

Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support

By

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A thesis submitted to the BRAC Institute of Educational Development in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of
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Declaration

It is hereby declared that-

1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing the 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 reference.
3. The thesis does not contain material that 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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Approval

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Ethics Statement

I, Tanzina Hossain, hereby consciously assure that for the manuscript titled “Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support” the following is fulfilled.

- This material is my own original work, which has not been previously published or submitted elsewhere.
- All sources used in this manuscript are appropriately identified and cited. Text that is literally copied must be identified as such by using quote marks and providing suitable references.
- All the participants of this research willingly participated in this research.
- The participants’ identities who have participated in this research are confidential, protected and will not be revealed at any point.
- The findings are suitably contextualized in relation to previous and present research.

Abstract

Supporting children with speech delay is a critical concern in early childhood education, especially in inclusive classroom environments. This study explores how English-medium preschool teachers in Dhaka teach and support speech-delayed children within inclusive settings. The study investigates three key areas- the teaching strategies employed by teachers, the challenges they face while working with speech-delayed children, and the institutional support available to them. A qualitative research approach was used to conduct this study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with two preschool teachers and classroom observations of their teaching practices. Thematic analysis of the data revealed that teachers employed various inclusive strategies such as individualized attention, use of non-verbal communication, visual aids, multisensory teaching, peer support, and regular guidance for parents. Teachers demonstrated creativity and adaptability in their methods despite notable challenges. These challenges included large class sizes, behavioral issues, lack of specialized training, limited resources, and inconsistent parental cooperation. Although institutional support was limited, teachers expressed the need for smaller class sizes, recruitment of special educators, and increased parental involvement. This study has implications for teacher training, curriculum planning, and policy support for inclusive education. It contributes to a deeper understanding of current classroom practices, teacher needs, and areas for systemic improvement to better support speech-delayed children in English medium preschools.

Keywords: Speech delay, inclusive classroom, English medium pre-school children

Dedication

This Thesis is dedicated to all the respected pre-primary teachers who tirelessly make effort to build a cheerful and caring learning environment for the children with speech delay.

Acknowledgment

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, **Nazmin Sultana**, for her valuable guidance and constructive feedback throughout my research journey.

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List of Acronyms

IE	Inclusive Education
IEPs	Individualized Education Plans
DSA	Developmental Systems Approach
AAC	Augmentative and Alternative Communication
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorders
UDL	Universal Design for Learning

Chapter 1

Introduction and Background

1.1 Introduction

Speech delay is a significant developmental issue worldwide, affecting an estimated 5-8% of children under the age of five (National Institute on Deafness and Other Communication Disorders [NIDCD], 2024). In Asia, the prevalence is similarly high, with reported rates ranging from 7-10% ((NIDCD, 2024). In Bangladesh, where preschool education typically serves children aged 3 to 6- a critical window for language acquisition- there is a concerning lack of resources to support children with speech delays, particularly in private preschools. Around 10% of children in the country have some form of disability, including speech delays, though many go undiagnosed due to inadequate screening processes (American Academy of Pediatrics, 2024). These challenges underscore the urgent need for research into how preschool teachers in Bangladesh can better support children with speech delays through more inclusive classroom strategies.

Speech delay, as defined by the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association (ASHA), occurs when a child does not develop speech skills at the expected rate for their age. This may involve difficulties in articulating sounds, forming words, or speaking fluently. Often, speech delays are linked to other conditions such as hearing impairments, cognitive delays, or developmental disorders. It is crucial to distinguish between speech delays, which involve the mechanical aspects of speaking, and language delays, which affect a child's ability to comprehend and use language for communication (ASHA, 2024).

Addressing the needs of children with speech delays in Bangladeshi preschools will require a multifaceted approach, including enhanced teacher training, improved resource allocation, and the implementation of more robust early screening programs (Guralnick, 2017). The process of addressing and responding to the diverse needs of all learners by increasing participation in learning, cultures, and communities, and reducing exclusion within and from education (UNESCO, 2021). This research aims to explore these areas, focusing on the strategies, challenges, and support available to preschool teachers as they work to create more inclusive learning environments for children with speech delays.

1.2 Research Topic

The title of this research is: **Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support**

Some children face significant challenges with speech development, which can impact their learning and social interactions in the classroom. Research indicates that speech delays require specialized teaching approaches to support children's progress in inclusive settings. This study explores the strategies, challenges, and institutional support available to teachers in Dhaka's English medium preschools.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Inclusive education has become a crucial focus of global educational reform, especially in early childhood settings. Inclusive classrooms are designed to accommodate students of all abilities, creating an environment where every child can thrive academically and socially (Paul & Norbury, 2012). However, for students with speech delays, participating in such environments can present unique challenges, often requiring specialized teaching strategies and support

systems (Justice & Redle, 2014). Speech delays, characterized by the late development of expressive or receptive language skills, affect a child's ability to communicate effectively, which in turn impacts social interaction, academic progress, and emotional well-being (Bishop et al., 2016).

In Bangladesh, where inclusive education policies are still developing, the integration of students with speech delays in preschool classrooms remains particularly challenging. Preschool teachers often face significant barriers, including a lack of training, resources, and institutional support, to effectively facilitate the learning of these students (Chowdhury, 2020). While inclusive education policies promote equal access to learning opportunities, teachers are often ill-equipped to implement strategies tailored to the specific needs of students with speech delays. This lack of preparedness can hinder the academic and social development of these children, leading to challenges in communication, lower self-esteem, and increased frustration in learning environments (Bishop et al., 2016; Paul & Norbury, 2012). This research seeks to explore the strategies teachers employ, the challenges they encounter, and the support they receive in their efforts to integrate students with speech delays into inclusive preschool settings in Bangladesh.

1.4 Research Questions

Research Topic: Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in English Medium Preschools in Dhaka

1. How do pre-primary teachers employ teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms to facilitate students with speech delays?
2. What challenges do pre-primary teachers face when teaching students with speech delays, and what support do they get?

1.5 Purpose of the Study

This study aims to explore the strategies employed by pre-primary teachers in English medium preschools in Dhaka, the challenges they face, and the institutional support available to improve their teaching practices. Specifically, it will explore the teaching strategies, challenges teachers face in implementing inclusive practices and explore the types of institutional support available to them.

1.6 Significance of the Study

This research specifically addresses the challenges faced by preschool teachers in supporting students with speech delays, focusing on the teaching strategies, challenges, and support systems available. By examining these critical areas, the study aims to provide insights into how teachers can better manage speech delays in their classrooms. The findings will guide the development of targeted training programs, support mechanisms, and policy adjustments, ensuring that teachers are well-equipped to address the needs of speech-delayed students. Ultimately, this research contributes to improving the academic and social outcomes for students with speech delays, creating a more inclusive learning environment that caters specifically to their unique needs. By identifying teaching methods and areas where additional support is needed, the study seeks to provide insights that could inform teacher training programs and enhance support systems for speech-delayed students in inclusive classroom settings.

1.7 Summary

Speech delay is a common developmental issue that affects children under five, with similar prevalence in Bangladesh. Despite its impact on children's communication and social development, early identification and support remain limited in Bangladeshi preschools,

particularly in English medium settings. While inclusive education policies promote equal access, teachers often lack the training, resources, and institutional support needed to address the needs of speech-delayed students. This study explores how pre-primary teachers in English medium preschools in Dhaka implement teaching strategies for students with speech delays and examines the challenges and support systems involved. Its findings will inform teacher training, enhance institutional support, and strengthen inclusive practices in early childhood education.

Chapter 2

Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I reviewed various literature including journal articles, research papers, and policy documents related to the teaching of speech-delayed children. This includes a review of literature concerning the impact of speech delay on children's learning and social development, inclusive education in early years, teaching strategies for speech-delayed children, teachers' challenges, and the institutional support they receive. I reviewed this literature to guide the development of my conceptual framework, interview guide, and discussion chapter. I have organized this chapter into the following sections: Speech Delay in Early Childhood, Impact of Speech Delay on Learning and Social Development, Inclusive Education in English Medium Preschools, Teaching Strategies for Children with Speech Delay, Challenges Faced by Teachers, Institutional Support, and the Conceptual Framework.

2.2 Developmental challenges in children with speech delay

Speech delay in early childhood refers to a developmental lag where a child's speech production does not meet expected milestones for their age, affecting communication skills (American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, 2024). Speech-delayed children are at risk for long-term learning and social difficulties (Paul & Norbury, 2012) such as significant problems in reading, social skills and overall learning. "Social difficulties" for a child with a speech delay means they struggle to interact with others effectively due to their limited ability to communicate verbally, which can include difficulty understanding social cues, taking turns in conversation, expressing their needs clearly, and adapting their language to different situations, often leading to frustration

and social isolation (Wren et. al., 2023). Social difficulties are of different kinds and can affect children differently. According to Paul and Norbury (2012), they often face challenges in reading, cognitive development, and overall classroom learning. Socially, these children may experience specific difficulties such as trouble initiating conversations, maintaining interactions, and understanding social cues like facial expressions or tone of voice. As a result, they may struggle to make and keep friends, participate in group activities, or express their emotions clearly. These social barriers can lead to feelings of frustration, social withdrawal, low self-esteem, and even behavioral issues. Moreover, external factors such as trauma, neglect, or frequent changes in caregivers, especially in early childhood, can compound the effects of speech delay (Krier et al., 2018). point out that children in unstable caregiving situations often lack consistent emotional support and language modeling, both of which are critical for language acquisition. In such cases, a child may not only struggle with speech but also with forming secure attachments and trusting adults, further complicating social development. These children may find it especially difficult to seek help, build relationships with teachers or peers, or advocate for their own needs in school settings. Social competence, which involves the ability to interact appropriately and effectively with others, is often hindered in children with speech delays. Their reduced capacity to communicate can make even simple interactions, such as greeting someone, asking for help, or participating in play, challenging. As a result, they may be perceived by others as disinterested, shy, or even oppositional, when in fact, they are simply struggling to express themselves or understand what is expected of them. Without early and sustained support, these social limitations can become more pronounced as children grow older, potentially affecting their long-term mental health and educational outcomes.

These issues highlight the urgent need for targeted interventions to support both educational and social development. Social difficulties vary from child to child, depending on the severity of the speech delay, personality, and environmental factors. For instance, a highly motivated child with a mild speech delay and a supportive family may develop coping strategies and thrive socially, while another child with more severe delay and limited home support may become increasingly isolated. Therefore, understanding the nature and context of these difficulties is essential when designing interventions or classroom strategies (Krier et al., 2018). Effective intervention requires early screening; however, in countries like Bangladesh, such programs are often limited. The absence of culturally adapted and validated screening instruments makes it difficult to accurately assess speech and language development in Bangladeshi children. A systematic review highlighted the need for appropriate screening tools tailored to low- and middle-income countries, including Bangladesh (Faruk et al., 2020).

Therefore, speech delay in early childhood is more than a communication issue—it is a developmental challenge that affects children’s academic learning, emotional well-being, and social integration. The nature and severity of social difficulties experienced by speech-delayed children can differ, but they generally include problems with forming relationships, understanding social norms, and participating meaningfully in peer and classroom interactions. When compounded by environmental risks like trauma or instability, these difficulties become more complex and require comprehensive, individualized support strategies. Understanding these challenges is essential for creating inclusive educational environments where every child has the opportunity to thrive.

2.3 Inclusive Education and strategies for inclusive education and challenges in implementing inclusive education in Bangladesh

Globally, Inclusive Education (IE) is considered the most efficient and cost-effective approach to educate all learners together. Institutional support plays a vital role in enabling teachers to meet the diverse needs of students in inclusive classrooms. According to UNESCO (2021), robust support systems- including policy frameworks, training programs, and resource allocation- are essential for inclusive education success. Globally, teachers receive training in early interventions, inclusive education strategies, and parent and parent collaboration for managing speech delays. Programs focus on early screening, task-sharing, and evidence-based tools to integrate children with speech delays into mainstream settings (Collins et al., 2017). initiatives such as the Hanen Centre's learning and loving it emphasize evidence-based approaches to improving teacher skills in language development (Danciu, E2015). The Hanen Centre's *Learning Language and Loving It* program is an evidence-based initiative aimed at enhancing teacher skills in promoting language development among young children. The Hanen approach equips teachers with evidence-based techniques designed to enhance young children's communication skills, especially in inclusive classrooms. One of the core strategies involves child-cantered interactions, where educators are trained to observe and follow the child's interests during activities. This method increases engagement and responsiveness, making learning more meaningful for children with speech delays. Another key component is language modelling, where teachers learn to expand on children's speech by adding new vocabulary and more complex sentence structures. This technique exposes children to richer language input, which supports their expressive and receptive language development. The approach also emphasizes peer interaction, encouraging educators to facilitate social communication between

children. This helps foster natural back-and-forth exchanges, enhancing both speech and social skills. Teachers are trained in turn-taking strategies and responsive communication, which promote balanced conversations and help children learn the rhythm of interaction.

Additionally, educators are guided in creating a language-rich environment by embedding language-learning opportunities into daily classroom routines. This includes narrating actions, labeling objects, asking open-ended questions, and encouraging storytelling or role play.

By practicing these techniques, teachers develop specific skills such as:

- Observational sensitivity to children’s communication cues,
- Intentional language use tailored to each child’s developmental level,
- Facilitation of peer dialogue, and
- Adaptation of classroom routines to promote frequent verbal engagement.

These approaches are highly practical and adaptable, making them effective tools for teachers to support the communication needs of children with speech delays in inclusive early childhood settings (Danciu, 2015).

In Bangladesh, government policies play a vital role in promoting inclusive education, including support for children with speech delays. The National Education Policy emphasizes equitable access to quality education for all, highlighting the need to address diverse learning needs and reduce discrimination. It advocates for inclusive practices in schools, ensuring children with disabilities, including speech delays, can learn alongside their peers (Malak et. al., 2013).

Although inclusive education policies in Bangladesh—such as the Compulsory Primary Education Act (1990), the Bangladesh Persons with Disability Welfare Act (2001), and the

National Education Policy (2010)- lack clear, detailed guidelines for teacher training, they have had indirect impacts on improving teachers' professional skills. These policies have raised awareness about the rights of children with disabilities and created expectations for integrating such children into mainstream classrooms. In response to these shifts, teachers are increasingly required to develop flexible, adaptive teaching methods to support students with speech and communication difficulties. For example, in the absence of formal training, educators have begun using visual aids, simplified language, and routine-based instruction to meet student needs (Malak et al., 2013). Moreover, grassroots adaptation, though a result of policy gaps, has fostered creativity, peer collaboration, and practical problem-solving among teachers. In this way, while the policy framework remains vague, it has played a role in gradually enhancing teacher competence in inclusive classrooms. The main idea is that while Bangladesh has signed international declarations and developed policies supporting inclusive education (IE), there is a gap between policy and practice. Policies are largely influenced by international treaties and are not well understood by practitioners and teachers in the local context. Key barriers to effective IE implementation include teachers' attitudes and limited professional development. The study highlights the need for further research to examine classroom-level practices and suggests that existing policy guidelines have limited impact on fostering effective IE in Bangladesh (Malak et al., 2013).

2.4 Challenges Confronted by Teachers While Teaching Students with Speech Delay

Numerous studies have highlighted the persistent challenges associated with implementing inclusive education in early childhood settings. One such study by Sarker and Unzum (2023) explored the structural and systemic barriers that hinder effective inclusion of children with

special needs, including those with speech delays. These children often face significant obstacles in the classroom, largely due to the absence of well-established support systems and appropriate resources tailored to their developmental and communication needs. A major barrier identified is the shortage of specialized personnel, such as speech-language therapists or special education teachers, who are trained to work with children experiencing speech and language delays.

Without access to such professionals, general classroom teachers are frequently left unsupported and unprepared to meet these children's specific learning requirements. In many schools, there is also a lack of assistive technologies, such as visual communication boards, speech-generating devices, or simplified instructional materials, which are essential for promoting meaningful engagement among children with communication challenges. In addition to the lack of resources, traditional classroom settings often follow rigid, one-size-fits-all teaching approaches that emphasize standardized content delivery rather than differentiated instruction. Such environments rarely accommodate diverse learning needs or allow the flexibility needed to support children with speech delays. The absence of individualized education plans (IEPs) further compounds this problem, as children are expected to adapt to mainstream instruction without consideration of their unique cognitive, linguistic, and emotional profiles.

The situation is exacerbated by policy misinterpretation and inconsistent implementation practices. As Sarker and Unzum (2023) point out, although inclusive education is a policy priority in Bangladesh, there remains a significant gap between policy intentions and actual classroom practices. Teachers and school administrators may not fully understand inclusive education principles or how to translate them into day-to-day teaching. Additionally, weak monitoring and accountability mechanisms mean that schools often implement inclusion practices inconsistently or ineffectively, which affects the quality of education for children with

special needs. Societal stigma and limited awareness surrounding disabilities, particularly invisible or communication-based disabilities like speech delay, also play a major role in hindering effective inclusion. Misconceptions about children with speech delays often result in negative attitudes from both peers and educators, contributing to feelings of exclusion, low self-worth, and social isolation among affected students. In this context, teachers may feel overwhelmed, unsupported, and unequipped to handle the social and emotional needs of such children in addition to academic instruction. Moreover, insufficient political will and lack of sustainable funding for inclusive education further limit progress. Without long-term investment in teacher training, infrastructure development, and inclusive curriculum design, schools remain unequipped to meet the demands of a diverse student population. These structural limitations result in inequities in access, participation, and achievement for children with speech delays.

This concern is echoed by Bishop et al. (2016), who emphasize that many teachers receive little to no specialized training in managing speech and language delays. As a result, educators often feel ill-prepared, frustrated, or even ineffective when trying to support these students. Guralnick (2017) notes that in the absence of adequate training and support, teachers are left to rely on their own creativity and resourcefulness, often developing individualized strategies without any formal guidance or validation. While this adaptability reflects teacher dedication, it also highlights systemic gaps that place disproportionate responsibility on individual educators rather than on institutions.

In summary, the challenges of implementing inclusive education for speech-delayed children are deeply complex and multifaceted. These challenges stem not only from resource shortages and training gaps but also from broader societal, political, and policy-level shortcomings. Societal

stigma, vague policy language, and insufficient financial and institutional support collectively hinder the development of inclusive classroom environments. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustained effort involving collaboration among educators, policymakers, families, and the broader community. By understanding these layered challenges and learning from existing strategies, this study aims to contribute to the development of more effective, equitable, and responsive educational practices for speech-delayed children in Dhaka's English medium preschools.

2.5 Conceptual framework

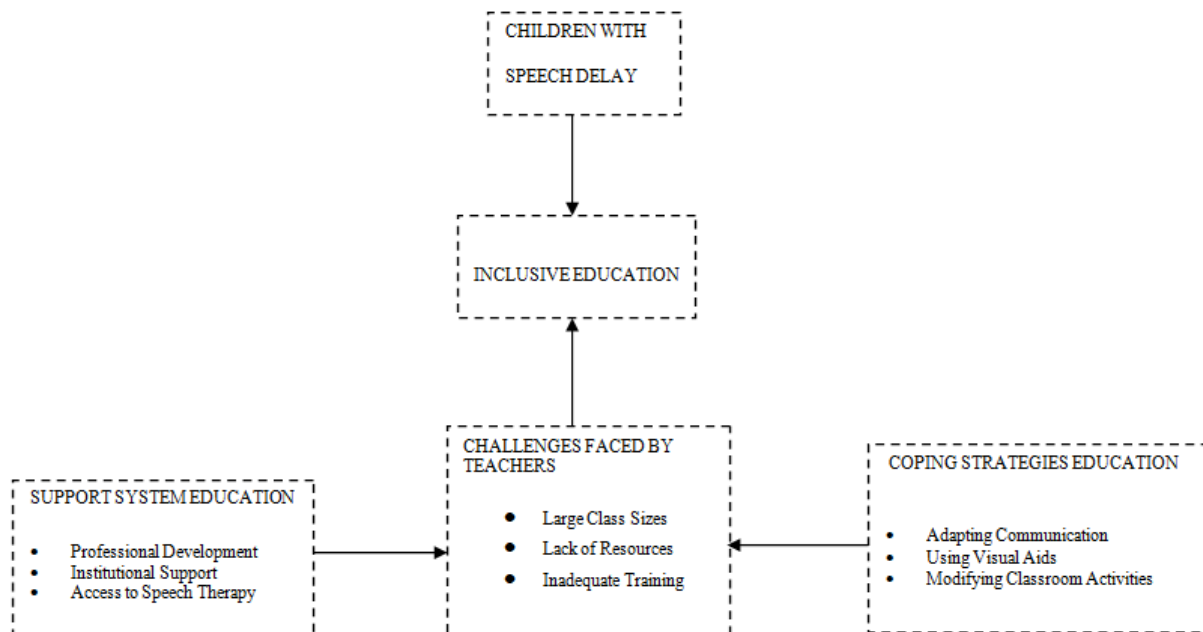


Figure 2.1: conceptual framework

2.6 Summary

This chapter reviewed various literature relevant to teaching speech-delayed children in inclusive preschool settings, with a focus on English medium contexts. It explored the nature of speech delay in early childhood, its impact on learning and social development, and the principles of inclusive education globally and in Bangladesh. Key challenges faced by teachers, such as lack of training, insufficient resources, and policy-practice gaps, were also discussed. The chapter further examined institutional support systems and highlighted evidence-based strategies that educators can use to support children with speech delays. By reviewing both global and local literature, this chapter has helped inform the development of the conceptual framework and interview guide for this study and will support the analysis and discussion in later chapters.

Chapter 3

Methodology

3.1 Overview

This chapter explains the research design that was used for to explore the teaching strategies, challenges, and institutional support available for preschool teachers working with speech-delayed children in English medium preschools in Dhaka. The following sections discuss the research approach, sample and sample size, sampling technique, data collection techniques, analysis, limitations of the study, ethical issues, and trustworthiness.

3.2 Research Approach

This study employs a mixed qualitative research approach. Qualitative research is crucial in education research as it explores the "how" and "why" behind experiences, providing deeper insights into human behavior, phenomena, and context that cannot be captured through numerical data (Cleland, 2017). Therefore, qualitative approach was chosen because it can allow for an in-depth understanding of teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices in inclusive classroom settings. By using a qualitative approach, in-depth interview and observation checklist, the study aims to capture the nuanced and complex realities of teaching speech-delayed children.

3.3 Rationale for Choosing the Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative approach is ideal for gaining a rich, in-depth understanding of complex issues (Creswell & Poth, 2018). This study adopted such an approach to deeply explore the teaching strategies, challenges, and institutional support experienced by preschool teachers working with speech-delayed children in English medium preschools. Since qualitative research takes place in

real-world settings and focuses on understanding phenomena through close interaction with participants (Creswell & Poth, 2018), this study utilized one-on-one interviews and classroom observations to gather detailed insights aligned with its objectives.

3.4 Research Site

Qualitative research typically involves collecting data in natural settings to gain a deep understanding of participants' experiences. Researchers purposefully select participants and locations to gather rich, detailed insights into the research problem (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The study took place in two well-established English-medium preschools in Dhaka, Bangladesh, known for their focus on English instruction and diverse student populations, including children with speech delays. Although the schools remain unnamed for confidentiality, they provide a relevant setting for the research, as teachers there actively address challenges related to inclusive education and supporting speech-delayed students. My experience in this field, along with personal connections, facilitated access to the research sites and helped establish rapport with the teachers, which in turn enabled the collection of rich and meaningful data.

3.5 Sample and Sampling Procedure

I did purposive sampling for the data collection so that I could get information-rich data. In qualitative inquiry, researchers' effort is to make a comprehensive understanding of the phenomena. In doing so, qualitative researchers select samples where they get thorough information (Merriam & Grenier, 2019).

The participants in this study are preschool teachers from English medium schools in Dhaka who have experience teaching speech-delayed children. The teachers selected for this study have at least one year of experience teaching preschool students and have worked with at least one

speech-delayed child in their classroom. The participants include two female teachers, ranging in age from 25 to 40 years. These teachers were chosen as research participants because of their direct involvement in teaching speech-delayed children, which makes them a valuable source of data for understanding the challenges and strategies in inclusive education. The criteria for participant selection included having at least one year of experience teaching preschool students and experience working with at least one speech-delayed child. The sampling process focused on identifying teachers who could provide rich, detailed insights into the teaching strategies and challenges associated with speech-delayed children.

Table 3.1

The following table summarizes the sample details:

Participant Code	Gender	Age Range	Teaching Experience	Experience with Speech-Delayed Children
T1	Female	25–30	2 years	Yes
T2	Female	35–40	7 years	Yes

This purposive sampling approach ensured that the participants were well-suited to provide in-depth information aligned with the study’s objectives.

3.6 Data Collection Methods

This study employed two primary qualitative data collection methods: in-depth semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. These methods were chosen to gain a comprehensive understanding of the strategies used by teachers, the challenges they encounter while teaching students with speech delays, and the nature of institutional support they receive. According to Creswell and Ploth (2018), qualitative research tools like interviews and observations allow the

researcher to explore participants' lived experiences and the meaning they attach to those experiences.

3.6.1 In-depth Interviews with Preschool Teachers

One-on-one, semi-structured interviews were conducted with two English-medium preschool teachers. These interviews aimed to explore teachers' strategies for working with speech-delayed children, the difficulties they face in inclusive settings, and the nature of the institutional support they receive. As suggested by Creswell and Ploth (2018), one-on-one interviews allow participants to share their lived experiences and enable the researcher to understand the meanings attached to those experiences.

An interview guide was developed to maintain focus while allowing flexibility to probe emerging themes. The guide was divided into two parts:

- **Part A** gathered demographic information such as age, gender, teaching experience, educational qualifications, and relevant training related to speech and language development.
- **Part B** consisted of 25 open-ended questions aligned with the research objectives. These questions focused on key areas:
 - **Teaching strategies and adaptations** for speech-delayed children, such as adjusting communication styles, using visual aids, and incorporating multisensory techniques.
 - **Challenges and institutional constraints**, including class size, limited resources, and feelings of unpreparedness.

- **Support systems and professional development**, such as training, materials, and access to therapists or assistants.
- **Parent-teacher collaboration**, exploring how teachers communicate with and involve parents in their children's speech development.
- **Teacher recommendations** for changes in classroom practices and institutional policies.

Sample questions included: *How do you adjust your communication style to ensure lessons are accessible for speech-delayed children?* and *What types of support does your school provide for teaching speech-delayed children?*

Probing questions like *Can you give an example?* and *Could you elaborate on that?* were used to gather deeper insights. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 minutes and was audio-recorded with participants' consent. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim for analysis.

3.6.2 Classroom Observations

To complement the interview data, structured classroom observations were conducted for each teacher. Observation is considered a critical qualitative research tool for examining classroom environments, teacher behaviors, and student engagement in natural settings (Creswell & Ploth, 2018). These non-participatory observations were designed to document how teachers support speech-delayed students through specific teaching practices and classroom strategies.

An observation checklist was developed to guide the process and ensure consistency across observations. The checklist was organized into the following categories:

- **Classroom Environment:** Layout, presence of support areas, use of language development tools (e.g., flashcards, visual aids), and the overall classroom atmosphere.
- **Teaching Strategies:** Use of visual aids, communication adjustments (e.g., slow pacing, simplified language), non-verbal communication, differentiation of teaching methods, and multisensory instruction.
- **Student Engagement:** Level of individualized attention and peer support provided to speech-delayed children, and their active participation in classroom activities.
- **Classroom Management:** Influence of class size and teacher-to-student ratio on the quality of support provided.
- **Assessment and Progress Monitoring:** Use of developmental milestones, documentation of progress, and adaptation in case of limited resources.
- **Institutional Support:** Access to additional assistance (e.g., aides or therapists), professional development opportunities, and in-school support mechanisms.
- **Teacher Reflection:** Evidence of self-reflection and adaptability in teaching practices, along with any observed recommendations for future improvement.

Each observation was rated on a 5-point scale (1 = Poor to 5 = Excellent) with a dedicated space for descriptive comments. Observations were video recorded where permitted and conducted without interrupting classroom activities to ensure the authenticity of behavior and interactions.

3.7 Data Collection Procedure

To investigate the research problem, I conducted semi-structured interviews with my participants. Given the constraints of time and professional responsibilities, arranging face-to-face interviews proved challenging due to both my schedule and that of the participants.

Therefore, I opted to conduct the interviews via Zoom- a flexible and accessible method for qualitative data collection, especially when in-person interactions are not feasible. According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), telephone and virtual interviews are valid qualitative methods that allow researchers to capture participants' views and opinions.

To ensure participants' convenience, I pre-scheduled each interview based on their availability and sent consent forms in advance through email. Prior to the interviews, I also called the participants to explain the research purpose, the interview process, and to establish rapport. I began each session with informal greetings and personal check-ins. The interviews commenced with demographic questions, followed by open-ended questions based on the interview guide. However, I maintained a conversational tone throughout by rephrasing questions in a more informal and relatable manner. This approach helped the interviews feel more natural and less rigid. Each interview with the pre-primary teachers lasted approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews were audio-recorded with participants' prior consent. Following the interviews, classroom observations were conducted. Written consent for classroom observations was also obtained from the participating teachers. Prior to their involvement, I briefed them on the research objectives, key questions, and observation protocol. Observation checklists were shared with them via email, and they printed the checklists for on-site notetaking during their visits.

3.8 Role of the Researcher

As the primary researcher, I played a non-participatory role during the classroom observations to ensure that my presence did not influence the natural dynamics of the classroom. During the interviews, I acted as a facilitator, encouraging participants to share their experiences openly. I maintained a reflective journal throughout the research process to document my thoughts, biases,

and any challenges encountered during data collection. My background in education provided me with a foundational understanding of teaching practices, but I remained mindful of my role as a researcher rather than an evaluator or supervisor.

3.9 Data Analysis

The data collected from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the six-step process proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

1. Familiarize with the data: I began by carefully reading and re-reading the interview transcripts to gain an in-depth understanding of the content. Additionally, I listened to the audio recordings multiple times to capture the underlying messages and took detailed notes during this process. During this stage, I organized the data methodically. I used color-coded highlights to mark smaller segments of information in the transcripts that were relevant to my research questions. These color-coded portions were grouped under specific codes on printed copies of the transcripts.

2. Generating Initial Codes

I generated initial codes by identifying small meaningful segments from the transcripts and observation notes. The following table illustrates some interview extracts and the initial codes that emerged:

Generate initial codes

Interview Extract	Codes
“For inattentive students, sometimes I have to call them by their names. Like, ‘Hi Ruha, look at the board,’ or I have to change my tone (make it louder).” (T1)	Individual attention, Adjusting communication, Addressing inattention
“Let’s have some warm-up or sometimes we sing a song to grab their attention.” (T2)	Warm-up strategy, Auditory engagement, Increasing attention

3. Searching for Sub-Themes

Next, I clustered related codes into broader sub-themes based on emerging patterns in the data.

Below is an example of how codes were grouped under sub-themes:

Table 3.2

Search for sub-themes

Codes	Sub-themes
Individual attention, Adjusting communication, Addressing inattention	Individualized support for speech-delayed students
Warm-up strategy, Auditory engagement, Increasing attention	Use of multisensory teaching strategies

4. Reviewing Sub-Themes

I reviewed and refined the sub-themes to ensure they accurately represented the underlying data.

Then I aligned them under broader themes that correspond to my research questions.

Table 3.3

Review the sub-themes

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Individual attention, Adjusting communication	Individualized support	Teaching Strategies for Speech-Delayed Children
Warm-up strategy, Increasing attention	Use of multisensory teaching	Teaching Strategies for Speech-Delayed Children

5. Defining Themes

After reviewing the themes, I refined their titles to ensure clarity and alignment with the study objectives. For instance, “Support” was renamed “**Institutional Support and**

Recommendations” to more clearly reflect the focus on administrative and professional support systems. Each theme was defined, and the sub-themes were cross-checked for consistency.

6. Writing Up

Finally, I presented these defined themes along with supporting quotations and analysis in the findings section of the thesis. Each theme was discussed in relation to the research questions, with interpretive insights grounded in the data.

3.10 Ethical Issues and Concerns

Ethical considerations were central to my research process. I obtained informed consent from all participants before conducting any interviews or observations, ensuring that they understood the purpose of the study and their rights as participants. To protect their identities, I used pseudonyms, and I made it clear that they could withdraw from the study at any time without facing any negative consequences. All data were stored securely to maintain confidentiality. I also engaged in reflexivity throughout the research. I acknowledged that my own background, experiences, and beliefs might influence how I interpreted data. By continuously reflecting on my role as a researcher, I aimed to minimize personal bias and remain grounded in the participants' authentic voices.

3.11 Credibility and Rigor

The trustworthiness of qualitative research is ensured when the study demonstrates reliability, validity, and adheres to ethical standards. According to Merriam and Grennier (2019), strategies such as triangulation, member checking, peer review, researcher reflexivity, prolonged engagement with data, diverse participant selection, maintaining an audit trail, and providing rich, detailed descriptions all contribute to establishing the credibility of qualitative findings.

To enhance the credibility of my study I employed several strategies. First, I used *member checking* by sharing transcripts with participants so they could confirm the accuracy of their contributions. This step helped ensure that I faithfully represented their perspectives. Second, I practiced *triangulation* by using two methods of data collection: interviews and classroom observations. This helped validate findings by cross-verifying information from different sources. I also provided *thick descriptions*- rich, contextual accounts of classroom interactions

and teaching strategies- to allow readers to determine whether the findings might be transferable to similar contexts.

Finally, I kept a reflective journal throughout the research journey. This practice allowed me to document my thoughts, assumptions, and potential biases as they emerged. By engaging in reflexivity and being transparent about my subjectivity, I aimed to ensure that my interpretations were grounded in the data rather than shaped by personal preconceptions.

3.12 Limitations of the Study

Conducting in-person interviews and classroom observations myself would have provided more detailed insights. However, as a full-time professional, it was challenging to arrange face-to-face interviews and classroom observations during working days. As a result, I conducted telephone interviews, and two university students assisted with the classroom observations.

Chapter 4

Results

4.1 Overview

The purpose of this chapter is to present findings from the thematic analysis of data collected through semi-structured interviews and classroom observations in English-medium preschools in Dhaka. This chapter explores what barriers teachers' face while teaching children with speech-delayed within inclusive classrooms, the support mechanisms available and what they need, and the nature of communication with parents. I organize the chapter into four major themes: Teaching Strategies, Challenges, Institutional Support and Recommendations, and Communication with Parents. Each theme includes several sub-themes and integrates findings from both interviews and observation checklists.

Table 4.1

Themes and Sub-themes

Theme	Sub-themes
Teaching Strategies for Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive Classrooms	• Individual attention and adaptation • Use of non-verbal communication • Use of visual aids and multisensory teaching • Collaborative teaching and peer support • Monitoring and guidance
Challenges Faced by Teachers	• Class size and resource limitations • Behavioral challenges

	• Lack of specialized training and institutional support • Parental resistance and acceptance
Support and Recommendations for Improvement	• Recruitment of specialized teachers • Smaller class sizes and improved resources • Importance of parental involvement

Note. Themes were developed from coded interview data related to teaching speech-delayed children.

4.2 Teaching Strategies for Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive Classrooms

This theme highlights personalized strategies used to support speech-delayed students in the classroom. Teachers adjust their tone, proximity, and verbal cues to foster inclusion and engagement. Non-verbal communication methods like gestures, facial expressions, and body language are also employed to create emotional connections and aid understanding. Visual aids such as flashcards, projectors, and videos, along with multisensory materials like tactile objects, are incorporated to cater to different learning styles. Informal co-teaching and peer pairing further provide individualized attention and enhance communication skills in a collaborative setting. *I have organized this theme under five sub-themes as individual attention and adaptation, use of non-verbal communication, use of visual aids and multisensory teaching and collaborative teaching and peer support and lastly guidance and monitoring by teachers.*

4.2.1 Individual Attention and Adaptation

Teachers consistently highlighted the significance of providing individualized attention as a cornerstone for effectively supporting speech-delayed students within inclusive classroom environments. This approach was not only widely endorsed in teacher interviews but was also strongly validated by observational data, which rated it among the most consistently and effectively employed strategies. Educators demonstrated an intuitive understanding of how subtle, personalized adjustments could make a significant difference. These adaptations included modifying their tone of voice, adjusting physical proximity, and fine-tuning instructional techniques based on each child's unique needs and responsiveness.

One teacher illustrated this point by sharing, *“Sometimes I have to call them by name multiple times. For example, 'Ruha, look at me, look at the board' – that usually helps them respond.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). Such instances show that using a child's name, establishing eye contact, and offering verbal prompts were simple yet powerful tools to draw attention and encourage engagement. Another teacher elaborated on the need for physical proximity and focused interaction, saying, *“She can't speak but she can understand everything. I sit close to her and give more attention because she responds better through eye contact.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). These accounts highlight how speech-delayed students often demonstrate emotional and cognitive responsiveness when teachers engage them directly and sensitively.

Overall, these individualized approaches reflected a strong commitment to student-centered teaching. By adjusting their behavior, tone, and instructional methods, teachers ensured that speech-delayed students could access learning opportunities on par with their peers and were not left behind in a fast-paced classroom setting.

4.2.2 Use of Non-verbal Communication

Non-verbal communication emerged as a crucial bridge for children with limited verbal skills.

Teachers frequently used gestures, facial expressions, and body language to convey instructions, maintain engagement, and foster emotional connection. These non-verbal cues complemented verbal teaching and were especially helpful in inclusive settings, where students had diverse communication needs.

As one teacher noted, *“I often use gestures-like showing thumbs up or pointing- because that’s how they understand what I want them to do.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). These simple gestures helped children grasp expectations without the stress or confusion that sometimes-accompanied verbal instructions. Another teacher shared, *“Even a simple nod or warm smile helps a lot... they feel reassured.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). This reflects the emotional dimension of non-verbal cues, which helped build a safe, responsive environment where students felt acknowledged and supported.

Observation data also revealed the strategic use of miming, hand signals, and animated expressions, especially during transitions or behaviour management. In several instances, teachers used hand gestures to signal when it was time to tidy up or switch activities- reducing reliance on verbal commands and creating a more predictable routine for children who struggled with auditory processing or verbal expression. These practices show that non-verbal communication was not only an accommodation but also an inclusive pedagogical tool that promoted accessibility and participation.

4.2.3 Use of Visual Aids and Multisensory Teaching

Teachers made extensive use of visual aids and multisensory materials to support the learning of speech-delayed children. These tools helped translate abstract concepts into concrete, relatable experiences. Visuals such as flashcards, image-based storybooks, videos, and projectors were used to capture attention, enhance understanding, and stimulate engagement across multiple senses.

As one teacher explained, *“Sometimes we start with a song or video. It grabs their attention instantly.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). Audio-visual content was particularly effective in creating an immersive learning experience that appealed to both verbal and non-verbal learners. Another teacher added, *“I use my phone or projector to show them visuals... especially to those who can’t speak but can relate to images.”* (Interviewee2_F_exp7). For speech-delayed children, visuals often served as a bridge between their comprehension and expression, making classroom content more accessible.

Teachers also creatively incorporated tactile and kinesthetic elements, like clay modeling, textured flashcards, or hands-on alphabet boards, catering to children who learned best through touch and movement. These multisensory approaches enhanced memory retention and facilitated expressive learning. Despite resource limitations, teachers maximized what they had and demonstrated a strong commitment to making learning inclusive and engaging for all students.

4.2.4 Collaborative Teaching and Peer Support

In the absence of formally assigned special education teachers, schools relied on informal collaborative teaching methods to ensure that children with speech delays received adequate

attention. Co-teaching arrangements allowed educators to divide roles strategically enabling one teacher to manage the class while another focused on individual learners.

One teacher described this setup: *“Sometimes my co-teacher manages the class while I sit beside the speech-delayed child to help them focus.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). These arrangements allowed for more direct and responsive support without compromising the broader class dynamic. In addition to teacher collaboration, peer support played a valuable role in promoting inclusive learning. Teachers often paired speech-delayed students with more verbally expressive peers, creating opportunities for imitation, social interaction, and language learning. *“We pair the speech-delayed kids with those who are talkative. They copy each other, and that helps a lot.”* (Interviewee1_F_exp5). These pairings provided natural, low-pressure learning environments where children could observe, mimic, and engage in communication without fear of failure or isolation. Through these strategies, classrooms became more interactive and socially cohesive, helping speech-delayed children learn through both structured teaching and spontaneous peer modelling.

4.2.5 Guidance and Monitoring

Teachers played a crucial role in ensuring continuity of learning and support for speech-delayed children by maintaining regular and proactive communication with parents. This communication went beyond simple updates- it involved the consistent sharing of tailored resources, strategies, and feedback to help parents provide meaningful support at home.

One teacher shared, *“I always explain everything- what works in class, what can be tried at home.”* (Interviewee2_F_exp7). This highlights a deliberate effort to involve parents as partners in the child’s developmental journey. Teachers often took time to break down classroom

strategies and suggest practical adaptations that could be implemented in the home environment. This approach empowered parents, giving them a sense of clarity and confidence in supporting their child's learning outside school hours.

Moreover, teachers also facilitated access to supplementary tools and platforms that could enhance home-based support. For instance, one teacher noted, *"I send links to YouTube videos and parenting groups with games and speech exercises."* (Interviewee2_F_exp7). These curated resources were designed to engage both the child and their caregivers, reinforcing classroom lessons through interactive and accessible content.

Through this ongoing guidance and active monitoring, teachers helped bridge the often challenging gap between school and home. Their efforts contributed to building a more consistent and supportive ecosystem for learners with speech delays- one where parents were not only informed but equipped and encouraged to participate in their child's progress. This collaborative approach was instrumental in fostering continuity, motivation, and a shared sense of responsibility between educators and families.

4.3 Challenges Faced by Teachers

This theme explains the challenges faced by teacher while dealing with children with speech delay. Overcrowded classrooms, limited resources, and lack of specialized training hinder teachers' ability to provide individualized support to speech-delayed students. These students often face emotional and behavioral challenges due to communication difficulties, requiring teachers to manage classrooms with empathy and flexibility. Furthermore, inadequate institutional support makes it difficult to create an inclusive learning environment. Therefore, *I have organized this theme under four sub-themes as class size and resource limitations,*

behavioural challenges, lack of specialized training and institutional support and parental resistance.

4.3.1 Class Size and Resource Limitations

Teachers consistently identified large class sizes as a major barrier to providing effective, individualized support for children with speech delays. With classroom numbers often ranging from 17 to 20 students, each with varying learning needs, delivering the sustained one-on-one attention required by speech-delayed learners was described as a daily struggle. One teacher reflected, *“If there were only 10 students, it would be easier to support the speech-delayed ones” (Interviewee1_F_exp5)*. Smaller class sizes were widely viewed as a foundational requirement for implementing tailored teaching strategies and creating space for deeper engagement with each child.

In addition to the constraints posed by student numbers, teachers also highlighted a persistent lack of appropriate resources, particularly those designed to aid speech and language development. Basic materials such as flashcards, visual aids, and interactive tools were often in short supply. When these ran out, teachers resorted to improvisation. *“When we run out of flashcards, we cut images from magazines or draw them on the board” (Interviewee2_F_exp7)*. These creative workarounds were common and demonstrated the dedication and flexibility educators brought to their roles.

However, while resourcefulness helped bridge immediate gaps, the recurring lack of institutional support left teachers feeling overstretched and under-equipped. The combination of high student-to-teacher ratios and limited access to specialized materials placed significant strain on their ability to deliver inclusive and responsive education. These insights underline the urgent need for

policy-level interventions that prioritize manageable class sizes and ensure sustained access to teaching aids tailored for children with communication challenges.

4.3.2 Behavioural Challenges

Teachers frequently reported that speech delays were closely linked to a range of behavioral challenges in the classroom. These behaviors often stemmed from the frustration and emotional stress children experienced when they were unable to communicate their needs, thoughts, or feelings effectively. The inability to express oneself verbally sometimes led to visible signs of distress, including agitation, withdrawal, or disruptive actions.

One teacher shared, *“They get frustrated. One child throws things when he can't express himself. I have to calm him down gently” (Interviewee2_F_exp1)*. Such situations demanded a great deal of empathy, attentiveness, and individualized support from teachers, who often had to de-escalate tense moments while keeping the rest of the class engaged. Teachers also described moments where children with speech delays isolated themselves or disengaged from classroom activities. Observation notes revealed instances where students sat quietly in corners, appeared visibly upset, or lost focus during lessons. In response, teachers developed small but meaningful strategies to re-engage these students, such as offering sensory-friendly materials like crayons or toys, and simply providing a calm, non-verbal presence. *“He sits in a corner. One of us has to sit beside him with his crayons to keep him involved” (Interviewee1_F_exp5)*.

These experiences highlight the emotional complexities that can accompany speech delays, both for the children and the teachers supporting them. They underscore the critical need for training in behavior management approaches tailored specifically for non-verbal or minimally verbal

learners. Without such tools, teachers are left to navigate these challenging dynamics on their own, relying on patience, instinct, and compassion to meet the needs of their students.

4.3.3 Lack of Specialized Training and Institutional Support

A significant concern raised by many teachers was the lack of specialized training and institutional support to effectively address the needs of children with speech delays. While most had received general orientation sessions related to inclusive education, they felt these sessions were too broad and lacked the practical, focused content required to support children with specific communication challenges. One teacher remarked, *“We didn’t receive any training specifically for speech delay. Only general orientation” (Interviewee2_F_exp7).*

As a result, teachers often found themselves navigating these challenges without a clear roadmap. Many relied on their personal experiences, intuition, and trial-and-error methods, or sought informal advice from peers facing similar issues. This situation not only created inconsistencies in how support was provided but also left teachers feeling underprepared and overwhelmed. There was a widespread call for more structured and comprehensive training programs, along with institutional mechanisms to support inclusive practices. One participant emphasized, *“Every school should have at least one special needs teacher. We are not trained for this” (Interviewee1_F_exp5).* This statement reflects the broader demand for systemic change, where inclusive education is backed by adequate human resources, ongoing professional development, and regular mentorship from specialists.

Teachers expressed a strong desire for training that goes beyond theory- training that equips them with concrete tools, strategies, and confidence to work effectively with children experiencing speech and language delays. Their feedback highlights the urgent need for policy-

level commitment to building capacity within schools and ensuring that inclusion is not just an expectation, but a supported and sustainable practice.

4.3.4 Parental Resistance

Teachers encountered a range of responses from parents when addressing concerns about their children's speech development. While some parents were open, receptive, and actively engaged in conversations about their child's needs, others exhibited resistance- often rooted in denial, fear, or a lack of awareness.

One teacher reflected, "Some say, '*He's still young, he'll talk eventually.*' *They don't want to hear that something might be wrong.*" (Interviewee1_F_exp5). This sentiment illustrates a common barrier faced by educators: the reluctance of some parents to acknowledge developmental delays, particularly during early childhood when variations in growth are often perceived as normal. Such attitudes may stem from cultural beliefs, stigma associated with developmental disorders, or a deep emotional discomfort with the possibility that their child might face long-term challenges.

This resistance had tangible consequences in the classroom. When parents delayed or avoided confronting the issue, it often resulted in missed opportunities for early diagnosis and intervention- both of which are critical in supporting speech-delayed learners. Teachers found it difficult to move forward with individualized strategies or referrals without parental cooperation, ultimately hindering the child's progress and placing additional strain on the teacher's efforts to provide timely, targeted support.

4.4 Support and Recommendations for Improvement

In this theme teachers highlighted the pressing need to hire specialists in communication disorders to support and train regular teachers in addressing speech delays. Key recommendations include reducing class sizes for more personalized attention and ensuring consistent access to specialized educational resources. *I organized this theme again under three sub-themes, recruitment of specialized teachers, smaller class sizes and improved resources and importance of parental involvement.*

4.4.1 Recruitment of Specialized Teachers

Teachers strongly emphasized the need for recruiting specialized educators, particularly those trained in working with children with speech and communication difficulties. They believed that the inclusion of such professionals within mainstream, inclusive classrooms would significantly enhance the overall support system for both students and general teachers. According to participants, special educators bring with them a set of skills and evidence-based strategies that are often lacking in general teacher training.

One teacher pointed out, *“They know techniques we don’t... like how to grab the attention of a non-verbal child” (Interviewee2_F_exp7)*. This remark reflects the gap many general educators feel when trying to meet the diverse needs of children with speech delays, particularly in the absence of formal training in special education.

Teachers further noted that having access to the expertise of special educators would not only benefit the children—especially those with more complex communication needs- but also provide much-needed guidance and confidence for teachers themselves. Working collaboratively with specialists was seen as a way to build the capacity of the whole teaching team and ensure

that no child is left behind due to a lack of targeted support. The call for recruiting special educators, therefore, was not just about staffing- it was about strengthening the inclusive education framework and equipping classrooms with the human resources necessary to deliver individualized, effective instruction for all learners.

4.4.2 Smaller Class Sizes and Improved Resources

A recurring theme in teacher interviews was the need to reduce class sizes by lowering the student-teacher ratio. Educators expressed that smaller groups would enable them to give more individualized attention, which is particularly crucial when working with children experiencing speech delays. One teacher noted, *“With 10–12 kids, I can track their development better, especially for speech delays” (Interviewee1_F_exp5)*. This perspective highlights the challenges of managing larger classrooms, where the specific needs of each child, especially those requiring additional support, can easily be overlooked.

In addition to advocating for smaller class sizes, teachers emphasized the importance of having access to improved and age-appropriate educational resources. They called for the inclusion of engaging, interactive materials that could enhance children's motivation to communicate and participate. These included child-friendly technologies such as talking toys, educational digital games, and interactive books. As one teacher stated, *“Talking toys, digital games, or interactive books would help children with speech delay more than just flashcards” (Interviewee2_F_exp7)*.

This feedback suggests a shift away from traditional, one-dimensional teaching aids toward more immersive and stimulating learning environments. Teachers believed that these tools could be especially effective in drawing children out of their silence, encouraging speech, and making the learning process more enjoyable and responsive to individual needs.

4.4.3 Importance of Parental Involvement

Teachers consistently highlighted the significance of parental involvement in enhancing children's speech and language development. They regarded parents not just as supporters, but as essential partners in the process of helping children with speech delays make meaningful progress. Teachers explained that while school-based interventions are important, their impact is significantly amplified when complemented by consistent reinforcement at home.

Many teachers reported that they made deliberate efforts to engage parents in their children's learning journey. This often involved sharing practical strategies, demonstrating simple exercises, and providing easy-to-use resources to encourage more frequent and purposeful language use within the home environment. One teacher explained, *"We advise parents not to give mobiles... instead talk to the child, name objects, sing together"* (Interviewee2_F_exp7). This advice stems from a belief that face-to-face verbal interaction plays a far more powerful role in language development than passive screen time.

The emphasis on verbal engagement was echoed by another teacher, who observed, *"The child spends more time with the parent. If they talk more at home, it really helps"* (Interviewee2_F_exp7). This comment reflects the practical reality that children's primary caregivers have the greatest opportunity to create a language-rich environment, simply through regular, everyday conversations and interactions.

Overall, teachers promoted a model of shared responsibility, where the efforts made by educators in school settings are extended and sustained through active participation by families at home. This collaborative approach not only fosters continuity in learning but also empowers parents to

take an active role in their child's speech development, thereby contributing to more holistic and sustained progress.

4.5 Summary

This chapter detailed the inclusive strategies employed by preschool teachers to support speech-delayed children in English-medium settings in Dhaka. Key strategies included personalized attention, visual and multisensory aids, peer support, and collaborative teaching. However, challenges such as large class sizes, behavioural difficulties, lack of training, and limited resources were persistent. Teachers highlighted the need for structural improvements, including recruiting special educators, reducing class sizes, and enhancing parental involvement. Effective parent-teacher communication emerged as a crucial pillar of support for speech-delayed learners.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the findings of the research questions. This chapter includes a discussion of teachers' teaching strategies in inclusive classrooms along with the challenges they face. Furthermore, the support they need is presented. Finally, I suggest some recommendations for further study.

5.2 Discussion

This section explains my findings and discusses them under the two research questions. The study found from the interviews and classroom observations that there is a gap between teachers' strategies and support they get in the classroom. Moreover, challenges are also discussed and scrutinized for underpinning reasons. The discussion developed by searching the alignment or contrast between the findings and other research results as well as the reason behind the alignment or contrast.

5.2.1 Teaching Strategies in Inclusive Classrooms

The findings indicate that teachers in English-medium preschools in Dhaka employ a variety of adaptive and student-centered teaching strategies to support speech-delayed learners. These include providing individual attention, using non-verbal communication, employing visual and multisensory teaching methods, encouraging peer support, and maintaining ongoing guidance through parent communication.

The use of individual attention, such as modifying tone, reducing distance, and using the child's name, aligns with inclusive teaching principles that emphasize differentiated instruction. The concept of inclusive pedagogy, as discussed in the study, aligns well with the use of individual attention strategies such as modifying tone, reducing distance, and using a child's name- when these are applied as part of everyday classroom practice for all students. Rather than singling out learners for special treatment, inclusive pedagogy emphasizes creating a supportive learning environment where every student feels valued and included. When used universally, these subtle, personalized interactions can foster a sense of belonging and participation, helping to reduce the stigma of being seen as different and supporting all learners to engage meaningfully in classroom life (Florian & Black-Hawkins, 2011). Such personalization helps foster a sense of security and engagement for children who struggle with verbal expression. This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) concept of the "zone of proximal development," where the teacher's scaffolded support can significantly impact a learner's development (McLeod, 2024).

Teachers also emphasized non-verbal cues like gestures, facial expressions, and body language, which echoes findings from research suggesting that non-verbal modes of communication play a vital role in early childhood classrooms, especially for children with limited verbal abilities (Norbury et al., 2016). Both emphasize that children's communication challenges and strengths are not solely dependent on verbal or cognitive scores. This study reinforces the idea that language difficulties can exist independently of a child's nonverbal intelligence, aligning with teachers' emphasis on the importance of non-verbal communication such as gestures, facial expressions, and body language. It highlights that children with lower NVIQ may still experience significant language challenges and rely more heavily on non-verbal cues to communicate.

Recognizing and supporting these alternative forms of expression is essential, especially in inclusive classroom settings.

Moreover, the integration of visual aids and multisensory tools—such as flashcards, videos, and tactile materials- supports the article "*Universal Design for Learning: Meeting the Needs of All Students*" by Patricia Kelly Ralabate clearly aligns with the concept of integrating visual aids and multisensory tools such as flashcards, videos, and tactile materials. The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework promotes providing multiple means of representation, which includes offering information in diverse formats to accommodate varied learning styles and needs. By emphasizing flexible methods and materials, like digitized text, video captioning, and classroom adaptations, the article supports the use of multisensory tools to reduce learning barriers and engage all learners more effectively (Ralabate, 2011).

The findings also highlight informal co-teaching and peer pairing as effective means to foster inclusion. Peer support not only assists speech-delayed learners with modeling and socialization but also promotes empathy and cooperative learning within the class, an outcome emphasized by another article. The systematic review found that peer support interventions are effective in improving communication skills among young children with autism spectrum disorders (ASD) in early childhood settings. Using 18 single-case experimental design studies, the review highlighted those interventions guided by the social support model, particularly those incorporating friendship groups, child-preferred play materials, and augmentative and alternative communication (AAC), were associated with positive communication outcomes. These findings support the value of structured peer involvement in enhancing communication for children with ASD (Chapin et. al., 2018)

Finally, the emphasis on guidance and monitoring through parent communication shows that teachers are aware of the importance of continuity between school and home environments. Encouraging parents to replicate classroom strategies and offering curated resources for home use reflects best practices in early intervention. The findings from another article align closely with the educational emphasis on parent communication as a bridge between school and home. By highlighting the critical role of parent-child transactions (e.g., responsive dialogue, instructional support) in early development, the Developmental Systems Approach (DSA) underscores that continuity across environments fosters resilience and learning. Teachers who prioritize guidance and monitoring through parent partnerships mirror this framework, ensuring that strategies like scaffolding and socioemotional support extend seamlessly from classroom to home. This synergy not only reinforces developmental gains but also mitigates risks, reflecting the DSA's core principle: optimal child outcomes depend on integrated, system-wide efforts. (Guralnick, 2011). It also indicates that teachers view parents as co-educators, a vital aspect in promoting inclusive learning.

5.2.2 Challenges and Support

While the findings demonstrate a range of thoughtful strategies, teachers also face significant challenges that hinder effective inclusion of speech-delayed students. These include large class sizes, limited resources, behavioral challenges, lack of specialized training, and inconsistent parental cooperation.

Teachers consistently reported that large class sizes made it difficult to provide individualized support, echoing earlier research indicating that overcrowded classrooms reduce opportunities for differentiated instruction and attention to diverse needs. Overcrowded classrooms

significantly hinder teachers' ability to provide individualized support, especially for students with speech delays. Limited contact time, increased workload, and insufficient teaching resources make it challenging for educators to address the unique communication needs of these children. As highlighted in the study, the stressful environment, lack of administrative support, and inadequate professional development further reduce opportunities for tailored interventions. Consequently, students with speech delays are at greater risk of falling behind academically and socially in such settings (Osai et. al., 2021). The ratio of students to teachers in these settings often exceeds what is manageable for inclusive practices.

Resource limitations, such as the lack of age-appropriate materials for speech support, further compound these difficulties. Teachers' improvisation using handmade or repurposed materials reflects resilience but also underlines the need for systematic institutional support. This gap is echoed in global research, which shows that under-resourced schools struggle to implement inclusive education even when the intent is present. In this document we learned that under-resourced schools often struggle to implement inclusive education due to a lack of funding, infrastructure, and trained teachers. Despite policies promoting inclusion, many schools lack accessible facilities, assistive technologies, and data systems to identify and support marginalized students. Overcrowded classrooms and insufficient teacher training further hinder individualized learning. The COVID-19 pandemic worsened these gaps, as many disadvantaged students lacked access to remote learning. Without targeted financing and systemic reforms, inclusive education remains an unmet goal for under-resourced schools. (UNESCO, 2020).

Teachers also face behavioral issues arising from students' frustration due to communication barriers. Such behaviors, including withdrawal or disruption, require specific training in

emotional and behavioral management. However, the study found that most teachers lack specialized training in speech or communication disorders, relying instead on intuition and informal peer collaboration. This finding is in line with studies showing that general educators often feel underprepared to support students with speech and language needs. While trainee teachers expressed generally positive attitudes toward inclusion, many of these views were conditional, often accompanied by concerns about inadequate training, lack of resources, and insufficient time. Respondents repeatedly noted feeling ill-equipped and undertrained to meet the needs of students with speech and language difficulties, emphasizing a need for more specialized knowledge and support. This reflects a broader discomfort and uncertainty among general educators when tasked with accommodating such students in mainstream classrooms. The study highlights that positive intentions alone are insufficient without systemic support, and reinforces the need for both structural changes in teacher education and a cultural shift in attitudes toward inclusion- aligning closely with the idea that teachers' sense of under preparedness is a major barrier to effective inclusive education (Marshall et al., 2002).

Parental resistance, particularly denial or delay in accepting a child's speech delay, presents another significant barrier. Some parents view speech delays as transient and resist suggestions for further assessment or intervention. it aligns with the concept of parental resistance, particularly denial or delay, as the discussion highlights how parents often took extended periods, sometimes months or years, to move from initial concern to seeking services. This delay was influenced by uncertainty, mixed feedback from others, and comparisons with peers, which could downplay the severity of the issue. Such hesitation reflects a form of resistance, where parents may struggle to fully accept or act on developmental concerns, particularly in the

absence of clear guidance or agreement from professionals and family members (Marshall et al., 2020).

In terms of support, teachers identified three major needs: recruitment of special educators, smaller class sizes, and parental involvement. The absence of specialists in most preschools means that general educators must shoulder responsibilities beyond their training, which can lead to burnout and inconsistent support for students. This finding is backed up by another paper which supports the idea that inclusive education requires structural changes, including policy reforms, improved data systems, teacher training, and equitable financing. The recommendations align with global efforts to ensure education systems are inclusive and resilient, particularly for marginalized groups. For more explicit international policy frameworks, the document references UNESCO's guidelines and tools, such as the *Education Sector Analysis Methodological Guidelines Volume III*, which includes risk and vulnerability analysis informed by the pandemic. These guidelines can serve as a basis for structural changes to support inclusive education (Lennox et al., 2021).

5.3 Conclusion

I investigated the challenges and strategies in implementing inclusive education for preschool teachers and students with speech delay through this study. In doing so, I interviewed preschool teachers, observed their classrooms, and spoke with education specialists and administrators involved in inclusive education. Inclusive education is a key approach to ensuring equity in early childhood education, particularly for children with speech and language delays (UNESCO, 2020). In this study, all participating teachers expressed a positive attitude toward inclusive practices but noted that they often lack the specific training and resources required to effectively

support children with speech delays. While some had received general training on inclusive education, most felt unprepared to address the specific needs of children with speech and language difficulties. Teachers highlighted strategies such as peer support, visual aids, and simplified instructions to promote inclusion, though they struggled with time constraints, large class sizes, and limited access to speech therapists. This study has implications for teacher training and policy implementation to better support inclusive practices in early childhood education, particularly for children with speech delays, by addressing gaps in resources, training, and structural support.

5.4 Recommendation

Based on this study, the following are the recommendations for teachers, policymakers, and further research to enhance inclusive education practices for preschool children with speech delays in English-medium schools in Dhaka:

Specialized Teacher Training: Implement mandatory professional development on speech and language delays, including strategies for communication and behavior management.

Integration of Special Educators: Employ speech-language therapists or inclusive specialists in preschools and encourage co-teaching with general educators.

Smaller Class Sizes: Maintain low student-teacher ratios (e.g., 15:1) and use teacher assistants to enable individualized support.

Contextual Teaching Resources: Provide funding for inclusive, adaptable, and locally appropriate teaching materials and tools.

Parental Engagement: Offer workshops and tools to involve parents in early intervention and maintain consistent home-school communication.

Inclusive Education Policies: Embed inclusion into strategic planning and advocate for standardized government policies across all preschools.

Peer-Supportive Culture: Promote peer support systems and embed social-emotional learning to foster empathy and collaboration among children.

Research and Evidence-Based Practice: Support studies on speech delay and inclusive education outcomes, and encourage school-level action research for ongoing improvement.

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Appendices

A. Permission Letter

Permission Letter for School Authority

To
The Principal
.....

Subject: Request for providing support for Master's thesis

Dear Sir/Madam,
Greetings!

Under the BRAC Institute of Educational Development (BRAC IED), BRAC University, I am conducting my thesis titled, "Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support." This study aims to explore the teaching strategies employed by preschool teachers, the challenges they face, and the institutional support they receive while working with speech-delayed children in inclusive classroom environments.

To collect data, I plan to conduct an in-depth interview (online or in person) with selected preschool teachers from your school. With their consent, the interview will be audio-recorded for transcription and analysis purposes. Following the interview, the researcher (or a research assistant) will observe one or two of the participant's classes to understand how inclusive strategies are applied in real classroom settings.

As the researcher, only I will have access to the interview recordings and transcripts. All participation will be completely voluntary, and participants may withdraw their consent at any time. Their identities, as well as that of the school, will be kept strictly confidential, and all data collected will be used solely for academic purposes related to this thesis.

Therefore, I humbly seek your permission to conduct this research at your school and sincerely hope for your kind cooperation and support. Should you have any questions or need further clarification, please feel free to contact me by phone or email.

Thank you for your valuable time and support.

Sincerely,

Tanzina Hossain

Master's Student

Student ID: 22257001

Email: tanzina24@gmail.com

BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University

B. Consent Form for English Medium Preschool Teachers

TEACHERS' INFORMED CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH

This form is valid from November 01, 2024 to May 30, 2025

Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support

**Tanzina Hossain, Master's Student
BRAC Institute of Educational Development, BRAC University**

I have read the information provided thoroughly and understand it. After careful reading, I have decided to participate in the project titled, "Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support." The study intends to explore the teaching strategies used by preschool teachers, the challenges they face, and the institutional support they receive when working with speech-delayed children in inclusive classrooms.

I agree to the conditions listed below with the understanding that I may withdraw my participation from the project at any time, and I may choose not to answer any questions that I do not want to answer.

DESCRIPTION OF RESPONSIBILITY

- I will participate in a one-on-one online interview with the researcher.

RISKS

- There should be no risk to me, my students, or my classroom practices from this research.
- No information will be recorded that may be embarrassing or uncomfortable to me.
- My consent is completely voluntary and optional.

BENEFITS

- I understand that I may benefit from participation by self-reflecting on:
 - My teaching strategies for children with speech delays.
 - The challenges and support systems available in my school for inclusive practices.

CONFIDENTIALITY

I understand that the information in the study records will be kept strictly confidential. Data will be securely stored on a password-protected laptop. All data will be anonymized and will not reveal my identity or that of my school.

Audio recordings of the interviews will be confidential and will not include any identifying information. No reference will be made in oral or written reports that could link my identity to the data. The data will be used solely for academic research to explore how teachers in English medium preschools support speech-delayed children.

Reports and findings from the study may be shared with the research community at academic conferences or published in research journals, but individual participants will remain anonymous.

CONTACT

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, or if you later decide to withdraw your consent for participation, you may contact the researcher.

Tanzina Hossain

Email: tanzina24@gmail.com

If I decide to participate, I am free to discontinue participation at any time without prejudice. If I withdraw from participation, my information will be removed from the research results. If I participate in this project, I can request information about the study and copies of my interview and observation notes.

Teacher's Name: _____

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Researcher's Name: Tanzina Hossain

Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

The participant should keep a copy of this form for his/her records.

C. Interview Guide for English Medium Preschool Teachers

Interview: English Medium Preschool Teachers

Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support

Part 1- Demographic information

Please fill in the blanks or put a tick (✓) next to the word or phrase that best matches your response.

1. Name-
2. Email-
3. Phone number-
4. Age-
5. Year of teaching experience in pre-primary class-
6. Education qualification-
7. Professional degree-
8. Do you get any training on ‘play-based learning’? (I) Yes (II) No
9. If your answer is ‘YES’, please write the name of the training-

Part 2- Interview questions

1. How long have you been teaching, and what inspired you to work in early childhood education?
2. What attracted you to teach in English medium preschools, and what do you enjoy most about working here?
3. How do these strategies vary based on individual student needs?
4. Could you describe a specific lesson where you adapted your teaching method for a speech-delayed student?
5. How do you adjust your communication style to ensure lessons are accessible for speech-delayed children?
6. Do you use visual aids, and if so, how effective do you find them in engaging speech-delayed children?
7. How do you assess the progress of speech-delayed children in your classroom?
8. Are there specific indicators or milestones you use to monitor speech-delayed children’s development?
9. What are the main challenges you encounter in supporting speech-delayed children within an inclusive classroom?
10. How does class size or the availability of resources impact your ability to teach and support speech-delayed children?

11. When resources are limited, what adaptations do you make to ensure speech-delayed children still receive adequate support?
12. What do you find most challenging about balancing the needs of speech-delayed children with those of other students in your class?
13. Have you encountered situations where you felt unprepared to meet a speech-delayed child's needs? How did you handle it, and what could have helped?
14. What types of support, such as training, materials, or additional assistance, does your school provide for teaching speech-delayed children?
15. How effective do you find this support in helping you manage daily challenges in teaching speech-delayed children?
16. If you could request additional resources, training, or assistance for teaching speech-delayed children, what would be your top priorities?
17. What changes or additional support would most improve your ability to teach speech-delayed children effectively?
18. How do you communicate and collaborate with parents of speech-delayed children to support their development at home and in school?
19. What strategies do you use to inform parents about their child's progress and challenges related to speech delay?
20. How often do you meet with parents of speech-delayed children, and what topics are typically discussed during these meetings?
21. Do you provide parents with any specific guidance or activities they can do at home to support their child's speech development?
22. Have you encountered situations where parents were hesitant or resistant to your suggestions regarding their child's needs? If so, how did you address this?
23. How do you ensure open and effective communication with parents from diverse cultural or linguistic backgrounds?
24. What role do you think parents play in the success of speech-delayed children, and how do you encourage their involvement?
25. Do you have any recommendation for adjustments in teaching strategies, classroom setup, or institutional policies that you feel would make a significant difference in supporting speech-delayed children?

** Do you want to add any more information?

*Do you have any questions about this study?

D. Classroom observation Protocol

Teaching Speech-Delayed Children in Inclusive English Medium Preschools in Dhaka: Strategies, Challenges, and Institutional Support

School's name:

Time (duration of observation):

Date:

Number of classroom observation:

Teacher's Name:

Gender:

Number of students:

Subject:

Content name:

Learning outcome:

Category	Observation Criteria	Comments
Classroom Environment	Classroom Layout: Is there a designated quiet or individual support area?	
	Resources: Are there language development tools (flashcards, visual aids, multimedia) available?	
	Classroom Atmosphere: Is the classroom calm, supportive, and conducive to learning?	
Teaching Strategies	Use of Visual Aids: Are visual aids like pictures, symbols, or charts used regularly?	
	Adjustments in Communication: Does the teacher use simplified language, slow pacing, and clear speech?	
	Non-Verbal Communication: Are gestures, body language, and facial expressions used to aid understanding?	
	Differentiation of Teaching Methods: Are lessons adapted to the individual needs of speech-delayed students?	

	Instructional Techniques: Are multisensory techniques (visual, auditory, kinesthetic) used to aid comprehension?	
Student Engagement	Individualized Attention: Are speech-delayed students receiving adequate individualized support during lessons?	
	Peer Support: Are speech-delayed students paired with peers for language modeling or support?	
Student Engagement	Student Participation: Are speech-delayed students actively engaged in classroom activities alongside peers?	
Classroom Management	Class Size & Teacher-to-Student Ratio: Does the class size affect individualized support for speech-delayed children?	
Assessment & Progress	Progress Monitoring: Is the teacher tracking progress for speech-delayed children (e.g., milestones, assessments)?	
	Adaptations for Limited Resources: Can the teacher adapt when resources (e.g., materials, time) are limited?	
Institutional Support	Institutional Support Availability: Does the teacher have access to additional support (assistants, therapists, etc.)?	
	Teacher Training & Development: Is there evidence of ongoing professional development for supporting speech-delayed students?	
Teacher Reflection	Self-Reflection: Does the teacher reflect and adapt their strategies after lessons?	
	Recommendations for Improvement: Based on observations, are there clear recommendations for enhancing support for speech-delayed children?	