Exploring the Practice of Alternative Assessment during Covid-19 of Bangla Medium Secondary Level Teachers and Students in Bangladesh

By

Samia Noor

19103069

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

Department of English and Humanities
Brac University
October 2022

Declaration

It is hereby declared that
1. The thesis submitted is my own original work while completing degree at Brac University.

2. The thesis does not contain material previously published or written by a third party, except where this is appropriately cited through full and accurate referencing.

3. The thesis does not contain material which has been accepted, or submitted, for any other degree or diploma at a university or other institution.

4. I have acknowledged all main sources of help.

Student's Full Name & Signature:

_____
Samia Noor
19103069

Approval

The thesis titled "Exploring the Practice of Alternative Assessment during Covid-19 of Bangla Medium Secondary Level Teachers and Students in Bangladesh" submitted by Samia Noor (19103069) of Semester, Summer 2021, has been accepted as excellent in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in English on 22nd October 2022.

Examining Committee:

Supervisor:

(Member)

_____

Mohammad Mahmudul Haque

Assistant Professor, Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Departmental Head:

(Chair)

_____

Dr. Firdous Azim

Chairperson, Department of English and Humanities

BRAC University

Acknowledgement

Firstly, I would like to thank almighty Allah for giving the strength to cope up with my mental and physical instability while conducting the research. The journey of this research was not very smooth and without the constant support, motivation and tolerance of my parents, siblings and my husband, completion of this research would not have been possible.

I am very thankful to my cousins, Sweety apu, Rita apu, Jhumur apu, my nephew and niece, Neehal, Faiza, Raima, Rishad, Nawmi and my uncles and aunties, Hossian chachu and Zahangir chachu and chachi for their unconditional assistance. I also express my heartiest gratitude to Mrs. Marwa Mohammad ma'am for assisting me thoroughly.

Additionally, I cannot but mention my dearest friends Afnan Malik and Sayeda Mollika's selfless support which worked as both internal and external motivation for me. Thanks to another closest friends Urmi and her siblings, my sister's friends Hafsa and Oishi to help me in the process of data collection during lamentations of corona pandemic.

Last but not the least, I am very heartily thankful to my supervisor, Mr. Mohammad Mahmudul Haque for supervision and encouragement which has triggered me to work harder and provoke me to use my intuition.

Abstract

There has never been any successful implementation of alternative assessments previously in schools in Bangladesh (Podder, 2020 as cited in Podder & Mizan, 2020). During the coronavirus pandemic, Bangladesh has taken alternative (weekly assignments) initiatives to assess students instead of yearly exams (Alamgir, 2020). Hence, this study aims to find out the state and the factors of alternative assessments of English language during the lockdown at the secondary level of Bangla medium (Bangla version) public and private schools in Dhaka, and gauge to what extent CLT-principles are followed, if at all. A qualitative approach has been used to collect data through teachers' and students' interviews, and documents collected (assignments) from the students have been analyzed thematically through coding the written texts. Though the document analysis reveals that writing activities (the only focus of the English assignment) carry the features of the tasks of CLT – which is the NCTB-mandated English language teaching approach – findings show that the practice of alternative assessments of English is not effective among the public and the private school students and teachers because of significantly negative washback of the SSC exams which is a public summative assessment that follows the traditional assessment structure. Additionally, the teachers of both public and private schools are found to be using GTM, practicing topics, activities, exams (traditional assessment) important to the SSC exam and remained negligent toward the practice of the NCTB-given English assignments, though NCTB has prohibited the practice of any other assessments (Hasan, 2020). This is mainly due to the lack of teacher training and unfamiliarity with the new assessment system. In this paper, significant measures to improve the practice of alternative assessment have been recommended, such as increasing the value of alternative assessments to be as highly heralded as the SSC exam.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Chapter 3: Methodology

Chapter 4: Findings

Chapter 5: Discussion

Chapter 6: Conclusion

1.0 Chapter 1

1.1 Introduction

Bound (1995) states that students can overcome poor teaching quality but there is no way to overcome the poor quality of assessments. Alternative assessment has appeared as a challenge to the traditional testing system (Anderson, 1998). It is found to be "indirect", "inauthentic", "one-shot", "speed-based", "norm-referenced", "decontextualized" (Baily, 1998), lacking in feedback practice (Baily, 1998), "[known as] single-occasion tests" (Law and Eskes, 1995), "[assessed] individually" (Baily, 1998), "[assessing] only the lower skills" (Law and Eskes, 1995), focuses learners' ability of memorization and recall (lower level of cognition skills) (Smaldino et al., 2000) (as cited in Dikli, 2003, p. 15). Additionally, traditional tests are also product-oriented, summative in nature, "focus[es]on discrete answers", and "[evaluates] non-interactive performance" (Armstrong, 1994; Bailey, 1998, p. 207 as cited in Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018, p. 17). Assessment of learning has always been the core consideration of teaching-learning endeavors (Dawson et al., 2013). Brown and Hudson (1998) state that alternative assessment has been approved in the discipline of EFL/ESL as the practice of language testing is more connected with language learning (as cited in Al -Mahrooqi & Denman, 2018).

Alternative assessment assesses "what [students] integrate and produce, rather than on what they can recall and reproduce" (Huerta-Macías, 2002, p. 339). It incorporates various types of assessments which involve different real-life oriented tasks that trigger and use students' higher-level thinking skills in the real-life context (Al Ruqeishi, 2015 as cited in Monib et al., 2020). In addition, the communicative language teaching method also requires the use of the target language in a real context. The tasks which are used in CLT embed the features of real-life communicative events. For example, role play, authentic materials, picture stripe stories, etc. (Freeman, 2008).

This study sheds light on the contemporary relevant literature including related theories and concepts, the current scenario of English language assessment in Bangladesh, and the alternate initiatives of the

Bangladeshi government to engage students in their studies. It also discusses the methodology adopted to conduct this research, findings from the analysis, discussion, and finally the conclusion.

1.2 The Problem Defined

Though the Communicative Language Teaching approach has been the official English language teaching approach in Bangladesh for over two decades, there are problems in implementing it, especially in the realm of language assessment. In particular, only two of the four fundamental language skills – reading and writing – are assessed, and even these are based on memorization. Moreover, neither school-based assessments nor continuous assessments have made favorable changes to the English language curriculum. The following challenges remain lack of classrooms; unwillingness of teachers; shortage of classroom teachers in the schools; high teaching load of the teachers; large class size; financial constraints; lack of monitoring; and lack of CA training etc. (p. 8)" (as cited in Islam et al., 2021). Thus, there is a need to find whether, and to what extent, the weekly English assignments are given during the pandemic to assess SSC students' English skills and keep them in practice worked.

1.3 Research Context

Secondary School Certificate and Higher Secondary Certificate are two important high-stake tests where success plays important roles in students' future, creating parents' social image as well as the reputations of teachers and schools and the public image of the government. (Amin and Greenwood, 2018).

Hence, the secondary level, especially, classes 9 and 10 are one of the important levels where students begin taking preparation for their board exam and that is why the researcher has chosen class 9 from private and public Bangla schools to investigate the similarities/differences in the practice of the English weekly assessment.

1.4 Significance of the Study

In the secondary and the higher secondary level of Bangla medium schools in Bangladesh, grammar is assessed discretely without using any comprehensive communicative context, reading texts, and writing items are found to be repeated in the English national board exams over the years which is causing the tendency of rote learning among students (Ali & Hamid, 2020; Ali et al., 2018; Amin & Greenwood, 2018). Therefore, it does not allow students to use their innovation, and creativity (Ali & Hamid, 2020), including speaking and listening skills in the English language in real-life contexts and there is no alignment with the national English curriculum (Amin & Greenwood, 2018). Alternative assessment has found its credibility in EFL/ESL classrooms as it contributes to improving both receptive and productive skills (Monib et al., 2020). Hence, the study on English assignments in Bangladesh during the corona pandemic will open the window for further future research on alternative assessments and their connection with the CLT approach in Bangladesh as well as the importance of such assessments during corona-like pandemics to engage students in their studies. Additionally, it will have an in-depth scenario of English language assignment to researchers and will carry implications for the stakeholders like test designers, decision-makers, administrators linked with curriculum development, teacher trainers, teachers, and others who are related to the Bangladesh education system.

1.5 Objective of the Study

This research aims to find out the state of alternatives (weekly assignment) and factors related to such alternatives in Bangladesh at the secondary level (class 9) during the corona pandemic in private and public Bangla medium (Bangla version) schools through the below-mentioned questions.

1.6 Research Questions

1. Do the activities in the assignments which have been implemented as an alternative during the pandemic contain the characteristics of alternative assessment and Communicative Language Teaching approach?

2. How is the new assessment and feedback practiced in reality?

3. What effect does the practice of weekly assignments have on class 9 students?

4. What effect does the practice of weekly assessments have on class 9 English language teachers?

2.0 Chapter 2

2.1 Review of Literature

2.1.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the previous research on English language assessment practices and their impact on the secondary level in Bangladesh in detail. The section also refers to relevant concepts, theories, and relevant scholarly work related to assessment practices.

2.1.2 Assessment and Alternative Assessment

To begin with, assessment is a continuous process that incorporates different types of extensive methodological techniques (Mousavi, 2009, p. 35, as cited in Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018). Different types of assessments such as informal assessments, formal assessments, formative assessments, summative assessments, diagnostic tests, placements tests, alternative assessments (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018), conference assessments, portfolio assessments, self and peer assessments (Douglas, 2010), etc are observed today.

Furthermore, according to Cheng & Fox (2017), assessment has three dimensions- firstly, assessment for learning, a process used by both teachers and students to find students' learning outcomes, for instance, formative assessment. Secondly, an assessment of learning is only used to see if the learning has happened, this type of assessment is used to make a certain assertion to see students' status at a particular point in time, for example, summative assessment. Thirdly, assessment as learning is a process where a student self-evaluates himself or herself to achieve certain learning goals in the future, for instance, formal self-assessment, etc.

Currently, English language teachers have realized the need for new alternative assessment techniques to give the students a better language learning environment so that the students can not only be evaluated based on their knowledge but also simultaneously use it in the future while practicing the language in the real life. (Tosuncuoglu, 2018).

2.1.3 Various Aspects of Alternative Assessments

Alternative assessment is a reaction to traditional assessments or tests (e.g., Herman, Aschbacher, and Winters. 1992, as cited in Douglas, 2010). It is a result of the criticisms that include the conservativeness of the test content which focuses on testing some basic skills by neglecting the capability for critical thinking and problem solving of students, the lack of a link between test content and curriculum, and so on. (Herman et al., 1992).

Furthermore, it is designed to stimulate substantial productive learning for students themselves (Hargreaves et al., 2002, as cited in Fox, 2016) as centre for teaching and learning, BYU, states "alternative assessments are used to determine what students can and cannot do, in contrast to what they do or do not know" (Centre for Teaching and Learning, BYU). The main aim of this assessment is to collect documentation about the ways students are catching up, operating, and finishing real-life activities in a certain area. (Garc´ıa & Pearson, 1994, as cited in Huerta-Macías, 2002).

These assessments are built on the principle of constructivism and sociocultural theory. Firstly, the tasks are real-life centered which not only prioritizes learning but is also related to the real life of the learner (Maslovaty & Kuzi, 2002). Secondly, according to the perspective of sociocultural theory, knowledge is located, and learning is social, intuitive, cooperative, and implanted in an individual's local culture which can be explicitly observed in the classroom situation where teachers, students, and their peers constantly work cooperatively by sharing their power in the process of assessment. (Gipps, 1999) (as cited in Fox, 2016). Therefore, alternative assessment is also referred to/ categorized as performance assessment, authentic assessment, dynamic assessment, direct assessment, constructivist assessment (Simonson and others, n.d.), criterion-referenced assessment, informal assessment, situated (or contextualized) assessment, and assessment by the exhibition (Hamp-Lyons & Condon, 2000, as cited in Fox, 2016; Herman et al., 1992; Huerta-Macías, 2002; Islam & Stapa, 2019, as cited in Dikli, 2003; Monib et al., 2020).

Moreover, McConlogue (2020) asserts that an alternative method is required to prevent stress and workload from students which happens due to exam pressure. Recently, in the field of education, remodeling can be observed in the method of evaluating students' output where summative assessment progressively converts into formative assessment (alternative assessment). (Monib et al., 2020). However, Anderson (1998) points out both the issue of a formative and summative evaluation process which he thinks, must be incorporated in the procedure of alternative assessments. Through the process of teacher feedback, students get the opportunity to reflect upon themselves before completing the final work through the process and practice of revision. (Anderson, 1998).

2.1.4 Formative Function of the Assessment

Miller (2002) states that the formative function of the assessment relates to the learners' learning progress, motivates them, offers necessary feedback on the areas where it is required for future work, and boosts the desired learning outcome. Cizek (2010) and Douglas (2010) define/state the purpose of formative assessment as a process where both students and teachers are involved and work as a team to comprehend students' learning and organization of concepts, identify strengths, diagnose weaknesses, as well as areas of development that work as a source of information to assist the teachers to make plans for instructions and at the same time help students to enhance their understanding and develop their achievement (as cited in Cheng & Fox, 2017).

2.1.5 Feedback

Alternative assessments provide feedback to learners which is absent in the practice of traditional assessments (Dikli, 2003). Feedback plays an important role in how the next chapter or unit will be planned for parents, students, and teachers from the information which are gathered from the formative assessments/alternative assessments (Fox, 2016) – for example, portfolios, checklists, and observations (Cameron, 2001). Cheng & Fox (2017) have stated that the practices and responses

(feedback) of assessment determine students' capability to learn. The most important factor behind the feedback is students' understanding and usage of it.

2.1.6 Summative Function of the Assessment

Though alternative assessment is formative in nature (Monib et al, 2020; Armstrong, 1994; and Bailey, 1998, as cited in Brown and Abeywickrama, 2018), it also has a summative function, and being summative is one of the fundamental motives of assessment (Miller, 2002). It is in line with the "assessment of learning" (p. 5) which is organized at the end of a certain instructed time which can be a course, program, unit, project semester, or a school year to assess student academic achievement, learning, and other skills that he has acquired. (Cheng & Fox, 2017).

2.2 Scenario of English Language Assessment in Bangladesh

2.2.1 In Reality- The Split between Objective and Execution

"Curriculum, instruction, and assessment are intricately connected to each other (Pellegrino, 2010)" (p. 5). But for Bangladesh we can see a different scenario i.e., it is a test-driven country where exams play a cultural role in assessing students. (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018a, 2018b; Ali et al., 2018) (as cited in Islam et al., 2021).

2.2.2 Assessment Practices, Teaching Methods, and the Effects of Washback

Execution of assessment improves the success of language policy and execution of curriculum depends on the standard of evaluation and testing (Das et al., 2014). Communicative language teaching (CLT) was adopted in Bangladesh in 1996 (National Curriculum, 2012) as a language teaching methodology among primary and secondary levels. It was also a shift from the grammar-translation assessment method to a skill-focused assessment method of the English language in Bangladesh (Islam et al., 2021). It was assumed that the assessment methods in CLT will be used by academics and individuals. Ironically, this has been problematic since its initiation. (Quader, 2001b).

Changes made to the curriculum did not change the practice of the grammar-translation method because the question pattern of high-stake assessment still resembles the characteristics of the grammar-translation method (Khan, 2020). Ali, Hamid & Hardy (2018) state that the test is inconsistent with the aim of the English language in the national curriculum as well as with the current English language education policy which requires the development of students' communicative competence. Additionally, it has been found that teachers only use and practice such design and pattern of assessment methods that are linked to the public exams (Sultana, 2019). Only writing, reading, and prescriptive grammar are assessed, though the test items are non-contextual, and memorization-based (Islam et al., 2021).

For example, in the case of the primary English curriculum (2012) in Bangladesh, emphasized all four skills of listening, speaking, reading, and writing but has not combined assessment policies into it. Secondly, the junior secondary (grades 6-8) English curriculum assimilates both formative (continuous assessment) and summative assessment (half-yearly, final exam, and Junior School Certificate) as well as combine all four skills. However, the JSC exam excludes listening and speaking tests methods (National Curriculum, 2012) and comprises only reading and writing skills, grammar, and vocabulary. Thirdly, the secondary (9-10) English curriculum has divided English into two parts- 1st paper and 2nd paper. The first part focuses on language skills through different themes like home and family, hobbies, etc. The second part stresses grammar and composition. (National Curriculum, 2012). Both formative and summative assessment methods are followed but the marks distribution of receptive skills, productive skills, and grammar are not equal. The curriculum has assigned 40 marks for writing and 40 marks for reading, on the other hand, 10 marks for listening and 10 marks for speaking. (Islam et al., 2021).

English 1st paper (100 marks)		English 2nd paper (100 marks)	
Part-A: reading test	**50 marks**	**Part-A: grammar test**	**60 marks**
1. MCQ	1×7=7	1. Cloze test with clues (vocabulary test)	0.5×10=5
2. Short questions	2×5=10	2. Cloze test without clues (vocabulary test)	0.5×10=5
3. Summarizing	10	3. Matching	1×5=5
4. Information transfer	1×5=5	4. Fill in the blanks with the right form of verbs	0.5×10=5
5. Gap filling without clues (vocabulary test)	1×5=5	5. Change of speech/narration	5
6. Matching	1×5=5	6. Transformation of sentences	1×10=10
7. Rearranging	1×8=8	7. Completing sentences	1×5=5
Part-B: writing test	**50 marks**	8. Use of suffix and prefix	0.5×10=5
8. Paragraph writing	10	9. Tag questions	1×5=5
9. Completing story	10	10. Use of linking words	1×5=5
10. Describing graph/chart	10	11. Punctuation	5
11. Letter writing	10	**Part-B: composition**	**40 marks**
12. Dialogue writing	10	12. Writing cover letter with CV	8
		13. Letter writing	10
		14. Paragraph writing	10
		15. Composition writing	12

(Rahman et al., 2021, p. 10)

Particularly, Ali & Walker (2014) assert that there is no separate teacher training for English teachers. They are trained in general education. For instance, the teachers of the primary level are trained under the Ministry of Primary and Mass Education in the Primary Teachers Training Institute (PTI), and the secondary level trainers are trained under Teachers' Quality Improvement (TQI) and the Secondary Education Sector Development Project (SESDP) and Teachers Training Colleges (TTCs) as well as in the National Academy for Educational Management (NAEM). However, such training does not focus on teaching methodology and the way books can be used in classroom situations.

However, School-Based Assessment (SBA) in 2007 and Continuous Assessment (CA) in 2012 have been reformed as an alternative assessments. According to Susanna (2020), continuous assessment (CA) evaluates the students' progress or performance throughout the duration of a course. In Al-Mahrooqi and Denman's (2018) words, "Alternative assessment is somewhat of a blanket term that is often used to describe a variety of alternatives to what is popularly considered more "standardized" forms of testing" (p. 1). Both School-Based Assessment (SBA) and Continuous Assessment (CA) assessment methods are defined as alternative assessments by Podder and Mizan (2020). It has been found that 30% of marks were allocated for this assessment which includes different engaging activities like group work, project work, and so on (NCTB, 2007). Then, it was changed to CA assessment and 20% of marks were allocated. Given that, the name SBA did not cover madrasah and college, and therefore, CA has been used as a common name. (Podder and Mizan, 2020).

The policy of SBA included "class tests, class work, homework, assignments, oral presentations, and group work" (Begum & Farooqi, 2008, p. 7), and CA included "Class tests, class works or practical works, and homework, group presentation, peer work, class assignment, oral questioning methods and other socio-psychological dimensions of the students [were also included] as assessment methods" (Begum & Farooqi, p. 7-8). However, neither SBA nor CA has been effectively implemented and none of them including the national exams are aligned with aim of the national

English curriculum which aims at the implementation of the CLT approach in English. It was found that SBA was implemented by 7% of the schools. The reasons behind the failure of such assessments were, "extra load of teachers, shortage of trained teachers, complex type recording system of SBA results, and lack of close monitoring and mentoring system" (Bangladesh Examination Development Unit, 2016, p. 2) (p. 7) [similarly,] lack of classrooms; unwillingness of teachers; shortage of classroom teachers in the schools; high teaching load of the teachers; large class size; financial constraints; lack of monitoring; and lack of CA training, etc. (p. 8)" (as cited in Islam et al., 2021).

2.2.3 The Alternative Initiatives Taken by NCTB to Engage Students in Their Studies

A short syllabus based on the content from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) will be used for designing the assignments for students of classes 6 to 9 which has been started on November 1, 2020, as a replacement for the yearly examination (Alamgir, 2020). The purpose of the weekly assignment is to figure out the gap in the student's learning so that the authority can take the corrective initiative. As the COVID pandemic increased, the weekly assignment system extended to 2021 (Assignments for Class 6 to Class 9 for the First Week, 2021). Additionally, students will be promoted based on the assignments which obtain no marks or grades. (Alamgir, 2020).

As a result, eight guidelines have been considered to give knowledge to the teachers and students regarding the overall aspects, and below are some of the relevant ones (Hasan, 2020): Firstly, the activities mentioned in the guidelines would start from November 1 and the implementation of these guidelines will be under the management of all the Regional Deputy Directors, District Education Officers, and Upazila Secondary Education Officers. NCTB directed a 30-working-day secondary school syllabus which had to be followed and the syllabus would be posted on the website www.dshe.gov.bd in due time. Next, NCTB, in collaboration with experts in the appropriate subject, designed content for the assigned tasks from the required syllabus. Every week, assignments developed from following the topic would be delivered to the heads of all educational institutes at the secondary

level. The educational institution will be unable to conduct any other assessment activities (tests, homework, etc.) other than the ones assigned by the board. Furthermore, the teachers will identify the student's weaknesses and take necessary action on those students in the following academic year with a special focus on them based on the performance of the submitted assignments. The institution leaders will create plans to record the assignments including teachers' evaluations.

3.0 Chapter 3

3.1 Methodology

3.1.1 Introduction

The whole chapter has explained the methods the researcher considered before collecting the information for the study and while doing the study. It includes settings, research design, sampling, sample size, instruments, data analysis instruments, and data triangulation.

3.1.2 Research Design

The researcher has used qualitative research methodology to explore the state of English weekly assignments in Bangladesh at the secondary level (class 9) during the coronavirus pandemic in private and public Bangla medium (Bangla version) schools. Creswell and Creswell (2018) assert the nature of the research enables the researcher in face-to-face interaction with the participants where they can openly share their thoughts which not only lets them observe their behavior but also interpret and learn the meaning of the problem or issue that they hold. The researcher also enjoys the opportunity of looking at the background, culture, and experiences of the participants which are playing a significant role in shaping their perceptions. Eventually, Vaus (2002) opines that this research design provides infinite data regarding the real life of the people and their situation as the method makes the behavior of the participants more comprehensible within its larger context. Therefore, since the qualitative research method deals with human understanding of certain facts in society, it will help the researcher to deeply investigate the situation of the English weekly assessments and feedback practice, the attitude of teachers and students towards the assessment, and finally, the impact of such assessment on students and teachers at the secondary level.

Moreover, the data has been analyzed using an inductive approach (thematic analysis) where codes and then themes that emerge from the data are not pre-formulated. (Sarantakos, 2013).

3.1.3 Sampling

The researcher has selected the Bangla medium (Bangla version) for students, teachers, and classrooms from the secondary level (class 9) in order to learn about the situation of weekly assignments. Since Class 9 is a level where students begin to prepare themselves for the SSC exam which is arguably the assessment with the highest stakes in Bangladesh, she has found the individuals and sites rich in information; thus, she has used purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Clark, 2017).

3.1.3.1 Sampling Strategy

The researcher has selected participants from private and public Bangla medium (Bangla version) secondary level schools "to present multiple perspectives of individuals" (Creswell, 2012, p. 207) and to showcase the "complexity" (Creswell, 2012, p. 207) of the situation based on the ownership of the schools. It is expected that students, teachers, and classroom management from public and private Bangla medium (Bangla version) schools may have variation in teaching, learning, and assessing the English language or getting the benefits in facilities which will generally create two different characteristics. Thus, to identify different features to get variation in the data regarding the weekly assignments, the researcher has firstly used a purposeful maximal variation sampling strategy (Creswell, 2012; Creswell & Clark, 2017) which requires a rich variety of participants – in particular, two different groups for comparing and contrasting the private and public Bangla medium and version students.

Secondly, even after the identification of two different stakeholders (students and teachers) from Bangla Medium (Bangla version) private and public secondary level (class 9) schools to find multiple points of view, it was difficult for the researcher to find adequate and suitable participants because of the lock-down due to the pandemic. In this case, the researcher has used a purposeful snowball sampling strategy. Snowball sampling is a type of purposeful sampling which helps to find "the best people to study because of the complexity of events" (Creswell, 2012, p. 209). The researcher

started collecting data from the participants she is familiar with and then asked the "participants to recommend other individuals to be sampled''. (Creswell, 2012, p. 209).

3.1.3.2 Sample Size

 Student profile: - 15 Bangla medium (Bangla version) students studying in class 9 from public schools and 15 Bangla medium (Bangla version) students studying in class 9 from private schools have been selected for the interviews to find the similarities and differences in how they dealt with the weekly English assignments. Most of the students were female and very few of them were male aged between 15 to16. All the students were from Dhaka city.

 Teacher profile: - Additionally, interviews were also conducted with 8 secondary English language teachers from Bangla medium (Bangla version) schools (4 from public and 4 from private). Among the 8 teachers, one male and female English language teacher working in a private secondary school had achieved their honors degree in English Literature and master's degree in ELT and Applied linguistics and the rest of the male English language teachers had accomplished their honors and master's in English Literature. All of the teachers were from Dhaka city and from the same schools that the researcher has chosen for students' interviews.

Regarding the size of the sample, the researcher thinks that the above participants are sufficient to provide enough data to present an in-depth picture. In this regard, Charmaz (2006) has stated that "gathering fresh data no longer sparks new insights or reveals new properties. This is when [the researcher has] an adequate sample,'' (as cited in Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 262) an idea of saturation. Regarding the selected documents that make up the second data source, read *3.1.4.2*

3.1.4 Instruments

3.1.4.1 Semi-structured Interview

 Firstly, the researcher wanted to use a focus group discussion but then, it has been impossible to schedule a fixed time as none of the participants (teachers and students) could decide on a single

time. Finding no other ways, she has selected a one-to-one semi-structured interview type to collect data. A semi-structured interview works as a prompter and reminds the interviewer to ask questions about such issues which he desires to cover (Bell & Waters, 2014). On the contrary, a personal interview establishes rapport between interviewer and interviewee by creating a relaxed environment that enables the participants to concentrate, it also discourages the interference of third parties (Vaus, 2002).

There were predetermined indirect questions regarding a class hour, English language teaching method, teacher's belief, English language skills practiced in the class, the language students and teachers use (speak) to communicate in the class, activities or tasks used in the online class, feedback practice, the practice of the assessments other than assignments, the practice of the assignments and feedback, marking criteria, motivation, the way English is taught, teacher's role in helping students in the assignment, students and teachers attitude, washback effect and so on. All these questions have been designed based on the discussion of theories and other research studies in the literature review section.

However, the interviewees came up with information that was significant to my study and provoked me to ask more questions. The questionnaires used for the interviews are open-ended so that it allows the interviewees to respond in detail which helps the educator to explore the responses of the participants to relate them to the central phenomenon. (Creswell, 2012).

In addition, the analyst has accomplished a pilot testing on the questionnaire before attempting the actual interview with the help of one of her English language teachers who teaches the English language at a well-known private university. The researcher has made changes depending on the feedback of the teacher to make it as focused and specific as possible.

3.1.4.2 Documents Collection and Selection: The researcher has also collected the soft copy of the English assignments while interviewing the students (designed and assigned by the Bangladesh

education board) to understand whether the tasks/activities in the assignments carry the characteristics

of the task in the CLT approach. The analyst has also looked at the rubric which includes the way

feedback must be provided in the assignment. Since it is an assessment, the researcher has also thought

to look at it through the lens of the characteristics of assessment.

She has also collected samples of the activities/question papers from every student in order to

understand the way teachers are assessing the students.

Before selecting the samples, firstly, she has deeply gone through all the documents and sorted

them out based on the institutions to which the participants belong. Then, she selected them by keeping

the research questions in her mind. Both the data are presented in the finding section under particular

themes. Documents are also analyzed in the way interviews have been analyzed below.

3.1.5 Qualitative Data Analysis

3.1.5.1 Analyzing Interview Questions and documents

The data have been analyzed using the following steps described by Creswell & Creswell

(2018): -

Firstly, the researcher has organized and prepared the data for analysis which involved

transcribing and, dividing based on the sources of information. She transcribed the data (interviews) in

her notebook based on the type of institution (public or private) a participant belongs to. In order to

know the data, she has read and gone through the text to make the data more familiar to her. The

researcher searched for the opportunity to think about what overall meaning a text or words of the

participants have been reflecting on and has taken some initial notes. After that, the researcher involved

herself in coding the data following the steps of coding that Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2007) have

recommended (as cited in Creswell, 2012). Firstly, "getting a sense of the whole" (p. 244) means to

make a sense of the entire picture by reading the transcriptions precisely and jotting down the ideas that

come to mind while reading. The next step is selecting a file that seems to be the shortest or most

interesting like one interview or one document and going through it by keeping some questions in mind and underlining the words or phrases of the participants or documents which the researcher has thought to quote directly. Then, write the underlying meaning in the margin in two to three words. Furthermore, the process of coding begins with pointing out the text segments, assigning bracket around them, and then for an appropriate explanation of the meaning of the text segment, a code or phrase have been placed. After coding the whole text, a list of all codes is created. After that, all the similar codes are grouped, and the unimportant codes are excluded. The researcher reduced the list of codes to the smallest number gradually and rechecked the data to see whether any new codes can be emerged by cross-checking with the list she has made earlier as the target of the researcher is to reduce the codes to get three themes or descriptions. Finally, she has created themes and descriptions from the data and has represented the description and themes in the finding section.

3.1.6 Data Triangulation

In qualitative research, validation of the accuracy and credibility of the findings are insured through member checking and triangulation. Triangulation is the process of using multiple data collection instruments to verify the evidence of the study (Creswell, 2012). The data of this study have been triangulated in the below ways:

Students' Opinion   The documents of the activities
                                            students are being practiced

Teachers' Opinion
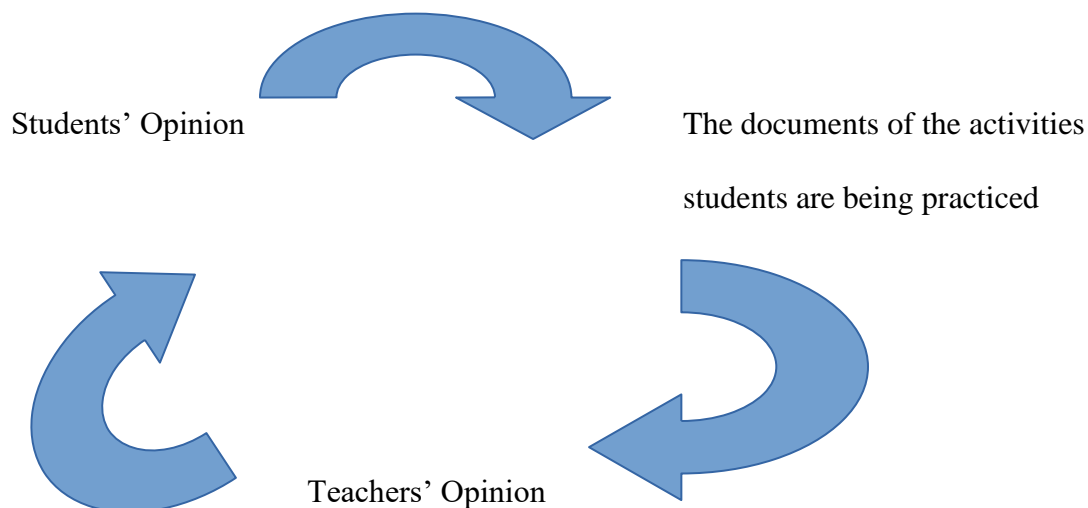
3.1.7 Considering Ethical issues

The researcher has maintained the below issues in this study:

1. Maintaining the privacy of the participants: The researcher has kept the name of the participants and the institution hidden and used pseudonyms to maintain the confidentiality of the research so that it does not cause any harm to anyone.

2. Taking permission: She has taken permission from the teachers, students, and the institution to record and use the information for the research. For online class observation of private school, the analyst has got the permission of two weeks from the principal, and for observing the recorded videos of public-school class observation, she has taken the permission of two weeks from the headmaster. Moreover, before conducting the interview session, the researcher informed the participants that data are being collected for research purposes and that it will benefit the English education sector and make the administrators rethink the issues regarding alternative assessments.

3. Avoiding plagiarism: The researcher has used paraphrasing, summarizing, and quoting while using information from other books or articles. The research has also used in-text citations and citations to acknowledge the authors.

4. Avoiding falsifying data: The analyst has been unbiased towards the participants while collecting the data. She has not manipulated any of the information in benefiting the needs of her interest. The researcher has presented the information as it is and has been very truthful throughout the whole process of the research.

4.0 Chapter 4

4.1 Findings

4.1.1 Introduction

This chapter firstly presents what and how students are supposed to be assessed in the English assignments, then, the findings found from the interview of students and teachers show the ways English assignments are practiced. Finally, it explores the effect of the English assignment through the lens of the characteristics of assessment and washback hypotheses.

4.2 Research Question: 01

1. Do the activities in the assignments which have been implemented as an alternative during the pandemic contain the characteristics of alternative assessment and Communicative Language Teaching approach?

Theme: Activities and Alternative assessment

Emergent categories: Types of activities; Communicative Language Teaching approach

Since the national curriculum of English Education policy in Bangladesh has integrated the communicative language teaching method (Hamid & Honan, 2012, as cited in Rahman et al., 2019), the researcher has thought to explore some of the written activities of the English assignments from the students of class 9 (2021) while conducting the interviews and among those assignments, she has decided to analyze four English assignments to find out whether such activities contain the characteristics of the activity used in communicative language teaching method.

To begin with, since the activities are designed based on the lessons of a unit from the book, it has been assumed that the students first read the lessons to have a general idea about the overall writing topic and then involve themselves in writing the task.

The first assignment asked students to prepare a short report on Sheikh Mujibur Rahman (known as the father of the nation in Bangladesh) by collecting the most important information

regarding him in 180-200 words. Moreover, the students can use images, newspaper clips, narratives, etc. to support the assignment. See Appendix 1

The second assignment asked the students to explore the pastime activities of the older generation and their generation by interviewing their elderly people. Then, it has asked to note down the differences by giving reasons behind the differences using their thought. See Appendix 2

Then, the task of the third assignment directed the students to plan the subject matter highlighting heroic struggle and sacrifice in 1971 for staging the program in school to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence. See Appendix 3

The task of the fourth assignment is to make the students think about the ways Bangladesh can develop itself by converting unskilled people into skilled human resources by explaining using 5 ideas. See Appendix 4

All the above writing activities can be defined as unguided writing or free writing because, in such activities, students are free to write without any apparent guidance, help, or feedback during the process of writing, although the title or the topic of the activity is already given. In these activities, remarks are given later. (Scrivener, 2011).

The role of the teacher, in this case, remains as a facilitator as he/she motivates students to write but without giving any concern to forms of the language rather the students experiment with ideas and become less afraid of doing errors (Nunan, 2003).

Now, in the four activities, we can see that these written tasks are based on real-life, culture, and context-based, and students can practice English on the discourse level, which means vocabulary, cohesion, and coherence. In this regard, we can define such activities as an alternative assessment as all of the tasks equip learners with skills to employ in real-life situations (Al Ruqeishi, 2015 as cited in Monib et al., 2020) and are a paradigm shift from traditional assessment. (Charvade, Jahandar & Khodabandehlou, 2012 as cited in Monib et al., 2020).

All of the activities are designed based on the lessons of a unit from the book *English for Today* designed by the National Curriculum & Text Board for classes 9-10.

Regarding the three characteristics of tasks, every activity consists of an information gap. In the first assignment, the students do not know all the most important information regarding the father of the nation, in the second one, the students do not know the pastime activities that their elderly people had and the differences in the pastime activities between their elderly people and them with reasons. In the third assignment, the students had to think critically about planning items by highlighting heroic struggle and sacrifice in 1971 for staging the program in school to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of Bangladesh's independence and in the fourth assignment, students need to critically think about the ways unskilled people of Bangladesh can be converted into human resources. Thus, all the activities have a significant information gap that the teachers know but the students do not know and must think about it.

Next, all the tasks allow students to choose what they will write and how they will write by maintaining a writing structure, topic, introduction, description, and conclusion. Additionally, each of the assignments has a column on rubrics. Rubrics have been drawn to provide remarks to students and students can also become aware of writing a standard piece based on the criteria. Such a type of rubric is known as a holistic rubric as it describes the quality of an assignment using basic terms, such as excellent, good, fair, and unsatisfactory. The teacher then fits the assignment based on the description under the terms. (Nunan, 2003). For example, the first assignment states that to get excellent, a student must add at least 10 kinds of information, proper use of coherence, cohesion, and vocabulary, Similarly, the second one requires at least 5 reasons, appropriate use of vocabulary and error-free sentences, and so on. The requirements of getting excellent are set but the students have the independence of what and how they will write.

Finally, the main objective of CLT is communication using the target language. The students based on the feedback from their teachers will "evaluate whether or not [their] purpose (communication) [have] been achieved based upon the information [they have received] from [the teacher]" (Freeman, 2008, p. 129).

To mention that the researcher has gone through all the English assignments of 2021 of class 9 and all of the activities in the assignments have focused mainly on assessing writing skills, consisting above characteristics and criteria.

4.3 Research Question: 02

2. How is the new assessment and feedback practiced in reality?

Theme: Practice and Feedback of New Assessments

Emergent categories: Irresponsive towards students regarding the issues of assignments; Topics. exercises, teaching methods significant to SSC exam are only the priority; Adopting unfair means in the assignment because of lack of motivation; Instructions provided by teachers as well as institutions; The use of negative punishment on the students; Prioritization of standardized test/exam over the alternative assessment; Lack of appropriate instructions and training; Assignment as a criterion of promoting and positioning students.

4.3.1 Interviews of Teachers and Students from Public and Private Schools

Findings show that the significant washback effect of the high-stake test (S.S.C) has made the practice of alternative assessment (English assignment) a failure which is presented below in detail in the form of themes.

4.3.2 Interviews of the Students

Similarities in the responses of the students studying in public school and private school:

4.3.2.1 Irresponsive Toward Students Regarding the Issues of Assignments

Similar experiences among students have been found both from the private and public-school students regarding teachers' negligence towards the assignment issues of English. Firstly, Sajid, a public-school student states, "teachers say assignments are for home, we need to complete and submit . . . teachers say that they will check and give us feedback . . . but have never got our paperback". Nipa, Arita, Prajakta, Anima, Arpita, Antila, Anika, Monika, Rohit, and others have also shared the same experiences. None of them had a chance to look at the answer sheet of the assignment after submission nor they have got any feedback or mark.

4.3.2.2 Topics, Exercises, and Teaching Method Significant to SSC Exam Are Only the Priority

The researcher has found the use of the grammar-translation method approach by their teachers in teaching and assessing English 1st paper and English 2nd paper while interviewing them. Both students studying in private and public schools have mentioned grammatical items that are thought of discretely without using any context. For example, fill up, match 5 sentences, right form of verbs, narration, transformation, completing the sentence, suffixes, prefixes, tag questions, connectors, capitalization, and punctuation. On the other hand, only reading and writing skills are practiced through memorization not the way the communicative language teaching approach has suggested.

Moreover, findings from the interview with the public-school students show that teachers make them practice the topics that are significant for the high-stake test (SSC exam) and students also feel comfortable with it. Students or teachers do not practice or discuss English assignments or topics related to English assignments. Additionally, similarities are found in the interview of students studying in private schools with the students at public schools.

4.3.2.3 *Adopting Unfair Means in the Assignment Because of Lack of Motivation*

Students at public schools have acknowledged that they copy from other sources instead of doing it by themselves. Furthermore, private school students have also accepted the fact of copying and stated several reasons which are similar to the finding of public-school students.

4.3.2.4 Instructions Provided by Teachers as Well as Institutions

From the interview of public-school students, it has been found that the teachers have not provided any specific instructions related to the content of the assignment rather general instructions were given. On the other hand, in the case of providing instructions, the analyst has found a different scenario from the interview of the private school students. Students have been provided with content-specific instructions along with the basic instructions mentioned above as public students stated right after the implementation of the assignment.

4.3.2.5 The Use of Negative Punishment on the Students

Nipa, a student studying in one of the well-known public schools has mentioned, "teachers threat us of not giving promotion to class 10 if not submitted". Moreover, Arita, also from a public-school state, "we do not have exams now and that is why the school thought of promoting us through assignment". Another student Prajakta from a public school has asserted, "neither we have online classes, nor we have exams like a private school . . . the government has prohibited teachers to give any other exams except assignment and teachers use it for promotion".

On contrary, according to the students at the private schools, the teachers have not submitted assignments the only criteria for promoting and positioning students in the upper class. It has been found that different exams and tests are also considered for ranking and promoting besides the assignment, though the government has strictly forbidden conducting any other exam or test besides the assignment (Hasan, 2020, no. 04).

4.3.3 Interviews of the Teachers

4.3.3.1 Prioritization of Standardized Test/Exam over the Alternative Assessment

The teachers of both public and private schools have been practicing standard tests or exams, even though exams and tests had been disallowed during the lockdown by the government, and have a negligent attitude towards the practice of assignment.

Tests for English 1st paper and English 2nd paper are being conducted online which is important for the students to engage in studies. For example, a class test where the pattern is sometimes in the form of a multiple-choice question or written. Model tests from the test papers or guidebook on grammar and passages from *English for Today* of English 1st paper, paragraph writing, letter writing, etc., are mostly tested which obtain 50 to 60 marks. Fareen has shared a pattern of the ways they assess the students online:

"Eng 1st p: Any model question (MCQ, QA, rearrange, complete story, chart paragraph,

      email, paragraph, Fill in the blanks with or without clues) = 60 marks

Eng 2nd p: Part: A (Grammar 30 marks)	1. Gap filling with clues: 5 marks
	2. Substitution table: 5 marks
	3. Changing sentences: 5 marks
	4. Suffixes and prefixes: 5 marks
	5. Question tag: 5 marks
	6. Capitalization: 5 marks
Part: B (composition 30marks)	1. Paragraph (8 marks)
	2. Essay 12 marks
	3. CV writing 10 marks."

Another question pattern shared by Kasem:

    "English 1st paper: passage mcq+question and answer+ unseen passage (50 marks)

     English 2nd paper: article, matching, the right form of verbs, question and answer, tag

questions, paragraph, composition, completing story (50 marks) ... Time duration: 2hr"

For the above two online exams, the students must sit in front of the camera with their pen and paper and submit the answers later by sending the pictures of the answer sheet through Facebook messenger or WhatsApp.

Additionally, Karim has shared an MCQ test on English 1st paper and 2nd paper which was conducted through the google form:

"English 1st paper: 20 marks MCQ question from a passage

English 2nd paper: 20 marks MCQ question from completing the sentence, suffix, and

prefix, narration, tag question, changing sentence".

4.3.3.2 Lack of Appropriate Instructions and Training

Firstly, Qader, Nayeem, Safwan, and other English teachers at public schools have shared that they did not get any training on how English assignments should be assigned or the way they should be taking a class using technologies or the internet. Though Qader has 22 years of teaching experience and training under ELTIP, he could not explicitly explain how the CLT method can/should be implemented. Moreover, Nayeem, another public-school English teacher has been asked regarding the practice of English assignments in the class. He replied, "government has given the work for home, there is no specific training or instruction given from the government. We have suggested students not make mistakes." He has 20 years of experience and training under TQI-SEP. Furthermore, Safwan, another public-school English teacher, having 13 years of teaching experience and training under TQI-SEP has stated, "I think training could be given since it is a new system of assessment, but the assignment is very easy, and we teach students using CLT."

4.3.3.3 Assignment as a Criterion of Promoting and Positioning Students

Though the assignments obtained no marks, teachers at public schools have used it as a criterion for promoting or ranking the students to engage them in their studies and make them complete

the assignment. Failing in submission can make them lose their position in the class or can cause them demotion which is stated by both the students and teachers.

4.4 Research Questions: 03 & 04

3. What effect does the practice of weekly assignments have on the students?

4. What effect does the practice of weekly assignments have on the teachers?

Theme: Effects of Alternative Assessment

Emergent Categories: Negative washback effect of the high-stake exam (S.S.C)

4.4.1 Negative Washback Effect of the High-Stake Exam (S.S.C)

The findings from the student and teacher interview show that the washback effect of the S.S.C exam has become an obstacle in the practice of alternative assessment, thus, the assignment does not play any role on teachers and students. However, to understand the issues of effect extensively, the researcher has looked at it through the lens of the five major principles of language assessment (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018) and the washback hypotheses by Alderson & Wall (1992).

The first principle of assessment, validity, is a characteristic of a test that states that the test should measure what it is supposed to measure. The assignment, an alternative to traditional tests, lacks construct validity because the assessment does not focus on assessing reading, speaking, and listening (proficiency and communicative competence) which means it does not meet the linguistic constructs of being valid according to the English curriculum in Bangladesh. Furthermore, the assessment also lacks criteria-related validity because the rubrics that have been designed as a criterion to evaluate the students' assignments are not appropriately followed by the teachers. Teachers do not check the assignment or provide feedback after the submission. Additionally, the assessment also lacks consequential validity as students consider it as a "waste of time" instead of a learning experience and do not feel any motivation towards it.

Secondly, a test can be defined as authentic when the task is real-life oriented. Again, the researcher has already explained how the tasks of the assignment are real-life, context, and culture based.

Thirdly, the assignment seems to be practical as it engaged students in their studies during the lockdown without much mental pressure, physical content, and financial pressure.

Fourthly, the assignment also lacks intra-rater reliability which is an internal factor that occurs due to the carelessness, tiredness, biased attitude, etc. of a subject teacher. Most teachers ask students to submit the assignment as a criterion for promoting them, also, many students complain that most of the students receive "excellent", this has reduced their interest to write the assignment by themselves. Consequently, they feel comfortable copying or paraphrasing ideas from other sources.

Finally, according to the principles of the language assessment, the assignment does not have any consequential validity or washback which includes "accuracy in measuring intended criteria, its effect on the preparation of test-takers, and the (intended and unintended) social consequences of a test's interpretation and use"(Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018, p. 36) and "the effect of testing on teaching and learning" (Hughes, 2003, p.1 as cited in Brown & Abeywickrama, 2018, p. 39) due to the washback effect of the high-stake test (S.S.C) on it. The overall findings from the interviews prove that if the test (assignment) does not have significant consequences, it will not have washback, and if the test (SSC exam) has significant consequences, it will have washback, which is largely dependent on the nature of the test. (Alderson & Wall, 1992). Furthermore, the negative or negligent attitude of the teachers and the students toward the practice of English assignment also manifests that a test (SSC) has the power to impact the attitude towards the "content, method, etc of learning/teaching" (Alderson & Wall, 1992, p. 9).

5.0 Chapter 5

5.1 Discussion

5.1.1 Introduction

The chapter presents a discussion and conclusion on the findings which includes the review of the major findings, the way research questions have been answered, the reflection of the researcher on the data, and views of the researcher regarding the findings which have been compared with the literature, limitation of the study and finally researcher's suggestion for the future research.

5.1.2 Comparison with the Literature

The study has critically explored the situation of the alternative assessment (assignment) implemented during the lockdown to engage students in their studies. It has been found from this research as well as the earlier research that any initiative regarding education taken by the government is always unplanned and lacks appropriate research. The researchers Rahman and Pandian (2018) have stated that policymakers of Bangladesh do not consider the reality of the classroom while taking any initiative. Like SBA and CA, English assignments do not completely reflect the methods of assessment (Islam et al., 2021) that are embedded in the approach of CLT.

Besides, adequate training is significant as found in the findings and regarding this, they have stated that English teachers, after completing their honors and master's in literature face problems when they are assigned to teach CLT- based textbooks because of their beliefs and the role they are playing as a teacher play an important role. (Ali & Walker, 2014). Additionally, Rahman & Pandian (2018) have mentioned that Bangladesh ignores the reality of the classroom and the needs of the teachers during every phase of the curriculum development, which can be explicitly observed in the finding from the teachers' interviews that teachers are either unaware of implementing CLT or unclear about the way activities of the assignment can be conducted in the class. (Das, Shaheen, Shrestha, Rahman, and Khan, 2014 as cited in Rahman et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Rahman et al. (2012) have shared that the assessment system of Bangladesh only assesses learners' ability of memorization and skills of comprehension, which can be explicitly observed in Arpita's, Rahman's, and Anhar's statement, students of the public and the private schools where memorization is suggested by the teachers. Moreover, their study has also shown that the practice of feedback in the class is unsatisfactory (Rahman et al., 2012) which can be perceived in the practice of assignment from the interview which lacked the need-based detailed feedback.

On contrary, the study has shown that even after the prohibition of the other assessments like exam/test (which asses what high-stake test requires) except assignment, the teachers and students have continued to practice such assessments which evoke "a ritualistic tone, informed by more conservative, compliant and what is seen as context-dependent circumstances" (Ali et al., 2018, p. 17). Additionally, the negative attitude of the students towards the assignment and their only focus on the content, topics, and exercises which are important to do well or pass the high-stake tests have become a threat to the way of achieving the curriculum goals and objectives (Islam et al., 2021).

6.0 Chapter 6

6.1 Conclusion

6.1.1 Introduction

This section closes out the study by acknowledging its limitations, summarizing the findings, and providing some recommendations for assessment-related stakeholders such as students, teachers, and policymakers.

6.1.2 Limitations and Future Research

Though the research provides some significant insights into the issues regarding alternative assessments and the high-stake test in Bangladesh, it has some obvious limitations. Firstly, it is qualitative research that has been conducted on very limited participants. The sample size of this research is 10 public and 10 private students, 3 public and 3 private English teachers from secondary level Bangla medium Bangla version schools. However, another limitation might be the lack of authenticity in the collected information. The participants who have participated in the interviews may not answer faithfully. Despite having limitations, the research fills up the gaps in the literature regarding the situation of alternative assessment during the pandemic in Bangladesh. It is one of the types of research which also contribute to the field of washback as the analyst has found the significant washback effect of the high-stake test on the practice of alternative assessment in Bangladesh. Additionally, further future research can be conducted on the practice of alternative assessment in Bangladesh by using a mixed-method approach or just a quantitative method approach by using the instrument class observation along with interviews.

6.1.3 Review of Major Findings, the Way Research Questions Have been Answered, and the Reflection of the Researcher on the Data

Firstly, it has been found that the assessment designers have carefully designed the assignments following the CLT approach. Secondly, regarding the ways English assignments and feedback are

being practiced in the reality, the study has found the negative washback effect of high- stake exams

which is hindering the practice of alternative assessment (English assignment) among both private and

public-school teachers and students. Furthermore, no significant differences have been found regarding

the practice of English assignments among the students and teachers of public and private schools.

Both teachers at public schools and private schools remain negligent in responding to students

regarding the assignment. The teacher's sincerity decreased as they found that the assignment held no

or less value compared to the SSC exam. Additionally, the grammar-translation method (GTM) has

become the most convenient teaching methodology to design the syllabus, topics/materials, activities,

and contents which are significant to the SSC exam. The high-stake testing system welcomes the use of

GTM, even though the government has prohibited the practice of any other type of assessment except

assignment during the corona pandemic. The teachers and the students of both private and public

schools practice and prioritize standard tests/exams ignoring the English assignments.

However, slight differences in the interview of public and private school teachers and students

regarding instructions and the criteria of promoting or ranking students in the new class, issues of CLT

approach, and assessment literacy have been observed. Private school students receive content-specific

instructions along with the basic instructions right after the application of the assignment whereas

public school students remain unaware of the content-specific instruction. Even after the prohibition of

any type of physical exam or test, private school students have to sit for the online exam as well as

submit the assignments. Public school students on the contrary are promoted or positioned based on the

submission of assignments. Moreover, public school teachers seemed to be unaware of the

implementation of the CLT method to assess students, conversely, private school English teachers are

found to be aware, but they hold a different perspective regarding the implementation of the CLT.

Furthermore, to perceive an in-depth understanding of the effect of the assignment, the analyst

has analyzed through the lens of the five major principles of language assessment (Brown &

Abeywickrama, 2018) and the washback hypotheses by Alderson & Wall (1992). The study has found

no effect on the assignment as it does not have consequential validity, therefore, it does not have

washback. On the other hand, it has also been found that the SSC exam which is a high – stake test has

significant consequences, hence, has the power to exploit the attitude of students and teachers towards

the subject matter, methodology, etc. Furthermore, it can also be suggested that not only the assessment

system needs to be reformed but also the tertiary education background of the English teachers needs to

be considered to meet the goal of the curriculum. From the teachers' interviews, it has been found that

most of the teachers have received their honors and master's degrees in literature except two, who

obtained their master's in ELT and applied linguistics but honors in literature. The teachers' teaching

methodology is significantly influenced by their educational background as degrees in English

literature do not equip them adequately in English teaching and learning.

6.1.4 Recommendations

The researcher has come up with some suggestions based on the findings on how alternative

assessments can be included and developed in the context of Bangladesh including the SSC exam to

foster communicative language teaching method.

Firstly, the findings evoke that initiative must be taken to change the design of the high-stake

test based on the communicative language teaching approach to change the belief of the teachers and

students in teaching, learning, and assessing the English language.

Secondly, based on the test specification and object, the question pattern needs to be very

innovative, creative, and contextual.

Thirdly, any implementation of alternative assessments from the government must have the

gravity like the SSC exam so that it also has important consequences like the high-stake test which will

make the teachers and students prioritize the such practice of the assessment equally.

Fourthly, only the introduction of an assessment along with guidelines and instructions will not be effective if it is not monitored strictly.

Fifthly, to motivate and involve the students to do such types of communicative assessments, the teacher has to become a positive reinforcer which means the presence or addition of any stimulus to an act or the environment of that act which will increase the possibility of that act to be repeated again (Feldman, 2016).

Sixthly, a change in teachers' and students' beliefs is needed to practice the such type of communicative assessment. For this, the first thing that must be considered is to understand the differences between the program ELT and Applied Linguistics and Literature.

Seventhly, it is very difficult to say the way speaking and listening tests can be incorporated in the context of Bangladesh but not completely impossible. For example, a format of one examiner (playing both the role of examiner and interlocuter) and one/ two candidates can be used for a speaking test.

Finally, to face coronavirus-like pandemics, the teachers and students need to be aware and trained regarding the use of alternatives to the classroom, classroom and testing materials, and assessment. For instance, remote teaching and learning are impossible to think of without a computer/smartphone, internet, and significant software. Tasks should be designed in such ways that they can be practiced using such software, like, Google Docs, which works better for writing as well as group work. Also, many plagiarism tools, like Turnitin, can be used to check the writing.

References

Ahmed, M. K., & Chowdhury, T. M. (2020). English Language Learning in English and Bengali

　　Medium Schools of Chittagong. *English for Specific Purposes World*, *22*(61), 1–26.

　　https://www.esp-world.info

Alamgir, M. (2020, October 24). Assignments for class 6-9 students to start on Nov 1. *The Daily Star*.

　　Retrieved from https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/assignments-class-6-9-students-

　　start-nov-1-1983217.

Alderson, J. C., & Wall, D. (1992). Does Washback Exist? *Applied Linguistics*,

　　14, (2), 115–129, https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/14.2.115

Ali, M. M., & Obaidul, H. M. (2020). Teaching English to the Test: Why Does Negative Washback

　　Exist within Secondary Education in Bangladesh? *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and*

　　International Education, *50*(4), 1–18. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1535890

Ali, M. M., & Walker, A. L. (2014). 'Bogged down' ELT in Bangladesh: Problems and policy. *English*

　　Today, *30*(2), 33–38. http://journals.cambridge.org/abstract_S0266078414000108

Ali, M. M., Hamid, M. O., & Hardy, I. (2018). Ritualisation of testing: problematising high-stakes

　　English-language testing in Bangladesh. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International*

　　Education, *50*(4), 1–21. https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1535890

Al-Mahrooqi, R., & Denman, C. (2018). Alternative Assessment. In *The TESOL Encyclopedia of*

　　English Language Teaching (pp. 1–6). John Wiley and Sons.

　　https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118784235.eelt0325

Amin, M. A., & Greenwood, J. (2018). The examination system in Bangladesh and its impact: on

　　curriculum, students, teachers and society. *Language Testing in Asia*, *8*(1), 1-18.

　　https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-018-0060-9

Anderson, R. S. (1998). Why Talk About Different Ways to Grade? The Shift from Traditional

Assessment to Alternative Assessment. *New Directions for Teaching and Learning*, *1998*(74), 5–16. https://doi.org/10.1002/tl.7401

Begum, M., & Farooqui, S. (2008). School Based Assessment: Will it Really Change the Education Scenario in Bangladesh? *International Education Studies*, *1*(2), 45–53. http://www.ccsenet.org/journal/index.php/es

Bell, J., & Waters, S. (2014). *Doing Your Research Project* (6th ed.). U.S.: McGraw-Hill Education.

Brown, H. D., & Abeywickrama, P. (2018). *Language Assessment: Principles and Classroom Practices* (3rd ed.). U.S.: Pearson Education ESL.

Cameron, L. (2001). *Teaching Languages to Young Learners.* Cambridge. U. K.: Cambridge University Press.

Centre for Teaching and Learning, BYU. (n.d.). *Using Alternative Assessments*. Center For and Learning. Using Alternative Assessments | CENTER FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING https://ctl.byu.edu/using-alternative-assessments (byu.edu)

Cheng, L., & Fox, J. (2017). *Assessment in the Language Classroom: Teachers Supporting Students Learning Applied Linguistics for the Language Classroom* (A. Curtis, Ed.; 1ˢᵗed.) [E-book].U.K.: Macmillan Education.

Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational Research* (4th ed.). U.K.: Pearson Education.

Creswell, J. W., & Clark, V. L. P. (2017). *Designing and Conducting Mixed Methods Research* (3rd ed.). U.K.: SAGE Publications.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (5th ed.). U.S.: SAGE Publications.

Dann, R. (2014). Assessment as learning: blurring the boundaries of assessment and learning for theory, policy and practice. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy & Practice*, *21*(1), 149–166. https://doi.org/10.1080/0969594X.2014.898128

Das, S., Shaheen, R., Shrestha, P., Rahman, A., & Khan, R. (2014). Policy versus ground reality:

    secondary English language assessment system in Bangladesh. *The Curriculum Journal*, *25*(3),

    326–343. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585176.2014.909323

Dawson, P., Bearman, M., Boud, D. J., Hall, M., Molloy, E. K., Bennett, S., & Joughin, G. (2013).

    Assessment Might Dictate the Curriculum, But What Dictates Assessment? *Teaching &*

    Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal, *1*(1), 107–111.

    https://doi.org/10.2979/teachlearninqu.1.1.107

Dikli, S. (2003). Assessment at a distance: Traditional vs. alternative assessments. *The Turkish Online*

    Journal of Educational Technology, 2(3), 13–19.

Douglas, D. (2010). *Understanding Language Testing* (B. Comrie & G. Corbett, Eds.; 1st ed).

    U.S.: Hodder Education.

Feldman, R. S. (2016). *Understanding Psychology* (13th ed.). U. S.: McGraw-Hill Education.

Fox J. (2016) Using Portfolios for Assessment/Alternative Assessment. In: Shohamy E., Or I., May S.

    (eds) *Language Testing and Assessment. Encyclopedia of Language and Education* (3rd ed.).

    Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02326-7_9-1

Freeman, D. L. (2008). *Techniques and Principles in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.). U.S: Oxford

    University Press.

Hasan, S. M. Z. (2020, October 26). Implementation of short syllabus in secondary to start Nov   1.

    Risingbd Online Bangla News Portal.

    https://www.risingbd.com/english/education/news/74887

Herman, J. L., Aschbacher, P. R., & Winters, L. (1992). *Practical Guide to Alternative*

    Assessment. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development. U.S.

Huerta-Macías, A. (2002). Alternative Assessment: Responses to Commonly Asked Questions.

    In J. C. Richards & W. A. Renandya (Eds.), *Methodology in Language Teaching: An*

Anthology of Current Practice, Cambridge Professional Learning (pp. 338–343). chapter,

    Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

    https://socialscienceresearch.org/index.php/GJHSS/article/view/2845

Islam, M. S., Hasan, M. K., Sultana, S., Karim, A., & Rahman, M. M. (2021). English language

    assessment in Bangladesh today: principles, practices, and problems. *Lang Test Asia*, *11*(1), 1–

    21. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-020-00116-z

Khan, R. (2020). English Language Assessment in Bangladesh: Washback effect of current practices

    and the way forward [E-book]. In *The Routledge Handbook of English Language Education in*

    Bangladesh (1st ed., pp. 115–129). London. U.K.: Routledge.

    https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429356803

McConlogue, T. (2020). Developing Inclusive Curriculum and Assessment Practices.

    In Assessment and Feedback in Higher Education: A Guide for Teachers (pp. 137-150).

    London: UCL Press. doi:10.2307/j.ctv13xprqb.14

Miller, N. (2002) 'Alternative forms of formative and summative assessment', in J. Houston and

    D. Whigham (eds), *The Handbook for Economics Lecturers: Assessment*, Bristol:

    Economics LTSN, http://www.economicsnetwork.ac.uk/handbook/

Monib, W. K., Karimi, A. Q., & Nijat, N. (2020). Effects of Alternative Assessment in EFL Classroom:

    A Systematic Review. *American International Journal of Education and Linguistics Research*,

    3(2), 7–18. https://www.acseusa.org/journal/index.php/aijelr

Nunan, D. (Ed.). (2003). *Practical English Language Teaching* (1st ed.). U.K: McGraw-Hill

    Companies.

Podder, R., & Mizan, M. M. R. (2020). Alternative Assessment Practices in Secondary Schools   in

    Bangladesh. *Education and Development Research Council (EDRC)*, *6*(3), 22–33.

    https://www.edrcbd.org

Rahman, A., & Khan, R. (2021). English Language Testing Practices at the Secondary Level: A

Case Study from Bangladesh. In B. Lanteigne, C. Coombe, & J. D. Brown (Eds.), *Challenges in Language Testing Around the World: Insights for language test users* (pp. 447–464).

Singapore: Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-33-4232-3_32

Rahman, K. A., Seraj, P. M. I., Hasan, M. K., Namaziandost, E., & Tilwani, S. A. (2021).

Washback of assessment on English teaching-learning practice at secondary schools. *Language Testing in Asia*, *11*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-021-00129-2

Rahman, M. F., Babu, R., & Ashrafuzzaman, M. (2012). Assessment and Feedback Practices in

the English Language Classroom. *Journal of NELTA*, *16*(1-2), 97–106.

https://doi.org/10.3126/nelta.v16i1-2.6133

Rahman, M. M., & Pandian, A. (2018). A Critical Investigation of English Language Teaching

in Bangladesh: Unfulfilled expectations after two decades of Communicative Language

Teaching. *English Today*, *34*(3), 43–49. Cambridge University Press.

https://doi.org/10.1017/S026607841700061X

Rahman, M. M., Islam, M. S., Karim, A., Chowdhury, T. A., Rahman, M. M., Seraj, P. M. I., & Singh,

M. K. M. (2019). English language teaching in Bangladesh today: Issues, outcomes and

implications. *Language Testing in Asia*, *9*(9), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0085-8

Richards, J. C., & Rodgers, T. S. (2002). *Approaches and Methods in Language Teaching* (2nd ed.).

U.K.:Cambridge University Press.

Sarantakos, S. (2013). *Social Research* (4th ed.). U. K. :Palgrave Macmillan.

Scrivener, J. (2011). *Learning Teaching: The Essential Guide to English Language Teaching* (3rd ed.).

U.K: Macmillan ELT.

Sultana, N. (2019). Language assessment literacy: an uncharted area for the English language

teachers in Bangladesh. *Language Testing in Asia*, *9*(1), 1–14. https://doi.org/10.1186/s40468-019-0077-8

Susanna, Obineli (2020). *Continuous assessment 2019*. Retrieved on 7 July 2022 from

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/339655960_CONTINUOUS_ASSESSMENT_2019

Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2008). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research* (1st ed.). U.K.: SAGE

Publications.

Tosuncuoglu, I. (2018). Importance of Assessment in ELT. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, *6*(9), 163–167. https://doi.org/10.11114/jets.v6i9.3443

Vaus, D. A. (2002). *Surveys in Social Research* (5th ed.). Australia.: Routledge.

Appendix

Assigned Task and Assessment Criteria on the basis of Revised Syllabus due to COVID-19, 2021

Class: Nine
Subject: English

Assignment Serial	Unit and Unit Tittle	Lesson no and Title	Assignment	Instruction	Assessment Rubrics
Assignment-1	Unit-1 Father of the Nation	Lesson 1: Bangabandhu's Family in 1971 Lesson 2: The tale of Home coming Lesson 3: Bangabandhu at the UN Lesson 4: Bangabandhu's Relationship with other Countries	Prepare a fact file (a short report of all the most important information on a person or subject) on the Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. You can use narratives, pictures, images, information, newspaper clips etc. to support your assignment. Write 180-200 words.	1.Topic/Title: 2.Introduction: 3.Body/Description: (Number or title of paragraphs may vary in writing the assignment) 4.Conclusion:	**Excellent:** 1.Cohesion and coherence are properly maintained. 2.The assignment has at least 10 kinds of information. 3.Vocabulary is varied, appropriate, and sufficient. **Very Good:** 1. There is occasional missing of cohesion and coherence. 2. The assignment has at least 8 kinds of information. 3. Vocabulary is generally varied and sufficient with little inappropriate use. **Good:** 1. Cohesion and coherence are not properly maintained. As a result, the writing is to a large extent disorganized. 2. The assignment has at least 6 kinds of information. 3. Use of vocabulary is limited. **Needs improvement:** 1. Cohesion and coherence are not at all maintained. As a result, the writing is very disorganized. 2. The assignment has at least 4 kinds of information. 3. Use of vocabulary is extremely limited with lot many inappropriate uses.

English Assignment 1

কোভিড-১৯ পরিস্থিতিতে ২০২১ শিক্ষাবর্ষের পুনর্বিন্যাসকৃত পাঠ্যসূচির ভিত্তিতে এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ ও মূল্যায়ন নির্দেশনা

শ্রেণি: ৯ম
বিষয়: ইংরেজী

এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজের ক্রম	অধ্যায় ও অধ্যায়ের শিরোনাম	পাঠ্যসূচিতে অন্তর্ভুক্ত পাঠ নম্বর ও বিষয়বস্তু	এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ	নির্দেশনা	মূল্যায়ন রুব্রিক্স
Assignment-2	Unit Two: Pastimes	Lesson 1: Have You any Favorite Pastime? Lesson 2: Reading Really Helps! Lesson 3: Change in Pastime Lesson 4: Change in Pastimes in Bangladesh Lesson 5: Pastimes Vary	Pastime may change generation to generation. Take an interview with your parents or grand-parents or elderly people of your family. Know about their pastime activities and take notes on them. Also think about the pastime activities of your generation. Write the differences and mention why these differences have taken place.	1.Topic/Title: 2.Introduction: 3.Body/Description: (para or para title may vary assignment to assignment) 4.Conclusion:	**Excellent:** 1. At least 5 reasons given in the writing. 2. Error free sentences 3. Appropriate vocabulary is used **Very Good:** 1. At least 3 reasons given in the writing. 2. Minor error in sentences. 3. Satisfactory vocabulary is used **Good:** 1. At least 2 reasons given in the writing. 2. Frequent error in sentences. 3. Good range of vocabulary is used and some misuse of vocabulary. **Needs improvement:** 1. One or irrelevant reasons given in the writing. 2. Lots of errors in sentences. 3. Inadequate vocabulary.

English Assignment 2

কোভিড-১৯ পরিস্থিতিতে ২০২১ শিক্ষাবর্ষের পাঠ্যসূচির ভিত্তিতে অ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ ও মূল্যায়ন নির্দেশনা

শ্রেণি: ৯ম   **বিষয়: ইংরেজী**

এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজের ক্রম	অধ্যায় ও অধ্যায়ের শিরোনাম	পাঠ্যসূচিতে অন্তর্ভুক্ত পাঠ নম্বর ও বিষয়বস্তু	এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ	নির্দেশনা	মূল্যায়ন রুব্রিক্স
Assignment-3	Unit Three: Events and Festivals	Lesson 1: Mother's Day Lesson 2: May Day Lesson 3: International Mother Language Day-1 Lesson 4: International Mother Language Day-2 Lesson 5: Independence Day Lesson 6: Pahela Boishakh	This year we are going to celebrate the Golden Jubilee of our Independence Day. If You are assigned to organize a cultural programme to celebrate the day at your school, what your plan will be to stage the program highlighting the heroic struggle and sacrifice in 1971. Narrate in brief in not more than 200 words.	1.Topic/Title: 2.Introduction: 3.Body/Description: (para or para title may vary assignment to assignment) 4.Conclusion:	**Excellent:** 1. At least 10 items will be included in the programme. 2. Error free sentences 3. Appropriate vocabulary is used **Very Good:** 1. At least 7 items will be included in the programme. 2. Minor error in sentences. 3. Satisfactory vocabulary is used **Good:** 1. At least 5 items will be included in the programme. 2. Frequent error in sentences. 3. Good range of vocabulary is used and some misuse of vocabulary. **Needs improvement:** 1. Items are few and maintained in the planning of the programme. 2. Lots of errors in sentences. 3. Misuse of vocabulary.

Assignment 3

কোভিড-১৯ পরিস্থিতিতে ২০২১ শিক্ষাবর্ষের পাঠ্যসূচির ভিত্তিতে অ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ ও মূল্যায়ন নির্দেশনা

শ্রেণি: ৯ম   **বিষয়: ইংরেজী**

এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজের ক্রম	অধ্যায় ও অধ্যায়ের শিরোনাম	পাঠ্যসূচিতে অন্তর্ভুক্ত পাঠ নম্বর ও বিষয়বস্তু	এ্যাসাইনমেন্ট বা নির্ধারিত কাজ	নির্দেশনা	মূল্যায়ন রুব্রিক্স
Assignment-5	Unit Four: Are We Aware?	Lesson 1: The Ferry Boat Lesson 2: Are we Too Many? Lesson 3: Our Food and Shelter Lesson 4: The Story of Lipi Lesson 5: Let's become skilled workforce	Bangladesh is one of the densely populated countries in the world where about 18 crores people live in within 1,47,570 square kilometers. The age range of about 10 crores people is 15-64. By upgrading unskilled workforce to skilled workforce many countries in this world have turned into a developed one. Think how Bangladesh can reach in the level of developed countries by making unskilled people to skilled workforce. Give five (5) ideas and explain in not more than 200 words.	1.Topic/Title: 2.Introduction: 3.Body/Description: (para or para title may vary assignment to assignment) 4.Conclusion:	**Excellent:** 1. 5 reasons given in the writing. 2. Error free sentences. 3. Appropriate vocabulary is used. **Very Good:** 1. At least 3 reasons given in the writing. 2. Minor error in sentences. 3. Satisfactory vocabulary is used. **Good:** 1. At least 2 reasons given in the writing. 2. Frequent error in sentences. 3. Good range of vocabulary is used and some misuse of vocabulary. **Needs improvement:** 1. One or irrelevant reasons given in the writing. 2. Lots of errorsin sentences. 3. Inadequate vocabulary.

Assignment 4

Questionnaire for teachers:

1. Could you please share your educational background with me?

2. Did you take any training regarding English teaching?

3. Currently, how are you teaching and assessing English language in your class? Could you give an example on the way you are teaching and assessing English?

4. How are you practicing English assignment?

5. Has government provided you with instructions or training related to English assignment?

6. How do you mark or provide feedback on the assignment?

7. What is your opinion regarding the solutions that are uploaded on the internet and students copying from it?

8. Could you explain me the term CLT and how the activities in the English assignments are related to CLT?

9. What are the other assessments used beside the English assignments?

10. How students are being promoted?

11. Do you consider it as an extra load? Why?

12. What English language skills do you practice and asses currently?

13. How do you focus on the form of a foreign language when you teach? (Grammar, Vocabulary, Pronunciation).

14. How do you design tests for your course? What are your ways of implementing activities/tasks?

Questionnaire for Students:

1. What school are you studying? Private or public?

2. How are you learning English currently?

3. How does your teacher assess English language?

4. Could you please share some topics, exercises that are being practiced by your teacher currently? Is

it like before? Do you find any changes in teaching practice currently?

5. How does your English teacher assist or guide you in the English assignment?

6. Do you enjoy doing English assignment?

7. Do you take help from any other sources while doing the assignments?

8. Which type of assessment is prioritized more? English assignment or exam?

9. How much time has been allotted for the submission of the assignment?

10. How does your teacher grade your English assignment?

11. Does your teacher provide any feedback?

12. Do you prepare yourself before doing the assignments?

13. What materials are used in learning and assessing English?

14. Has your teacher provided any instructions or guidelines on assignments?

15. How is your exam graded or marked?

16. What English language skills are being practiced by your teacher?

17. What English language skills are being assessed through the assignment?