

Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms for 6–8-Year-Old Children in English-Medium Schools of Bangladesh

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A thesis submitted to Brac Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Science in Early Childhood Development

Brac Institute of Educational Development

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Declaration

It is hereby declared that

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing my master's degree at Brac University.
2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.
3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.
4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

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Ethics Statement

Title of Thesis Topic: Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition in English Classrooms for 6–8-Year-Old Children in English-Medium Schools of Bangladesh

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1. Source of population: Teachers of English-medium schools of Dhaka.

2. Does the study involve (yes, or no)

- a) Physical risk to the subjects- no
- b) Social risk- no
- c) Psychological risk to subjects- no
- d) Discomfort to subjects- no
- e) Invasion of privacy- no

3. Will subjects be clearly informed about (yes or no)

- a) Nature and purpose of the study-yes
- b) Procedures to be followed-yes
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- d) Sensitive questions-yes
- e) Benefits to be derived-yes
- f) Right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study-yes
- g) Confidential handling of data- yes
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4. Will signed verbal consent be required (yes or no)

- a) from study participants- yes
- b) from study participants- yes
- c) Will precautions be taken to protect anonymity of subjects? - yes

5. Check documents being submitted herewith to Committee:

- a) Proposal- yes
- b) Consent Form- yes
- c) Questionnaire or interview schedule- yes

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Abstract

This qualitative study explored teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding the use of play-based pedagogy for English language learning among children aged six to eight in English-medium schools in Bangladesh. The study explored teachers' understanding of play-based learning, their classroom practices, and the challenges affecting its implementation through six in-depth interviews and three classroom observations. The study focused on teachers with experience teaching children aged six to eight years who are learning English as a second language. The findings showed that teachers had positive views about play-based pedagogy and recognized its importance in improving young learners' engagement, confidence, and English language development. Their understanding was mostly consistent with existing theories of play and second language acquisition. However, classroom observations showed a difference between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices, as the use of play-based approaches depended on school environment, classroom conditions, and institutional expectations. The study concludes that the main challenges to implementing play-based English teaching stem from structural and contextual factors rather than teachers' lack of interest or willingness. Finally, as recommendation the study suggested teacher training, reforming assessment systems, increasing parental awareness, and creating more flexible classroom conditions that may support better English language learning experiences for young children in Bangladesh.

Keywords: Play-Based Pedagogy; English Language Acquisition; 6-8-Year-Old Learners; English Medium School; Bangladesh.

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List of Acronyms

BANBEIS: Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics

CAIE: Cambridge Assessment International Education

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

ECD: Early Childhood Education

ELA: English Language Acquisition

IDI: In-Depth Interview

PBP: Play-Based Pedagogy

SLA: Second Language Acquisition

TPR: Total Physical Response

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

Chapter I Introduction & Background

Introduction

The foundational years of primary education are critical for language development. The number of English-medium schools in Bangladesh has increased significantly as English has been established as an international language necessary for both academic and international trade (Hamid & Erling, 2016). The significant growth of English-medium education is proven by student enrollment nearly doubling in the last ten years as families value the language skills needed for international careers (BANBEIS, 2024; Sarker & Mohsin, 2024). Pinter (2017) maintains that play-based activities promote a relaxed atmosphere that lessens performance anxiety, facilitating students to explore a foreign language more freely and confidently than in conventional situations.

Children start learning English grammar in primary school; however, it is unclear how much play-based pedagogy is used in English-medium primary classrooms. According to Richards and Rodgers (2023), the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) framework asserts that the most effective way to develop language skills is through active, meaningful interaction in social settings. However, in the Bangladeshi context, success and intelligence are frequently measured by grades. This is also why, at the primary stage, when education suddenly shifts from play-based to exam-based, children receive more lecture-based lessons than activity-based ones (Ahmed & Jahan, 2021). Because English medium schools in Bangladesh follow a foreign curriculum, children aged 6-8 are under constant pressure to become fluent in English. High-stakes assessments, parental expectations, and limited class time can limit opportunities for play-based practices.

A global curriculum may strictly mandate a play-based environment, but country-specific cultural practices and belief systems can make it difficult for schools and teachers to implement play pedagogy (Hossain & Khan, 2022). Even if the curriculum mandates such practices, their success relies heavily on teachers' views and their ability to implement them in a compliant environment while managing schools' and parents' expectations. By investigating the understanding and practices of English teachers of learners aged 6-8 in Bangladeshi English-medium schools, this study intends to uncover classroom realities. This study attempts to understand how teachers view this practice, whether they have enough scope to implement it, if they are trained to facilitate age 6-8 students in this method for language acquisition, how they balance structured requirements with guided play, and finally how effective language classes are in terms of acquisition and usage.

Plenty of research supports the benefits of play for learning. Still, the perspectives of English-medium teachers in Bangladesh who work with children aged 6 to 8 have not yet been thoroughly examined in the literature. Mourão (2014) recognized the cognitive benefits of learning English through play, yet empirical data remain limited on how primary educators in Bangladesh's English-medium schools perceive and implement these pedagogical shifts. While current research confirms that play-based interventions substantially enhance English language acquisition (Piker, 2013), this study is vital for identifying the structural barriers, such as rote-learning assessments and insufficient professional development, that hinder teachers from applying these strategies in Bangladeshi classrooms (van Oers & Duijkers, 2012).

Statement of the Problem

Worldwide, play-based pedagogy is now being implemented, as scholars have deemed it a necessary practice for a child's language development (Zosh et al., 2017). While play-based pedagogy and its effective results are evident in pre-primary classrooms in Bangladeshi English-medium schools, this is not the case in primary schools. The main issue is a pedagogical gap in Bangladesh's English-medium schools, where rote-heavy, exam-focused instruction suddenly replaces the organic, play-based language acquisition strategies of pre-primary years.

(Chowdhury & Rivallan, 2011; Hamid & Baldauf, 2019). In our country, unlike pre-primary teachers trained in guided play, primary school teachers are often trained only in subject-matter expertise, without knowledge of play-based facilitation. This shift creates a washback effect that dominates the curriculum and promotes an educational culture which values quantifiable grades over communicative competence, creating a systemic dependency on high-stakes assessments (Hasan, 2013).

As a result, learning suffers as students shift from deep linguistic acquisition to surface-level memorization, failing to benefit from the incidental vocabulary gains that typically flourish in playful classroom environments (Strauss & Bipath, 2020). In primary school, they begin receiving a more structured education and start learning basic grammar and semantics. This can be very difficult for them, as it is taught in a teacher-centric, rigid style. Transitioning suddenly from that to a more teacher-centric, structured, and exam-centered instruction makes it difficult for students to cope with and learn effectively.

The transition from pre-primary to primary education commonly increases students' performance anxiety as the instructional approach shifts abruptly from play-based exploration to structured, results-oriented methodologies (Piker, 2013). Furthermore, educators are often compelled to

abandon engaging, interactive, play-based strategies because of intense pressure from parental stakeholders who value immediate academic results (Mao et al., 2022). In this situation, teachers face a compliance paradox: they must juggle a communicative approach with a structural approach. Without specific professional development, teachers struggle to balance the structured requirements of a foreign curriculum with the fluid, activity-based methods necessary for early childhood development.

Schools operating within a specific socio-cultural framework that demands highly fluent English speakers frequently find it difficult to balance PBP (play-based pedagogy) with more traditional practices. Furthermore, localized evidence on this issue is lacking. It is unclear whether, and how, play-based learning is practiced with learners aged 6-8 in English-medium classrooms in Bangladesh. Therefore, this study intends to investigate teachers' experiences and professional perspectives to identify barriers to, and opportunities for, more effective integration of play-based English language acquisition for children aged 6-8 in Bangladeshi English-medium schools.

Purpose of the Study

This study considers how English teachers of students aged 6-8 understand the incorporation of play-based pedagogy for English language acquisition in English-medium schools in Bangladesh. The study intends to understand how teachers perceive play's contribution to children's English language acquisition, how they apply play-based instructional methods in English classrooms, and what obstacles or influencing conditions they face. This study is important because it offers a localized understanding of how teachers integrate play for language acquisition within the socio-cultural and scholastic context of Bangladeshi English-medium schools, since the transition from pre-primary to primary education typically shifts out of

interactive learning to structured, exam-oriented instruction (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016; Broadhead, 2006).

The findings of this study can help improve play-based English language learning in early primary classrooms and teacher training programs. The study can help teachers and school administrators create more balanced strategies that integrate academic objectives with child-friendly learning environments by identifying the realities teachers face, such as assessment pressure, parental expectations, and restrictions in professional training (Rahman et al., 2019; Gronlund, 2006). In the long term, the study can help create more engaging and relaxed English classrooms where young students can improve their self-esteem, communication skills, and meaningful language acquisition through play-based activities (Weisberg et al., 2016).

Significance of the Study

Localized research on the unique socioeconomic and pedagogical challenges of the English-medium sector in Bangladesh remains limited, even though international studies support the advantages of play (Mao et al., 2022). Because students may undergo greater stress when moving from participatory pre-primary settings to teacher-led primary classrooms, this research offers insight into how teachers perceive and manage this vital developmental shift (Piker, 2013). The study's findings can inform teacher training by identifying the challenges and professional needs involved in integrating PBP with the academic requirements of English language learning among children aged 6–8. The findings may also help identify institutional and classroom conditions, such as assessment pressure, parental expectations, and resource limitations, that influence teachers' ability to implement play-based approaches. Additionally, the results will give school administrators a clear understanding of why a quiet classroom may limit targeted language outcomes, promoting improvements in institutional pedagogical standards.

This study contributes to a deeper understanding of teachers' views on the role of play-based pedagogy in facilitating English language acquisition among early learners. It explores how play-based activities can encourage meaningful communication and offer learners opportunities to develop vocabulary, speaking, listening, and confidence in using English. The study also considers how to incorporate these approaches into English lessons to create more compelling contexts for language use, rather than relying predominantly on memorization and teacher-directed instruction. In doing so, the study shows the potential of play-based practices to promote children's active, meaningful use of English while supporting the language-learning objectives of the primary classroom.

By addressing the performance-centric mindset that may dismiss play as a distraction from academic rigor, the findings can inform school-level approaches to integrating play-based practices within existing academic requirements (Weisberg et al., 2016). This study contributes to understanding play as a meaningful approach to English language acquisition within a demanding academic curriculum. By providing a Bangladeshi perspective that recognizes English's significance as a lingua franca and a means for social mobility, this evidence can inform English curriculum design and school-level practices while remaining child-friendly and culturally relevant.

This study connects theoretical perspectives on play-based pedagogy with evidence from actual classroom contexts. It contributes empirical evidence on how teachers in this context understand and navigate changes in their educational practices (Mourão, 2014). The study can help teachers of children aged 6-8 who are moving from strict, lecture-style teaching to more inclusive, active methods by identifying their specific training needs.

Research Questions

1. How do teachers understand Play-based pedagogy and the role of play-based pedagogy in English language acquisition for learners aged 6-8?
2. How do teachers implement play-based methods while teaching English in English classrooms in English-medium schools?
3. What factors do teachers encounter when integrating play-based pedagogy for English language learning?

Operational Definitions

Teacher: A teacher is a trained individual who guides and supports learners in their educational development by facilitating learning (UNESCO,2019). In this study, a teacher refers to an English language educator working with children aged 6-8 in an English medium school, supporting their English learning through classroom activities and interactions.

Perception: The term perception is defined as a particular way of considering or evaluating something; it is a mental view or outlook influenced by an individual's experiences and beliefs (Oxford Learner's Dictionary, 2023). Inside educational research, it encompasses the cognitive and affective views a teacher holds regarding a specific teaching method (Pajares, 2022). In this study, perspective is defined as teachers' professional viewpoints, attitudes, and perceived challenges regarding integrating play-based activities to facilitate English learning in the English classroom.

Play-Based Pedagogy: According to the UNICEF (2018) framework, play-based pedagogy is an approach to early childhood education that involves a range of activities including free play, guided play, and games, where children are active participants in their own learning. It is

characterized by being joyful, meaningful, and socially interactive. In this study, play-based pedagogy refers to the specific instructional strategies used by English teachers, such as language games, role-play, and interactive storytelling, to move away from traditional grammar-translation methods toward a more child-centric classroom environment.

English Language Acquisition (ELA): In linguistic terms, language acquisition is defined as the process by which humans acquire the capacity to perceive and comprehend language, as well as to produce and use words and sentences to communicate (Lightbown & Spada, 2021). It differs from formal learning by focusing on subconscious processing and communicative competence. In this research, English language acquisition refers to the development of foundational English skills, specifically listening and speaking, within young learners taught in a second-language environment.

English Classroom: In this study, the English subject classroom refers to a formal classroom environment in English-medium schools where students aged 6-8 are taught English as a mandatory subject through two papers: English language and English Literature. Through organized learning activities and teacher-guided interaction, these classrooms focus on improving students' speaking, listening, reading, and writing abilities.

English-Medium School: In the South Asian education sector, English-medium schools are private institutions where English is the primary language of instruction and communication for all academic subjects, excluding the national language (Banu & Sussex, 2001). For this study, English-medium schools are defined as private educational institutions in Bangladesh that follow international curricula (such as Pearson Edexcel or Cambridge International) and serve students in the primary grades.

6-8-Year-Old-Children: Primary education generally refers to the first stage of compulsory education, focusing on basic literacy and numeracy. While the age range varies by region, it usually involves children transitioning from early childhood care into formal schooling (UNESCO, 2020). For this research, the focus is on students typically aged between 6 and 8 years, who are at a key developmental stage for both mental development and second language immersion.

Chapter II Literature Review

This chapter reviews literature on play-based pedagogy (PBP), English language acquisition, and teachers' perceptions and practices of using play-based approaches in English language learning. It is organized into key themes. The review focuses on the structural and sociocultural factors, including “playful constraints,” that influence how English teachers in Bangladeshi English-medium schools understand and use play-based approaches in English classrooms for children aged 6–8 (Broadhead, 2006; Shrestha, 2022).

Theoretical Foundations of Play-Based Pedagogy

Constructivist and sociocultural theories serve as the main theoretical foundations for play-based pedagogy in early English language acquisition. Constructivism, heavily influenced by Piaget (1936, as cited in Ewing, 2016), holds that children develop knowledge through hands-on experiences. This means that rather than rote memorization, students in English-medium classrooms between the ages of 6-8 develop vocabulary and meaning through interaction, exploration, and contextualized activities (Hossain & Khan, 2022). In addition, according to Vygotsky (1978, as cited in McLeod, 2024), sociocultural theory claims that learning occurs in social situations and children learn through social mediation. With the help of teachers or more experienced peers, children can reach higher levels of language competency through the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). Students can experiment with English in safe, low-stress settings by engaging in play-based activities like role-playing and cooperative games, with scaffolding support from their teacher. (Sarker & Mohsin, 2024).

Furthermore, play-based approaches that emphasize real interaction correspond closely with Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), which emphasizes meaningful interaction over grammatical accuracy (Islam, 2023). This strategy is further supported by Piaget's constructivism

theory and Vygotsky's sociocultural theory, which acknowledge that children between the ages of 6 and 8 learn best through movement, imagination, and social engagement instead of abstract instruction (Ahmed & Jahan, 2021). Together, these theoretical perspectives present play as a developmentally appropriate and pedagogically appropriate strategy for promoting English language acquisition in early primary classrooms.

Play-Based Pedagogy and Language Acquisition

Research suggests that play in the primary years can be paired with language teaching to support deeper learning through incorporating engagement, meaningfulness, social interaction, iteration, and joy (Zosh et al., 2017). Each of these is closely related to the principles of communicative language teaching theory, which claims that successful learning is only possible through interaction. When PBP is applied in English classrooms, students interact with peers and teachers, using dialogue to talk, argue, negotiate, etc. During play-based group games, students ask clarification questions without shyness or fear because, in classroom settings, the teacher focuses on formative rather than summative assessments. In this situation, children acquire new vocabulary, learn correct grammar through listening and speaking, and learn to understand tone.

Guided play has shown more concrete early literacy outcomes than lecture-based, teacher-centric instruction because it provides context-specific, repeated exposure, which is effective for lexical acquisition and learning grammar (Pyle et al., 2020). Play-based learning can support language acquisition by giving children regular opportunities to hear and use English in different situations. Through role-play, storytelling, group games, and other interactive activities, children can learn and practice new words and language forms in different contexts. Repeated exposure may help them understand and remember new language while also allowing them to practice

English with others. These activities can be especially helpful for young learners because they learn through active involvement and interaction rather than mainly through memorization.

Play-based activities also give children opportunities to use English for meaningful communication. When children work together, solve problems, follow instructions, or take part in role-play, they need to listen and respond to others using English. These exchanges can help children develop their English knowledge and learn how to use the language appropriately in different situations. Therefore, play-based pedagogy can support communicative competence by combining language learning with active participation, social interaction, and meaningful use of English.

Students participate willingly in class when PBP is implemented. This reduces performance anxiety and encourages linguistic risk-taking (Weisberg et al., 2016). Furthermore, by rendering learning interactive and enjoyable, play enhances intrinsic motivation and lowers affective barriers, thereby fostering both communicative competence and affective readiness for English language acquisition (Whitebread et al., 2012). These processes naturally stimulate language development. Play is therefore not only pleasurable but also linguistically and cognitively useful.

Teachers' Beliefs, Perceptions, and Attitudes Toward Integrating Play in Language Classrooms

Teachers' perspectives strongly influence how play-based pedagogy is understood and applied in the English classroom. Research suggests that teachers' views about play directly influence how frequently and effectively it is implemented in classroom practice. While some teachers believe that play is important for development in primary education, others believe that it is incompatible with academic discipline (Pyle & Danniels, 2017). As curriculum interpreters, teachers mediate between policy and classroom practice, often adapting or limiting play-based approaches in

response to sociocultural needs even when policy advises play. Teachers' confidence, training, and perceptions of its effectiveness as a teaching technique shape how it is implemented in the classroom.

Teachers' views are also influenced by their understanding of play's role in learning English. Play-based activities give children opportunities to use English in purposeful and interactive ways, which can support vocabulary development, speaking, reading, writing, listening, and confidence. Teachers who see these benefits may be more willing to use play as part of English lessons rather than regarding it as separate from academic learning. However, teachers who mainly associate effective English learning with direct teaching, grammar exercises, and measurable results may be less likely to use play-based activities. Therefore, teachers' understanding of how play supports language learning can affect both their attitudes toward PBP and how they use it in the classroom.

Accountability demands and cultural norms also influence teachers' beliefs. Some teachers may favor worksheet-driven or grammar-focused instruction because they feel conflicted between play-based methods and the demands of standardized assessment (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016). In academically competitive schools, measurable grades and results often take priority over other teaching goals, especially in English-medium schools where English proficiency is associated with social status and better career opportunities (Zosh et al., 2017). Teachers may therefore feel pressure to embrace more conventional, teacher-centered methods even while aware of the advantages of play for English development.

Factors in Implementing Play-Based Pedagogy in English Classrooms

Play-based pedagogy in English classrooms can be limited by “playful constraints,” which refer to the challenges teachers face in balancing high-stakes assessments with interactive, play-based

teaching techniques (Gronlund, 2006). Teachers may also find it difficult to use guided play alongside the formal curriculum when they do not receive proper training (Strauss & Bipath, 2020). Cultural expectations about what makes a good student, along with parents' expectations for clear academic progress through practices such as memorization by repetition and completing exercise books, may discourage teachers from using low-anxiety, activity-based teaching approaches (Shrestha, 2022; Cross & Islam, 2021). These limitations may hinder play-based activities' ability to encourage vocabulary development, speaking, listening, and communicative confidence by reducing children's opportunities to utilize English through meaningful participation.

Classroom conditions can also affect teachers' ability to use play-based pedagogy effectively. Large class sizes, limited lesson time, fixed classroom arrangements, and pressure to complete the prescribed curriculum may make it difficult to organize interactive and play-based activities (Fesseha & Pyle, 2016; Pyle & Danniels, 2017). In English-medium schools, teachers may also be expected to meet specific language and academic outcomes within limited class time. As a result, they can rely more on teacher-led instruction, worksheets, and structured exercises because these methods are easier to manage and help them cover the required content. This may reduce children's opportunities to communicate in English, interact with peers, and use the language in valuable contexts.

Impact of Play-Based Pedagogy on English Language Acquisition in the Bangladeshi Context

In Bangladesh, English-medium schools hold a unique social position and are often associated with academic status, global mobility, and higher socioeconomic standing (Hamid & Baldauf, 2019). Formal instruction, exam performance, and language precision remain therefore highly

valued. Despite policy-level promotion of communicative approaches to teaching English, classroom practices frequently remain teacher-centered and textbook-driven, indicating an imbalance between pedagogical realities and policy goals (Hamid & Erling, 2016). Structural obstacles, such as large class sizes, exam-oriented assessment systems, physical space constraints, and parental expectations for clear educational rigor, also shape teachers' teaching approaches. In these situations, play-based learning may be seen as time-consuming or not aligned with performance-driven objectives.

By decreasing the affective filter, which lowers student anxiety and promotes class participation, play-based pedagogy greatly improves language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). By encouraging incidental vocabulary expansion, this interactive setting enables children to learn English organically through social interaction instead of isolated memorization (Hamdi et al., 2025). Additionally, directed play bridges communication, helping students move from simple item identification to using more complex grammar in relevant, everyday situations (Shrestha, 2022; Cross & Islam, 2021). Play-based pedagogy gives children more opportunities to actively use English rather than only listen to the teacher. Through activities such as role-play, storytelling, language games, and group tasks, children can practice new words and language structures while interacting with their teachers and classmates. These activities allow children to use English in different ways, such as asking questions, answering others, sharing ideas, and communicating with their peers. Regular opportunities to use English can help children connect classroom learning with everyday communication and develop their ability to communicate effectively.

However, research shows that guided play can successfully strike a balance between educational objectives and developmental needs (Pyle et al., 2020). This suggests the problem is less about the validity of play and more about the institutional support and professional training teachers

have available. However, the impact of play-based pedagogy also depends on how teachers plan and use these activities. Guided play allows teachers to keep clear learning goals while giving children opportunities to explore, interact, and use English actively. When play-based activities are linked to English language goals, they can help children develop vocabulary, speaking, listening, and confidence while still meeting curriculum requirements. Therefore, effective use of play-based pedagogy requires teachers to comprehend its role in language acquisition and have enough training, time, and support from their schools to use these approaches effectively in English classrooms.

Chapter III Methodology

This chapter describes the method used to explore teachers' perspectives on play-based pedagogy in English-medium schools in Bangladesh. Based on the interpretivist approach, the study attempts to understand how and why teachers make instructional decisions by exploring their experiences and perspectives (Schwandt, 2000, as cited in Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study also explores teachers' views on how play-based pedagogy can support English language acquisition among children aged 6–8, how they apply these approaches in English classrooms, and the factors that affect their implementation.

Research Approach and Design

This study adopted a qualitative research approach to explore teachers' views and experiences of using play-based pedagogy (PBP) in English classrooms. This approach was suitable because it focused on understanding the reasons behind teachers' instructional choices and practices, rather than collecting simple, fixed responses (Yin, 2018). It enabled the study to better understand teachers' perspectives on the role of play in English language learning and acquisition (Geertz, 1973, as cited in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The approach also helped examine how PBP was practiced in the selected classrooms and how sociocultural and circumstantial factors shaped its use in supporting English language acquisition.

Research Site

Since the study focused on teachers' perspectives on using play-based pedagogy for English language acquisition among 6–8-year-old learners, two English-medium schools in Dhaka City were selected for the research.

One school was located in Dhanmondi and the other in Gulshan. Both schools followed the Cambridge curriculum. One school was 25 years old, had thousands of students, and had a good reputation among schools. The other school was smaller, with a 30-year legacy yet a very limited number of students, as it targeted quality over quantity. Both schools shared a similar vision and mission but differed in culture and practice.

Research Participants and Participant Selection Procedure

The study population consisted of teachers who teach English to 6-8-year-olds in English medium schools of Dhaka, Bangladesh. Six (6) female English teachers from 2 English medium schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh, were chosen for the study using purposive sampling. Participants' teaching experience ranged from one to thirteen years. Their age ranged from 25 to 48 years. Five received formal training from their employers, while one also received training from other organizations, such as the British Council. Only one teacher had not received any formal or outside training. School coordinators and professional networks were contacted to select participants, making sure that every participant met the inclusion criteria and provided voluntary informed consent. Teachers who did not meet the criteria of at least one year of experience were not chosen for this study, as were teachers with less than a year of English teaching experience at an English medium school. Teachers who did not teach the student age range of 6-8 were not included in the study.

Data Collection Tools

Data collection used two tools. The two tools were an in-depth interview guideline and a non-participant classroom observation checklist.

Data Collection Method and Procedure

To gain a complete understanding of the research problem, the study adopted a qualitative research design using triangulation (Denzin,2012). Data were collected through in-depth interviews, non-participant classroom observations, and curriculum review. Using multiple methods allowed the researcher to compare teachers' views on play-based pedagogy with their classroom practices and examine possible differences between what teachers reported and what was observed.

The researcher conducted six in-depth interviews with six English teachers from two English-medium schools in Dhaka. With participants' permission, the interviews were audio-recorded, and pseudonyms were used to maintain confidentiality. The researcher also conducted classroom observations with students aged 6-8. Six observation sessions were carried out in the two schools located in Dhanmondi and Gulshan, with each participating teacher observed at least once. The researcher observed the classes as a non-participant and focused on how teachers incorporated play-based activities while meeting school rules and academic requirements. The observations helped compare teachers' reported views with their actual classroom practices and provided further insight into how teachers created encouraging and stimulating environments for English language learning.

Data Management and Analysis

Data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis. The interview transcripts and classroom observation notes were reviewed several times to develop a clear understanding of the participants' responses, experiences, and classroom practices. The data were then coded by identifying important ideas and patterns related to the research questions. These initial codes were organized into broader themes representing teachers'

perceptions of play-based pedagogy, their classroom practices, the role of play in English language acquisition, and the challenges they experienced when implementing play-based approaches. The findings from the interviews were then compared with the classroom observation findings to identify similarities and differences between what teachers reported and what was seen in their classrooms. This process helped triangulate the data and develop a more complete understanding of the research findings (Flick, 2018). Finally, relevant participant quotations were included to support the themes and provide a detailed representation of teachers' experiences and perspectives (Ponterotto, 2006).

Validity & Reliability of The Research Tool

An industry expert assessed and approved the in-depth interview questionnaire and classroom observation checklist. The expert was a faculty member of BRAC IED, BRAC University. Furthermore, the questionnaires were pilot-tested with a teacher who met all requirements for inclusion in the actual study. The final guideline and observation checklist were prepared by including feedback from the participant and the expert. This ensured the study's validity and reliability.

Ethical Issues

The study followed proper ethical procedures to safeguard the rights, privacy, and well-being of all participants. First, informed consent was obtained after the purpose of the research, the procedure involved, and the participants' role were clearly explained. Teachers were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to leave the study at any point. Second, confidentiality and anonymity were ensured by avoiding participants' and schools' real names, preventing identification in the final report. Third, interview recordings, transcripts, and other research materials were stored in a secure, password-protected folder and were used solely

for research purposes. Finally, measures were taken to prevent any personal or professional harm by reporting teachers' views accurately and fairly, without deliberately altering or misrepresenting their responses.

Limitations of the study

Only one school was allowed to do classroom observations. Hence, only three English classroom observations were carried out in one English medium school. This restricted the ability to capture variations in classroom practices.

Chapter IV Findings and Discussion

This chapter presents and discusses the findings of the study. First, the findings are drawn from in-depth interviews and classroom observations carried out with the participating teachers, and they are organized thematically in line with the study's three research questions. Within each theme, the patterns that appeared across participants' responses are described first, then supported with relevant quotations from the data as evidence. Finally, the discussion section will interpret the collected data and evidence against existing literature and theories, aligned with the study's research questions, to highlight similarities, research gaps, and their effects.

Findings

This chapter will explore the findings of this study. The study explores teachers' perceptions and classroom practices about the incorporation of play-based pedagogy in acquiring English as a second language in Bangladeshi English-medium schools. The study focused on teachers with experience teaching children aged six to eight years who are learning English as a second language. The study conducted six in-depth interviews and three non-participant classroom observations to arrive at the findings. All data were collected in accordance with ethical standards and with participant confidentiality maintained. To maintain confidentiality and discourage bias, the two schools are referred to as School A and School B, both of which follow the Cambridge (CAIE) curriculum, and the six teachers are referred to only by number, as Participant #1 to Participant #6. The in-depth interviews are numbered chronologically and cited as In-Depth Interview #1 to In-Depth Interview #6, and the three classroom observations are numbered as Classroom Observation #1 to #3. The findings are organized under four broad themes aligned with the study's research questions, with sub-themes to clarify further. Within

each theme, the patterns shared across participants are described first and are then supported with citations from the interview transcripts and classroom observation notes.

Demographic Information of the Participants

Six English teachers from two private English-medium schools situated in Dhaka city's Dhanmondi and Gulshan area took part in the in-depth interviews. The six participants, all female, ranged in age from twenty-five to forty-three. Their academic qualifications ranged from a Bachelor's degree in English to Master's degrees in English Literature, Applied Linguistics and ELT, and TESOL. Their teaching experience varied greatly, ranging from one year to almost thirteen years. While some also taught upper grades, all taught English Language and/or English Literature to children aged six to eight. The participants' exposure to professional development varied significantly: two had received structured training (in-house, British Council partner-school, and online programs), two had received only limited in-house training focused on class management and discipline, and the remaining participants reported little to no formal training beyond a demonstration class with feedback.

In addition to the interviews, three participants teaching at School A were each observed teaching a single forty-minute English lesson to learners in the six-to-eight age range, and these observations are drawn on in the themes below to compare what the teachers reported with what was visible in their classroom practice.

Theme 1: Teachers' Understanding of Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition

The first theme reflects the participants' understanding of play-based pedagogy, its perceived value for young learners, their understanding of the second language acquisition process, and their perceptions of their own role as English teachers. Across the six interviews, all participants

showed a largely accurate and consistent grasp of play-based pedagogy and an overwhelmingly favorable attitude toward it, even when they could not put it into practice because of environmental constraints.

Teachers' Conceptualizations of Play-Based Pedagogy

When asked to define play-based pedagogy, all six participants gave broadly similar explanations. Across the responses, the concept was understood as a method of teaching through games, play, and fun interactive activities such as songs and rhymes, role-play, drawing, visualization, and the use of realia deliberately used to promote practical reading, writing, listening, and speaking practice rather than traditional, lecture-based memorization. All the teachers also agreed that learning will not be effective without children's willful participation in the classroom. One participant emphasized holding onto children's attention by "*teaching students through games- introducing an activity that grabs the student's attention and keeps them engaged willingly*" (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26). Another teacher similarly pointed out the importance of engagement, saying, "*It is about using a more fun form of education for children. It relies more on engaging sessions that keep the children hooked while they also learn*" (In-Depth Interview #3, 16-05-26). The only real variation was in how the idea was articulated: participants with a linguistics or ELT background tended to frame it in more specialized terms, whereas others described it in more everyday language. This shared understanding was captured most fully by one participant, who explained:

"Play-Based Pedagogy basically means letting children learn through play instead of sitting them down for rigid, teacher-centered lessons or memorization; it uses their natural curiosity as the main engine for learning. In a play-based classroom, teachers intentionally set up

environments and activities that feel like a fun game for students, so they engage willingly. It actually helps them build real-world skills through practice” (In-Depth Interview #5, 18-05-26)

Overall, the findings from the In-Depth Interviews indicate a shared understanding of play-based pedagogy among the participants.

Teachers’ Views on the Importance of Play-Based Pedagogy for Young Learners (Ages 6-8)

Participants consistently emphasized the importance of play-based pedagogy for children aged six to eight, describing it as an approach that aligns with young learners' developmental characteristics. One participant explained, *“I find it absolutely important especially for my students of age 6–8. Because I think this age range is imaginative, active, and playful, always attracted to whatever is interesting to them”* (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26). Building on this understanding, most participants said that play-based pedagogy helps sustain children's attention by rendering learning enjoyable and engaging. Another participant noted, *“Young children cannot hold focus for a long time, so play-based learning can ensure that they are having fun while also learning important skills”* (In-Depth Interview #6, 18-05-26).

This view was echoed by another participant, who explained the importance of play-based learning from the children's perspective, *“Only reading from the books or worksheets can get very boring for them because they are young children with shorter attention spans than adults. The average adult can only hold their attention on something for 15 minutes straight, and these are children doing seven periods of 40-minute classes... So, it is more fun for them when the class activities are play-based, and I have observed higher information retention and better skills development in them.”* (In-Depth Interview #3, 16-05-26). Participants further associated this increased engagement with improved learning outcomes, particularly greater information

retention and skill development. Reflecting this view, a participant added, *“I 100% think that student retention of information is better when classes are play-based instead of lecture-based”* (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26).

Teachers’ Views on Second Language Acquisition and Effective English Learning

Participants shared a common understanding of how children acquire English as a second language, noting that early childhood provides an ideal foundation for language learning and that active communication, rather than passive instruction, best supports acquisition. One participant noted the developmental advantages of this age group, explaining, *“I think the younger the learner, the easier it is to learn a language. At this age, it is quite easy for children to learn three languages at once since their brains are still developing, they have less inhibition, and they can readily understand new information”* (In-Depth Interview #4, 10-05-26). Building on this idea, participants consistently emphasized that children learn English through meaningful interaction and regular language use. Another participant explained, *“Children learn English through talking to their classmates in English and to the teacher in English”* (In-Depth Interview #3, 16-05-26). Finally, participants stressed that interaction opportunities are most effective when children feel emotionally secure. One participant noted that *“Children learn English best when the classroom is more of a stress-free environment than a rigid-strict space”* and concluded that *“This fearless environment of a classroom is required for this age range of children”* (In-Depth Interview #5, 18-05-26).

Overall, these findings suggest that participants viewed second language acquisition as a developmental process facilitated by young children's readiness to learn languages, frequent opportunities to communicate in English, and an encouraging classroom environment that lets learners speak without fear of making mistakes.

The Teachers' Role in an English Only Environment

All participants similarly viewed the teacher as central to children's English language development, emphasizing that effective language learning depends heavily on the teacher's guidance and support. One participant described the teacher's influence as paramount, stating that *"The teacher's role is definitely 90% in language development because the teacher guides and motivates the student"* (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26). Building on this role, participants pointed out the teacher's responsibility to create an English-rich classroom environment, particularly because many children have limited opportunities to use English outside school. Another participant explained, *"The teacher must ensure an environment in which teachers and students use English despite there being a chance of making mistakes through which young children will learn"* (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26).

Finally, participants emphasized that teachers must not only provide opportunities to use English but also create a classroom setting in which children feel encouraged to participate confidently. One research participant explained that, *"Teachers should motivate learners by creating interactive classrooms in which children feel at ease expressing themselves without fear or hesitation"* (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26). Overall, these findings suggest that participants viewed the teacher not only as an instructor but also as a facilitator who shapes the classroom environment, encourages meaningful language use, and supports children's confidence in learning English.

Theme 2: Classroom Practices Supporting English Language Acquisition Through Play

The second theme explores how teachers applied what they learned about play-based teaching in the classroom. Although every participant expressed positive opinions of the method, there were

variations in how often they used it in everyday teaching. The participants differed in how in-depth they used play-based pedagogy in their own classrooms. Four of the six participants reported using the approach actively, one participant reported using it only in a limited capacity, and another reported not using it at all in current practice.

Two sub-themes emerged from the information collected: the use of play-based pedagogy in English classes and teachers' opinions on its effect on English language development.

Teachers' Implementation of Play-Based Pedagogy in English Classrooms

All participants who reported using play-based pedagogy described a wide variety of classroom activities intended to promote engagement, teamwork, and meaningful language use. Grammar games, role-playing, storytelling, timed group competitions, Total Physical Response (TPR), outdoor learning, question-and-answer games, and the use of props and realia were all frequently mentioned tactics in the interviews. Participants consistently described the activities as intentional teaching tactics rather than just child-friendly activities, even though they varied according to the children's age, level, and lesson. For instance, one participant talked about incorporating grammar games into her lessons where learners were divided into pairs or groups to solve language-related tasks within a set time frame, as well as designing activities where children demonstrated actions to the class, and the class would guess the word; hence building up their vocabulary (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26). Another participant pointed out that "Students were excited and more competitive in finding 10 nouns through physical identification of objects when taken outdoors than writing ten nouns from the board" (In-Depth Interview #5, 18-05-26), and that taking students outside to identify nouns generated significantly more interest than standard written exercises. According to these reports, most participants saw play-

based activities as chances to increase participation and encourage children to use English in authentic settings without feeling nervous about the foreign language.

Although all participants understood the importance and benefits of a play-based method, not all could implement it whenever they wanted to. Only four teachers said that they use play-based activities regularly, whereas two teachers stated that their employers objected to practicing any method other than the traditional one. Most teachers also mentioned that parental expectations are a factor in their inability to implement the method. One of the participants shared, *“Play-based pedagogy does not correspond to my current teaching practices. Because of large class sizes, examination pressure, and syllabus completion pressure from the authority as well as the parents, it makes it impossible to implement it consistently in class.”* (In-Depth Interview #4, 10-05-26). Another participant similarly said, *“To be honest, we don't usually introduce activities much. Although it is up to the teacher, she has to keep up with the other English teachers by complying to a lesson plan that is shared across the various sections. That makes it difficult to plan games or do anything unique. This, in my opinion, is a weakness on our part; teachers require a lot more training, appreciation, support from school, and direction to arrange play-based activities in class.”* (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26).

All classroom observations reflected this variation: one lesson demonstrated interactive play-based teaching, while the other two were largely teacher-centered with limited use of play-based activities, supporting participants' accounts that implementation was constrained by institutional and realistic factors. The observations supported these outcomes, with teachers consistently facilitating learning, encouraging participation, and maintaining an English-rich classroom environment across all three lessons.

Teachers' Views and Subsequent Practices Regarding Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Development

The interviews revealed that teachers' positive beliefs about early language acquisition directly determined their daily classroom choices. This mindset allowed them to translate ideas into practical, hands-on lessons smoothly. In the interviews, teachers talked about using play-based activities to teach reading, writing, listening, and speaking. They described how these activities got children talking, cooperating, and actively participating in everyday lessons. One of the participants said, *"We talk while we're playing a game in the classroom, so when I say a word or sentence, they listen and remember it because they're learning through play. They look at my actions and try to copy them, or they copy their peers. If the experience is fun, they remember the lesson taught through it."* (IDI #1, 15-05-26). According to the participants, play-based activities promote confidence, vocabulary retention, participation, and also organically combine several language abilities into a single task. Even though writing was thought to be the hardest talent, one participant pointed out that *"Play-based education makes them write better content, but they take more time to compose their thoughts this way"* (IDI #3, 16-05-26). The classroom observations also reflected participants' emphasis on language use as a means of acquisition. Across all three lessons, English was consistently used as the language of instruction, and students were given opportunities to practice speaking, listening, reading, and writing during classroom activities.

However, the information received from the interviews was not fully demonstrated in the classrooms, as not all teachers implemented play-based pedagogy during their lessons.

Observation findings partially supported these views. In the classroom where play-based strategies were incorporated, learners appeared cheerful, and approximately 90% participated actively throughout the lesson. In contrast, the two predominantly teacher-centered lessons

showed lower levels of enjoyment, with one class appearing rushed and another in which several students seemed nervous and reluctant to answer questions.

Theme 3: Challenges Affecting Play-Based English Language Learning

The third theme summarizes the challenges participants encountered while implementing play-based pedagogy in classes with students aged 6-8. The findings were categorized into five sub-themes: institutional and curricular constraints, classroom-specific challenges, expectations from parents, a lack of professional support, and teachers' own felt needs.

Institutional and Curricular Barriers Faced by Teachers

The biggest obstacle to using play-based pedagogy was institutional expectations. Participants talked of feeling under pressure to finish the syllabus, get children ready for tests, and adhere to standard lesson plans, which left little room for interactive activities. One participant explained that the examination-heavy system left no room for implementing play-based activities and that using games or pair work often led school authorities to question her classroom management and success in teaching (In-Depth Interview #4, 10-05-26). Another participant said that, “*Although collaborative activities that are effective naturally create noise, school authorities continued to frown upon it and associated effective teaching with quiet classrooms.*” (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26). This was evidently reflected in the classroom observations. Two out of the three non-participant observation sessions revealed teacher-centered classroom conduct.

Classroom Constraints Faced by Teachers

Several structural challenges hindered the implementation of collaborative and play-based activities, including large class sizes, fixed seating arrangements, and limited class time. These factors restricted student movement and group work, with one teacher highlighting that a significant portion of a 40-minute lesson was spent organizing students before she could begin

(In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26). Observation showed one teacher had to give out extra work at home because she could not complete all tasks within the 40 minutes, as she had to spend a significant portion of class time organizing desks and settling students (Classroom Observation #2, 16-06-2026). This issue was further supported by more classroom observations, which revealed a poor teacher-student ratio and fixed seating across all three settings directly restricted opportunities for collaborative learning.

Parental Expectations and its Effects on the Classroom

The findings revealed contrasting parental attitudes toward implementing play-based pedagogy. On one hand, teachers from School A observed that many parents prioritized traditional academic metrics, such as examination results and textbook-based learning. Conversely, teachers from School B reported that parents were generally supportive of play-based approaches, actively valuing lessons that balanced enjoyment with educational progress (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26; In-Depth Interview#3, 16-05-26).

Lack of Teacher Training Programs

A lack of professional support emerged as a frequent barrier for teachers. Participants mentioned a shortage of formal training regarding both play-based teaching methods and strategies for supporting diverse learners with ADHD, dyslexia, autism, etc. For example, one teacher shared that her school's internal training focused primarily on classroom management rather than specialized instruction, which left her feeling unequipped to support a student with dyslexia (In-Depth Interview #2, 16-05-26). Conversely, another teacher reported having extensive professional training but explained that rigid institutional restrictions, rather than a lack of knowledge, ultimately prevented her from implementing these practices in her classroom (In-Depth Interview #4, 10-05-26).

Theme 4: Teachers' Needs for Strengthening English Learning Through Play

Participants consistently identified several systemic requirements for successfully implementing play-based pedagogy. The most critical needs included longer lesson periods, reduced examination pressure, greater parental awareness, stronger institutional support, and specialized teacher training. For instance, one teacher shared that the standard 40-minute period is insufficient, suggesting that a one-hour timeframe is required to properly develop concepts and facilitate practice, while also advocating for parent counseling to alleviate result-oriented pressure on young learners (In-Depth Interview #1, 15-05-26). To better support this pedagogical shift, another participant recommended replacing high-stakes examinations with continuous assessment models (In-Depth Interview #4, 10-05-26). Furthermore, participants highlighted the need for greater institutional support and professional autonomy to implement play-based activities effectively (In-Depth Interview #5, 18-05-26), alongside regular training focused on child-centered and communicative teaching practices (In-Depth Interview #6, 18-05-26). Collectively, these insights indicate that effective play-based learning cannot rely solely on a teacher's individual knowledge and motivation; rather, it depends heavily on broader institutional, parental, and structural support.

Discussion

This section discusses the findings in light of existing literature and theoretical perspectives on play-based pedagogy and second language acquisition. This discussion explores how the results support, refute, or expand on earlier studies about teachers' attitudes toward and use of play-based pedagogy in the classroom for six-to eight-year-old English language learners in English-medium schools in Bangladesh. This discussion is organized aligned to the themes from the

findings: Teachers' understanding of play-based pedagogy, Teachers' classroom practices in relation to play-based pedagogy, Challenges faced by teachers in implementing play-based pedagogy in the classroom, and Teachers' felt needs.

Theme 1: Teachers' Understanding and Perceptions of Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition

The findings showed that all participants understood play-based pedagogy as teaching through games, interaction, creativity, and meaningful activities rather than relying mainly on memorization. This comprehension aligns with the definition of play-based pedagogy given by Pyle and Danniels (2017), who define it as deliberate learning through enjoyable and engaging activities facilitated by educators. The consistency of statements across participants indicates that, despite implementation limitations in the classroom, teachers in English-medium schools are aware of child-centered learning approaches. Participants' belief that children learn better when they participate voluntarily reflects the idea that play is a deliberate pedagogical technique rather than just a recreational activity. It also supports Bodrova and Leong (2007), who argue that play promotes social learning, self-regulation, and cognitive development.

This supports previous research on young learners, which shows that children learn better through meaningful experiences and active participation (Cameron, 2001; Pinter, 2006).

However, the teachers' views were mainly based on their own classroom experiences. Therefore, further research is needed to examine how play-based English teaching affects children's language development.

The teacher's experiences and views about how their students learn aligned with quite a few second language acquisition theories. Their focus on communication, interaction, and giving children chances to use English supports Long's (1996) Interaction Hypothesis and Swain's

(1985) Output Hypothesis. This aligns with the idea that young children learn best through active interaction and engagement rather than only listening. All participants agreed on the importance of a stress-free classroom environment and how it makes children more comfortable using English without fear of making grammatical errors. This reflects Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which explains that anxiety can make language learning more difficult. However, their preference for an English-only classroom differs from recent research, which suggests that carefully using children's first language and translanguaging can also support young learners' understanding and reduce anxiety.

Theme 2: Classroom Practices Supporting English Language Acquisition Through Play

The findings showed that teachers who used play-based pedagogy included activities such as storytelling, role-play, grammar games, Total Physical Response, outdoor learning, group competitions, and the use of realia. These activities are connected with communicative language teaching, which focuses on meaningful communication and active participation of learners (Cameron, 2001). The activities shared by the participants suggest that play-based pedagogy gives children opportunities to practice vocabulary, speaking, and listening skills while building their confidence in real-life learning situations.

The findings also suggest that play-based learning is especially useful for developing children's oral English skills. Teachers reported that games and interactive activities encouraged students to speak more confidently and helped them remember new vocabulary. This supports Interaction and Output theories, which emphasize that language develops through meaningful use and communication. Additionally, the findings indicate that play-based activities can help teachers

assess students' understanding by observing participation and interaction, rather than relying only on written tasks.

However, a key finding of this study was the gap between teachers' positive views of play-based learning and their actual classroom practices. Although all participants believed play-based learning was valuable, not all teachers used it regularly in their classrooms. This supports Borg's (2003) argument that teachers' classroom practices are often shaped by external factors, meaning teachers' beliefs do not always translate into direct changes in practice.

The classroom observations further supported this finding by showing differences between what teachers reported and what was observed in their classrooms. While one classroom included interactive, activity-based teaching, the other lessons were mainly teacher-centered because of limited class time, classroom arrangements, and school expectations. This indicates that the limited use of play-based pedagogy was not because teachers rejected the approach, but because they faced practical and institutional barriers.

Theme 3: Challenges Affecting Play-Based English Language Learning

The findings indicate that the main barriers to implementing play-based pedagogy were institutional and structural. Teachers experienced difficulties because of examination pressure, the need to complete the syllabus, and fixed lesson plans, which reduced their ability to use flexible and interactive play-based teaching methods. This reflects Alderson and Wall's (1993) concept of negative washback, where examination systems influence teaching practices and often encourage teachers to focus more on exam preparation than interactive learning.

Classroom-related challenges also affected teachers' ability to implement play-based activities. Large class sizes, fixed seating arrangements, and limited lesson time made it difficult for

teachers to organize group work and collaborative activities. These challenges are similar to previous research in South Asian educational contexts, which shows that classroom conditions often make it difficult to implement communicative and child-centered teaching approaches (Hu, 2002; Hamid, 2010).

Parental expectations were another factor influencing the use of play-based pedagogy. Teachers reported that some parents placed greater importance on examination results and written performance rather than interactive learning experiences. This reflects the wider culture of academic competition in Bangladeshi English-medium education. However, differences between the two schools suggest that school environment and institutional culture may influence how parents understand and respond to play-based learning.

Another important finding was the gap between teachers' understanding of play-based pedagogy and their ability to use it in practice. Teachers understood that games and interactive activities can support English learning, but they found it difficult to choose or design the right game for a specific English topic or learning goal. This shows that teachers need more practical training on how to design and use play-based activities for different English lessons appropriate for the 6-8 age range.

Lastly, another challenge identified was the lack of specialized teacher training. Participants expressed the need for more training on play-based teaching methods, communicative approaches, and strategies for supporting children with diverse learning needs. The findings suggest that teacher training alone may not be enough; teachers also need institutional support, flexibility, and professional autonomy to implement play-based pedagogy effectively.

Theme 4: Teachers' Needs for Strengthening English Learning Through Play

Overall, this study contributes to existing research by showing that teachers in Bangladeshi English-medium schools have positive attitudes toward play-based pedagogy and recognize its importance for young learners' English language development. However, the findings also show that wider institutional, assessment, classroom, and social factors influence the successful use of play-based English teaching. Therefore, meaningful implementation of play-based pedagogy requires changes beyond teachers' personal beliefs and motivation.

The findings indicate that play-based learning cannot depend only on individual teachers' efforts. Instead, it requires supportive educational systems and appropriate conditions. Participants identified several requirements for effective implementation, including longer lesson periods, less examination pressure, stronger school support, greater parent awareness, and practical teacher training.

Teachers also emphasized the importance of flexible lesson planning and continuous assessment. These suggestions align with research supporting child-centered assessment approaches. Similarly, the need for professional development highlights that teachers require not only theoretical understanding but also practical skills and strategies to apply play-based methods effectively in classrooms.

Conclusion

This qualitative study examined teachers' perceptions and classroom practices regarding the use of play-based pedagogy for English language learning among children aged six to eight in English-medium schools in Bangladesh. The study explored teachers' understanding of play-

based learning, their classroom practices, and the challenges affecting its implementation through six in-depth interviews and three classroom observations.

The findings showed that teachers had positive views about play-based pedagogy and recognized its importance in improving young learners' engagement, confidence, and English language development. Their understanding was mostly consistent with existing theories of play and second language acquisition. However, classroom observations showed a difference between teachers' beliefs and their actual practices, as the use of play-based approaches depended on school environment, classroom conditions, and institutional expectations.

The study concludes that the main challenges to implementing play-based English teaching stem from structural and contextual factors rather than teachers' lack of interest or willingness. Factors such as examination pressure, fixed curriculum requirements, large class sizes, limited lesson time, parental expectations, and insufficient practical training affected teachers' ability to apply play-based methods regularly.

Overall, the study highlights the need for supportive educational environments where teachers can effectively use child-centered approaches. Improving teacher training, reforming assessment systems, increasing parental awareness, and creating more flexible classroom conditions may support better English language learning experiences for young children in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

To implement play-based pedagogy effectively in English language acquisition, schools and policymakers need to create supportive environments where teachers can apply child-centered teaching approaches. Greater flexibility in lesson scheduling and planning would enable teachers to allocate sufficient time to design engaging activities that meet students' individual learning

needs. Schools should also improve classroom environments by keeping class sizes manageable where possible and using flexible seating arrangements that encourage movement, collaboration, and group-based learning. As this study found that rigid lesson plans and institutional expectations often restricted teachers' ability to be creative, schools should give teachers more professional autonomy and value activity-based teaching as an effective method of instruction.

Assessment practices should also be reconsidered to reduce excessive dependence on examination-based English learning. Schools should place greater emphasis on continuous and formative assessment methods that measure children's progress in communication, participation, comprehension, and overall language development, rather than focusing mainly on written test scores. Additionally, assessment practices should incorporate speaking and listening to motivate children to use English meaningfully in everyday classroom interactions. Teacher development should be strengthened through regular, practical training programs focused on play-based pedagogy, communicative language teaching, Total Physical Response (TPR), differentiated instruction, and strategies for supporting children with diverse learning needs. Training should not only provide theoretical knowledge but also show teachers how to apply these approaches in real classroom conditions. Schools should also provide ongoing professional support and opportunities for teachers to share experiences and effective practices with colleagues.

Furthermore, schools should conduct parent awareness programs to help families understand the educational value of play-based learning in language acquisition and reduce excessive pressure related to examination performance. Parents should be informed that interactive activities can support children's language development, confidence, and long-term learning outcomes. Finally, future research should include larger samples from different types of schools and educational settings, compare different curricula, and better examine children's actual English language

development over time to better understand the long-term impact of play-based pedagogy in Bangladesh.

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Appendices

Appendix A: IDI Guideline

Topic: Teachers’ Perceptions of Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition in English Language Classrooms for 6–8-Year-Old Children in English-Medium Schools of Bangladesh

Objective: To explore teachers’ perceptions of using play-based pedagogy to support English language acquisition among 6–8-year-old learners in English-medium schools in Bangladesh.

Section A: Demographic Information

Interview Date:	
Start Time:	
End Time:	
Name of School:	
Curriculum:	
Teachers Name:	
Age:	
Educational Qualification:	
Teaching Experience:	
Teaching Grade:	
Training Received:	

Section B: Teachers' understanding of Play-Based Pedagogy

1. What do you understand by play-based pedagogy (PBP)?
2. What is your opinion about the use of play-based Pedagogy in teaching?
3. To what extent does play-based pedagogy align with your current teaching practices? Please elaborate.
4. How do you perceive the process of second language acquisition among young children (aged 6-8)?
5. In your opinion, how do children learn English most effectively in a classroom setting?
6. How important do you think play-based pedagogy is for supporting English language acquisition? Why?
7. What do you think are the most effective strategies for teaching English to students in Classes 1–3 (aged 6–8)?

Section C: Current Teaching Practice

8. What teaching approach do you typically prefer to use when teaching English to young children? Please explain.
9. How effective do you find your current teaching methods? How do students usually respond to them?
10. How do you perceive the role of the teacher in supporting non-English-speaking children to learn English as a second language?

11. To what extent do you have the freedom to be creative when planning your lessons? Please elaborate.

12. How well is your teaching approach aligned with the curriculum? Please explain.

Branching Questions:

A. If the teacher uses Play-based pedagogy

1. What type of play-based activities do you use in your English lessons? How do your students respond to these activities?

2. In your experience, how does Play-based pedagogy influence students' reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills?

3. To what extent does your school allow and encourage you to apply PBP in your English classes?

4. How do parents respond to PBP? Do they support it?

5. What challenges do you face when implementing PBP in your classroom?

6. How do factors such as class size and time constraints affect your use of PBP?

B. If the teacher does not use play-based pedagogy

1. What are the reasons you do not use PBP in your teaching?

2. Would you be interested in using PBP in the future? Why or why not?

3. What types of support or resources would enable you to implement play-based pedagogy in your classroom?

4. In your opinion, how might play-based pedagogy influence children's English language learning (positively or negatively)? Please explain.

Section D: Student Transition and Classroom Behavior

13. How do students adapt to the transition from play-based learning in early years to more formal or rote-based learning in primary grades? Please elaborate.

14. What differences have you observed in students' behavior and engagement between lecture-based teaching and activity/play-based approaches?

Section E: Challenges and Recommendations

15. What major challenges do you face when teaching English to young children?

16. What changes would you recommend to improve English language teaching for children in grade (1-3) aged 6–8 in Bangladesh?

Appendix B: Classroom Observation Checklist

Section A: General Information

Name of School (Code)	
Curriculum	
Teacher's Name (Code)	
Subject	
Lesson Topic	
Grade	
Students age range	
Class size	
Duration of class	
Date	

Section B: Classroom Environment

Items	Yes/No	Comments
Classroom is child friendly		
Lessons are interactive		
Student centered teaching		
English learning materials are available		
Interaction based seating arrangement for group work		

Joyful learning atmosphere		
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Section C: Play-Based Teaching Practices

Items	Yes/No	Comments
Teacher uses games to teach English		
Teacher uses songs/rhymes		
Teacher uses storytelling		
Teacher uses role-play/drama		
Teacher gives group tasks for language learning		
Teacher encourages playful learning		
Teacher motivates active student participation		
Teacher values participation more than memorization		
Teacher includes shy/weak learners		
Teacher is able to manage play while maintaining		

learning goals within class time		
Teacher is able to cover syllabus		

Section D: Learners Experience

Items	Yes/No	Comments
Language of instruction is English		
Students respond/communicate in English		
Vocabulary is taught through activities		
Grammar is taught through activities		
Students practice speaking		
Students practice writing		
Students practice listening		
Students practice reading		
Students participate actively		

Appendix C: Consent Form for In-Depth Interview (IDI)

Title of the Study

Teachers' Perceptions of Integrating Play-Based Pedagogy for English Language Acquisition in English Language Classrooms for 6–8-Year-Old Children in English-Medium Schools of Bangladesh

Researcher Name: Najiyah Farah Haque

Institution: BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC University)

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this research is to explore teachers' views and experiences regarding the use of play-based pedagogy in English language classrooms for children aged 6–8 years in English-medium schools in Bangladesh.

Participation

You are invited to participate in an individual interview that will take approximately 45–60 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any question or withdraw from the interview at any stage without any negative consequences.

Procedure

If you agree to participate, you will be asked several open-ended questions about your teaching practices, experiences, and opinions related to play-based learning in English language teaching. With your permission, the interview may be audio-recorded to ensure accurate data collection.

Confidentiality

All information shared during the interview will remain confidential. Your identity and the name of your institution will not be disclosed in the research report or any publication. The collected data will be securely stored and used only for academic research purposes.

Risks and Benefits

There are no anticipated risks involved in participating in this study. Although there may not be any direct personal benefit, your participation may contribute to improving teaching practices and understanding of play-based pedagogy in English language classrooms.

Consent

- ☐ I have read/heard the information about this study and understood the purpose of the research.
- ☐ I willingly agree to participate in this study.
- ☐ I give permission for the interview to be audio-recorded.

Participant's Name: _____

Signature_____ Date: _____

Researcher's Signature: _____

Appendix D: গভীর সাক্ষাৎকারের নির্দেশিকা

Section A: সাধারণ তথ্য

সাক্ষাৎকারের তারিখ:	
শুরুর সময়:	
শেষ সময়:	
বিদ্যালয়ের নাম:	
পাঠ্যক্রম:	
শিক্ষকের নাম:	
বয়স:	
শিক্ষাগত যোগ্যতা:	
শিক্ষাদানের অভিজ্ঞতা:	
যে শ্রেণিতে পাঠদান করেন:	
প্রাপ্ত প্রশিক্ষণ:	

Section B: খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি (Play-Based Pedagogy - PBP) সম্পর্কে

শিক্ষকদের ধারণা

১। খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি বলতে আপনি কী বোঝেন?

২। শিক্ষাদানে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতির ব্যবহার সম্পর্কে আপনার মতামত কী?

৩। খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি আপনার বর্তমান শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতির সাথে কতটুকু সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

৪। আপনার মতে, শ্রেণিকক্ষে শিশুরা সবচেয়ে কার্যকরভাবে কীভাবে ইংরেজি শেখে?

৫। ইংরেজি ভাষা শেখানোর ক্ষেত্রে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতিকে আপনি কতটা গুরুত্বপূর্ণ মনে করেন? কেন?

৬। আপনার মতে, ১ম থেকে ৩য় শ্রেণির (৬-৮ বছর বয়সী) শিক্ষার্থীদের ইংরেজি শেখানোর সবচেয়ে কার্যকর কৌশল কী?

Section C: বর্তমান শিক্ষাদান অনুশীলন

৭। ছোট শিশুদের ইংরেজি শেখানোর ক্ষেত্রে আপনি ব্যক্তিগতভাবে কোন শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করতে পছন্দ করেন? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

৮। আপনার বর্তমান শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতিকে আপনি কতটা কার্যকর মনে করেন? শিক্ষার্থীরা সাধারণত এতে কীভাবে সাড়া দেয়?

৯। ইংরেজি ভাষা না-জানা শিশুদের দ্বিতীয় ভাষা হিসেবে ইংরেজি শেখানোর ক্ষেত্রে একজন শিক্ষকের ভূমিকা সম্পর্কে আপনার ধারণা কী?

১০। পাঠ পরিকল্পনা তৈরির ক্ষেত্রে সৃজনশীল হওয়ার জন্য আপনি কতটুকু স্বাধীনতা পান? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

১১। আপনার শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি নির্ধারিত পাঠ্যক্রমের সাথে কতটুকু সামঞ্জস্যপূর্ণ? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

শাখাভিত্তিক প্রশ্নাবলি (Branching Questions)

ক. যদি শিক্ষক খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার করেন

১। আপনি আপনার ইংরেজি ক্লাসে কী ধরনের খেলা-ভিত্তিক কার্যক্রম ব্যবহার করেন? শিক্ষার্থীরা এসব কার্যক্রমে কীভাবে সাড়া দেয়?

২। আপনার অভিজ্ঞতায়, খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি শিক্ষার্থীদের পড়া, লেখা, বলা ও শোনার দক্ষতার ওপর কী ধরনের প্রভাব ফেলে?

৩। আপনার বিদ্যালয় কি আপনাকে ইংরেজি ক্লাসে PBP প্রয়োগ করতে অনুমতি ও উৎসাহ প্রদান করে?

৪। অভিভাবকেরা খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান সম্পর্কে কী ধরনের প্রতিক্রিয়া দেখান? তারা কি এটি সমর্থন করেন?

৫। শ্রেণিকক্ষে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান প্রয়োগ করতে গিয়ে আপনি কী ধরনের চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হন?

৬। শ্রেণিকক্ষের শিক্ষার্থী সংখ্যা এবং সময়ের সীমাবদ্ধতা আপনার PBP ব্যবহারে কীভাবে প্রভাব ফেলে?

খ. যদি শিক্ষক খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি ব্যবহার না করেন

১। আপনি আপনার শিক্ষাদানে খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান ব্যবহার করেন না কেন?

২। ভবিষ্যতে PBP ব্যবহার করার ব্যাপারে আপনি কি আগ্রহী? কেন বা কেন নয়?

৩। শ্রেণিকক্ষে PBP প্রয়োগ করার জন্য কী ধরনের সহায়তা বা উপকরণ আপনার প্রয়োজন বলে মনে হয়?

৪। আপনার মতে, খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি শিশুদের ইংরেজি ভাষা শেখায় ইতিবাচক নাকি নেতিবাচক প্রভাব ফেলতে পারে? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

Section D: শিক্ষার্থীদের মানিয়ে নেওয়া ও শ্রেণিকক্ষের আচরণ

১২। প্রাক-প্রাথমিক স্তরের খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষার পরিবেশ থেকে প্রাথমিক স্তরের তুলনামূলকভাবে আনুষ্ঠানিক বা মুখস্থভিত্তিক শিক্ষায় আসার ক্ষেত্রে শিক্ষার্থীরা কীভাবে মানিয়ে নেয়? অনুগ্রহ করে ব্যাখ্যা করুন।

১৩। বক্তৃতাভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান এবং কার্যক্রম/খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদানের মধ্যে শিক্ষার্থীদের আচরণ ও অংশগ্রহণে আপনি কী ধরনের পার্থক্য লক্ষ্য করেছেন?

Section E: চ্যালেঞ্জ ও সুপারিশ

১৪। ছোট শিশুদের ইংরেজি শেখাতে গিয়ে আপনি কী কী প্রধান চ্যালেঞ্জের সম্মুখীন হন?

১৫। বাংলাদেশের ১ম-৩য় শ্রেণির (৬-৮ বছর বয়সী) শিশুদের ইংরেজি ভাষা শিক্ষার উন্নতির জন্য আপনি কী ধরনের পরিবর্তন বা সুপারিশ প্রস্তাব করবেন?

Appendix E: শ্রেণিকক্ষ পর্যবেক্ষণ চেকলিস্ট

অংশ A: সাধারণ তথ্য

বিষয়	তথ্য
বিদ্যালয়ের নাম (কোড)	
পাঠ্যক্রম	
শিক্ষকের নাম (কোড)	
বিষয়	
পাঠের বিষয়বস্তু	
শ্রেণি	
শিক্ষার্থীদের বয়সের পরিসর	
শ্রেণিকক্ষের শিক্ষার্থী সংখ্যা	
ক্লাসের সময়কাল	
তারিখ	

অংশ B: শ্রেণিকক্ষের পরিবেশ

বিষয়সমূহ	হ্যাঁ/না	মন্তব্য
শ্রেণিকক্ষ শিশু-বান্ধব		
পাঠদান আন্তঃক্রিয়ামূলক		
শিক্ষার্থী-কেন্দ্রিক শিক্ষাদান		

ইংরেজি শেখার উপকরণ উপলব্ধ		
দলগত কাজের জন্য পারস্পরিক যোগাযোগভিত্তিক বসার ব্যবস্থা		
আনন্দময় শেখার পরিবেশ		

অংশ C: খেলা-ভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান অনুশীলন

বিষয়সমূহ	হ্যাঁ/না	মন্তব্য
শিক্ষক ইংরেজি শেখানোর জন্য খেলা ব্যবহার করেন		
শিক্ষক গান/ছড়া ব্যবহার করেন		
শিক্ষক গল্প বলা ব্যবহার করেন		
শিক্ষক ভূমিকাভিনয়/নাটিকা ব্যবহার করেন		

শিক্ষক ভাষা শেখার জন্য দলগত কাজ দেন		
শিক্ষক আনন্দময় শেখাকে উৎসাহিত করেন		
শিক্ষক শিক্ষার্থীদের সক্রিয় অংশগ্রহণে উৎসাহ দেন		
শিক্ষক মুখস্থ করার চেয়ে অংশগ্রহণকে বেশি গুরুত্ব দেন		
শিক্ষক লাজুক/দুর্বল শিক্ষার্থীদের অন্তর্ভুক্ত করেন		
শিক্ষক শ্রেণিকক্ষের সময়ের মধ্যে শেখার লক্ষ্য বজায় রেখে খেলাধুলাভিত্তিক কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করতে সক্ষম		
শিক্ষক পাঠ্যসূচি সম্পন্ন করতে সক্ষম		

অংশ D: শিক্ষার্থীদের শেখার অভিজ্ঞতা

বিষয়সমূহ	হ্যাঁ/না	মন্তব্য
পাঠদানের ভাষা ইংরেজি		
শিক্ষার্থীরা ইংরেজিতে উত্তর দেয়/যোগাযোগ করে		
কার্যক্রমের মাধ্যমে শব্দভান্ডার শেখানো হয়		
কার্যক্রমের মাধ্যমে ব্যাকরণ শেখানো হয়		
শিক্ষার্থীরা বলার অনুশীলন করে		
শিক্ষার্থীরা লেখার অনুশীলন করে		
শিক্ষার্থীরা শোনার অনুশীলন করে		
শিক্ষার্থীরা পড়ার অনুশীলন করে		
শিক্ষার্থীরা সক্রিয়ভাবে অংশগ্রহণ করে		

Appendix F: গভীর সাক্ষাৎকারের (IDI) সম্মতিপত্র

গবেষণার শিরোনাম

বাংলাদেশের ইংরেজি মাধ্যম বিদ্যালয়ের ৬-৮ বছর বয়সী শিশুদের ইংরেজি ভাষা অর্জনের জন্য ইংরেজি ক্লাসে খেলাভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি সংযুক্তিকরণ সম্পর্কে শিক্ষকদের ধারণা

গবেষকের নাম: নাজিয়াহ ফারাহ হক

প্রতিষ্ঠান: ব্র্যাক ইনস্টিটিউট অব এডুকেশনাল ডেভেলপমেন্ট (ব্র্যাক বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়)

গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য

এই গবেষণার উদ্দেশ্য হলো বাংলাদেশের ইংরেজি মাধ্যম বিদ্যালয়গুলোর ইংরেজি ভাষা শিক্ষার ক্লাসে খেলাভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি ব্যবহারের বিষয়ে শিক্ষকদের মতামত ও অভিজ্ঞতা সম্পর্কে জানা।

অংশগ্রহণ

আপনাকে প্রায় ৪৫-৬০ মিনিটের একটি ব্যক্তিগত সাক্ষাৎকারে অংশগ্রহণের জন্য আমন্ত্রণ জানানো হচ্ছে। আপনার অংশগ্রহণ সম্পূর্ণ স্বেচ্ছাসেবী। আপনি চাইলে যেকোনো প্রশ্নের উত্তর না দিতে পারেন অথবা যেকোনো সময় কোনো কারণ ছাড়াই সাক্ষাৎকার থেকে সরে যেতে পারেন।

সাক্ষাৎকারের প্রক্রিয়া

আপনি অংশগ্রহণে সম্মত হলে, আপনাকে আপনার শ্রেণিকক্ষের অভিজ্ঞতা, শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি এবং খেলাভিত্তিক শিক্ষার বিষয়ে কিছু উন্মুক্ত প্রশ্ন করা হবে। আপনার অনুমতি সাপেক্ষে সাক্ষাৎকারটি অডিও রেকর্ড করা হতে পারে, যাতে তথ্য সঠিকভাবে সংরক্ষণ করা যায়।

গোপনীয়তা

সাক্ষাৎকারে প্রদত্ত সকল তথ্য সম্পূর্ণ গোপন রাখা হবে। আপনার নাম বা প্রতিষ্ঠানের পরিচয় কোনো গবেষণা প্রতিবেদন বা প্রকাশনায় উল্লেখ করা হবে না। সংগৃহীত তথ্য শুধুমাত্র একাডেমিক গবেষণার কাজে ব্যবহার করা হবে এবং নিরাপদে সংরক্ষণ করা হবে।

ঝুঁকি ও উপকারিতা

এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণের ক্ষেত্রে কোনো পরিচিত ঝুঁকি নেই। যদিও সরাসরি ব্যক্তিগত উপকার নাও থাকতে পারে, আপনার অংশগ্রহণ ভবিষ্যতে খেলাভিত্তিক শিক্ষাদান পদ্ধতি উন্নয়ন এবং ইংরেজি ভাষা শিক্ষার মানোন্নয়নে সহায়ক হতে পারে।

সম্মতি

- ☐ আমি গবেষণা সম্পর্কে প্রদত্ত তথ্য পড়েছি/শুনেছি এবং এর উদ্দেশ্য বুঝতে পেরেছি।
- ☐ আমি স্বেচ্ছায় এই গবেষণায় অংশগ্রহণে সম্মতি দিচ্ছি।
- ☐ আমি সাক্ষাৎকার অডিও রেকর্ড করার অনুমতি দিচ্ছি।

অংশগ্রহণকারীর নাম: _____

স্বাক্ষর _____ তারিখ: _____

গবেষকের স্বাক্ষর: _____