

English Pronunciation Difficulties of Students in the Sub-Urban Areas of Sylhet: A

Secondary Scenario

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ABSTRACT

This research paper tries to find out the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet and the possible barriers that work behind this problem. It also tries to investigate the fact that whether their local or Sylheti accent is responsible to mispronounce some particular sounds or not. It gives an introduction on a general scenario of the Bengali medium schools in sub-urban areas in Sylhet division and to what extent importance is given on pronunciation skill in there. In theoretical part, along with other theories it covers detail information about what is pronunciation, why is it important, and why is it being overlooked in our country. It also tries to bring out the responses of teacher while teaching pronunciation and the reasons of English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students of overall Bangladesh and particularly in Sylhet area. A survey has conducted among some Bengali medium schools in Sylhet, to finds out the possible barriers that demotivate them to develop their pronunciation skills. The data of the survey was collected from both the students and teachers and it shows the reasons that prominently responsible for this problem. Finally, this paper concluded with some possible solution to overcome the pronunciation difficulties in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet.

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CHAPTER 1- INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

English is considered as the global communicative language in our present world. Similarly in Bangladesh, learning English language is given sufficient emphasis nowadays to develop its people's communicative competence through the basic skills- reading, writing, speaking and listening. However, learning proper pronunciation is the most difficult part, and in this regard Maniruzzaman (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) stated that, pronunciation is hardly given enough importance while teaching and learning English at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Bangladesh (p. 12).

Many schools or educational institutions are giving importance on learning proper pronunciation nowadays, whereas Nath et al. (2011) stated that, Sylhet division is still a low performing region in terms of education (Exploring Low Performance in Education: The Case of Sylhet Division, para. 3). Although some schools of urban areas in Sylhet division are doing really good in providing quality English language learning, based on the rate of primary and secondary education completers, the sub-urban areas lag much behind than the national average. The students of these schools lack English speaking efficiency due to lack of practice as well as their poor pronunciation skills.

Therefore, the aim of this paper is to focus on the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in sub-urban areas of Sylhet

1.2 Problem Statement

In cities like Dhaka, Chittagong, Sylhet, Comilla many Bengali medium schools have been working on the pronunciation sector and has brought improvement as well. However, still in some sub-urban areas of Sylhet like- Moulvibazar, Kulaura, Komolganj etc. learning and teaching pronunciation is being constantly overlooked. The schools do not give much importance to this area. Hence, they face a great deal of English pronunciation difficulties. For example- they do not know how to differentiate between the sounds “Bear” and “Beer” words. They pronounce both words exactly the same way. Regarding this issue Jahan (n.d) stated in her article that, inappropriate pronunciation of English will make people misunderstand the speaker easily (p. 36). It is assumed that some reasons might be working behind this issue and these are—firstly, students do not get much scope for speaking English in an English language classroom here that creates lack of practice or exercise to improve the pronunciation skill. Secondly, it becomes hard for a teacher to teach or work on proper pronunciation of almost 50-55 students in a given class time, since there is no extra class on pronunciation or speaking, so this is really time consuming. Thirdly, sometimes local/Sylheti accent can causes mispronunciation. To be more specific, here some students cannot achieve the proper pronunciation due to the influence of their local (Sylheti) accent or it can be the teachers’ local accent influence that makes the students adapt the wrong pronunciation. Moreover, the classes follow the GTM method that hardly encourage the communicative way, which again makes the students get less chance to speak or communicate in English. In addition, there are no individual arrangements to evaluate the pronunciation skill in the Bengali medium schools of sub-urban areas in Sylhet.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

This research paper will be focusing on the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet and the target level of this study is the Secondary level (students from level 6-10).

1.4 Central Research Questions

- a) What are the possible barriers behind English pronunciation practice?
- b) Do they have any problem with pronouncing any specific sound or syllable due to their Sylheti accent? If yes then what are those specific sounds?

CHAPTER 2- LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Learning English language would not be successful if a person cannot communicate with others; and an inappropriate pronunciation often creates misunderstanding which causes a breakdown in communication. Hence learning proper pronunciation is really important for a successful communication.

2.2 What is Pronunciation?

Pronunciation is basically known as the production of sounds that we use to create meaning ("Fact", 2002). Similarly, Ur (2010) stated that, the idea of pronunciation can be described as a combination of the sounds of the language as well as stress, rhythm and intonation (p. 47).

2.3 Why Pronunciation is Important?

In her article, Jahan (n.d) mentioned about the importance of pronunciation in case of communication. According to her, students of Sylhet division had no scope to learn English as a second language for non-availability of English medium schools for a long time. Inappropriate pronunciation of English will make people misunderstand the speaker easily, whereas, proper pronunciation will encourage them to communicate with the speaker willingly (p. 1).

Jahan also added that, teaching Pronunciation is the most complicated but a significant aspect of ESL/EFL teaching at the same time (p. 1). According to her, it is quite impossible for ESL learners to achieve a perfect native like accent. The communication process will be successful if the pronunciation of the learners can easily be understood by the efficient

speakers of English (p. 2). Moreover, Hancock (2003) said that, pronunciation is essential for speaking and listening (p. 6).

Moreover Mumeneen (2011) added that, students with BA degree in English are found to have problems in English pronunciation; as a result they often fail to impress the interview board in a job market. Moreover, they also face many problems while communicating with others in their daily lives due to this lacking (p. 14).

On the other hand, while giving examples of other countries, Lin, Fan and Chen and Moniruzzman (as cited in Howlader, 2010) described that like Bangladesh, some teachers in Taiwan as well argue that English pronunciation is not actually important. Students require to show their pronunciation skill only in few tests (p. 4).

2.4 Why is it being overlooked in Bangladesh?

According to Howlader (2010), teaching pronunciation has been overlooked in ESL/EFL sites for the past few eras and GTM became the principal method. Later audio lingual method followed the traditional way for pronunciation practice through minimal pair drills and short conversations (p. 1). He also stated that, the condition of English in Bangladesh is not that much bad, however the issue of accent still can be seen in oral communication. Moreover, English language teachers are much reluctant to teach pronunciation in the class (p. 2). Furthermore, Howlader also said that, English has become the compulsory course in Bangladesh right after the arrival of CLT. It included the listening and speaking as its curriculum but overlooked the pronunciation (p. 2).

According to Morley (as cited in Howlader, 2010), till the 1960s teaching and learning pronunciation was regarded as pointless non-communicative drill and exercise strategies (p.

1). Likewise, Gilbert (as cited in Howlader, 2010) also stated that, in spite of carrying an essential link to communication through listening and speaking, pronunciation is being overlooked in the syllabus, materials as well as in the classroom activities (p. 2). Furthermore, Maniruzzaman (2008) also mentioned that, pronunciation is a vital part in case of learning second/foreign language because it directly affects learners' communicative competence and performance. Nevertheless, teaching EFL pronunciation is neglected in the syllabus, material and classroom, especially in Bangladesh (p. 1).

According to Moniruzzman (as cited in Howlader, 2010), in EFL countries like Bangladesh pronunciation is still being ignored. The communicative competence of learners' fails to reach the competent level because listening and speaking skills are not properly taught in the classroom and there is no particular course on pronunciation in the curriculum of Bangladesh (p. 3).

2.5 Teacher's response to teach Pronunciation

Alam (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) claims that, most of the teachers do not give any effective tasks for pronunciation practice during the class period. It is quite impossible to make one's pronunciation, intonation and stress perfect by only theoretical knowledge because the achievement of a desired standard needs a lot of practice (p. 13).

Besides, Maniruzzaman (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) stated that, pronunciation is an inevitable fact in case of listening and speaking as reception and production of information highly influenced by intelligible pronunciation (p. 12). Similarly, Hancock (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) maintains that pronunciation is inseparably tied with listening and speaking. However, pronunciation is hardly given enough importance while teaching and learning English at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels in Bangladesh (p. 12)

Moreover Maniruzzaman (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) also argued that, most of the EFL teachers avoid pronunciation instruction in the classroom by smart tricks because they do not have the idea of useful and effective strategies to teach pronunciation and which approach to follow when they meet a specific problem (p. 13-14).

Furthermore, Jahan (n.d) stated that, sometimes teachers emphasize on teaching only the enunciation of difficult sounds and allow the class to produce native like sounds, although this effort does not work among the learners after the semester (p. 2). According to Hoque (2011), teachers only give importance to the reading, writing and grammar sections of the textbooks that are relevant to passing the SSC and HSC examinations (p. 2). Moreover, Shuchi (2013) added that some teachers might have lack of qualification and that is why they might not aware of their own English language (p. 9).

Besides, according to Derwing and Munro (2005), the study of pronunciation has been sidelined within the area of applied linguistics and for that reason teachers are often left to depend on their own intuitions with little direction. Although some teachers can successfully teach their students pronunciation under these conditions, a large number of them are reluctant to do so (p. 2).

Wei (as cited in Howlader, 2010) argues that, some teachers have poor knowledge about the different strategies of teaching pronunciation and that is why they do not find it interesting. This reason often makes the students lag behind in better pronunciation and in achieving effective communicative competence (p. 4). On the other hand, Dalton (as cited in Howlader, 2010) describes it as the Cinderella area of the English language because according to him, the teachers and learners might think that it will be under grasp without any effort (p. 4).

2.6 Reasons behind pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students

According to Nunan (as cited in Jahan, n.d), teaching pronunciation is dealt from different perspective because impact of the first language seems prominent in case of pronunciation and only exceptional learners can achieve the mastery over pronunciation. It does not matter that they start learning language after their puberty (p. 1). According to Khan (2007), due to various phonological differences in L1, pronunciation patterns of learners' L2 often get influenced (p. 7).

On the other hand, Sultana and Arif (as cited in Hoque, 2011) have pointed out a number of reasons of Bengali learners' mispronunciation, such as lack of their knowledge about the difference between the letters and sounds of a word. Moreover, they do not emphasize on the pronunciation when a word is spelt and as a result these learners are unable to follow either syllabic or phonological divisions of words properly (p. 3). Besides, according to them, the use of different local dialects with different pronunciation influences the English language of non-native English speakers in Bangladesh (ibid).

While describing the reason behind pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students, Hoque (2011) described that one of the common fault of some Bengali speakers of English is that they enunciate only the first part of the diphthong and disregard the second part (p. 6). Hai and Ball (as cited in Hoque, 2011) stated that, one of the reasons behind wrong pronunciations of the Bengali speakers is, their aspiration of the plosives / p, t / often creates confusion. For instance: Supper-suffer, three-tree, through-true etc. (p. 8).

While finding out the difficulties that Bangladeshi speakers of English usually face, Rahman (as cited in Hoque, 2011) has found that in Bangladesh, English is spoken more

likely with an accent associated with mother tongue that ignores the sound patterns, stress, rhythm and the intonation systems of English (p. 8).

Moreover, Burman (as cited in Ostalski, 2009) stated that, the Bengali speakers are unable to follow the special rhythmic qualities of English because the phonemes of Bangla are patterned differently from it. Hence, the Bengali speakers might find it hard to pronounce some consonant clusters of English (p. 6). According to Rahman (2012) the difficulty not only lies in the fact that English have some particular consonant sounds that are different from Bengali sound pattern but also that there is little relationship between the English alphabet and it's sound-patterns.

Furthermore, in his article Hasan (2013) has mentioned that, Bengali learners usually have two basic inter-related problems while learning English. One is that they lack the idea of phonological differences between the monophthongs of Bangla and English; another one is, as a logical consequence of the first, they often mix up the features of the phonemes of both languages. To be more specific, their lack of knowledge forces them to resort to mispronunciation (p. 1).

Hasan also stated that, standard pronunciation is not always necessary to make our communication successful. Nevertheless, the lacking of English phonological features in our students' discourse, might create an "accent" or there may even be a communication breakdown (p. 1).

2.7 Reasons behind pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in Sylhet

In her article Farhana (2010) mentioned that, the student of Sylhet division were deprived of the opportunity to learn English as second language due to the non-availability of

English medium schools for a long time because most of the English medium schools in Bangladesh are centred in the capital city Dhaka. Similarly, Shuchi (2013) also added that, it is difficult to teach Standard English in the classroom because the teacher has to face many problems due to the dialectal accent of students (p. 8).

2.8 Possible solutions to overcome the Difficulties

To create consciousness and concern for pronunciation, Kenworthy (as cited in Jahan, n.d) has referred that, English pronunciation is comprised of various components like sounds, stress and variation all together, so the learners need to recognize the function as well as the structure of it. Besides, they need to develop a consciousness for pronunciation and also need to be aware of that their poor and unintelligible language can make their utterances annoying to themselves and to their listeners as well (p. 2).

Robertson (as cited in Jahan, n.d) has especially talked about the necessities of the Asian students. According to him, Asian students should practice some important areas of speech like- country specific complex sounds, cluster problems, th' words, linking words and sounds. Therefore, teachers and learners are required to have essential knowledge about those sounds, especially the sounds related to English language (p. 1).

Pennington, Richards and Nunan (as cited in Jahan, n.d) describes the present condition of research on teaching pronunciation from the perspective of CLT. They have suggested that teachers should be focusing on a long-term goal to teach pronunciation and it should be taught as an integral part of spoken language. Besides, they also suggested that lessening the amount of native language influence should be the aim of this teaching. According to them, since pronunciation is associated with listening vocabulary and grammar, the teachers should focus these interdependent aspects (p. 2).

Similarly, Morley (as cited in Jahan, n.d.) mentioned that, supra-segmental aspects like stress, rhythm and intonation should be given importance in order to improve pronunciation, since the aim of those not just to complement meaning but to create meaning (p. 2). Besides, Jahan (n.d) again suggested that, in order to obtain fluency and accuracy in speaking non-native speakers should focus on some methods related to speech mechanism. It would help them to pronounce the proper sounds of English language (p. 3).

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the method used by the researcher to collect and analysis data from different Bengali medium schools.

3.2 Research Design

The objective of this study is to find out that, to what extent emphasis are given on teaching pronunciation and while teaching/learning pronunciation, what types of problem English teachers and learners face and how they can overcome those problems. This research is both quantitative and qualitative in form, but the students' questionnaire is given in a statement pattern rather than a question pattern. Because statement pattern would be more helpful and easier to get the response of the participants, since the participants are from secondary level.

This design included the students of secondary level (6-10) of different Bengali medium schools and the teachers of English classes as respondents. The design also enabled the researcher to capture the class environment and the interaction ability as well as the opportunities of students provided by the schools.

3.3 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of the research study consisted of several theories; however, the main focus was on the theory, The Influence of the Local Varieties on the Sound Patterns of English. The other supporting theories were- The Effect of Bangla dialect on English Language Teaching: Teachers' Perspectives and Attitudes, Teaching and Learning

Pronunciation in ESL/EFL classes of Bangladesh, and Teaching English Pronunciation in Countries where English is a Second Language: Bangladesh Perspective etc.

3.4. Sampling

For the study, the researcher has chosen 4 Bengali medium schools of Moulvibazar district in Sylhet as a sample unit to collect data. The participants both teachers and students were cooperative and helpful in filling up the questionnaire.

3.4.1. Students from various Bengali medium Schools

In the research there were 108 students from four different Bengali medium schools. The age range was from 13-17 years old. There were 61 female students and 47 were male. The survey of this research was done on both combined and non-combined schools. The researcher also observed the class environment and the participants during the class time and tried to evaluate the problem from the interaction between SS and ST.

3.4.2. Teachers from various Bengali medium Schools

It was possible to get information from only 12 teachers from different schools. 8 of them were really helpful and cooperative. Maximum teachers of those schools could not manage their time to participate in this assessment.

Institution wise numbers of student and teacher respondents are given bellow:

Table 1: Detailed Sampling Plan

Institution	Teachers No.	Students No.	Class Level
School 1	4	27	7 and 8

School 2	4	27	8 and 9
School 3	2	30	7, 9 and 10
School 4	2	24	6 and 7

3.5. Setting

The researcher has collected the data from four different Bengali medium schools. Three of the schools were from Moulvibazar city and the other one was from Kulaura city. The teachers were present in the class during the students' evaluation and were monitoring and helping the students to understand the questionnaire. Since the teachers were present in class during the survey, the setting was formal; and because of this formal setting the researcher in some cases did not get authentic information from the respondents. Teachers' survey was done in their office room at their convenient time.

3.6. Instrumentation

The researcher used separate questionnaire for both teachers and students. The researcher organized the questions in a way so that the participants feel easy and comfortable to answer and express their opinions. In student's questionnaire (see appendix A), the respondents had to choose and tick an appropriate option from five options for each item\statement-

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly Disagree

For analysis, the researcher converted the responses into mathematical figure. The students' questionnaire was in the form of statement, not questions. On the other hand, the questionnaire for teachers (see appendix) was in the qualitative form. There were 10 questions for students and 8 questions for teachers.

3.7. Data Collection Procedure

The data were collected from the teachers and students of four different Bengali medium schools. For collecting data, the researcher had to contact with the headmasters/ headmistress of those schools and tell them the purpose of the research to get permission. The researcher also had to take permission from the teachers, whose classes she observed for conducting teachers' and students' survey.

3.8. Data Analysis Procedure

After collecting data they were analyzed and organized very carefully. The collected data from the students and the teachers were presented in two separate tables. First, the researcher compiled the students' responses and arranges those numbers according to each statement in first table. Later on, total number of students' responses for each item were counted with percentage and listed in another table. Then these were analyzed according to the central research question. On the other hand, the researcher converted the teachers' responses into percentage and arranged them in another table (see Appendix B). Besides, the elaborate responses of teachers' for each question are also discussed in the finding and discussion part.

The assessment was done to find out the reasons behind the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet through the separate

questionnaire. By these two separate questionnaires we got to know about the reasons from different point views.

3.9. Obstacles Encountered

It was not possible for the researcher to cover a good number of schools in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet, because maximum numbers of schools were closed due to Eid vacation. However, the limited amount of data was studied very carefully to find out the main reasons behind their pronunciation difficulties. The researcher tried her best to make the research as impartial and lawful as possible. Likewise, some of the students were not cooperative and refused to fill up the survey questionnaire as it was not relevant to their study. Some of them were hesitating to fill up the questionnaire because it was in English. Moreover, the researcher had to explain few words to the students from questionnaire, which were unknown to them. On the other hand, it was a bit harder to get teacher's time to fill up their questionnaire. Most of the teachers were busy doing their work; some of them were on leave. Therefore, the researcher could manage only 12 teachers to fill up their questionnaire. Few of them were reluctant to participate, but others were really co-operative.

CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to develop and analyze the research data that were collected from the teachers and students of different Bengali medium schools.

4.2. Result Found from Students' Questionnaire Survey

The respondents had to tick the appropriate option from the five options for each statement in the student questionnaire. For analysis the responses were converted into percentage. Five options that were given for each statement are as follows-

Strongly Agree

Agree

Neutral

Disagree

Strongly disagree

The results of students' responses are presented below through two separate tables. First table will show the actual number of responses given to each statement. Then the second table will show the average numbers after converting the responses into percentage.

Table 1

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1. Learning proper pronunciation is necessary.	32	61	15		

2. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking inside the classroom.	8	76		24	
3. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking outside the classroom.	5	49	47	6	1
4. Teacher does not put emphasis on pronunciation while taking English classes.		83	15	10	
5. Teacher does not correct pronunciation error in class.		40	19	41	8
6. Teacher uses local/ Sylheti accent, while teaching English.		45	45	18	
7. Your local/ Sylheti accent comes along, while speaking English.		85	13	10	
8. Sylheti accent often causes problem with pronouncing specific sound.	10	75	10	13	
9. /p/ sound is often pronounced like /f/, due o Sylheti accent.		90	11	7	
10. /s/ sound is often pronounced like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to Sylheti accent.	4	31	69	4	

Now all these responses are converted into percentage-

Table 2

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1 st statement	29.6%	56.5%	13.9%		
2 nd statement	7.4%	70.4%		22.2%	
3 rd statement	4.6%	45.4%	43.5%	5.5%	4.6%
4 th statement		76.8%	13.9%	9.2%	
5 th statement		37%	17.6%	38%	7.4%
6 th statement		41.7%	41.7%	16.7%	
7 th statement		78.7%	12%	9.2%	
8 th statement	9.2%	69.4%	9.2%	12%	
9 th statement		83.3%	10.2%	6.5%	
10 th statement	3.7%	28.7%	63.9%	3.7%	

4.3. Discussion of the Students' Questionnaire Survey Results

In response to the first statement (table 1), 32 (29.6%) students strongly agreed, 61 (56.5%) students just normally agreed, and 15 (13.9%) students gave neutral answers. Therefore, it seems majority of students agreed to the fact that learning proper pronunciation is necessary.

In response to the second statement (table 1), 8 (7.4%) students strongly agreed, 76 (70.4%) students just normally agreed, and 24 (22.2%) students normally disagreed. From the

findings it seems, majority of students agreed that, students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking inside the classroom.

In reply to the third statement (table 1), 5 (4.6%) students strongly agreed, 49 (45.4%) students normally agreed, 47 (43.5%) students were neutral, 6 (5.5%) students disagreed, and 1 (0.9%) students strongly disagreed. So here it can be said that majority of students agreed that students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking outside the classroom.

Then in response to the fourth statement (table 1), 83 (76.8%) students agreed, 15 (13.9%) students were neutral and 10 (9.2%) students were disagreed. Therefore, it seems maximum average of students agreed that teacher does not put emphasize on pronunciation while taking English classes.

Similarly in response to the fifth statement (table 1), 40 (37%) students agreed, 19 (17.6%) students were neutral, 41 (38%) students disagreed and 8 (7.4%) students strongly disagreed. Therefore, it can be said that, majority of students disagreed to the fact that teacher does not correct pronunciation in class.

In reply to the sixth statement (table 1), 45 (41.7%) students agreed, 45 (41.7%) students were neutral and 18 (16.7%) students disagreed. Here it seems that majority half students agreed to this fact and at the same time other majority half students gave neutral answer to this statement. So, it can be said that majority of students were neutral to the fact that teacher uses local/ Sylheti accent, while teaching English.

In response to the seventh statement (table 1), 85 (78.7%) students agreed, 13 (12%) students were neutral, and 10 (9.2%) students disagreed. Therefore, here it seems maximum

average of students were agreed that their local/ Sylheti accent comes along, while speaking English.

Similarly, in reply to the eighth statement (table 1), 10 (9.2%) students strongly agreed, 75 (69.4%) students agreed, 10 (9.2%) students were neutral, and 13 (12%) students disagreed. Therefore, it seems that majority of students agreed that Sylheti accent often causes problem with pronouncing specific sounds.

Then again in in reply to the ninth statement (table 1), 90 (83.3%) students agreed, 11 (10.2%) students were neutral and 7 (6.5%) students disagreed. So, here it seems again majority of students agreed to the fact that /p/ sound is often pronounced like /f/, due to Sylheti accent.

Finally in response to the 10th statement (table 1), 4 (3.7%) students strongly agreed, 31 (28.7%) students agreed, 69 (63.9%) students were neutral, and 4 (3.7%) students disagreed. Here the result was neutral because maximum average of students gave neutral answer to the statement that /s/ sound is often pronounced like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to Sylheti accent.

4.4. Results and Discussion of the Teachers' Questionnaire Survey

There were 8 questions for the teachers and the questionnaire was in the qualitative form. In this section, the summary of responses of teachers' questionnaire survey are shown in a table and then analyzed and discussed sequently. Here, 'R' indicates the responses of four schools converted into percentage together and 'Q' indicates the questions.

Table 3**Summary of the responses of teachers' questionnaire survey**

Responses	R1	R2	R3	R4
Q1. According to you, what could be the major reason behind the English Pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet division?	5 (41.6%) teachers said that lack of practice is the main reason behind the pronunciation difficulties.	4 (33.3%) teachers said that local accent is main reason.	3 (25%) teachers said that poor teaching system or negligence towards teaching pronunciation is the reason.	---
Q2. Do you think the activities being used in classes to learn English, would help the students to improve their Pronunciation difficulties? How?	8 (66.6%) teachers said that, activities are helpful but not enough.	4 (33.3%) teachers simply said- yes, they are helpful.	---	---
Q3. Do you think class time is not enough to work on students' pronunciation skills?	7 (58.3%) teachers said, class time is not enough to work on students' pronunciation skill.	5 (41.6%) teachers think that given class time is enough.	---	---
Q4. Does the student use Sylheti accent	11(91.6%) teachers said that, the students	1 (8.3%) teacher answered	---	---

while speaking English?	do use the Sylheti accent.	negatively.		
Q5. Do some of the students often pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to Sylheti accent?	5 (41.6%) teachers said that, students do not pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/.	7 (58.3%) teachers said, students do pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/.	---	---
Q6. Do some of the students often pronounce the /p/ sound like /f/, due to Sylheti accent?	10 (83.3%) teachers said that, students do this common mispronunciation.	2 (16.6%) teachers answered negatively.	---	---
Q7. Is there any particular chapter in syllabus to practice pronunciation?	All 12 (100%) teachers said that, there is no particular syllabus.		---	---
Q8. According to you, what can be done to overcome/improve the pronunciation skills of students?	8 (66.6%) teachers suggested that to increase the class time and to add a particular chapter in syllabus on pronunciation practice.	4 (33.3%) teachers suggested for extra class time and that parents should be mindful of using Sylheti accent, while talking to their children.	---	---

In reply to the very first question (appendix B), 5 (41.6%) teachers said that not getting enough scope to practice English speaking inside and outside the classroom is the major problem of pronunciation difficulties in our context, because through speaking we can find out their pronunciation problem. 4 (33.3%) teacher said their local accent is the main reason of their poor pronunciation. 3 (25%) teacher said that our poor teaching system might be the significant reason behind the pronunciation difficulties, for instance- some teachers neglect to teach the pronunciation. Therefore, it seems that, majority of teachers said that lack of practice inside and outside the classroom is the main reason behind the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet.

In answer to the second question (appendix B), 8 (66.6%) teachers said that the activities are helpful but not enough. Because through these activities they can only identify the pronunciation difficulties but do not get enough time to work on them. 4 (33.3%) teachers simply said, “yes, they are really helpful”, but did not explain. Therefore, it seems that majority of teachers said that, the activities being used in classes to learn English, helps them to identify the pronunciation difficulties of students but the sad part is they do not get enough time to work on them.

In the response to the third question (appendix B), 7 (58.3%) teachers said, yes. According to them class time is not enough to work on students’ pronunciation skills. On the other hand, 5 (41.6%) teachers said that, they think class time is enough to work on students’ pronunciation skills, only if the students concentrate on class and the teachers help them. So here it can be said that, majority of teachers said class time is not enough to work on pronunciation skills.

In reply to the fourth question (appendix B), 11 (91.6%) teachers said that, the students do use the Sylheti accent, while speaking English. According to them, it is a common issue that maximum students use their local accent, when they speak English, whereas only 1 (8.3%) teachers answered negatively.

In answer to the fifth question (appendix B), 5 (41.6%) said that the students do not pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/. However, the other 7 (58.3%) teachers said that the students do pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to their local accent. Therefore, it seems that maximum number of teachers agreed to this fact.

In reply to the sixth question (appendix B), 10 (83.3%) teachers said that it is a common mistake of every local student that they often pronounce the /p/ sound like /f/. however, 2 (16.6%) teachers answered negatively. They said that the students pronounce the /p/ sound like /p/. So, it seems majority of teachers said that students do pronounce the /p/ sound like /f/, due to their Sylheti accent.

In response to the seventh question (appendix B), all 12 (100%) teachers replied that there is no particular chapter in syllabus to practice pronunciation. Finally, in reply to the eighth question (appendix B), 8 (66.6%) teachers replied that, the govt. and the school authorities should increase the class time as well as a particular chapter on pronunciation in syllabus, so that the teachers can give more activities to the students to practice the English speaking and improve their pronunciation skill. On the other hand, 4 (33.3%) teachers said that, extra class time should be given for pronunciation practice and also the family members of the students should be mindful of using Sylheti accent, while talking to their children. Therefore, it seems that according to maximum teachers, increasing class time to practice

pronunciation and adding up a particular chapter on pronunciation can improve the pronunciation skills of students.

4.5. Findings in terms of the Research Question

This research study is concerned with the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet. The first research question was designed to find out the possible barriers behind English pronunciation practice. Based on the findings it seems that according to 5 (41.6%) teachers, lack of scope and time to practice pronunciation is the biggest barrier that works behind the English pronunciation practice. However, 3 (25%) teachers believed that another big barrier might be the poor teaching system. According to them some teachers neglect and are reluctant to teach pronunciation. On the other hand, 83 (76.8%) students believed that teachers' negligence (putting no emphasis) towards teaching pronunciation work similarly as another barrier.

The second research question was whether they have any problem in pronouncing any specific sound or syllable due to their Sylheti accent. The findings suggest that according to 7 (58.3%) teachers, students often pronounce the /s/ sound like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to the local accent. Moreover, according to 10 (83.3%) teachers, students often pronounce the /p/ sound like /f/, because of their local/ Sylheti accent.

4.6. Discussion of the Findings

Jahan (n.d) said that successful communication takes place only with correct pronunciation. Inappropriate pronunciation of English will make people misunderstand the speaker easily, whereas, proper pronunciation will encourage them to communicate with the speaker willingly (ibid). The finding of the research is likely to support her opinion.

Howlader (2010) said that, English language teachers do avoid pronunciation teaching in their classroom. Gilbert (as cited in Howlader, 2010) also pointed out that, pronunciation is also overlooked in the syllabus, materials and sometimes in classroom activities, while it is surprisingly true that pronunciation carries an important link to communication through listening and speaking. The findings of this study tend to agree with the view of Jahan (n.d); Gilbert; and Howlader (2010).

According to Alam (as cited in Jahan, 2011) most of the teachers do not give any effective activities in the class for pronunciation exercise. Moreover Maniruzzaman (as cited in Mumeneen, 2011) also argued that, maximum EFL teachers do not have convenient approaches or techniques for teaching pronunciation and as they do not know what approaches are suitable when they meet a specific problem, they simply avoid pronunciation lessons in the classroom by employing shrewd tricks. According to this findings the researcher totally supported the claim of Alam; and Maniruzzaman because the teachers show negligence towards teaching pronunciation and they do not have the suitable strategy to teach pronunciation.

CHAPTER- 5 CONCLUSION

5.1. Introduction

Since this research is about the English pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet, it should be mentioned that students from the sub-urban areas of Sylhet division had no opportunity to learn English as second language for non- accessibility of English medium schools for a long time in comparison with the capital city Dhaka. Therefore, pronunciation part had been highly overlooked in these areas' schools. The students have very little idea about pronunciation. Moreover, the teachers have lack of strategic knowledge to teach pronunciation. On the other hand, the dialectical accent of them has become a great barrier to this. They often pronounce wrong sound of a particular alphabet or word, due to their Sylheti accent. According to Jahan (n.d), the communication process will be successful if the pronunciation is correct. Therefore the school authorities of sub-urban areas of Sylhet should put an emphasis on learning proper pronunciation. Or else the students of this division will always lag behind.

5.2. Summary of the Findings

This study has collected data from four different Bengali medium schools by surveying 108 students and 12 teachers and from their responses it is found that the schools and the teachers do not emphasize on pronunciation skill. The teachers have little idea of different approaches to teach pronunciation. Besides, they do not get enough time to work on students' pronunciation problem. Moreover, this study also found out that use of local accent of both teachers and students is working as a major reason behind the pronunciation difficulties of students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet.

5.3. Practical Implication

It can be expected that, from this research study the teachers as well as the school authority would get necessary and helpful information, which they can consider in their classroom work. This study also has shown some valuable data through which, one can get the idea of present condition of these schools of sub-urban areas and learn the importance of English pronunciation, so that the teachers and schools could emphasize on learning proper pronunciation.

5.4. Recommendation

From this research study some important facts can be brought to the light and these can be used as solutions. The finding has shown that class time is not enough to develop on pronunciation, so the school authority might work on it. Moreover, the school management should recruit some teachers, who have better qualification as well as a good command in English. Besides they should not appoint those teachers who have local accent problem. Moreover, the schools can hold some seminars for the family members of the students, where effective advices would be provided regarding this problem. Furthermore, teachers should learn some different and effective approaches to teach pronunciation, so that the students could find it interesting.

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Appendix- A

Questionnaire for students

Class Level:

1. Learning proper pronunciation is necessary.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

2. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking inside the classroom.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

3. Students do not get enough opportunity to practice speaking outside the classroom.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree

- Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
4. Teacher does not put emphasize on pronunciation while taking English classes.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
5. Teacher does not try to correct pronunciation error in class.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
6. Teacher uses local/Sylheti accent while teaching English.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree

- Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
7. Your local/ Sylheti accent comes along while speaking English.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
8. Sylheti accent often causes problem with pronouncing specific sounds.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree
 - Neutral
 - Disagree
 - Strongly Disagree
9. /p/sound is often pronounced like /f/, due to Sylheti accent.
- Strongly Agree
 - Agree

- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

10. /s/ sound is often pronounced like /tʃ/ or /ch/, due to Sylheti accent.

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neutral
- Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

Appendix- B

Questionnaire for Teachers

Answer the following Questions:

1. According to you, what could be the major reason behind the English Pronunciation difficulties of Bengali medium students in the sub-urban areas of Sylhet division?

Answer: -----

2. Do you think the activities being used in classes to learn English, would help the students to improve their Pronunciation difficulties? How?

Answer: -----

3. Do you think class time is not enough to work on students' pronunciation skills?

Answer: -----

4. Does the student use Sylheti accent while speaking English?

Answer: -----

5. Do some of the students often pronounce the /s/ sound like /t/ or /ch/, due to Sylheti accent?

Answer: -----

6. Do some of the students often pronounce the /p/ sound like /f/, due to Sylheti accent?

Answer: -----

7. Is there any particular chapter in syllabus to practice pronunciation?

Answer: -----

8. According to you, what can be done to overcome/improve the pronunciation skills of students?

Answer: -----
