

**Exploring the Challenges and Opportunities of Learning  
English in Rural Secondary Schools in Bangladesh**

By

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

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## **Declaration**

It is hereby declared that

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

**Student's Full Name & Signature:**

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## Approval

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Of Spring, 2021 has been accepted as satisfactory in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on 25. 05. 2021.

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## **Ethics Statement**

This is my own work and while conducting this research I read various academic journals and books and various types of materials but the results presented in this thesis are based on my own study. During this research, I tried to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. I did not use the real name and identity of any participants or schools. I did not force the participants to participate in this research and all the participants agreed to participate voluntarily.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of this research is to investigate the problems faced by the rural students, especially rural secondary school students of Bangladesh in terms of learning English. An enormous gulf exists between the urban and rural students in case of available opportunities in education. During this pandemic, this difference has increased in many cases. This study also aims to document some constrains that rural secondary students face in learning English and what can be done to overcome these constrains. A qualitative approach has been adopted to conduct this study and different forms of data were collected for this study. The significance of this research is that it provides a rich picture of the rural students' struggle to learn English. This study will also be useful to create awareness among rural students, parents and other stakeholders regarding the importance, necessity and value of learning and having good command over English language. Various constrains found in case of learning English in rural schools are presented under three categories. These are student related problems, teacher related problems and infrastructure related problems. Finally some recommendation are suggested based on the results of this study.

**Keywords:** Secondary School; English Language teaching and learning; rural areas; National curriculum; teaching materials.

## **Dedication**

I would like to dedicate my work to my Mama and my grandmother who helped me to complete this journey and to my parents, the most humble personas.

## **Acknowledgement**

First of all, I would like to express my gratitude towards Allah, the most Gracious and Merciful. Then, I would like to thank my mother who continuously supported me and taught me to have patience in every situation of life. I would also like to give special thanks to my supervisor Md. Al Amin, the most supportive and helpful teacher of my life. In addition, I would also like to thank Professor Firdous Azim, Ms. Lubaba Sanajana, Professor Nahid Afrose kabir and Dr. Sayeed Noman for their guidance and help during my study. At last, I would like to give thanks to my family and friends for their support, love and motivation.

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## **List of Acronyms**

CLT: Communicative Language Teaching

GTM: Grammar Translation Method

ZPD: Zone of Proximal Development

## **Chapter 1**

### **Introduction**

English is one of the compulsory subjects in the secondary education system of Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, the importance of learning English is not only confined to the field of education but also to other fields including job sector, media, law, technology and communication. However, the importance of learning English varies in Bangladesh depending on the location and socio-economic status of the learners. Secondary education is one of the important stages in Bangladesh education system and considering the importance of secondary education, Bangladesh government not only provide free education but also provide some stipend for the students. English is considered as one of the important skills to develop the young people of Bangladesh into a valuable workforce. However, students from rural areas always remain behind in terms of facilities and achievement. Therefore, this study explore the village students' difficulty in English learning, teaching in those schools and other contextual barriers they face in learning English. This research may be significant for the village students, teachers and perhaps, for the policymakers and other stakeholders.

#### **1.1 Secondary Education System in Bangladesh**

In Bangladesh secondary level education starts from class six. Secondary level students have to read 13 to 14 books in together which is decided by the secondary level education board in Bangladesh. There are more than 23,000 secondary schools which includes government, non-government, Bangla version, English version and English medium. The same curriculum is followed in the whole country though the syllabus, class activities and the process or ways of teaching-learning system varies depending on the types of schools. In Bangladesh, schools located in city areas are more highlighted, focused and appreciated than schools located in rural areas. The results of the schools located in every city areas are also far better than the rural

schools. In Bangladesh, the students of both city and rural school follows the same textbook, curriculum and syllabus and yet most of the times students of city schools becomes topper and make the news.

Moreover, in case of academic performance, it is the students of city schools who always perform better than the rural school students. The government of Bangladesh, to some extent, is also responsible for this kind of inconsistency in result in education sector. In Bangladesh, power is centralised in one place, especially in Dhaka. The ultimate power and the main office of every department is located in Dhaka city. In this case, the government mainly monitors schools near Dhaka city or highlights age old famous schools. On the other hand, schools located in rural areas cannot draw enough attention from the authority.

### **1.1.1 English in the Secondary Education in Rural Areas**

To be true, the opportunities of learning English in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh is really limited. It is also remarkable that in terms of SSC result, the students of rural areas always lag behind and the failure rate in English is more prominent among rural students than urban. Every year, a large number of students participate in SSC exam where, many rural students fail in English. To be more specific, Sarkar (2020) states that lack of skilled teachers of English and math results in bad performance of rural school students in exams like JSC and SSC. Moreover, this has been a common scenario of rural schools in terms of academic results. Board officials and academics of Secondary Education clarify that the standard of education varies in rural and urban areas, which results in 0-50 percentage pass rate in rural areas (Alamgir, 2017).

The socio-economic condition of the people of Bangladesh is really poor. Most importantly, more than half of the population lives below the poverty line. The people living in rural areas earn their livelihood through agricultural work. The parents of the students cannot

afford to buy necessary materials for learning English. Also the good teachers do not stay in these schools for a long time due to lack of facilities. The existing English teachers of many rural schools lack communicative skills. That is why even after reading and learning English for consecutive twelve years, majority of the students fail in this subject, cannot understand the simple direction and even fail to make correct sentences. Moreover, the parents of the students prefer to work in mills and factories instead of giving second time examination as they do not have trust in the teaching and teachers of the schools.

### **1.1.2 Context of the Study**

This study mainly examines the education system of rural schools of Bangladesh. The researcher focuses on a particular district to observe and collect data in order to complete the study. The researcher selected four secondary schools in different villages of shamolia. Many people who are living in these villages work in some low paid jobs but they dream to educate their children till SSC and HSC and hope to get a government job. Interestingly, despite of being poor almost 90% of the villages are SSC pass. However, the secondary schools of this sub district are not up to date in comparison to schools located in city areas. These schools are located in areas where there are only three to four shops which include a tea stall, one bakery, one salon, one tailoring shop and a grocery shop. There are no stationary shops available near those schools and for that students need to visit a far to buy books, pen and paper. The selected schools are located near river side. Students and teachers usually go to schools by boat which is the only medium of transportation. Moreover, when the river dries out of water, all the villagers need to travel on foot which is a big problem and mainly for this reason teachers do not want to stay in those schools. That is why these schools lack skilful teachers and technological support.

In addition, memorization is regarded as the only way of learning English. Moreover, in case of English language teaching and learning, students only focus on textbooks and notebooks or guide books. Apart from guide book and 45 minutes of class lecture there is no other option to learn English language. The students of village consider English as a subject instead of language to learn. The teachers as well as the students are too shy to speak English in class though they can fluently read English and are good writer too. Furthermore, during English class the teachers of these schools give instructions and communicates with students in Bengali language instead of English language. Apart from the school, in many cases these students help their parents in their everyday activities and for that reasons sometimes students find it difficult to attend schools.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter discusses relevant past studies which are related to English language, English in Bangladesh, secondary school education system, teaching, learning and teacher related topics which were previously explored by different researchers. Various reviewed studies are presented thematically.

#### **2.1 Importance of Learning English**

Learning a foreign language in a negative environment is the most difficult things to do. It requires passion and relevant materials and supportive environment. Bangladesh being a developing country, could not focus on enriching its people with the light of English language. However, in Bangladesh, English is considered the second or foreign language. The demand of knowing English is so high that in every government job exams the proficiency over English is tested. Additionally, different multinational corporations and other high ranking job requires good English speaking ability.

Nevertheless, In Bangladesh, students' performance is really poor in English (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Regarding the importance of English Shahzada et al. (2012) mentions that command over English is a vehicle of thought. In Bangladesh, the practice of English in Bangla medium Schools is poor as it is related to socio-economic condition of the sector and English medium schools are eligible only for the elite societies (Hamid & Erling, 2016). Moreover, Erling et al. (2016) found that in rural areas of Bangladesh, the use of English is related with social status and identity.

## **2.2 Reviewing Previous Researches Regarding the Use of English in Bangladesh**

Although there are not many researches in Bangladesh context that explored the use of English in real life context, some of the existing research in this field are unique in terms of results. English is a compulsory subject in the secondary level schools in Bangladesh and yet the students are not proficient enough to use English fluently. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) state that the average English language skill level of a university student is equivalent to the class seven level. There are also other researchers working on the current system of teaching English in Bangladesh express similar concerns.

Regarding the implementation of CLT in curriculum and its effectiveness Rahman et al. (2019) state that the policy makers should recheck whether there is a balance between the CLT items and classroom materials. They also add that English language teachers should provide training so that he or she can use CLT in an effective way.

Shahzada et al. (2012) states that in the field of English teaching, teachers' use grammar translation method in their teaching and for that students' attainment in English is not satisfactory. They also state that the functional English is not taught and practiced in the classrooms, rather more importance is given to the teaching of English textbook. In addition, in the rural schools of Bangladesh, mainly Bangla is the medium of instruction and classroom language. Mirza et al. (2012) note that L1 translation results in better understanding and reduction of L1 makes learning frustrating. Farooqui (2014) mentioned that both teachers' and students' low proficiency in English results in using Bengali for classroom instructions. Moreover, teacher plays an important role in second language acquisition process as one cannot learn a second language alone, he or she needs a teacher.

Harmer (2007) points that a teacher needs to be a controller, prompter, participant, resource and tutor in classroom to facilitate learning. He also adds that less dominant role of a teacher encourage students to take the leading role. Rahman & Ahmed (2019) state that to

practice CLT in classroom, the Secondary English teachers are needed to provide training to ensure quality education. Moreover, some researchers focus on the teachers' ability in case of language teaching. Nur (2018) finds that in Bangladesh, English language teachers of secondary schools came from different streams such as history, politics etc. and hence they lack enough knowledge of subject matter in English. The author also mentions that teachers' lack proficiency as often teachers start their teaching career without any proper qualification or training. However, Sultana (2019) points that the grading and exam oriented assessment hampers language learning process. Hamid, Sussex & Khan (2009) state that most of the rural students do not have the ability to buy necessary books to learn English due to economic crisis which is one of the main obstacles for the learners' to do well in examination. Nuby et al. (2020) mentions that the proficiency level of the English teachers' of rural areas are disheartening.

### **2.3 The Importance of this Research in Further Studies in the Field of Language Teaching**

The researcher of this particular piece of research expects that it will help the future researchers by providing valuable information in the context of English language teaching in rural schools in Bangladesh. It would also help the target audiences of this research. For example, the teachers and students and authorities of rural schools. This will make them conscious about the problems which works as a barrier in case of promoting English language learning in Bangladesh. It will also benefit some teachers and students by letting them know the problems of using GTM in English teaching and learning system and also the importance of CLT and the problems related to CLT. However, the researcher tries to focus on some of the points which were missed by the previous researchers such as the teaching complications faced by the students of rural schools during COVID-19. Overall, this study will help the people to know the problems and at the same time encourage them to find further solutions of those problems. In addition, the previous researchers only focused on the importance of learning

English in rural areas, briefly identified the problems of teaching English in rural schools and discussed some definitions of teaching learning methods. However, this particular research focuses on discussing the socio-economic conditions of the rural areas, family background, social and economic status of students and also highlights the influence of economic status and village politics in learning English. Apart from these, this research also emphasizes on the environmental, student –teacher related and curriculum related problems that exist in rural schools. However, this research discusses the teaching learning related challenges faced by the students during this COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Methodology**

In this chapter I have presented the methodology of this study including the purpose of the study, its significance, research design and approach of this study, participants, settings of the study, data collection and analysis process and ethical issues taken into account while conducting this study.

#### **3.1 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to explore the challenges and opportunities of learning English in rural secondary schools in Bangladesh. This research also focused on the teaching learning system and process of English in rural schools. Another purpose of this study is to explore the actual learning outcome of English language from some selected village students which will represent the whole scenario of village education system. Apart from these, the researcher intends to raise awareness among rural students and parents regarding the importance of learning English and to grab the attention of the education board and ministry to take necessary steps to increase classroom monitoring system as an alternative way of evaluation.

#### **3.2 Significance of the Research**

This particular research will be significant for the village students, teachers and for other students. The stories of rural students sometimes remain unheard in the media and in other platform and as a result they remain behind in many cases. This study is significant in the sense that it attempts to give voice to those underprivileged students. In this study, village students will find lots of relatable problems, issues and situation and also solutions from which they can take advice and lesson. For example, from this study, a student can learn about the importance of learning English, how to be a good learner of English language, the possible

challenges of learning English in village and how to overcome those challenges, the possible opportunities of learning English in village atmosphere and also about how to use English for career building.

Moreover, the information of this study will help the future students to learn English with fun and at the same time it would encourage them to solve their problems of learning English. On the other hand, this study will benefit the teachers of village schools by letting them know about the struggles and difficulties of students which they cannot express in classroom due to shyness or fear. In the same way, this study may provide necessary information for the government and education board as the government aims to use human as active resource by providing quality education. If the research get noticed by the people related to ministry of education, they surely learn something really interesting, new and eye-catching bitter truth about village education system. This would benefit the education sector as the authority will ponder about this important issue.

### **3.3 Research Design**

In any kind of research, research design works as an outline or draft which guides the researcher. A research design provides a framework for the collection and analyses of data (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative research approach is followed to conduct this research in which data were collected through interview and observation. The researcher adopted a narrative approach as this is the best way of learning peoples experience in real life settings. Narrative approach offers practical and specific insights of the problem (Creswell, 2014). Apart from this, the researcher also used focus group discussion to gather information. Focus group discussion was conducted with the people of the same group who shares the same experiences (Bryman, 2012). Nevertheless, the questions that will lead the research are:

1. What are the challenges and opportunities of learning English in rural school in Bangladesh?
2. Why do rural schools lack good and experienced English teacher?

### **3.4 Settings**

The research was conducted in a natural setting, particularly in different villages of Shamolia, Nagpur. The researcher selected four High Schools to collect data. Students from more than two or three villages join one school here. Information were collected through direct and organised questions in the form of interview and focus group discussion where more questions raised with the flow of conversation.

### **3.5 Participants**

In total, there were 35 people who participated in the interview. The participants included both male and female students, teachers and parents. To be more specific, there were 27 students and 8 teachers of English from the four different schools. In addition, the name of the parents were not listed as they could not give full information as a single participant. The students comprises both academic successful and unsuccessful students who shared their view on the topic. The age limit of the participants varies as the students of different classes were interviewed.

#### **3.5.1 Detail Information of Participants**

It is important to describe the full information of participants as this justifies the accuracy and reasons of selecting mentioned participants of the research. The researcher used pseudonyms to protect the privacy and ethical issues. However, the information is described below:

<b>No.</b>	<b>Name of participants</b>	<b>Designation</b>	<b>Class</b>
1	Liza	”	8
2	Rubel	”	8
3	Faruk	”	8
4	Dilruba Akter	”	8
5	Mafi	”	8
6	Jannat	”	9
7	Shamim	”	9
8	Mridul	”	9
9	Zohura	”	9
10	Fahad	”	9
11	Babu	”	9
12	Meem	Student	9
13	Kakoli	”	9
14	Atik	”	9
15	Zarif	”	9
16	Ayesha	”	9
17	Mamun	”	10
18	Tamanna	”	10
19	Shuchi	”	10
20	Tripti Ghosh	”	10
21	Jakir	”	10
22	Orpa	”	10



23	Nafid	”	10
24	Kashfi	”	10
25	Turzo	”	10
26	Parvin	”	10
27	Meherun	”	10
28	Joynal Abedin	Teacher	
29	Hasan Mahmud	”	
30	Md. Badal	”	
31	Sharif Uddin	”	
32	Saima Chowdhury	”	
33	Ranu Akter	”	
34	Khurshid Alam	”	
35	Enamul Haq	”	

**Table 1: List of participants.**

### **3.5.2 Process of Data Collection**

Collecting data for a qualitative research is a time consuming and lengthy process. It took few months of time to select the ground or targeted place, to select the participants, to prepare questions for them and to decide the different ways of data collection. Apart from this, due to COVID-19 the data collection process was slightly different as schools were closed for a long time. In this circumstance, it was difficult to reach both the teachers and students. So it was not easy to visit the villages, find and gossip with them and collect information.

First of all, the researcher selected four high schools, located in rural areas as the source of data. All the information of this research were collected from those four schools since the

researcher used those as the representatives of all rural high schools. Secondly, the researcher had to contact with the headmasters of the schools through mobile phone regarding the address of the students and of their English teachers. However, with their permission and in the condition of not exposing their real identity the researcher continued with rest of the procedures. Data were collected through personal meeting, interview, asking questions and in the form of focused group discussion. Moreover, in qualitative research the physical existence or presence of the researcher in the field is highly recommended as it makes the research alive.

Different types of questions were made by the researcher to extract information from students, teachers and guardians. While visiting the students, researcher first asked them opinion based question. The researcher then moved on asking more questions based on their response of previous questions. There were both structured and unstructured questions. Both good and bad students (based on academic performance) were selected as their perception would be different due to the differences of their attitude, personal characteristics or performance. Throughout the time, I used pen and paper to remember my research questions and to write down their responses. Apart from the listed participants their siblings and cousins who studied in the same schools also contributed by sharing experience with the researcher.

### **3.5.3 Interview**

In any kind of research, after observation taking interview is the most important way of collecting information as it introduces the researcher with lots of different ideas and perceptions on a single topic. I have taken interview of 35 people for this research and the relatives of some participant's just randomly contributed in their own interest.

### **3.5.4 Focused Group Interview**

Apart from individual interview I had organized focus group technique as I have studied the students of four different schools. Focus group discussion or interview allows the researcher

to explore whether the participants response similarly or differently. However, in this case, I have organized four different sessions in which, one included 5-6 participants.

### **3.5.5 Checking and Observing Reading Materials**

While meeting students I asked them about their reading materials and some of them brought all those to me. I found that the syllabus is well organized with separation of chapter for different exams along with mark distribution. The schools recommended Popy grammar and composition book, Nobodut guide, Chowdhury and Hossain's grammar book for the students of class nine and ten. On the other hand, the students of class eight were asked to read Jupitar test paper and lecture guide book along with NCTB approved English grammar and composition book.

### **3.6 Limitation of this Research**

There are some limitations of this research. First of all, research was conducted within a short period of time. Secondly, due to COVID-19, there was lockdown going on and in this circumstance it was risky to travel and collect extra information. Moreover, lack of classroom observation was another limitation of this study as observation is most important in a research. In addition, collecting information was also risky and difficult as students were busy with their household chores, some were not at home, some were visiting relatives house, some were sick and most importantly some parents and teachers were unwilling to give interview and meet the researcher ( outsider) fearing Corona Virus.

### **3.7 Ethical Issues**

I ensure that all the aspects of ethical issues were properly maintained while conducting the research and collecting information. No bullying, no acts or comments of dehumanization, racist or controversial political statements were made or practiced. In addition, participants were not forced to give interview or give answers in a ready-made way. Moreover, to protect

the privacy issue I used pseudonyms of the participants and the name of the schools were not mentioned at all.

In the following three chapters I will present the result of this study followed by a discussion chapter.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Teacher Related Problems**

This particular chapter discusses the problems related with the teachers of rural schools. These are the things I have found after talking with local people, taking interview of the teachers and collecting relevant data. This chapter also included the answers of the researcher's interview questions and both the students and teachers own opinion about teaching.

#### **4.1 Lack of Knowledgeable Teachers**

After talking with students, parents and teachers I came to know that the teachers of rural schools do not have proper knowledge, experience and good educational background. For example Ayesha stated that:

Some of the teachers are just H.S.C pass who used to teach as proxy teachers and gradually as the time passes the school became government or semi-government and the teachers get the opportunity of making their job permanent.

The parents of some students of a particular school pointed out that one female English teacher used to teach in their school without government salary for more than 11 years. At that time she earned her monthly income by doing tuition and small amount of money from the school fund. This story makes it clear that rural school lacks knowledgeable and updated teachers. In addition to this, another student Fahad added that:

The present English teacher of my school was my father's classmate and my father told me that he failed several times in English subject during his SSC examination and he cannot explain things well to students.

The guardians of the students added that due to transportation problem highly qualified teachers with good educational background prefer to join schools located in city areas. Moreover, the head master of a particular school stated that “When any teacher joins in this school, he eagerly waits for transfer and it is very tough to appoint teachers with higher degrees”. He also added that he manages to appoint part time English teachers who are currently studying in universities or just completed graduation to inspire the students. In addition, most of the teachers use notebooks, guidebooks and also grammar books to assist them. Shuchi and Tripti added that “our class teacher always carry guide books and grammar books in classroom and reads grammatical rules and examples from that book and asks us to write those. He does the same things in coaching and private class”. Some students also pointed out that if they ask something not related to that class their teacher somehow avoid that and never explain that things.

#### **4.2 Less pair/Group work/ Presentations**

The teachers of these schools hardly give times on pair or group work. First of all, the students of two schools agreed that they are not familiar at all with the idea of pair or group work. Two of my participants, Zohura and Mridul (students of class nine from the same school) got astonished as they never heard something like that before. Moreover, they asked me lots of questions about the idea of group work. To be more specific, they asked me about the number of the students of a group, how the work goes, if the process really helpful or not and if the students are able to learn through this system or not. Secondly, Orpa, another participant (reads in class 10) added that they do not practice pair or group work in their school although she is well aware about this from Television series. She also included that she really wish that their school teachers introduce this kind of learning to them. Thirdly, Turzo (student of class 10) added that it is instructed in the text book to practice group and pair work while completing a

chapter but his school teachers do not follow this particular piece of instruction in any of the classes.

Finally, after talking with four or five teachers I came to know that these village teachers really have very little idea about the benefit of group work/pair work. Md. Badal (one of the teachers) stated group work as “a time wasting process”. He also added that in a 45 minute class time it is not possible to explain things, divide them in groups and re-check their progress. Another teacher, Saima Chowdhury states-

This is not a big deal whether we practice group work in class or not, our main goal is to provide education, make them learn and make them able to pass the exam. Regarding the presentation I would say that it is not meant for school students, this is for upper level students. So in this case, I don't think the teaching way or process should bother students, rather they should bother about their result.

Another teacher, Sharif Uddin included that group work is not needed in school level; instead of discussing they (students) misuse the time in gossiping. However, the information shared by the students and teachers makes it clear that the rural teachers are not aware of the actual benefit and necessity of group study.

#### **4.3 Teacher Plays Dominating Role and Lack of Student Talk Time**

Students confirmed that they are given less talk time in comparison with teachers talk time. Some of the students angrily stated that there are some teachers who only asks questions to good students whereas average and bad students are neglected. Shuchi, student of class ten, stated that teachers are unable to finish a particular chapter or topic within a class period due to the presence of large number of students and it is not possible to ask everyone to participate. Faruk, studies in class eight also added that students are not allowed to talk much in class, rather the teacher consumes most of the time in explaining things. In addition, according to

Fahad, “if we want to share things related to the topic in details, our class teacher does not allow us”. Shamim and babu added that teacher asks us to talk to him after class if we have any problem although we and teacher too could not manage it. On the other hand some teachers pointed out that the students are mischievous and we cannot handle the situation being friendly with them.

Babu also included that “the dominating role of a teacher makes us afraid of asking questions and it gradually reduces the chances of speaking ability of the students”.

In this circumstances, the teacher should need to change his or her role according to the demand of situation. A teacher can sometimes acts a controller, sometimes as a friend and sometimes as a guardian. This kinds of role shifting will make the teaching learning process interesting.

#### **4.4 Teachers’ Lacks Enough Idea about Communicative Approach**

Both the students and teachers agreed that they do not follow communicative approach in classroom, rather they follow the GTM or the traditional teaching approach. Meem, a student of class nine stated that she is not familiar with communicative approach. I personally introduced her with some of the features of communicative teaching and learning methods and then she mentioned that in her school she never observed such things. Other students for example, Atik and Zarif of class 9 state that:

We never ever find any similarities between the design of English textbook and the way our class teacher teaches. For example, our textbook is designed in a way that after opening a particular lesson we automatically get an idea of what we need to do, how to do that and what are the things we would learn from that lesson. All the instructions were given in the form of various sections. However, we never tried all the instructions in our class. The teacher runs out of time just explaining the story and word meaning. He also skips some sections.



English teacher, Khurshid Alam adds that:

If we try to practice all the sections given in the book it would take two days to complete a single lesson. It would not be a good idea of practicing all those things which were not meant for the examination. We simply put efforts on the things important for examination so that students feel less burden, can focus on limited things and get good marks.

Nevertheless, I understand that the teachers aim is to make the students pass. However, the teachers should make a strong lesson plan to engage students in every communicative activities so that along with learning about the language they also can learn about the use of language.

#### **4.5 Lack of Proper Feedback:**

I came to know that students are not given feedback in a proper way which is another reason for which students fails to understand English and ends up in failure in exams. For a healthy classroom environment providing both positive and negative feedback is mandatory. However, these students are only familiar with negative feedback. Liza, student of class eight said that if they make mistakes teacher use harsh words which are disgusting to hear in front of whole class. In addition, Rubel and other students said that their teacher is so lazy that he never gives paper on time. In the name of feedback he is only polite towards good students and beats the students who fails to carry pass marks. On the other hand, teacher Hasan Mahmud says that:

Simple words as feedback does not work here. They continue to do same mistakes again and again. So, if we use any harsh word and punish them the news become viral. Parents and school committee calls meeting regarding the issue and finally the teacher lose his respect both in school and locality. For these kinds of activities, we the teachers do not

criticise student's progress level. The class size is huge and it is not possible to give individual feedback.

Nevertheless, the teachers should learn how to give feedback which would bring good for the learners as feedback plays an important role in teaching and learning system. Most importantly, teachers should introduce pair and group studies as these will create confidence and help them to nurture a leader vibes their mind. In the same way, the teachers should rectify their mistakes and create friendly environment to promote teaching learning system.

## **Chapter 5**

### **Student Related Problems**

This chapter presents the problems faced by the students in case of learning English. The responses of the interview questions given by the students were included in the chapter. Apart from the structured questions, students also provided overall information regarding their own problems of not being able to learn English comparing to other subjects.

#### **5.1 Fear of Making Mistakes**

Village students are afraid of making mistakes which works as another hinder for them in the path of learning English. They are not only get afraid of speaking English but also of English teachers. For example, Mafi said that they gave nicknames to their English teachers. While they see their teacher they became alert as the teacher remains angry and beats them a lot. Another student Ayesha adds that:

I do not feel comfortable in speaking English at all. I got stuck in unknown pronunciation. I also make mistakes in reading and the whole class laugh at me. That is why I feel ashamed. I find English class boring and monotonous. I do not understand why we should learn a foreign language? We already have our mother tongue which is enough for us. And I can easily spend my days without English.

Another participant, Kashfi says:

English is such a difficult subject and it contains first and second paper. First paper is somehow manageable but second paper! Even after answering all the questions of second paper I am not sure about the marks I will get. Learning new vocabularies is not enough. We need to learn different grammatical rules and regulations which are difficult to remember.

It seems that students are not comfortable in learning and speaking English. From the very beginning of their education life English is introduced to them in a way which makes them afraid and nervous.

## **5.2 Do Not Understand the Importance of English and Lack of Motivation:**

The students of village schools do not understand the value and power of English. They do not realize that using English we can travel or communicate with the whole world rather they take English as a difficult subject in which they cannot afford simply the pass marks. In addition, there is no one to motivate them for higher studies or available job opportunities where good command over English is must. These village students actually have less knowledge about carrier due to their lower standard of living. For example, Mridul of class nine stated that his main target is to get a police or army job after passing HSC as his family cannot bear his educational expenses any more. On the other hand, most of the girls are destined to study till SSC. For these reasons students just want to pass the exam without being serious about learning the language. Moreover, the students feel comfortable in speaking Bengali language both inside and outside classroom. They do not find anyone to practice English. Jannat of class nine states that:

Our English teacher always encourages us to speak English in class. He also says that in order to learn English we need to practice as without practice it is impossible to learn a language. I understand his point but I have no one in my family with whom I can practice. School is the only place for me to continue my practice. I am not very good in English and my friends are also shy to speak. In the name of practicing English with my friends we laugh a lot.

On the other hand, English teacher Enamul Haq states that:

The main problem is that the students do not find interest in learning English. As a teacher I encourage them to learn it. There are some students in my class who are good in all subjects except English. The reason of it could be that they do not understand the value of English and they are not in the environment where speaking English is necessary.

After analysing their point of view I found that the environment in which they live in actually the main obstacle for them. In every means this environment is destroying their potential future.

### **5.3 Unconscious Guardian**

Parents, guardian or the family is the first institute for any human being to learn basic things, manners, rules, regulations and way of living. In the same way, the knowledge, power and awareness of a guardian plays an important role in their children's life in case of education. The village parents are not well educated, mostly are uneducated and they do not understand the value of education at all. Hence, they cannot help their children in learning, reading and writing. In this circumstance, their children are all alone in the field of education. These students only join classes though irregularly and follow teacher's instructions. However, after coming home they hardly give time on study rather they remain busy with household chores and other money making stuffs. Their parents also push them to do work instead of giving time in doing extra study or homework. That is why most of the students face difficulties in learning English as they could not give enough time in this field. Ranu Akter, the English teacher of a school also points that:

Only doing classes or being present in a classroom is not enough to learn a foreign language. One need to invest "time and money". At the same time their parents should help them acquiring it or at least motivate them. Nevertheless, the parents of our

students do not understand the importance of education hence they think that only pass mark is enough. That is why they do not want to spend money for their children's education.

Another teacher, Enamul Haq adds that:

Parents do not even monitor what their child is doing in his or her free time, what marks she or he gets in a subject, what things refrain their child from doing better result etc. It is we (the teachers), who monitor their study before their final exam. We visit the village at night to check who is studying and who is not, whose parents are awake with them and whose are not. Their parents do not come for an annual parents meeting. Students do not want to study and the parents do not know how to encourage them! So if a student do not get support and pressure from his family for a good result, we teachers cannot help him alone!

By mentioning time and money this teacher hinted towards private tutor. It is also true that without self-interest one cannot learn English.

#### **5.4 Memorization as a Key Tool of Learning**

I asked students some questions related to their syllabus which they could not answer properly. Based on their responses I came to learn that they actually do not know about basic communicative English language. Their way of communicating with me proves that they prefer memorization more than understanding the structure of sentences. Tamanna, student of class 10 stated that she, most of the times memorises fill in the gaps paragraphs which are without clues. She also added that in case of rearranging sentences she as well as some of her friends just remembers the first few lines and memorises the correct sequence number, they do not bother about reading the whole sentence. In this way, they give their class test and board exams and they are happy with this technique. Moreover, in case of paragraph or essay writing they

do not use their brain, they just memorise whatever is written in the guide book. Furthermore, Jannat says that:

For dumb students teacher made some sheets and notes for essays and paragraphs where they just need to memorise one essay. If they can memorise one essay they can write similar three or four essays just by changing few words. Other than this the structure as well as the sentence remains the same for all the essays and paragraphs. For example, if a student memorises the essay 'Journey by boat', he or she can also write essays like 'Journey by train', 'Journey by plane' etc. One of the student said that his English teacher invented this technique so that they all can pass tough exams just by memorising limited paragraphs and essays.

However, this kind of spoon feeding activities make the students irresponsible and hampers their potential. In addition, the teachers should help the students to remove their fear of learning English from the very beginning of their student life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Curriculum and Teaching Related Problems**

This chapter discusses the participants' opinion regarding curriculum and teaching related problems. Both the teachers and students confess their mind about the problems they face while teaching and learning English.

#### **6.1 Lack of Necessary Teaching Aids**

From the participants' I came to know that the students as well as the teachers of rural schools lack necessary teaching aids. For instance, Joyanal Abedin, the English teacher of a school mentioned that in his school there is no English learning clubs, no labs and no computers at all and every week he needs to go market to do teaching related printings. The headmaster of a particular school confessed that they don't know much about how to operate a computer and how to use it for learning purpose. When they need to learn something or do something they call local people or university students for help. Teachers of these schools also don't know how to conduct online classes or calling an online meeting. Teachers pass their information to some of the students of a particular class and asks them to spread the information to others. The idea of face- to- face spreading information has become common during the pandemic as most of the students do not have smart phones. In this circumstance, it is difficult for the rural students to keep in touch with the books and reading. The parents stated that students do not study at all as they could not afford mobile phones or other online materials. However, to solve this problem, students find out a marvellous idea. They jointly buy MB package and do classes by sitting together at a place. In this way, students who has mobile can help his or her friends who cannot afford to buy mobile. This is also one kind of humanitarian work in the time of pandemic. On the other hand, some of the students claim that they regularly follow class lectures on television. However, due to excessive load-shedding issue, they cannot keep the



track. Some of the students of class nine and ten confessed that online learning only helps them to connect with teachers and they really miss the classroom feeling as only few students join online class. Most of the times, their parents do not believe that they are doing classes using mobile phone as most of the parents are illiterate and thus students think online classes as an extra hassle which creates misunderstandings between their parents and themselves.

Moreover, the students especially girls stated that, they already belongs from middle or lower class family and hence, it is difficult for their parents to bear their educational costs. During this pandemic, their small business or source of income has stopped. That is why their parents are searching groom for them. For example, Kakoli, who is currently a student of class nine shared her feelings. Kakoli stated that her father always wanted her to become a school teacher, however, due to Covid-19, her father lost his job and now it is not possible for him to continue Kakoli's study. That is why few days back some people came to see Kakoli for marriage. The next day, Kakoli met with her teachers and they suggested her to stand against child marriage. Her school teachers talked with some local reporters and they came with camera and other stuffs to take Kakoli's interview, they made her parents understand the negative impacts of child marriage and promised her full free education. Not only Kakoli has faced this situation but also other students are facing this regularly.

## **6.2 Lack of Listening and Speaking Tasks Which Results in Poor Performance**

As I could not observe students in classroom, I played a short four minute audio clip only for the students of class ten to check their listening and speaking ability. I have found that the village students are extremely weak in listening and speaking. From the four minute audio clip they only wrote some basic words and simple verbs and some of them randomly wrote wrong words as they could not track the exact word. When I explained their mistake they laughed and also get shocked at the same time for not being able to catch the exact words as

they already were familiar with the words. After this, I asked them the reason of their weakness in listening and speaking. Nafid from class ten, replied that they are not familiar with this kind of listening activity. Tamanna also added that before this, they never ever practiced listening and speaking test. She included that by speaking test she only understand the ability of saying memorized things and this is the first time she heard that there is something called listening test. Meherun and Parvin also added that “although the preface of English for Today textbook mentions that it includes listening texts and clips, we are not getting that facilities as our school lacks that materials”.

In this case, the school management committee and the authorities in charge should take the necessary steps to bring the materials in schools. At the same time the national curriculum should give extra focus on including the activities and lessons regarding listening and speaking so that students and teachers cannot avoid that things. The government should include listening and speaking test in final exam too.

### **6.3 Lack of Practical Life and Career Oriented Chapters**

The students said that lack of practical life and work oriented chapters, stories and contents are also remarkable problems with the existing English curriculum. Dilruba said that people remembers and focuses on the things which are beneficial to them and she hardly finds things in English book which she could use in her practical life. Atik and zarif state that:

Apart from English first paper there are also some unnecessary things in second paper which is tough for us to remember. We barely use those in real life conversation. In films, series and news we observe that they do not follow the exact grammar items. However, we are instructed to learn those things. The enormous grammar items and rules makes us confuse and we do not understand these things appropriately as English is a foreign language.

On the other hand, Zarif adds that:

Our English curriculum and learning system should be easier which we can remember easily. Moreover, our teaching and learning system is basically grammar base and hence our English teacher says that without learning grammar we could not be able to make a single sentence. However, without giving supreme focus on grammar the curriculum should be made on focusing spoken English. In addition, the authority should include career oriented chapters which would make us motivated and keen to read and learn English.

In addition, some parents said that they cannot afford higher study to their children and the secondary curriculum should include life decisions, career options and goals as these would benefit their child more than reading the life story of great people.

#### **6.4 Use of GTM and Bengali as the Medium of Instructions**

In the village schools, GTM is the main teaching method which is subconsciously followed by the teachers. Most of the teachers are not aware about the type of teaching methods and also clueless about what methods and approaches they follow in the teaching learning system. In the same way students are not aware about the methods and approaches in which way they learn in class. By asking both the teachers and students about their classroom structure and explaining definition and characteristics of CLT and GTM they agreed that they follow GTM. Even though the national textbook is designed to practice CLT in classroom, the village teachers tends to skip that sections. For example, skipping pair and group work, dialogue reading and role play. The teachers just focus on reading the text and answering the questions. In addition, teachers use Bengali language as the medium of giving and receiving instructions.

From Jannat and other participants I also came to know that there is no teacher in these schools who use fully English in classroom. In the beginning of a class students only ask “Good

morning Sir, how are you?” In reply the teacher says “I am fine and you?” That is all they speak English in classroom apart from reading the text. Moreover, the students ask questions in Bengali and the teachers provide replies and explain things in Bengali. Also the meaning of words are explained in Bengali. Some teachers added that “students cannot understand if we explain things in English as this a foreign language”. Some students including Kashfi and Liza also agreed with this statement that they do not fully understand the English explanation of things and it would be harder for them to remember if teachers use English for explanation. Some students, for example, Mamun and Jakir included that “there are some teachers who cannot explain things well in English. However they are appointed by nepotism or by the school management committee’s suggestion as village politics affect education system”.

Nevertheless, the use of GTM reduces the learning ability of the students. As the learners are the main target of education, the curriculum, syllabus and education policy should be student friendly and flexible to learn. The government need to monitor the effectiveness of teaching policy.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Discussion**

This chapter focuses on discussing and analysing participant's points of view through the lenses of different theories based on the researcher's observation of village lifestyle and of rural schooling system. This will also include researcher's own opinion and some possible solutions of the problem.

#### **7.1 Introduce and Promote Advance Technology in Rural Schools**

From the data presented above it is proved that the schools of rural areas are really disconnected from the advantageous technological world and this is high time that the government should introduce advance technology in these areas. This will allow both the village students and teachers to feel connected with the outer world. If a student learns the different use of technology from school it will always help him/ her in future. It will also make them independent and confident in terms of keeping pace with the modern world. In addition, the use of technology will also bring benefits for teachers. By using technology teachers can collect educational information and get important notices from the particular website. They no longer need to go personally in the offices to collect important notices.

Moreover, from the responses the researcher has found that students are not always welcomed to use the computers and printers for their own purpose. Once in a week they (only students of science group) are allowed to use computer just to do the practical class that too open, used and closed by the class teacher where students are mere viewers. Apart from this, only different parts of the computers are introduced by the students of class six, seven and eight. Furthermore, there is no technician or permanent computer operator in these schools.

However, the students will never learn something great and innovative in this way, rather only the schools will be decorated with digital technological devices. Hence, the

government should provide lots of computers and teaching-learning related devices in these schools so that each students can have his or her own space where they can practice their everyday learning, can download study related books and articles and overall can be able to focuses on English language practicing. It is a matter of great regret that the teachers of these schools only focuses on buying guide books but they are not familiar with the idea of downloading pdf items. This kind of lack of knowledgeable teachers are impediment in the field of education. Neither they know nor can they make others know.

## **7.2 Providing Necessary Trainings to Make Skilful Teachers**

It is one of the important points to be noted that the teachers of these village schools need proper training to get fully engage with students. They need to know how to behave politely with students, how to treat them well, how to make learning interesting to them and when to change the role. It is the responsibility of a teacher to start a class with some warm up activities or in a funny way to make the classroom feel alive. However, from the responses I get to know that some teachers just enter the classroom with a boring face and starts to read which makes the lesson monotonous. In these circumstances, the secondary school teachers should provide training to make them cheerful, careful and to let them know that in order to teach a foreign language teacher should invent some tricks. For example, in a class a teacher can announce to play word building game once in a week where students are not allowed to use the same words twice. In every week they have to use new words. In this way a teacher can make the students learn new vocabularies without letting them know as students do not feel interested to learn vocabulary items.

Furthermore, the teacher should also provide training on role play. Both the students and teachers agreed that in classroom teacher always remains in the character of giving commands and it is the duty of students to follow him. However, teaching and learning would

be interesting and enjoyable if this traditional system can be changed. Sometimes allowing students to give commands and lead would make the student confident. At the same time this will give the teacher a chance to evaluate the students' progress.

### **7.3 Private Tutor or Joining Coaching is the Only Hope**

According to the responses of the participants it is clear that the classroom of rural schools are large enough to hold approximately fifty to seventy students in a single classroom. In this kind of environment it is really tough for a teacher to engage all the students in class, asking all of them to participate in classroom activity and giving individual feedback. In the same way, it is also difficult for the students to be attentive in such a chaos environment and learn something as everyone does not have the same learning ability. That is why many students prefer private tuition and coaching classes. The teachers, students and also parents added that there is no alternative of joining private tuition for better understanding as only five to seven students join there as batch system.

Moreover, Liza, Orpa, Jannat and some other students added that private tuition is mandatory to get good marks. They also included that some class teachers only give attention towards those who attends that teacher's tuition and it is important to be in the list of teacher's favourite students. Moreover, in Bangladesh there is a trend that students need to have golden-5 or GPA-5 for which both parents and students rush for private tuition. Another plus point of private tuition is that the teacher only focuses on important things, not the unnecessary things. The students prefer private tutoring more than mainstream schooling. Hamid et al. (2009) stated that students found private tutoring more effective and successful than main stream schooling.

#### **7.4 Absence of Social Interactions and Lack of ZPD Hinders Language Learning Process**

By visiting the particular villages and collecting the responses from the participants the researcher found that students of those rural areas lack minimum friendly environment of learning and cannot practice English outside classroom and also are deprived of social interactions in the target language. However, in terms of second language learning the importance of social interaction is highly recommended by many linguistics, especially by the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky. The socio-cultural theory of Vygotsky highlights that language learning occurs through social interaction and language learning is connected to the idea of ZPD. The ZPD focuses on the learning that a learner can learn by mixing with other people in the society as group study is always better and effective than individual study or learning (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). On the other hand, Stephen Krashen's comprehensible input hypothesis states that acquisition occurs when one is exposed to language that is comprehensible and contains  $i+1$  (Ortega, 2009). In this case  $i$  means existing knowledge and  $1$  stands to mean a little bit beyond that existing knowledge. Without getting proper environment people would not be able to learn second language fluently.

Both the teachers and students of every school agreed that they are deprived of using social interaction as a scope of learning English. There is no such person in their area with whom they can practice. Moreover, the society in which they live is not suitable to practice English.

#### **7.5 Language Learning Aptitude is Low among Student:**

The language learning aptitude is low among most of the village students which is one of the main reasons of student's failure in English. Second language learning is not easy as it happens consciously; without learners interest it is not possible to acquire English. Students do not feel interested to learn English as they are not aware of the benefits of knowing English.



Moreover, they do not find any motivation for learning English. From the beginning of their school days they consider English language as hard and foreign language. For this reason students always try to avoid English learning and moreover, they view English as a subject rather than as a language. That is why they just read to pass the exam. They forget whatever they read just after the exams and cannot find any practical use of those learning.

## **Chapter 8**

### **Conclusion and Recommendation**

Throughout the whole study the researcher tries to portrait the actual existing scenario of teaching – learning system of English language in village schools. The researcher has discovered some authentic information about English language teaching although in some cases the researcher finds the similar results reported by previous researchers which were reviewed in literature. The necessary data of this research were collected from different schools of a rural area which at the same time is relatable with the scenario of other village schools. The socio-economic condition of the village people of Bangladesh is not well off, they somehow tries to pass secondary school and by focusing this issue the Government of Bangladesh made secondary education compulsory. In secondary level education, students are mature enough to take schooling and learning seriously and this is the best time for them to learn English as their brain remain fresh at this stage.

By reading, writing, listening and speaking English for consecutive five years in primary school, the students feel shy, nervous and get afraid of speaking at secondary level which reflects the sign of poor quality education. At present when English is ruling the world, Bangladesh still struggles to teach this language properly both in primary and secondary level, especially the rural schools. The main reasons behind this are the problems with the existing teaching learning system, examination and evaluation process, learner's lack of interest, unfavourable learning environment, location of the schools, lack of experienced teachers etc. In addition, in Bangladesh students were evaluated by their academic results which causes memorizing content without understanding and question leaking practices.

However, the researcher would like to share some limited though possible opportunities which the village students can use outside classroom to improve English language learning ability. These are listed below-

### **8.1 Through Online Platform**

The students of village can learn English through different online platforms. Students can easily get access to different online platforms through mobile phone. For example, there are some Facebook pages and groups which publish posts and videos related to English language learning, speaking, like how to pronounce a word, how to be self-motivated to learn English etc. In the same way, in YouTube too there are many channels and blogs which aims to teach English language and also works with American and British accent. Moreover, there are some apps which the students can use in language learning. For instance, the Al Quran app. In this app the English translations of Arabic sentences are available. A student promising to learn English may use all these things to be fluent in English learning and speaking.

### **8.2 Television Programs Can Play a Major Role in Learning English**

Television is such a means of delivering messages and entertainment at the same time which is available in every house of the village. However, the students can use this as a language learning tool. There are some programs and shows which can promote English language learning. For example, Master Chief Reality show, political discussions, spelling bee and different types of English series or series in other language which provide English subtitles. In addition, watching movies can be another interesting option. Everybody likes watching movie and the teenage of secondary level schools would definitely love the idea. They can watch fantasy, horror, comedy, tragic, action movies and whatever category they wish and in this way they would learn some new words and sentences without feeling burden.

### **8.3 Through Watching News**

Watching news is another way of learning English language. Students can easily notice the way of pronunciation and the accent used by the presenter, way of speaking, and use of tones. They can also notice the difference of speaking by different presenter. This would increase their linguistic knowledge about the variety of English language. Watching news regularly would increase the general knowledge of the students. At the same time would help them in learning new vocabularies and sentences.

To conclude, the researcher remarks that the village students face difficulties and challenges in learning English language. The researcher urges the government to take necessary steps, to make some positive changes in the rural schools and national curriculum to provide village students a healthy learning environment as it is undoubtedly important to expand the use of English in order to keep pace with the modern era.

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