



Research Paper

A Study on Implementing Communicative Language Teaching Approach in the Secondary Level at Rural Area of Bangladesh.

Md Mehedi Hasan

Lecturer

Department of English

City University, Bangladesh

Abstract

This study investigated the significant barriers that teachers and students faced in implementing the communicative language teaching approach in rural Bangladesh, especially in secondary levels. Several questionnaires, interviews, and class observations, a survey was administered in several rural schools to conduct the research. The findings revealed that the teachers' insufficient quantity, the syllabus' ineffectiveness, the outclass environment, and the people's attitudes are causing the students to miss the target. In addition to the teachers and syllabus, the student's success in gaining the desired communication results depends on their outclass environment. The paper attempts to explore why teachers and students find the communicative approach so problematic. The researcher has developed strategies to improve the English language teaching-learning situation at the secondary level in Bangladesh by using the communicative approach to achieve the most benefits from the syllabus.

Received 04 Dec., 2022; Revised 14 Dec., 2022; Accepted 16 Dec., 2022 © The author(s) 2022.

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I. Introduction

English has been taught for a long year to the students of our country as a common subject at secondary level. More than 24 million children learn English as a second/foreign language in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh. Officially, they are taught English using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) methodology, as it was faced that CLT would develop learners' 'communicative competence', and thereby strengthen the human resource development efforts of the Government of Bangladesh (NCTB, 2003). What Widdowson, cited in Larsen-Freeman, p. 121, 2000, told in this context is, "being able to communicate required more than mastering linguistics structures. Students may know the rules of linguistic usage, but be unable to use the language." Furthermore, "Communicative Language Teaching aims broadly to apply the theoretical perspective of the Communicative Approach by making communicative competence the goal of language teaching and by acknowledging the interdependence of language and communication" (Larsen-Freeman, p.

121, 2000). Consequently, English often seems to be a heavy unnecessary burden to them. Thus this research would identify probable causes and situations for the current deficiencies in English education in Bangladesh and reveal ways to implement communicative language education successfully.

1.1 Rationale of the study

In the context of Bangladesh, every year a large number of students fail in the final academic examination and fail to communicate in the practical life situation. The research will be important for the students as it will disclose the hidden problems and give suggestions. The socio-economic development of a country depends on the percentage of education. The need for childhood and adult education cannot be harassed enough. Moreover, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) can be interpreted as a set of principles about the objectives of language teaching, the types of classroom activities that effectively promote learning, and the responsibility of teachers and learners in the classroom (Richards, 2006). Savignon (2007) argued, "It would be inappropriate to speak of CLT as a teaching 'method' in any sense of that term as it was used in the 20 century. Rather, CLT is an approach that understands language to be

inseparable from individual identity and social behavior" (p. 217). There is great interest in introducing Communicative Language Teaching to Bangladesh to improve students' English language performance. This research investigated the effectiveness and drawbacks of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) at the S.S.C. level in Bangladesh. The study's main goal was to identify factors that will facilitate or inhibit the implementation of communicative teaching of English in the secondary level at rural area of Bangladesh.

1.2 Statement of the problem

CLTA does not fit Bangladeshi culture. It demands everything ideal such as an ideal classroom setting, limited students, and trained teachers. In terms of Bangladesh, all these things are simply impossible. The overwhelming presence of English in the Bangladeshi curriculum thus can be argued to be the case of a 'white elephant' which consumes precious national resources but hardly produces any desirable outcomes. According to Quader (2001), the new CLT assessment approach is facing resistance in implementation from different stakeholders including teachers. However, not many empirical studies have devotedly investigated the issues related to CLT assessment and testing (Ali et al., 2018). There is a close relationship between the failure in English language teaching, learning, or curriculum implementation and inappropriate assessment methods in the context of Bangladesh (Khan, 2010; Rahman et al., 2018a, b, c). Therefore, a study on the appropriateness of teaching English in an ongoing Communicative style is needed in order to face the challenge of handling the Communicative approach.

II. Literature Review

The present study aims to look at different components of the English Language. The curriculum at secondary level (from class 9 to 10) in Bangladesh from a Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) point of view. This work looks at the issues related to learners' needs and desires in terms of their social strata. Their attitudes towards English proficiency level will also be addressed. The proficiency levels of the teachers from different backgrounds and their perspectives in English have also been discussed. It also focuses on the curriculum and syllabus of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB).

The researcher shows that social stratification gives the picture that people in the society possessed different status, they belong to many social groups, and they perform a large variety of social roles, People's social identity can be defined in terms of various factors such as social class, caste, colour and family lineage, rank, occupation, genders, age groups, material possession, education etc. In the study, the researcher finds that students from urban areas show better proficiency than those from rural areas. Their proficiency level is, therefore, much higher than that of the rural students and worth noting in different universities and institution job interviews, etc.

Although all schools have to teach their students the book English For Today, published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) as the primary textbook, the teaching methods differ from school to school considerably. To try and ensure a CLT-friendly teaching-learning situation, this project focused on "three main areas: teaching materials, teacher training and the reformation of the examination system" (Yasmin, 2006, p. 137). In the teaching of English, a popular but common book namely English for Today has been introduced maintaining all of the criteria of CLT. The book, although it has a number of limitations, has become handy in the context of CLT and the experts have designed this book with up to date information and in detail description. "The problem of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is that the term has always meant a multitude of different things to different people", Jeremy Harmer (2003).

CLT also introduced the use of authentic materials in the class. Using authentic materials provides students opportunities to experience language actually used by native speakers and allows them to develop strategies for interpreting language as it is actually used by native speakers (Littlewood, 1981). The focus includes the curriculum regarding the S.S.C. level, and the appropriateness of the types of tests students have. Finally, the researches provide his suggestions which include what type of test the students should have the appropriate textbook that the authority should think of and how well the students can be taught in a communicative environment by the teachers.

III. Research Design

This researcher will focus on the data collection method employed in this study. It will entail a detailed account of the questionnaire design, construction of research instruments, the sampling plan, and method of processing and analyzing the data.

3.1 Subjects

In this investigation, 50 students from rural schools were interviewed. In each area, students were selected randomly from class nine and ten disregarding their merit and place in classes. Ten teachers from rural schools were also interviewed. Rural schools in which the survey was conducted are from Patuakhali

District. They include Bauphal High School, Bauphal, Patuakhali, Kalaiya High School, Bauphal, Patuakhali, Dhamrai Hardinge Govt High School, Dhamrai, Dhaka and Ashulia School and College, Savar, Dhaka. Teacher samples were selected from those who teach English in any class from classes 6 to 10 in these institutions.

3.2 Instruments

The instruments that have been used in this study are:

1. Questionnaire for the students
2. Questionnaire for the teachers
3. Interview

3.3 Procedures

3.3.1 Material Preparation

The questionnaire was finalized through a close study of the CLTA situation in Bangladesh. The items of the questionnaires were adapted mainly from Tang (2002), Maniruzzaman(J3), and Rahman (2006). However, a considerable portion of the questionnaires was original regarding their source and point of view. The questionnaire was prepared in English. At the same time required numbers of photocopies were made from it.

3.3.2 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection sessions were arranged at times suggested by the high schools' permission, usually over a month period, beginning with administering the questionnaire followed by the classroom observation of lessons each about two sessions of 90 minutes duration. The observed principles were discussed with the teachers observed. The questionnaires were administered to the teachers after the classes were finished in the schools and for the students it was administered during the English class. Since this could raise the possibility of missing out on the most potential, original, and first impression of the respondents). This part has included the research design, which incorporated the description of participants and setting, a detailed account of the data collection procedure, and a questionnaire-by-question description. This part presents the presentation of the data.

IV. Findings and Discussion

This section deals with the interpretation and discussion of the study's results. The results are presented by assessing the response of the participants. Statements were coded as 'Always', 'Often,' 'Sometimes,' 'Rarely', and 'Never.'

Table 1: Percentage of teachers' responses to the questionnaire

		(a)Always	(b) Often	(c)Sometimes	(d) Rarely	(e)Never
1	Satisfied with pre-service or in-service training on E.L.T.	20	20	30	20	10
2	Familiar with the term Communicative Language Teaching (CLT).	75	15	10	00	00
3	The present syllabus of S.S.C. helps build up the four skills.	40	30	20	10	00
4	How often do you arrange for your students to use English for communication?	20	25	25	15	15
5	How often is the class size manageable for you?	20	10	10	20	40
6	Lack of efficient and trained teachers is one of the major causes of poor performance in communicative English at S.S.C. level in Bangladesh.	30	25	20	15	10
7	English is used for classroom instruction.	15	25	30	30	00
8	Infrastructural facilities provided in Bangladesh are enough to support CLTA.	10	20	30	30	10

Source: Survey conducted by the researcher

In response to the first statement, only 20% (frequency-4) of teachers opined that they were always satisfied with the pre-service or in-service training on E.L.T. The percentage of responses to the statement neutral, seldom, and never is 60%, indicating that the training provided on E.L.T. is unsatisfactory. In response to the second statement related to CLTA, 75% of teachers replied that they are always familiar with the term. In the third statement, the teachers were asked if the present S.S.C. syllabus is helpful. Most teachers stated that the syllabus is applicable because 40% of the teachers said they are always happy, and 30% of teachers

mentioned it sometimes. In response to the fourth statement, only 20% of teachers always arrange for their students to use English for communication, and 25% of teachers responded sometimes. In the fifth statement, many teachers indicate that the class size could be more manageable. Only 20% of teachers always stated, whereas 40% said the class size could be more manageable. The teachers opined about the lack of efficient and trained teachers as one of the major causes of poor performance in communicative English. According to the survey, 30% of teachers are always agreed with the statement. The findings also show that 25% of teachers sometimes, 20% of teachers sometimes, 15% of teachers rarely, and only 10% of teachers consider the problem as one of the major causes of lacking of communication. In response to the seventh statement, 15% of teachers responded that they 'always' use English in classroom instruction. Another 25% of teachers often, 30% of teachers sometimes, and 30% use English as a medium of classroom instruction. In response to the eighth statement, only 10% of teachers mentioned 'always' as they think that Bangladesh's infrastructural facilities are enough to support CLTA.

Table-1: Percentage of students' responses to the questionnaire

		(a)Always	(b)Often	C) Sometimes	(d)Rarely	(e)Never
1	To pass the examination is more important than being able to be skilled in four skills.	30	15	25	15	15
2	The four skills in the English language are equally essential to get a good job.	25	20	30	25	05
3	Listen to T.V. news, see English T.V. programs	10	15	20	15	40
4	Able to cope with your teacher if they teach in English.	20	25	30	15	5
5	How often do you participate in group or pair work/discussion in the English class?	10	20	25	25	20
6	Understand and cope with the current syllabus which follows CLTA.	20	25	30	15	10
7	Exercise the four skills in your English classes.	10	15	30	25	20
8	The classroom decoration is perfect for CLTA.	10	20	40	20	10

Source: Survey conducted by the researcher

According to the student's responses, the first statement shows that 30% of students agree that passing the examination is more important than being skilled in four skills, and 25% of students think it is sometimes essential. Following the second statement, 25% of students believe the four skills in the English language are equally vital to get good jobs, and 30% of students believe it is sometimes essential. Only 05% mentioned that without these skills getting a job is difficult. In the third statement, 40% of students opined that they never listen to T.V. news and see English T.V. programs; only 10% of them and sometimes 20%. The fourth statement shows that 30% of students could cope with their teacher if the teacher taught in English, 5% were never able to manage, and 30% of them sometimes do. Only 10% of students consistently participate in group work in the English class, and 20% never do—50% of students rarely and sometimes experience it. In response to the sixth statement, 20% of students always understand and cope with the current syllabus, which follows CLTA, sometimes 30% of students need help to do the same, and 10% can never do so. The seventh statement indicates that 20% of students never exercise the four skills in their English classes; only 10% do, and sometimes 30% of students exercise the four skills in their English classes. The final and eighth statement shows that the classroom decoration is perfect for 10% of students for CLTA. A majority of them agree that sometimes it is excellent, 40% on the other hand, 10% think it is never perfect.

V. Suggestion and Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, the following section contains recommendations for the better implementation of CLT in Bangladesh.

5.1 English Teachers need Formal Training

There has been a dying need for a time-befitting and well-structured training program for the secondary English teachers of the country. The teacher community needs to be efficient enough to cope with the changes brought about in E.L.T. curriculum and E.L.T. methodology at the national level. Although many teachers have received pre-service and/or in-service training in teaching English as one of the main subjects, a few are trained in communicative language teaching (CLT). Most of them need a clear idea about or understanding of CLT, and they need to learn the 'what's' and 'hows' of implementing it in the classroom to develop learners' communicative

competence. As a result, the introduction of communicative textbooks in schools necessitates that teachers be trained in the communicative methodology of teaching English.

5.2 Redesigning Texts

The current textbook requires more varied classroom activities, and the curriculum needs a more explanatory approach regarding cultural content. Its activities, if at all, are confined to mechanical gap-fillings, matching, ticking, and the like. In Bangladesh, where textbooks are the only materials readily available, they (textbooks) should be so developed as to help both teachers and students with sufficient examples and a variety of materials for practice in the communicative use of language. To fulfil this function in Bangladesh situation, a communicative textbook should have the following characteristics such as a) A clear lesson format should be followed throughout the book. Each lesson should have materials for a class of about 40 to 45 minutes. And clear indication should be given on how the teacher will organise each lesson. In the case of longer speeches or weak or mixed-ability students, the teachers should have the freedom to divide or reorganise study materials for the use of two classes. b) Objectives of each lesson should be mentioned either in the textbook or in the teacher's guide. c) Students will learn English as a vehicle to communicate with others. So, the lessons will be so developed as to provide ample opportunities to practice language skills. d) The themes/topics of the lessons should be familiar to the students. They should be exciting and enjoyable too. In each lesson, students should have a realistic context for language use. e) There should be an adequate scope of practice in language skills. All four skills should be integrated as they naturally happen in everyday life. Different types of text and discourse should be included. f) Traditional grammar teaching should be avoided. Grammar/structural elements should be presented within contexts/situations provided by the topics/themes. Illustrations of different types, like pictures, diagrams, charts, etc., should be used as integral parts of a lesson. They should provide sufficient context for language practice — they should not be used just for decorative purposes. g) The language used in the textbooks should be natural. That is, the language of the book, whether written or spoken, should resemble the language used in real life and the language activities should not be merely textbook activities; rather, they should be relevant to real-life activities. h) The activities should be student-centered rather than teacher-centered, emphasizing fluency rather than accuracy and i) Each new item, whether it is linguistic or of other types, should be introduced in an appropriate context, and they should be repeated in successive chapters so that the students get a sufficient scope to practice them. (cf. They are evaluating a communicative textbook in Hoque 1997: 79-80 (Nunan 1989a: 102).

5.3 Development of teaching materials and resources

Like other EFL countries, the lack of authentic and audiovisual materials is also common in Bangladesh. Materials and resources are likely to be limited in a country like Bangladesh, which is not wealthy. Participant teachers in this study have also focused on the need for appropriate and effective teaching materials for Bangladeshi English language context.

5.4 Reform of the examination system

Our examination system at the secondary level test memory rather than understanding and use of the English language in real life situations. It encourages little to change the outlook of the learners and guardians. To score well, students follow the ready-made guidebooks competitively available in the market, ignoring the NCTB-prescribed material. They can manage fairly even without consulting the NCTB textbook. Moreover, there needs to be more clarity between the curriculum objectives and the assessment system. It instructs to teach many things (e.g., speaking, listening items, etcetera) that never appear in the final assessment. As a result, students and teachers become interested in teaching objects that resemble question items in S.S.C.

5.5 Rearranging the classroom setup

To make learners use language in the classroom, we need to focus on the classroom setup, which is crucial to an interactive classroom. Interactions are more difficult to initiate if desks are in neat, orderly rows with everyone facing the board and the teacher. As Brown (1994) claims, "Students are members of a team and should be able to see one another, to talk to one another (in English!), and should not be made to feel like they just walked into a military formation." An ideal setup of a class that promotes interaction, involves arranging the desks in a semicircle. Desks arranged in small groups or chairs around a large table (accommodating all students) are equally practical. This arrangement is most feasible in getting students involved in group and pair work. For a long time, English examinations in our country did not have oral tests and a language use section. These two skills should be included. The testing system (items, techniques, etc.) should be revised so that teachers and students find a close resemblance between the contents taught following CLT methodology and the final assessment. Finally, the wide gap between the objectives of the curriculum and the assessment system should be reduced by devising more effective and representative items in the test.

5.6 Combining accuracy and fluency in English teaching

In English learning, accuracy and fluency are two equally important factors, but in our country, accuracy is emphasized more than fluency. Our students are keenly interested in the exact words, have a low tolerance of ambiguity, and tend to focus on discrete grammar points and specific syntactic constructions. Modern society needs students to use English accurately, and fluently, so more attention should be paid to fluency in the future's English teaching.

5.7 Integration of the four basic skills

Listening and speaking are interconnected, so we cannot drive out its significance from our classrooms. Rivers (1997) states that there should be "much listening to authentic materials" in an interactive classroom without discouraging students' spoken responses. The listening will be purposeful as students prepare to use what they have heard in some way. "Authentic materials" include teacher talk, audio, videotapes, and for reading - newspapers, magazines etc. If possible, native speakers could be brought into the classroom to interact with the students. Not only through speaking activities but also through reading and writing activities, we can initiate oral communication in class. While conducting a reading workshop with a group of students, I tried different techniques to incorporate all the language skills. Though the workshop's main objective was to enable students to read successfully by following reading strategies, they had enough opportunities to practice their writing and speaking skills. Sitting in groups of four, they were required to read a novel, and after reading for 8 to 10 minutes (2/3 pages), they were instructed to stop and describe in their own words the events and ideas they had read to their group members. They could also voice their personal opinions if desired. Each member of the group took a turn in explaining. In real life, the language skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing are generally integrated rather than occurring in isolation. When taking part in a conversation, for example, we both listen and speak; when we fill in a form, we read and write, and taking notes from a lecture involves listening and writing. Often the use of one skill leads naturally from another. In language classrooms, as in real life, skills in a lesson should be integrated — with one activity leading to another. We need to build our students' communicative competence around the four skills.

5.8 Creating Student-centered orientation

To facilitate English acquisition, students need oral practice in the English classroom. Teachers must ensure those classroom interactions are managed, not just by the teacher but by all participants. To achieve this, teachers should arrange the desks so the students can look directly at one another to help create interactions among students.

5.9 Clarifying Teacher's role:

Instead of being the master of the class, the English teacher could act as an independent participant and facilitator in the English classroom. They facilitate the communicative process among all learners and between students and various tasks. They can give guidance and advice when necessary. But this does not mean in the teaching process, and the teacher should only be a passive observer.

VI. Conclusion

The result of the study means a need to set an educational agenda that acknowledges the importance of the adaptation of CLT and recognizes the significance of its applicability in Bangladesh. It advocates that to successfully implement Communicative Language Teaching, Bangladesh must find the right balance between the breadth and depth of English in the national curriculum. Since quality is a national concern, perhaps English should be introduced later in the curriculum (Yasmin, 2005) but in a more intensified form. Importantly, substantially more public resources should be made available during this intensive phase of English teaching. Rural schools and teachers should be given special priority and resource allocations; the disadvantaged students require positive discrimination because it is mainly their failure that tarnishes the so-called national standard of English. There is no denying that in the present world, English is the most important language to communicate and to compete in the global market, for the nation to advance in education, science and technology, to build better infrastructure, and to strive to bring the nation out of the 'developing nation' status, Bangladesh needs to be competent in English. To replace the traditional out-of-date, teacher-centered grammar-teaching method, it is vital to find the underlying problems with the present secondary English curriculum and to take the necessary steps to improve and modernize the English language teaching methodology. The text-centered and grammar-centered practices need to be replaced by the student-centered, fluency-focused, and problem-solving activities required by CLT.

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