vygotsky people use language and communication to meet their needs. This language domain is directly linked with the other domains, especially the cognitive development and higher order thinking skills depend on the effective use of language and communicating skills. People use language as a tool to mitigate their needs and desire that also theorized by Vygotsky, which says 'thought and language co-exists' (Riddle, 1999). So it is obvious that the effective use of this language tool helps better achievement.

Effective use of language depends on environment and context that provided by the teachers in school setting. According to Vygotsky children learn in their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD, the bridge between known and unknown), where adults' scaffolding works as an essential component for learning (Vygotsky, 1978). To make the learning happen, adults need to create opportunities of interactions among children and adult or with capable peers in their cultural context where they learn through interacting, connecting and sharing their experiences to reach their proximal level of development (Crawford, 1996).

Accordingly children need opportunities to reach their proximal level and adult creates that opportunity through meaningful communication in daily life; e.g. conversation, practical activities, language modeling etc. Adults' support and modeling encourage children for acquisition of language. Relationships with children and adults are the key elements of effective practices of language and communication. Communication and language is one of the learning areas for achieving the learning goals, which contribute to the understanding and development of other areas. Moreover, involving children in rich experience based practical activities and play, adult engagement and support can make the effort rewarding (Brock & Rankin 2008).

2.2. Teacher's Readiness

Teacher's readiness means the preparation of teachers for dealing with children with the objective to achieve the desired standards. However, teacher standards define what teachers should know and do to advance their students' learning. Teacher-standards provide information on teaching practices, instructional strategies,

educational interactions, pedagogy, and creating opportunities for learning (Kagan & Britto, 2009).

After parents, teachers are the most influential caregiver who help children keep and use the language tools effectively (Riddle, 1999). Therefore, teachers need to know how they cater children to develop their language, literacy and communication skills properly. Usually national standard and procedure has taken the valuable responsibility to create opportunities for preparing teachers. For early childhood care and education, standards establishment and development of teacher's qualifications are emphasized (UNESCO & UNICEF, 2012). These standards are also counted as a useful tool to understand the conditions for success. Here linguistic and cultural diversity is mentioned as an essential component for effective early childhood education (Scott, Kagan & Frelow 2003). To improve teacher's pedagogic preparation these standards can guide the development of curricula for teachers training programs by providing information about what teachers of young children should know and be able to do in their roles as teachers (Kagan & Britto, 2009). In fact teacher's standards have guided the teacher's preparation program on the basis of what teachers should know to formulate the activity for better learning (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2009).

According to Status of Pre-primary teachers training of Bangladesh during 2010 to 2012, there was no comprehensive training plan for continuous capacity building; even there were no dedicated teachers for pre primary, so one teacher from existing primary teacher was responsible for conducting preprimary class. In government setting teachers were getting a 6 days short training on preprimary education (PPE)

and NGO preschools received training by their own management. So there was no linkage between GO and NGO standard and guidelines. There was a plan long training on newly developed pre-primary curriculum and periodic refreshers for earlier recruited GO preschool teachers on regular basis (Directorate of Primary Education, 2012). Fourteen thousand teachers were recruited on November 2013. All these newly recruited teachers have received 15 days Basic Training on Pre-primary Education which is mandatory by the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education and Ministry of Finance (M. Rahman, personal communication, June 5, 2014).

Though it is obvious that there are variations among teachers' preparation for the variation of country standards', but it is widely established that early childhood teachers requires to have thorough knowledge about language and communication development and also know how they can help children in developing their language and literacy skills (ERIC Digest, 2000).

2.3. Acceptable Standard Practices for Language Development

Early learning practitioners need to optimize listening and speaking opportunities through different conversation and hands on activities, language modeling and meaningful communication with simple language that help children to develop them as an expert user of language (Brock, & Rankin, 2008). To guide the practitioners on how they get involved in the process of ensuring children's holistic development different countries define their standards according to their national and cultural norms and expectations. In 2002, *The Going Global with Early Learning and Development Standards* project of UNICEF, Columbia University & Yale University

was launched under the focus of developing assessment and monitoring instrument for measuring early childhood development. That project covered only six countries, in the East Asia & Pacific region's UNICEF countries had put attention on ECD indicators.

In 2003, the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) Early Childhood Care and Development Experts' Meeting concluded with the common understanding to search culturally relevant indicators of measuring and promoting child development that reflects the nation's culture, values, beliefs, practice and expectations. This approach is widely undertaken by the other national partner of UNICEF during 2005 to 2008. Nearly 40 countries have initiated to develop their own standards for early childhood (Miyahara & Meyers, 2008).

In Global Context the North American state New Jersey has set their standards for quality improvement in language practices for preschool teaching practices. The State Department of Education of New Jersey has mentioned as standard practices for language development is small group conversation, use rich vocabulary words, use descriptive language, encourage children to talk, hands on activities, introduce different books and printing materials, copy and write words etc., which are the most common in different countries (New Jersey State Department of Education, 2004).

An European Country, such as Kosovo has developed the standards for the children aged 0 to 6 years, where early learning development standards have organized the expected achievements in different development area. The development of language and communication is one of the major areas which is divided into different number

of sub-areas and then into different numbers of standards. They have consider as standard practices as using simple languages to interact children, as well as share stories, vocabulary expansion, use of different types of books, talk about authors, drawings, scribbles, copy symbols etc. In this document it is portrayed how adults can support and encourage children to achieve these standards (Republic of Kosovo, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2011).

Another European country Republic of Macedonia is in the process of developing the Early Learning and Development Standards, where they have initiated to develop a set of nationally acceptable early learning and development standards for holistic development of children aged 0 to 6 years. Although the language and communication domain crosscuts, so like other nations this country has also considered language and communication as a major domain to set specific standards to confirm a holistic child development model. For proper development of language they have considered the opportunity of conversation, rich vocabulary use, storytelling, experience sharing, hands on activities, games, rhymes, reading and writing (Damovska et al., 2009).

An Asian Country Pakistan has developed its standards for the early year's children, where all standards refer to the wishes, aspirations and expectations for the development of children. These standards are used in many ways; especially for the school settings, it is used to improve instructions, teachers' preparation and curriculum development. They have planned the standards for 4 to 5 years old children and language development has counted as a major domain to set student standards and teacher standards, which will allow teachers to provide the essential support to the students to achieve the competencies. These standards are achieved by

the 4 basic language skills; listening, speaking, reading and writing. Storytelling, rhymes, jingles, free and encouraging environment for sharing and talking, introducing new words, prewriting activities, alphabet writing etcetera, are the most common practices that are defined in this document. This document also has mentioned that a quality learning environment is essential for optimal development (Pakistan Ministry of Education, 2009).

In Bangladesh Context, the early childhood care and education initiatives attained momentum from the late 1990s. In this process the early learning and development standards was taken into place in Comprehensive Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) Policy Framework in 2009 (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2009 & 2013). The proposed standards in Bangladesh have covered from birth to eight years children, where language and communication has selected as a domain which divided into several sub domains and then in aspects and then in standards. These standards actually guide and help the stakeholders to provide the support to ensure the child development as a whole. For language and communication development these standards have set strategies for the adults which will be counted as standard practices for the teacher after validation the standards. This document revealed the following standard practices: hands on activity, expand vocabulary using complex words, rhymes, riddle, song, define and explain words, listen and responds, model rich vocabulary, games for creating opportunity of talking, sharing, conversations, read stories, talking about books and author, opportunity to explore different kinds of books, stories, letters, opportunity of writing and encouragement for copying letter's contour etc. These are supportive practices that adult can use to

engage the child for achieving the indicators and helping to nurture child's learning and development (Ministry of Women and Children Affairs, 2010).

2.3.1. Listed Acceptable Standard Practices for Language and Communication Development

The following list is considered as the acceptable standard practices by the teachers in this study. This list has been generated from review of relevant standards and criteria practiced globally, regionally and nationally (e.g. New Jersey, Kosovo, Macedonia, Pakistan, Bangladesh). The listed acceptable standard practices are by which teachers' readiness has been explored in this study and is also the answer to the first research question.

Listening Practices

- Use simple language to interact with children
- Engage children in hands-on learning to build conceptual understanding of words and knowledge.
- Create opportunities to share stories and allow them to get involved in it.
- Build and expand on what children say by using more complex vocabulary.
- Provide indoor and outdoor opportunities to listen to different sounds.

Speaking Practices

- Create friendly environment and initiate games and activities for the opportunity to talk, converse and exchange dialogue.
- Model rich vocabulary in context
- Encourage children to share their views, opinions, to ask questions and respond.
- Involve children in singing and actions with voice expression (song, rhymes etc.)
- Introduce new words and explain the meaning of the unfamiliar words.
- Encourage child to recall and or tell about an event and help with questions.

Reading Practices

- Talk with children about the author and the illustrator of the book.
- Ask the children to talk about the book.
- Demonstrate reading.
- Read with children stories, fairy tales and poems and science books.
- Make available illustrative books that children can read and remember.

Writing Practices

- Provide opportunities to play games with letters made from different materials.
- Encourage and facilitate children to copy and describe the letter.
- Provide space where children can write.
- Provide activities that support prewriting and writing activities.
- Show interest and praise every time the child writes.

Chapter III: Methodology

3.1. Research Participants

Teachers of 5 to 6 years children from of government and NGO (Non Government Organization) preschool of Dhaka urban was the research population of this study. From this population six preschool teachers were selected as research participants from these two categories of preschools to capture the different status of teachers' and diversities in their practices.

3.2. Research Site

Data was collected from Dhaka urban area that represented urban area of Bangladesh in this study. Schools were selected from Mohammadpur, Mirpur and Mogbazar area of Dhaka city as per convenience of accessibility and feasibility of the researcher.

3.3. Research Approach

As indicated in the research questions, a qualitative approach with an explorative study design was preferred because qualitative approach produces exploratory and highly descriptive knowledge (Hesse-Biber, Leavy, 2006). This study also attempted to explore the readiness of the teachers regarding some acceptable standard practices of teaching language and communication that are identified by the researcher following literature review on language standards from diverse international and national studies. This study tried to gain a holistic understanding of the experiences of teacher's about teaching language and communication to the early year's students through capturing in-depth insight of teachers' perceptions and practices, which will

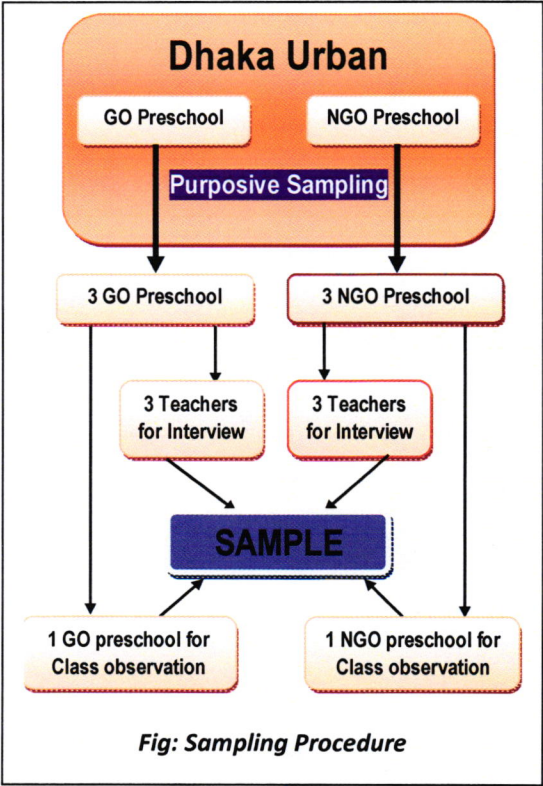
present in a narrative form after analyzing and interpretation. So collecting in-depth insight of teachers’ and their practices, qualitative approach has been selected (Teddile, Tashakkori, 2009).

3.4. Sampling Procedure

Teachers of government and NGO preschools of Dhaka urban were the population of this study. From this population six preschool teachers were selected purposively from these two different categories of preschools. Three government and three NGO preschool teachers were selected for the qualitative study. All the teachers were female.

Everyone approached for the interview

consented to participate. No private Bangla medium or English medium preschool teachers were included in this study due to the feasibility constrain. Two preschool classes were selected for observation. One government and one NGO preschool were selected to obtain information from wider range of school categories.



3.5. Data Collection Methods

Proper rapport was established by the researcher with six preschools’ authority of Dhaka urban for arranging the in depth interview (IDI) and class observation in school premises. Appropriate letter to the schools’ authorities was provided for taking their consent for class observation and IDI. For IDI, support of school authority

through prior notice was obtained. Each IDI was conducted for 25 to 40 minutes and classroom activities were observed according to the class routine then data was kept safe and secured.

Field notes, memo and journal for every IDI and class observation was kept separately with specific identification number for documenting the minute piece of information. Five audio records with the permission of the participants of IDI were also preserved. One of the participants didn't allow recording her voice, but gave all the answers willingly that were asked.

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

The following two data collection instruments were used in order to achieve the objectives

- In-depth Interview (IDI) Questionnaire and
- Observation Guideline (class observation)

The uses of two different instruments triangulated the information and also allow profound understanding. In-depth Interview questionnaire and observation guideline were prepared according to the research questions and the list of acceptable standard practices for language development that are identified by reviewing different literatures. The face validity of the tools was checked with the expert feedbacks from the Institute of Educational Development (IED), BRAC University and suitability of the questions were obtained by piloting the questions. The IDI questionnaire was piloted with one preschool teacher. After reviewing and piloting the tools it was modified and finalised for collecting data. In-depth Interview questions revealed the demographic information of the preschool teachers where the information on socioeconomic status was collected.

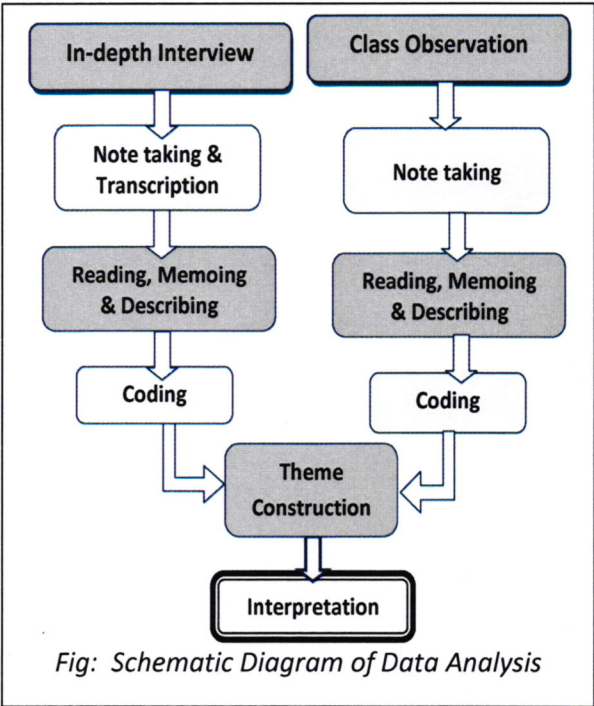
In-depth Interview: Six teachers for in-depth interview were selected from six preschools. Three were from government preschools and three from NGO preschools. For In-depth Interview researcher took consent and then collected data through previously prepared IDI questionnaire.

Observation: Two preschools were selected from two different categories; one government preschool and one NGO preschool to observe. Researcher observed the whole duration of classes through the lens of an observation guideline.

Study Duration: The study was conducted from May 2013 to July 2014.

3.7. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed according to the content analysis procedure and also getting support from the Atlas ti 5.2 (Dowling, M., 2008). It was started from the beginning of data collection process. Researcher followed some steps that help to organize data in a manageable format. Steps were followed standard procedure for qualitative data analysis as outlined in the schematic diagram



Note taking and Transcription: Following every IDI and class observation journal was written. The verbatim data was transcribed with proper identification numbers, so that it was identified later for the corresponding audio file.

Reading, Memoing and Describing: Reading and ‘memoing’ was started during IDI and class observation separately. Simultaneous reading and memoing was going on with describing the data whenever needed. Reading was done over and over again.

Coding: Apriori coding was done after repeated reading of the text. In this final study codes were highlighted using Atlas ti’s open coding option. Codes were then selected according to code by list (Atlas ti option). After an interview was completely coded another interview had gone through the same process of coding. However, if there was any code that was not in the a priori list then it was coded using free code option. After all interviewers had been coded, the codes were individually organized in Atlas ti option (code → output → quotations for selected code) so that under each code all the quotations from all the interviews are organized. This was gradually done for all codes. Quotations from each code were then reread several times for analysis in which patterns, similarities, and contrast was searched.

Theme construction and Interpretation: Through consolidation the quotations from every code, themes consistent with the research questions was created. After constructing the themes from every coded data, the themes was interpreted and composed to draw a conclusion. Emphasis was given on reading in every steps of data analysis to construct the ideas to answer the research questions.

3.8. Ethical Issues

Data collection process was maintained complete confidentiality and anonymity in the standard procedure. No identifying information or name was used in this study.

Verbal consent was collected from head teachers and their higher authorities before enter the school and classroom. Formal written consent was collected from the teachers before conducting interviews. Participants’ rights and privacy was ensured

through secured preservation of data. Data was kept in a safe and secure space file that required password access. Data was not used anywhere else except this research study. Ethical practice was ensured while implementing the research according to the research design and ethical guidelines.

3.9. Validity and Reliability

The IDI questionnaire and the observation check list, both English and Bangla versions were checked with expert judgment and then incorporated their feedback in the questionnaire and the observation check list.

The reliability of the in depth interview questionnaire was piloted with one preschool teacher. Pilot interview was conducted with a government preschool teacher and feedbacks were incorporated to refine the interview schedule.

3.10. Limitations of the Study

Due to time and resource constrain researcher has limited its class observation sample within two observation and no repeated observation. The data were collected only from the urban area, so more and repeated observation in more locations could have revealed more representative information.

Chapter IV: Findings

For the understanding of readiness of teachers in language and communication development of children in early years, the findings of this research has been organized into three major themes:

First, findings are gathered from IDI and class observation on current practices of language and communication development. Secondly, findings from IDI on perception of the teachers about language and communication development of preschool children were presented. Finally, the findings from IDI on challenges to introduce and apply language standard and communication in preschool were discussed. These themes have been generated from categorizing and coding the interview data based on research questions. Findings, therefore, helped in answering the research questions and satisfying the research objectives. These were related to perceptions, current practices and challenges for teachers about language and communication development in preschool.

In addition to this, the researcher compiled a list of acceptable standard practices in language development from relevant literature review. This was necessary to deal with the first research question about standard ongoing practices of preschool teachers. The global, regional and national perspectives in acceptable standard practices were examined by reviewing materials on needs and responses in early childhood development in different countries (e.g. USA, Europe, Asia and Bangladesh). These acceptable standard practices are organized in four major parts according to the four language skills which are practiced or proposed to be practiced

by the preschool teachers in New Jersey, USA; Kosovo, Macedonia, Pakistan and Bangladesh which is mentioned in literature review chapter. On the basis of these acceptable practices, preschool teacher's preparation for developing language and communication standard in early years is portrayed in the following sections.

4.1. Demographic Profile of Participants

Demographic data is presented for age, educational qualification and experience of the preschool teachers of this study. The age range of the teachers varied between 20 to above 30 years. Among them NGO preschool teachers belong to 20 to 30 years group and government preschool teachers are in above 30 age group. Two of the preschool teachers have their Master degree; three of them have Bachelor degree and one has Secondary School Certificate qualification. Data on training have shown that all the teachers have training either in teaching or in pre-primary education. All the government preschool teachers had teaching degrees; e.g. BEd, MEd, C-in-Ed and all the NGO preschool teachers got extensive training on early childhood development with continuous refreshers training. In addition two of the government preschool teachers got 5 to 7 days training on pre-primary education. Teaching experience varied according to the age of the teachers. The older teacher had more years of experience of teaching compared to the younger ones who had the least amount of experience (see Annex 1).

4.2. Findings on Current Practices of preschool teachers in teaching language and communication

Language and communication practice is the combined use of four basic language skills in daily life and also in classroom for delivering lessons. So to describe this

theme the researcher has split it into four language skills which have been counted as four subthemes. These are: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing practice.

Listening Practice

Most of the teachers have mentioned in IDI and also have found in observation that teachers have invariable try to encourage listening practice for communicating with the students in preschool as per the instruction they have got from the training and from the curriculum.

Using simple language: Most of the teachers try to communicate using non complex words and sentences so that children can understand and follow as a good listener. Sometimes teachers change their styles and vocal intonation as per the needs and abilities of students' to ensure the listening and communication. Most of the teachers also stated that when children are effectively engaged in listening they become attentive and absorb the lessons better. As described by one of the preschool teachers that:

I tried to make them understand through stories; gradually they become attentive. I leveraged on these listening practices and attempted to teach them several other topics, such as letter recognition very effectively. (Personal communication: Interview #2, 19-11-13)

Regular activities and morning circle: Children's engagement as listener in regular activities is recognized by almost every teacher in their IDI. Various rhymes, songs, stories, introducing own self are named by the teachers as stimulating listening activities. These are also evident from class observation. Morning circle is

documented as an important event by the preschool teachers which engage preschoolers in listening practice regularly. They mentioned that school activity start with national anthem and some other activities that permit children to listen to their teachers and their peers. Only one preschool teacher has mentioned regular news sharing activity that allows children getting involved as a listener. Students collected a piece of news from home or from the surroundings and share it to the class. Teacher has stated the regular practices:

First we sing the National Anthem, then some physical exercise that students perform listening to instructions, followed by rhymes, songs and stories (that also ensures listening practices). (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Shared storytelling: All the preschool teachers have acknowledged shared storytelling as a potential opportunity for listening. They also mentioned that during this activity students are more careful and attentive listeners, so that students can repeat and retell after listening, but vocabulary expansion practice is not observed in this session. All the teachers keep a strong feeling that when they teach anything, students are able to repeat, because they listen and understand. Teachers affirmed that:

When they listen to stories, they are attentive, didn't lose their concentration.

(Personal communication: Interview # 6, 02-12-13)

Whatever I teach, they can recall them and answer accordingly. (Personal communication: Interview # 2, 19-11-13)

Related to the aforementioned findings on listening practices by the teachers, the study found that teachers use simple language to make the students understand and as well as create different activities to engage students as listeners; e.g. morning circle,

shared story telling etc. But no outdoor opportunity for listening has been stated by the teachers or were observed. It has been observed that most of the teachers did not build and expand on what children say by using more complex vocabulary.

Speaking Practice

All the teachers have mentioned the opportunity of speaking practice of the students during class in their IDIs' and likewise it was also found in class observation report. Teachers have listed; play, rhymes, song, retelling story, news sharing, new words introducing along with letters as major speaking activities as the students practiced in preschool which they have instructed by their curriculum and training.

Play: The highly appreciated speaking opportunity is play time revealed by all teachers. They have mentioned that play provide opportunity of talking to each other for developing common understanding about rules of game and guide each other verbally for playing game. Teachers of GO preschool have mentioned two types of play; i) instructed play and ii) free play. The IDI and the observation data have mentioned that teachers describe the instructions during instructed play and check whether the children have understood the rule or not, then they let them play on their own. But during free play students are literally free to choose their play and their talking. It was observed that teachers do not introduce new words and explain the meaning of the unfamiliar words. Moreover, most of the teachers do not intervene or using stimulating words or scaffold during free play. Children talk a lot during both types of play. The following assertion by a teacher depicts this:

Teachers Guide mentions fourteen instructed plays and also the free play.In free play children talk to each other as per the need of the play; they decide the

role of the players...they play by their own. (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Play corner: The entire NGO preschool teachers have mentioned play as the most sparkling talking opportunity, which also identified from observation too. The teachers' say-so, play corner is organized in different corners with unique play materials during free play; e.g. block corner, imaginary corner, water and sand corner, book and picture corner etc. Teachers mentioned that these corners create different contexts and promote social play that motivates them to exchange dialogue. One teacher said:

In imaginary corner they arrange doll's marriage ceremony, so they must talk.

They also did phone call, shopping, cooking. Sometimes I asked what you are cooking. What should you need to cook this etc. (Personal communication:

Interview # 5, 02-12-13)

No teachers have mentioned nor has any observation found out any outdoor play opportunity in any type of schools.

Greeting, rhymes, songs during Morning Circle: Defined by all the teachers and supported by observation data established that morning circle provides speaking practice opportunities. All teachers have mentioned about some common speaking activities in morning circle, such as greeting, rhymes, song etc. Along with these activities news sharing is vividly identified as talking opportunity by one of the preschool teacher, which also have mentioned for the listening practice too. Teachers

involved children in singing and actions with voice expression during storytelling and other activities for capturing the children's attention.

Besides the morning circle, some **regular activities** are arranged by the teachers; e.g. reciting, singing and retelling activities as per the preprimary curriculum and the instruction book. Most of the teachers encourage children to share their views, opinions, to ask questions and respond. One of the teachers mentioned that sometimes she asked the students to make presentation in different way using their own words that help to understand their level of comprehension and use of language they have learnt. The teacher said -

There are 19 rhymes in Bangla and English, 9 songs and 9 stories. These are taught all through the year. (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

After telling the story I asked them to show it in role play. (Personal communication: Interview # 1, 19-11-13)

The enumeration of speaking practices shows that students of preschools are exposed in different talking opportunities; e.g. play and other speaking activities (repeating, retelling sharing etc.). Among them play is the leading activity that promotes explicit opportunity of talking, conversing and exchanging dialogue during class. Findings showed that teachers do not intervene or use stimulating words or scaffolding during free play.

Reading Practice

Reading alphabets, numbers and words: The IDI data and the observation data revealed that reading alphabet, numbers and words are common for all the preschools.

All the teachers demonstrate in the class how to read alphabet, numbers and words first then help children to read letters, words and numbers from the charts and books. Teachers said that students had a book to read and write on. One of them explained -

The only book in school is the teacher's guide for us and the Bangla letter writing book for the students, where they write the letters and the numbers.

(Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Reading storybook to the children is mentioned by the entire non government preschool teacher as a regular activity. They discussed the cover page and illustration and then read storybooks to the students which engage children in reading and allow seeing the reading demonstration. Most of the teachers also informed about preserving the storybook, they keep the storybook in a safe place so that students cannot reach them. Only one of them talks about a different practice; she kept the books in book corner during free play, where students can explore the books and pretend reading. On the other hand government preschool teachers stated that they narrate the story as a story teller to the students rather than reading story from their instruction book. They have mentioned that it is not instructed in teacher's instruction book or even there is no storybook available in government preschool; neither for the teachers nor for the students. Teachers stated -

We have 12 story books ...I keep them in a chest...I don't give them the book. I read the book to them then ask them to tell the story in their own language.

(Personal communication: Interview # 4, 23-11-13)

If you see them, you will think they are reading, they actually read the pictures... During free play, there is a 'Picture and Book Corner' where the books are available for the students. (Personal communication: Interview # 5, 02-

Based on the reading practice findings, all the students practiced reading letter, word and number. Along with this all the non- government preschool students were also exposed to reading demonstration and some of them were getting the chance of exploring storybooks and pretend reading. No evidence was found in any of the preschools of children reading the picture books or exploring reading with these.

Writing Practice

Writing alphabet and numbers: All the preschool teachers confirmed a certain way to practice writing alphabet and numbers in their IDIs. They give the model of the alphabet (if they have it) to the students to learn the shape of the alphabet then teachers provide space for writing; students go to the board, identify and say the letter and then write on the board first and then in exercise book. Teachers encourage and facilitate children to copy and describe the letter. Teachers of preschools invariably have revealed these findings:

At first I give the plastic shape of the alphabet then I show how to write on the board. and asked them to write on board. After that they write in their exercise book. (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Prewriting activity and game with letters: Only one non government preschool teacher has mentioned prewriting activity she practiced for writing development in preschool level. She makes student go through free drawing and strokes as prewriting activity then start letter writing in board, books and exercise books. Teacher describes how these processes are facilitated -

They (students) draw free drawing for 3 months;then starts patterns, which are part of letters of the alphabet. After twenty patterns they start writing the alphabetWe have models of letters, I give a set to them and I pick up randomly a letter from another set and show them, the student who has the same letter would spring out of the group and come to the center. S/he shows the letter and everyone would say what it is. (Personal communication: Interview # 5, 02-12-13)

Homework: Homework also pointed as writing practice opportunity by all of the teachers. Some of them give homework to repeat writing what they practiced in class and check on next day. From observation it is revealed that during checking the writing teacher gave feedback to the children on good handwriting. Some of the teachers have mentioned that they do not give homework directly but ask them to practice at home. All the preschool teachers have identified that writing practice is much less compared to listening and speaking practice for language development in preprimary level.

Based on the above findings on writing in preschools, the study have found that teachers provide opportunity to the students for writing letters, numbers and words in class and home as per the instruction they have in curriculum. Very few students have the exposure in prewriting activity.

Finally, above findings suggest that there are a set of different activities for the development of language and communication through practicing four language skills. Most of the teachers have pointed out morning circle, play and storytelling as

listening and speaking opportunity that allow children to engage and practice language and communication. Reading story books is practiced only in non government preschools as regular practice. Letters, numbers and words are the basic items for reading and writing in preschool that directly link with language development mentioned by the teachers.

4.3. Findings on Perception of the teachers for language and communication development in preschools

Teachers' perception about language and communication development in early years' children is articulated from IDI data in this theme. This theme explores teachers' beliefs, knowledge and attitude about language and communication development of early years children.

Belief about the language and communication skill development: Most of the teachers asserted that when students expressed or replied to what they saw or were taught in their mother tongue was development of language and communication skills for students. Some of the teachers think that using formal language to express one's thoughts verbally or in writing consists of language development. Most of the teachers also noted that when they come to know about students' understanding, they feel that younger children making progress in language and communication skills.

One teacher said that -

When students come to school they know little, but with time they observe and try to understand.....in this way their language is presumably developing.

.....When they try to recognize letters, numbers or words and say it, I understand that their language is developing. (Personal communication:

Interview # 2, 19-11-13)

Use of positive words and gesture: All the teachers have pointed out their positive words and gesture to appreciate students' effort in using language skills properly; e.g. clapping or explaining "very good!" etc. These can be articulated as constructive attitude for encouraging language practice.

Thoughts about play: In the same way all the teachers have expressed positive thoughts about play, they have indicated play as an effective opportunity for language development due to the freedom of using own language and communication skills in activity. Most of the teachers recognize that **play help children's holistic development**, because during play students get complete liberty of attachment with toys and have the opportunity of free movement, touching, holding things, communicating with others to manipulate items and events; they are the decision makers in their play, so they enjoy hands on experiences, which all are counted as opportunity of language practice by the teachers. A teacher has stated that -

Children enjoy play very much. Play help to develop everything, like physical, cognitive, communication, language, every kind of development occur during play. They can touch and hold everything in play. (Personal communication:

Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Stance towards using book: Similarly teachers have conveyed positive stance towards using book in their IDI. Despite the fact that there is a book for reading and writing letters and numbers and these books are kept by the teachers after use all teachers perceive that if they allow carrying the books at home this will motivate them to learn more at home which may open up another window to use language. They also

as well as parents can come to know what their children are learning at school.

Teacher described this -

I preserve those books after use, if we allow them to take the books to their home that will encourage children to learn at home and guardians will also remain informed. (Personal communication: Interview #1, 19-11-13)

Along with this attitude, some of the teachers show positive mind-set about storybook or extra book for students; however, will not put more pressure memorization. In contrast one of the teachers has a **different view about the story books**. Though she has confirmed that at preschool some students can read the words through spelling, still it is not necessary, in her view, to provide any books to read may be good for the elder students, according to her. This view is stated in this way -

Books help to develop humanity, so I think books need to be provided in as much quantity as required by the child; however, with enough caution, not to put any burden with the books. (Personal communication: Interview #1, 19-11-13)

It is wise to give the books in upper classes; the young students cannot handle these. (Personal communication: Interview # 4, 23-11-13)

Pre-primary curriculum and English: All the teachers believe that the preprimary curriculum is appropriate for this age group, but the majority of the teachers pointed out the need of English as a subject along with the curriculum. Though most of the non government preschools have taken English in their curriculum but the government preschool teachers circumvent this with all good intention, because there is no provision to teach English in national curriculum. Therefore teachers think it is

better to start earlier and it is their responsibility to prepare the child to catch up with the next class. They have stated -

Whatever is mentioned in instruction book to teach is okayBut it is necessary to put emphasis on English. (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)There is no option in the curriculum to teach EnglishI feel responsible to teach them There is no harm if they learn EnglishThey can do it, I see. (Personal communication: Interview # 1, 19-11-13)

Parents and family: All the teachers have identified parents and family role as important as teacher for language development of the children, because children stay with family and learn to communicate and practice language. Teachers said -

Parents are responsible for developing language,...child learn through observation. In a big family a child need to follow more people, so more practice help to develop better. (Personal communication: Interview # 1, 19-11-13)

By summarizing above findings, it can be deduced that teachers have a common understanding about language and communication development and they also identify parents as an important stakeholders, mentioned necessity of English as a subject and also recognize some important activities which foster language and communication development; e.g. play opportunity, use of books, and availability of story books and practice of language.

4.4. Findings on Challenges to introduce and apply language and communication skills in preschools

All the teachers have admitted some challenges in their IDI. Most of the challenged are identified related to the classroom management.

New students and non-Bengali students: All the teachers confirmed some difficulties that they have faced with new students during inception of a new class in their IDIs. Some of the teachers faced difficulties communicating with non Bengali students. Teachers did not mention any training or orientation on handling this type of children. But all the teachers have stated that the students are very young so they take time to settle down and also take time to listen formal Bangla instruction in class. They have mentioned that without proper communication nothing can happen including language development. So they often allow parents in the classroom for a temporary period during this time and take time to understand the language of the students to manage this challenge according to their understanding. But they did not mention any mechanism that were learnt from their training. One of the teachers expresses this challenge in the following way -

In the beginning of the class year I faced some problem. All the students were new, they seemed to be scared and cried, they are not also able to understand everything. ...Eventually we all become friendly with each other like real friends. (Personal communication: Interview # 3, 19-11-13)

Large class size: Government preschool teachers in this study have identified in their IDIs, large class size as a major challenge. They have pointed out that quality of education and practices of all the language skills was not maintained due to the large class size. Required time and attachment was not possible to provide by the teachers

to the students. They also face another challenge when any teacher takes leave, because during that time one teacher needs to conduct two classes simultaneously.

This challenge is described in the following way -

Forty children in a class is okay, if more that is difficult to managewhen any teacher goes for vacation, we need to conduct two classes side by side; both obliterate the value of the classes. (Personal communication: Interview # 1, 19-11-13)

Conducting continuous classes: One of the teachers have mentioned conducting continuous classes without any break as a challenge. She identifies this as a hindrance to practicing language and communication skills for proper development as well as educational development. She pointed out -

Authority think that we don't need any off period, so we have to conduct classes ceaselessly, as a result we become exhausted and sometimes can't talk at the end of the day. This is the reality. (Personal communication: Interview # 1, 19-11-13)

The target can be a challenge: In addition with these challenges one of the teachers mention that the target set for the preschool teachers is itself a challenge to them. This is because with a group of young students they need to complete the syllabus they aim for. Simultaneously, teachers also have to teach them the rules and regulation of the schools, good manners, behavior and help them socialize, cooperation and learning. All these activity deserve the opportunity of language skills practice. One of the teachers described -

At first they do not know anything, but I have to make them prepare for class one. Moreover, I have to teach them the manners, respect for the elders and the rules and regulations for schools and daily life. (Personal communication: Interview # 5, 02-12-13)

From the above findings on challenges, it is clear that teachers are facing a common problem in the beginning of the class and specially the government preschool teachers face difficulties with large class size to ensure the quality of education and practices of all the language skills. Despite the reality of these challenges teachers have expressed their confidence, enthusiasm and experience in facing challenges.

4.5. Key Findings

All the preschool teachers have affirmed existence of opportunities in preschool to practice listening, speaking, reading and writing skills in preschool. The opportunities for listening and speaking that allow children to engage and practice includes play, morning circle and shared storytelling.

Play is counted as a complete activity that provides the scope of talking, listening, thinking, socializing etc. but no outdoor play is mentioned by any of the teachers. Findings also showed that most of the teachers do not get involved or use stimulating words or scaffold during free play.

Opportunity of reading and writing is available for alphabet, numbers and words. Half of the teachers demonstrate storybook reading and discuss about books. Only one teacher creates opportunity of exploring books and pretends reading for the students.

Very few students get the opportunity for prewriting activities and game but no one have the exposure to illustrated books. Letters, numbers and words are the basic items for reading and writing in preschools that directly link with language development mentioned by the teachers.

All the teachers perceive that when children can express what they observe, are taught are think in their mother tongue is language and communication development.

Teachers identify the role of parents for language development is important. They also admit positive practices; e.g. availability of books, practice appreciation by the teachers can promote language and communication development.

Communicating with the young children and the non-Bengali children from the beginning of the school year was stated as most common challenge for the teachers, which will mitigate when they know and understand each other after passing time.

Large class size and ceaseless classes are the foremost challenge for the teachers of government preschool; in terms of ensure quality of education and practices of all the language skills. Findings also showed that teachers' experience and training was acknowledged as the strength for facing any challenge in preschool.

Chapter V: Discussion Conclusion and Recommendation

5.1. Discussion

This research sought to explore readiness of teachers for language and communication development in preschool through analyzing their practice and perception based on the acceptable standard practice determined by this study. In this part researcher is going to focus on answering the research questions and fulfilling the objectives of this research through describing, how teachers' perceive language development for the preschool students, how much they have practiced and how much practices they need to adopt according to the acceptable standard practices and what are the other efforts they already have taken beyond the curriculum for ensuring the good quality consistent with their understanding.

The practices of language and communication skills

The practices of language and communication are clearly portrayed through various activities noted in this study. All the activities give more emphasis on listening and speaking practice rather than reading and writing which is in line with the Operational Framework of Pre-Pre-Primary Education (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008, p.23). Some differences have been found in learning activities in government and non-government preschools due to their setting, class size, curriculum orientation and training. The specific practices are discussed below –

Listening and speaking activities

According to the data preschool teachers' demonstrate more matched practices in listening and speaking if compared to the acceptable standard practices that are determined by this study.

Regular activities: Teachers use simple language to produce understandable speech; they provide opportunity for play, hands on activity, song, rhyme, shared storytelling, news sharing as regular practices which allow students to utter different words and sentences after careful listening. Through facilitating these practices on a regular basis teachers help preschool children to attain the standard of language and communication development. However, **news sharing** is absent in entire government preschools, but this activity promotes engaging in speaking and using new words consistent with the context.

Play: Preschool teachers have identified play as the most significant opportunity for listening and speaking, which align with acceptable standard practice list. They have indicated that play facilitate and motivate listening and speaking practices. Because during play whatever the children think can produce in words, communicate and try to fulfill their needs. But the teachers did not mention play as a medium of learning though they put emphasis on it. All non government preschools have **play corner** with different materials that creates different context of talking, exchange dialogue and pretend play. These play corner encourage children to think, talk and express ideas independently that are directly related to listening and speaking and as well as with the cognitive development. The high-quality pretend-play facilitates higher-level cognition through perspective taking and abstract thinking and has a comprehensible relationship between social and language development (Bergen, 2002). Most of the teachers do not mention any fostering role during play, it also not even found in observation. So it can be said that teachers know that play and play corner provide opportunity of listening and speaking but they are not very much clear about their role

that may multiply the progress. Therefore it can be stated that teacher's readiness is important to facilitate these activities effectively and if every schools have the play corner, this might be upgraded the language and communication development through proper practice of speaking and listening.

Outdoor opportunity: Wearyingly the outdoor opportunity for listening and speaking is missing in both types of preschools, even if it is an enlisted in acceptable standard practices. However outdoor provides more freedom and space to stretch physically and imaginatively and allow children to fine tune their listening skills, and projecting their voice across space. It also provides a rich source of vocabulary (Learning through Landscape, 2009). It is clearly visible that there are rooms for teacher's readiness to improvise the listening and speaking practice in preschools, which are not accomplished yet as per the acceptable practices.

Reading activities

Current practice for reading skills are not fully covered the acceptable standard practices that are listed in this study.

Reading- alphabet, number, words and storybook: Teachers only confirm alphabet, number and words reading, and half of them (the entire non government preschool teachers) read the storybook to the children. And most of the teachers who read to the students, don't allow children to explore the books, they do not keep the book within reach to the students. This all are done as per the instruction they have got from their training.

Exploring storybooks and illustrated books: Only some of the non government preschool children allow exploring the storybooks with independent pretend reading during free play time. On the other hand, government preschool teachers tell the story as story teller, they do not practice reading to the children. Though storybook is one of the core materials and illustrated book is one of the supplementary materials for preschool as per Operational Framework for Pre-Primary Education, Bangladesh (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008, p. 23), and the preprimary curriculum matrix 3.2.12 also have mentioned about the use of storybooks and illustrated book in book corner (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2011, p. 29), but no storybooks are available in government preschools and no illustrated books are available in any of the preschools in this study. It is also mentioned in the proposed ELDS Bangladesh as a reading standard (Ministry of Women and Children Affaires, 2010). Illustrated books help to connect children with interpretation of images and characters as per social expectation and also help to learn behavior of handling book and inspire storytelling which lead to use more words and meaningful sentences with expanding their cognitive abilities (Jalongo et al., 2002). So it can be said that half of the children have missed the opportunity of experiencing the reading demonstration, and most of the children missed the chance of discovering storybook as well as pretend reading, which is not corresponding with the acceptable standard practice and also not with the national curriculum. If all the preschool children get the opportunity of reading and exploring storybooks and illustrated books the language development may flourish. So these issues need to be addressed for ensuring the teachers readiness for implementing the acceptable standard practice of reading skills.

Writing activities

Model of letters and teachers demonstration: Most of the acceptable standard practices of writing are covered by the preschool teachers. All they have used model of letters for delivering the sense of letter shape when the models are available.

Teachers demonstrate on board how to write then students practice in board, exercise book and book, so writing spaces are available for the students in class and home as the acceptable practices.

Prewriting and game with letters: The vital experience for developing writing is missing in this process. Except one, the entire preschool teachers did not mention the prewriting activity or game with letters, which is pointed out in standard practice list. Only one non government preschool have proclaimed the prewriting activity, where students get three months for free drawing and pattern practice before writing letters and also play a game with the letters that completely aligned with the acceptable standard practice.

Teachers' Perception

Language development: Most of the preschool teachers have perceived the language and communication development from student's reply and expression after listening to students' speak or asking questions to students. Some of them indicate the use of formal language as language development. All the teachers recognize the importance of language and communication development as it leads learning.

Perception about play: Teachers identify play and other activities as opportunities for practicing language skills. They have pointed out play as a multifaceted activity

that keeps students actively engaged and help foster their development. Such perception is in conformation with studies that consider play as a form of work for children through which they learn by playing with others (Jona & Sandra, 2010). Still, teachers have not explicitly and specially mention the role of play in learning; i.e. play based learning. The possible reason for which these teachers have not been able to relate play with learning vividly is because of their lack of formalized sensitization on the issue. However, from this study finding it can be consented with a fact that opportunity of practice language skills and play can facilitate students' language and communication development, and all these opportunities dependent on teachers' readiness.

Attitude about storybooks: Different attitude also have found from the teachers about storybooks. Most of the preschool teachers thought that preschool students are very young to read books, so storybooks for students is not necessary, along with this thinking the entire government preschool teachers even do not feel importance 'reading to the students' too, they only tell the story, not reading. But another finding depicts that reading storybooks and the book corner allow students pretend reading, which is actually the pre-reading stage. Reading sparks imagination, curiosity and help to understand the language pattern; these all are related to the language and communication development as well as the intellectual development (Raising Children Network, 2012). So it can be said that storybooks reading can enhance the progress of language and communication development in preschool however some of the teachers have no understanding about the impact of storybook reading.

Attitude towards teaching English: Most of the teachers have shown a positive attitude towards teaching English in preschool, though it is not enlisted in acceptable standard practice of this study even not mentioned in the national curriculum. English as a subject is taught in most of the preschools. In government preschool the entire teachers have managed time within their structured routine to take this class. They think alike in this issue; though English has started from Class I, so it does no harm if they learn earlier, moreover it may help them to catch-up the next class which seems kind of reflection of the goal of Operational Framework of Pre-Primary Education, Bangladesh (Ministry of Primary and Mass Education, 2008, p.19). According to the teachers' experience, students also have shown the capability to take this second language. However majority of the non government preschool have taught English as second language. So the respective authority can consider revisiting the issue.

Responsible resources: Teachers identify parents and themselves as responsible resources for language development; which is associated with the first layer of Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development, where children learn through face-to-face approach and parents and teachers were identified as stakeholder (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). Different countries policy also emphasis importance of educating parents to ensure the literacy rich home environment and as well as put emphasis on early childhood professionals (teachers) who creates positive and supportive stimulation for advancing the cognitive and language development (Kupcha-Szrom, 2011). If the home school relationship can be formalized the development take place properly.

Challenges

One of the common challenges identified by the teachers is communicating with new students and the non-Bengali students in the beginning of the year. The teachers then deal with a new set of students and it takes some time to build rapport which is very much indispensable for learning (Swenson, 2010). They also mention the large class size as a challenge, which surely needs to mitigate for ensuring the practices of communication and language development skills, because smaller class size in the early grades can heighten student academic achievement (Barnett, Schulman & Shore, 2004). Along with these challenges all the teachers have shown the passion and self-assurance that whatever they taught to the students, they can able to learn. Only one teacher describes challenge differently; she reflects her thought in a way that if say so all the targets in preschool are challenges and they need to prepare to overcome the challenges to achieve the target.

Impact of Training

This study has found that most of the teachers have a good educational qualification and have some training on teaching and also on preprimary education. However, these trainings differ in length and content. This disparity has yielded inconsistencies in practices and experiences among teachers as well as in perceiving aspects of pre-primary education. Lack of comprehensive understanding about pre-primary education across all categories of teachers may be a potential barrier for ensuring standard practices for language and communication development by these teachers. Interestingly further insight into the data reveals that teaching experiences has built confidence in these teachers for taking up challenges in a teaching learning environment.

The above discussions present a clear impression that teachers are quite ready in some areas of language skills in where they have informed by the curriculum and training. In some areas have lacking due to absentees of the activities in curriculum and also for unavailability of necessary materials. Language development is perceived by the teachers as expression of thinking and learning by their own language. Most of the teacher's perception and practice on reading skills is not positively matched with the acceptable standard practices of language and communication development, but the practice and perception of listening, speaking and writing skills are closer to the acceptable standard practices of this study.

5.2. Conclusion

Focusing on language development in pre-primary age is essential because language acquisition occurs at a rapid rate during these years due to the exposure to a social environment in which young people communicate with others. Teachers are the most proximal individuals in school setting, who practices scaffolding for developing language and communication skills in students. Research evidence also has showed that teacher perception and belief are leading key factors that help to improve students' language and literacy skill development (Weigel & Martin, 2005). Again teacher's capacity and readiness are very much guided by the national standards, which are revealed by this study too. This study tries to portray the scenario of language practices in preschools and as well as the perception of the teachers that motivate them to play their vital role in language and communication development of preschool children. This attempt gives an idea about the readiness of teachers for language and communication development of preschoolers.

5.3. Recommendations

Some recommendations have come up from the study that can be considered for enhancement of pre-primary education system and preparing teachers for their role in students' language development. Attention is needed for preparing teachers as per the standard practice of all over the world in language and communication development of children in preschool. The recommendations are as follows -

- Ensure the supply of adequate number of storybooks and illustrated books in every preschools to encourage reading in early years;
- More and enhanced professional development training is necessary for teachers of preschools than what is offered at present – essentially as very short courses of preschool orientation (so far only six days and proposed to be increased to be 15 days as one-shot initial training).
- Greater and systematic use of storybooks and illustrated books for encouraging reading in early years and making certain the reading practices as per the acceptable standards to ensure language and communication development.
- Applying adequate strategy for handling the second language speaker students in pre-primary class (those who don't speak Bangla at home or it is not their first language).
- Emphasizing and encouraging play-based learning to ensure fostering and scaffolding play and learning.
- Ensure the establishment of play corner in every school with suitable play materials to create the supportive environment for language skills development.
- Further study and research with larger and more representative sample and robust methodology in order to draw definitive conclusions and lessons which can be widely generalized.

- For assessing the problems and the situation in depth and in differing contexts, systematic and longer class observation need to be added to the research and evaluation agenda; this would be a way to deal with the confounding factors and to verify the anecdotal and intuitive views about the situation.

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Annex

Annex 1: Acronyms

ECD: Early Childhood Development

NGO: Non- Government Organization

IDI: In-depth Interview

ELDS: Early Learning Development Standard

ECCD: Early Childhood Care and Development

IED: Institute of Educational Development

Annex 2: Table 1: Demographic Profile of Participants

Partici pants	Age Range (year)	Educational Qualification	Teaching Experience (year)	Teachers Training	Title of the training	Early Childhood Training (yes/ no)	Title of the Early Childhood Training
Gov't 1	40 +	Med	23+	yes	DPed, MED, Primary Training Subject Based Tr.	Yes	1 Week Training
Gov't 2	40 +	Bed	33	yes	CLE, Subject Based Training, Competency based Assessment Tr. for Completion test	No	
Gov't 3	30-40	Masters	9+	yes	C-in-Ed, Subject Based Training, Training on Inclusive Education	Yes	Preprimary Education (5 days)
NGO 1	20-30	S.S.C.	2			yes	Pre Service Tr. for Preschool (7 days) and Refreshers
NGO 2	40+	Bachelor	15			yes	Basic Tr. for Preprimary (3 times a year), Monthly Refreshers
NGO 3	20-30	Bachelor	7+			yes	Preprimary Education

Annex 3: Teacher Interview Questionnaire

Research Title: Exploring the Readiness of Teachers for Language and
Communication Development in Preschool

Section A: Demographic Information

Date:

1. Name:

2. School (Name & Address):

(Please put a tick mark)

2. Age: ☐ 20-30 years ☐ 30-40 years ☐ 40+

3. Gender: ☐ Male ☐ Female

4. Education Level: ☐ SSC ☐ HSC ☐ Graduate ☐ Masters

☐ Other

5. Teaching Experience: ☐ 0-1 Y ☐ 1-2Y ☐ 2-3 Y ☐ 4 or more Y

6. Received Teachers' Training: y/n

If yes, name and duration of the programme:

7. Received Early childhood Training: y/n

If yes, name and duration of the programme:

Section B: Perception and current practices of preschool teachers

1. How important is young children's language development? How much priority should be given to language and communication skills among different areas of child development?
2. How do you know that the young child is making progress in language and communication skills? Is there any measure taken by you as a teacher?
3. How can children's language development be encouraged?
4. Who can play a helpful role in this regard? Who are the stakeholders?
5. What level of competency is expected in language?

Listening and Speaking

6. How do you introduce new words/ unfamiliar words?
7. How do you engage children in hands-on learning to build conceptual understanding of words and knowledge?
8. What type of words children use at an early age (5-6 years)?
9. Do the children know how to define words at their age? Y/N - how do they do that?
10. Are they able to discuss any topic? Yes or No? Why do you think so?
11. What types of songs, rhymes AND riddles are practiced in your class? When and how do you use these (as lesson content or transition activities)?
12. Do children have opportunity in your class to communicate with other children and adults? How and why do you provide this opportunity?
13. What types of games and activities do you initiate to encourage children to talk? How do these encourage talking?

Reading

14. How do you introduce a book? How can the introduction be made effective for language development of the children?

15. Do children read books in Bangla? What type of books do you use for children's reading? How do these books help language development of the children?
16. How many illustrated children's books are there in your class? Do you think there are enough books in your class? (Y/N) Why?
17. How do you or other teachers work to ensure the availability of those books?
18. Do you participate in reading? How long per day and in a week? How does your participation help language and communication development of the children?

Writing

19. Do the children write in the class/ home? What do they write? Where do they write?
20. How much writing do you ask from them? Why do you think that this much is enough?
21. How many different kinds of letters of the alphabet do you use in class? How do they help children to learn?

Section C: Challenges

22. Do you think what you know about language learning and teaching can be practiced in your class? (Y/N) if not, why?
23. What are the challenges that you face to communicate with pre-school kids and to conduct Language class? Please explain.

Annex 4: Observation Guideline

Research Title: Exploring the Readiness of Teachers for Language and
Communication Development in Preschool

Date:	
School's Name & Address:	Teacher's Name:
Total Students: Girls: Boys:	Students with Special Needs: (Describe the special needs)

A. General Observation

- Class environment (space, ventilation, light)
- Seating arrangement
- Weekly routine
- School environment
 - a. Physical aspects: gate, garden, playground, fence, class rooms, teachers' room, store, stairs, corridor etc.
 - b. Safety and security (protection from rain, wind, sunlight, noise, smell etc.)
- Outdoor Play
 - a. What types of outdoor game facilities are there? How many are they?
What is the condition of those facilities?
 - b. How students use those facilities? Is there any time slot in routine for outdoor play?

B. Observation on Language Development

Listening and Speaking

1. Does the teacher initiate games by which children get the opportunity to talk?
(about various persons, family, friend and a neighbor)
2. Does the teacher engage children in hands-on activities where they can talk?
What are those?
3. Does the teacher act like a model of rich vocabulary children's use of diverse words by using complex vocabulary? (saying the name of the things, instead of saying "thing,")
4. Does the teacher offer opportunity to listen to songs, riddles, and rhymes?
(during transition period/ main content)
5. How does a teacher introduce different things? (simply using the word 'thing' or actually mentioning the name of the object)
6. How does the teacher introduce new words/ unfamiliar words? (showing things, explaining the meaning of unfamiliar words, give example etc.)
7. Is there any encouraging environment for sharing opinions and responses?
8. How does the teacher encourage children to share their views and opinions, to ask questions and respond? e.g. Does s/he ask Qs? / give time to answer? / listen to the answer? / assist children to define words or answer? / give feedback?

Reading

9. How does the teacher introduce a book? (talk about the author, illustration, different parts of the book, reading for children and reading with children etc.)
10. Is there any opportunity to skim through the books and to read them independently?
11. How many types of books are available in class? (Illustrated books, fairy tales, poems, science books etc.) What is the physical condition of those books? How frequently do they use those books?
12. Does the teacher allow the students to participate in reading and stay till end?

13. What measure was taken or the students who are weak in reading?

Writing

14. How does the teacher introduce writing activities in class?

15. How many types of alphabets (made from different materials) are used in class? Is there any opportunity to play with alphabets/letters? How teacher encourage writing?

16. Is there enough opportunity to use different instrument for writing? (pencil, pen, colors, computer etc.)

17. What are practiced for writing in class? (e.g. copy and write familiar words, draws patterns between two lines etc.)

18. What scopes does the teacher provide to write at home or in classroom?

19. How does a teacher or a student use writing as a tool for sharing information or message?

20. How teacher solve the problem of writing?

Annex 5: Consent Form for the Teachers

Title of the Research: Exploring the Readiness of Teachers for Language and Communication Development in Preschool

Principle Investigator: Amena Begum

Dear Teacher

I am Amena Begum, as a part of my degree requirements from the Institute of Educational Development BRAC University, doing this study to investigate teachers' perception and practice regarding language and communication development of preschool children as well as the readiness of teachers in this regards.

As a preschool teacher, you will be invited in an interview to share your knowledge, attitudes and practices about language development of preschooler.

If you agree to participate you will expected to share your knowledge, attitudes and practices about language development of preschoolers with me. It will take near about 1 hour.

All the information collected from you will remain strictly confidential and maintain anonymity and confidentiality. I would be happy to answer your questions about the study and you are welcome to contact me.

Your participation in the study is voluntary. You are the sole authority to decide whether you want to participate in this study. If you agree to my proposal of enrolling yourself in my study, please put your signature in the specified space below.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Signature of Investigator

Date:

Signature of Subject/ Participant

Date:

Annex 6: Timeline

The study was conducted within 14 months time period during the month of May 2013 to July 2014. The time line in detail is describes the following chart -

	2013								2014						
	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	June	July
Proposal Development & Finalization															
Preparatory Work															
Sample selection & Communication															
Data collection & Management															
Data Analysis															
Report Writing															
Submission of First Draft Report															
Correction & Finalization															
Final Thesis Presentation															
Submission of Final Thesis															