

A Health-Check of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in Rural Primary Schools of Bangladesh

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Received: May 15, 2018 Accepted: June 23, 2018 Online Published: June 25, 2018

doi: 10.5539/elt.v11n7p163 URL: <http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n7p163>

Abstract

Bangladesh ELT situation has been deteriorating for the last four decades. Regional and national projects including ELTIP and EIA proved to be futile in improving this situation, especially, in the Bangladesh rural primary schools with almost 0% properly trained English teachers to implement the current CLT curriculum. This article investigates the on-going poor health-status of CLT at randomly selected schools of northern Bangladesh through delving into the research gaps linked with the ELT practitioners' own English proficiency, their training needs, motivation and teaching skills; their perception on the instructional module; and perception of the YLs of English in Bangladesh. This enquiry uses a mixed method involving a questionnaire survey, semi-structured interview with ELT teachers, teacher trainers, head-teachers and lesson observation followed by a workshop and informal discussion with 100 participants from all ELT stake-holders to validate the findings of the earlier questionnaire survey. The findings conclude that ineffective and lack of teacher training, non-availability of English subject teacher, unproductive instructional materials, unhelpful learning environment, learners' socio-economic background, teachers' poor competence in English and knowledge of CLT methods are responsible for this deterioration. It recommends that implementation of a rigorous teacher training program for CLT to produce English subject teachers for each school, production of a pedagogically user-friendly instructional module for CPD, a culture-oriented teaching-learning environment and a program of regular guidance and supervision by CLT experts would address the gaps prevailing in the ELT (and CLT) situation at the rural primary schools of Bangladesh.

Keywords: ELTIP, EIA, CPD, YL

1. Introduction

'Macaulayism' (Stephen Evans, 2002), through the Minutes of 1835, set the background of the tradition of English Language Teaching (ELT) in the then India. The legacy of this imperialist policy is shared by Bangladesh for obvious reasons. The history covers a period of about 180 years now. A long time up to 1960, about 125 years, ELT used to be imparted through the classical Grammar-Translation Methods of teaching-learning English. On the whole, the modern trends of ELT began from the 1970s (Richards, 2006), when language teaching started adopting communicative approach known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Dornyei (2009) has his own interpretation of CLT as:

"Although it was seen by many as a counter-reaction to the audio-lingual method that dominated the 1960s, the main goal of CLT- to develop a functional communicative L2 competence in the learner-was actually similar to the primary audio-lingual objectives (p. 33)."

However, Dornyei argues that both audio-lingual methods and CLT have the drill factor in common, the first drills the patterns of sentence structure to slowly develop interactional aspects of language acquisition from transactional practice, the latter replaces the drills of patterns/structures with 'communicative drills.' The earlier one is more associated with the learning theory, behaviorism, the latter prescribes 'learning through doing ...through their active participation in seeking situational meaning (p. 34)' using elements of both

behaviorism and innatism or mentalism. So, CLT, an approach advocating for ‘native speakerism’ demands a whole host of linguistic and cultural knowledge and experience of the target language on the part of the teacher as well as that of the learner. This is where implementing a CLT program for clientele groups, both teachers and learners, who are non-native speakers of English, gets very complicated. CLT covers a wide range of methods and techniques *with “no single text or authority on it, nor any single model that is universally accepted as authoritative* (Richards & Rodgers, 2001, p. 155).’

ELT in Bangladesh has adopted these popular, but alien to its providers (non-native English teachers) and clienteles (non-native learners of English), strategies (Canale & Swain, 1980; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Savignon, 2002; Richards & Rodgers, 2001) since the beginning of the new millennia. Efforts in terms of redesigning the English curricula for Primary, Secondary and Higher Secondary learners in Bangladesh, writing textbooks, training teachers and famously ‘digitalizing’ the classrooms have been put in all honesty but with insignificant/no changes in the already existing deteriorating ELT situation in Bangladesh (Hasan, 2004, Shabnam, 2012). But, why? That’s the main research gap this study aims to investigate.

2. Objectives

The objectives of this study are to:

- 1) Figure out actual problems and prospects of CLT in the rural primary schools of Bangladesh;
- 2) Identify how teachers’ CPD through training, ongoing self-empowerment through a user-friendly instructional module for the English teachers to be able to conduct CLT lessons productively.
- 3) Identify learner needs, environmental inadequacies, home-school partnership and useful provisions for resources including technology.

3. Literature Review

Imam (2005) writes, “Being nationally competent in English is one necessary condition if Bangladesh is to move up the long curve of economic growth from its low starting point (p. 474).” But, in an uncertain, nay, rather confusing ELT situation in the country, which neither provides a concrete language policy nor a uniform practice ensuring appropriate pedagogy and provisions nationally, the clientele groups and the providers of English language teaching-learning have been, for about 30 years up to 2000, unsure about how to deliver the curriculum effectively and which methods and materials to be used to deliver it successfully.

A need-based demand for an appropriate curriculum and effective teaching-learning materials were produced as a result of positive outcomes of some small or sizeable ELT projects conducted by many local NGOs, the government and some international agencies. The present English curriculum with the provisions for CLT is the end-result of those previous attempts to improve ELT in this country for about two decades from 2000 or so. In an uncertain ELT situation sans a credible policy and effective practice and with no tangible outcome in the attempts and efforts made so far, Bangladesh ELT situation is still an enigma. As a result of some government declarations like establishing Higher Secondary Teacher Training Institute (HSTTI), Orientation of Secondary School Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh (OSSTEB), Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP), Higher Secondary Education Project (HSEP), Program to Motivate, Train and Employ Female Teachers in Rural Schools (PROMOTE), Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project (SESIP) at different times, the ELT syllabi were converted into CLT curriculum from Primary to Higher Secondary levels in the late 1990s. Textbooks and Teachers’ Guides have been written and re-written, and various teacher training programs were held to go along with those changes in policies and strategies to implement the new CLT curriculum.

UK Government DfID (Department for International Development) 9-year period project, English in Action (EIA, 2008), supports this English-language factor for the development of Bangladesh and mentions it as one of the aims of EIA project, which is supposed to “*contribute to the economic growth of Bangladesh by providing English language as tools for better access to world economy (p. 1).*” But Hasan (2004) reports that the implementation of this modernized curriculum has been a failure to a great extent. Rahman and Rahman (2012) write,

“So, it is obvious that although the Ministry of Education has been trying to implement CLT approach in Bangladesh for more than a decade through teacher training and textbook writing projects like English Language Teaching Improvement (ELTIP), and others, there is hardly any improvement in English teaching-learning process (p. 16).”

The DFID projects, ELTIP and EIA, produced no substantial progress (Yasmin, 2009; Roshid, 2009; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). The main obstacles, according to Quader (2001) are the lack of “*a concordance between the*

examination, the syllabus, their notions about the process of learning, and the teaching method (p. 19).” Prithibi (2013) refers Hamid and Honan (2012) to report of ‘some success’ but her claim,

“...was contradicted by some students whose teachers presently used Bangla, which may be treated as resistance to change or their lack of English language skills. Even when teachers used more English, it appears that activities were teacher-centered as confirmed by the classroom observation study. This is against the goal of CLT (p. 19).”

UNICEF(2009) reports that with an estimated 16.4 million 6-10 years old primary school aged children attending 82,218 primary schools with 365,925 teachers (approximately 53% female of whom 23% are head teachers) , Bangladesh has one of the largest primary education systems in the world. This report states that the major challenges that Bangladesh primary education sector faces are “poor quality education; high dropout rates; promotion of equality in accessing education; decentralization of education administration; and special needs education (p. 2).” What this report does not explicate is that the deteriorating poor health-status of the ELT, in general, and current CLT, in particular, situation in this country is mainly due to a clash between policy and practice linked to teachers’ poor skills of target language, insufficient pedagogic knowledge, inappropriate guidance and supervision and un-useful instructional module. But quite a few studies (Ahmed, 2001; Ahmed & Nath, 2005; Barman, Sultana, & Bijoy, 2007; Hamid, Baldouf, & Richard, 2008; Hamid; Hasan, 2010; Shrestha, 2013; Alam, Zaman, Khna, & Rahman, 2014; Hossain, Nessa, & Kafi, 2015; Sultana, 2016; Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, & Rahman, 2017; Karim, Mohamad, Ismail, & Rahman, 2018) report that the Bangladesh ELT situation has been suffering from a host of health syndromes for the last four decades or so.

Eventually, many small and large scale projects including British Council run Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project (TQI-SEP, 2002); DfID funded English Language Improvement Project (ELTIP, 1997) and English in Action (EIA, 2008-2017) etc. in addition to quite a few ‘plans, schemes and proposals’ (Khan, 2002) like Higher Secondary Teacher Training Institute (HSTTI), Orientation for Secondary Teachers for Teaching English in Bangladesh (OSSTEB), Secondary Education Development Project (SEDP), Higher Secondary Education Project (HSEP) etc., most of which have been launched and implemented mainly for secondary school English teachers’ professional development. Reports on the impacts of some of these expensive projects, specially, ELTIP and EIA, the most expensive ones, were published with unconvincing findings. But researchers, including some of the above-mentioned ones, opine that the glossy reports were meant just to cover up the failures of all apparently well-meant efforts. Sadly, the last two large projects, ELTIP and EIA, costing a lot more than 100 million pound sterling over a period of 10-12 years with no practical and credible benefits for the ELT in Bangladesh have come to a hopeless end (Hamid, 2010; Anwaruddin, 2015; Islam, 2015; Anwaruddin, 2016; Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, & Rahman, 2017; Karim, Mohamed, Ismail, & Rahman, 2018). Many of these studies conclude that the current CLT curriculum has failed all the YLs of English at primary and secondary schools of Bangladesh. Although, all the projects put together aimed to train and support a massive number of teachers (just to mention a couple, 60,000 through ELTIP and 75,000 through EIA) at mainly secondary levels. Primary English teachers’ training remained secondary in terms of priority and proximity to address the immediate ELT issues at the start of life of the new CLT generation of Bangladesh.

Although, the government agencies evidently took important decisions to improve the poor health of ELT in Bangladesh cajoling CLT therapy into the already ailing ELT health, all efforts including the above-mentioned ones ended up in being just a wild goose chase.

However, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB, 1996) set the main goals of teaching English at the Primary levels in Bangladesh as:

“English needs to be recognized as an essential work-oriented skill that is needed if the employment, development and educational needs of the country are to be met successfully. English should, therefore, be taught as something to be used, rather than something to be talked about (NCTB, 1996, pp. 135-136).”

The Bangladesh Government initiatives (1999) to implement CLT from Primary to Higher Secondary levels are still under trial with no credible outcomes in any areas of ELT in Bangladesh. It’s acknowledged by all experts including psychologists, linguists and practitioners that language skill development is based on the competence and aptitude of the learners in their L1, which is also important for cognitive development of the child. This must be ensured in the primary stage, especially, in the early grades (Hossain, Nessa, & Kafi, 2015) first. When this is the case for L1, it may be more complicated in case of a Foreign or Second language (L2) learning. Oxford University Press ELT 7, 2014 reports, while presenting an introduction to the motion of the ELT Journal Debate organized by IATEFL 2014 in Harrogate, Graham Hall asks:

“Is a gap developing between policy and practice, and between our goals of how Primary ELT ‘should be’, and the

realities of often under-resourced classroom life?”

Coincidentally, the motion of the debate was “This house believes that Primary ELT does more harm than good”, which is an indication of the realities of ELT in many non-English speaking nations of the world including Bangladesh.

However, for the foreseeable future in Bangladesh, owing to her current language policies with new and very ambitious English curriculum, CLT, has been being “bailed out” (Hamid and Baldauf Jr., Richard (2008) for more than a decade now. It has to be in the communicative language teaching and learning manner, such as, dialogue, active learning, role play, songs, dance etc. expressing meaningful use of language (Shrestha, 2013) for making the lessons interesting, interactive and enjoyable. For the development of the communication skills, the Government of Bangladesh, in cooperation with the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), introduced a language policy in 2000 to promote the methods and techniques of CLT approach to ELT at the primary levels. (Ahmed, 2001; Mullick & Sheesh, 2008; Bhattacharya, 2015).

It was expected that the students would confidently speak and converse in standard English according to their age level and read to comprehend the textbooks set for them. Additionally, the children are also expected to acquire skills like write words, simple phrases, sentences, paragraphs, informal letters and numbers according to their age. Although, NCTB prepared English curriculum for the students of primary schools to consider appropriate approach and methods, unfortunately, the curriculum is not getting implemented properly (Hossain, Nessa, & Kafi, 2015). These researchers including Kabir (2015) found that majority of the students of the primary schools are weak in English language due to lack of English subject teachers who are properly trained in the CLT methods and techniques. Consequently, the quality of teaching deteriorated substantially all over the country (Mullick & Sheesh, 2008; Haider & Chowdhury, 2012; Kabir, 2015; Hossain, 2016). Several studies (Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998; Ahmed & Nath, 2005, Hasan, 2010; Carless, 2004 in Hong Kong; Hiep, 2007 in Vietnam; Ho & Wong (Eds.) (2004);

Jeon (2009) and Li (1998) in Korea, Orafi & Borg (2009 in Libya), Nishino and Watanabe (2008) in Japan and Butler (2011) show that most of the primary school students in many non-English speaking countries including Bangladesh are failing to learn language skills that they can use effectively. Researchers in this area believe that English language teachers have important roles and they need to adopt useful and effective strategies (Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 1986; Tudor, 1993; Harmer, 2001) for implementation any ELT curriculum. Bhattacharya (2015) highlighted, in his literature review, that teacher role as part of the planning and design component of a method, pointing out that these are related to the types of function teachers are expected to fulfill, the degree of control the teacher has over how learning takes place, the degree to which the teacher is responsible for determining the content of what is taught, the interactional patterns that develop between teachers and learners (Littlewood, 1981) and perceived role of the language teacher as the facilitator of learning in the context of CLT. This investigation concluded that the difficulties in English teaching at primary schools in Bangladesh were due to lack of proper teacher training, limited contact hours, lack of effective instructional module, class size, poor English language competence of the teacher and inadequate teaching skills and lack of motivation of both the teacher and the learner. Bhattacharya and recommended appropriate training for the teachers on teaching English and put emphasis for practicing speaking and listening by the students at Secondary and Higher Secondary levels. This current study finds that this would be productive and more fruitful at Primary levels to lay the foundation for the Secondary and Higher Secondary levels of CLT generation.

4. Methodology

This in-depth investigation was conducted ensuring a wide range of relevant literature review and participation of all stake-holders, e.g., ELT practitioners, head-teachers, teacher trainers, learners and ELT experts of the country. The study was carried on with focus on how CLT is implemented at primary schools, especially, in rural Bangladesh and to what extent it met the demands of learning of the L2 learners at primary schools in Bangladesh and the prescriptions of the current CLT curriculum.

Both qualitative and quantitative techniques were used with a triangulation method. Several data collecting instruments were planned and prepared to conduct the enquiry. Firstly, 100 rural primary teachers from seven sub-districts of the North-Western regions of Bangladesh were selected randomly for collection of the main data through a 20-item questionnaire on teachers’ perception on CLT, teaching materials, teacher guide, teachers’ own experience and English language competence and learner response. Several other data collecting instruments, such as, face to face semi-structured interview with ten ELT practitioners, five CLT trainers, ten head-teachers and a workshop with these three sets of interviewees and 75 English teachers were used to validate the findings of the earlier questionnaire survey. The workshop was jointly conducted by the researcher and a Co-supervisor guided

by the Supervisor of this research and three research associates in a rural setting of the District of Kurigram of Northern Bangladesh. A group of ten teacher-participants in the workshop were involved in a semi-structured interview conducted and recorded by the three research associate to collect information and data on over all outcome of the workshop. Finally, observation of five English lessons with a checklist were also carried on to see if any new phenomenon related to the primary CLT would emerge from the on the spot scenario of a real time lesson on teacher performance and learner participation.

Following data were collected through all the instruments over a period of over ten months collated using qualitative interpretation and quantitative analysis through SPSS.

The 20-item questionnaire was administered to 100 primary school English teachers to collect information regarding their familiarity with CLT, training received for teaching English, difficulty level of English text Books they have to teach, English class delivery strategies, problems and challenges encountered by them lesson delivery, use of technology (audio/video) in the class, familiarity with the social media etc.

On the basis of the data collected through the questionnaire, a group of ten teachers were interviewed to explore further the actual scenario of English teaching and solutions for improvement. The main focus was on teachers' suitability for teaching English, problems faced by them for implementation of CLT, challenges and solutions, students' ability and interest, class size, prospects and problems of practicing CLT, support from the Head of school and the other government/non-government agencies involved.

Ten Head-teachers were also interviewed to collect data on their familiarity with CLT approach and practice and how it could be implemented at primary levels effectively and what support s/he could provide to the teachers and what kind of support is required from the government.

Five Teacher Trainers were also interviewed to further explore the issues and prospects of the very short training (only for two days) that they have received through EIA project and the two hours training that they have imparted to the classroom practitioners in CLT.

Five English lessons were observed in different schools with an observation checklist of several categories. The data include teaching and learning styles in the class, class activities and participation of students, use of resources etc.

Quantitative data from the 20-item questionnaire were analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Scientist). Coding and categorizing of the qualitative data was also completed to discern the findings. Triangulation of findings was done on the basis of the data received from different sources.

Finally, a day-long workshop with 100 participants (75 CLT practitioners, 10 head teachers and five teacher trainers, 10 laymen including parents) was conducted by three expert on teaching and pedagogy to figure out a holistic 'bigger picture' of the actual CLT scenario of Bangladesh.

5. Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study are presented on several categories revealed from the data analysis. They are:

- **Teachers Potential** (Educational background, training, experience, knowledge of CLT, motivation and effectiveness)
- **Learner Needs** (Socio-cultural background, exposure to TL (target language), home-school partnership, access to technology, motivation and participation in English lessons)
- **Areas of Improvement** (Teachers' own English language skills, clear knowledge and intensive training on CLT for at least at a professional certificate course level, attractive and culturally appropriate textbooks, user-friendly self-study instructional module with bilingual lesson plans for day-to-day use by the English subject teachers.

5.1 Teacher Potential

Most of the teachers (84%) have a higher education (e.g., Bachelors and Masters Degrees) and 15% have Higher Secondary Certificates and 1+% Secondary Certificate (Figure 1).

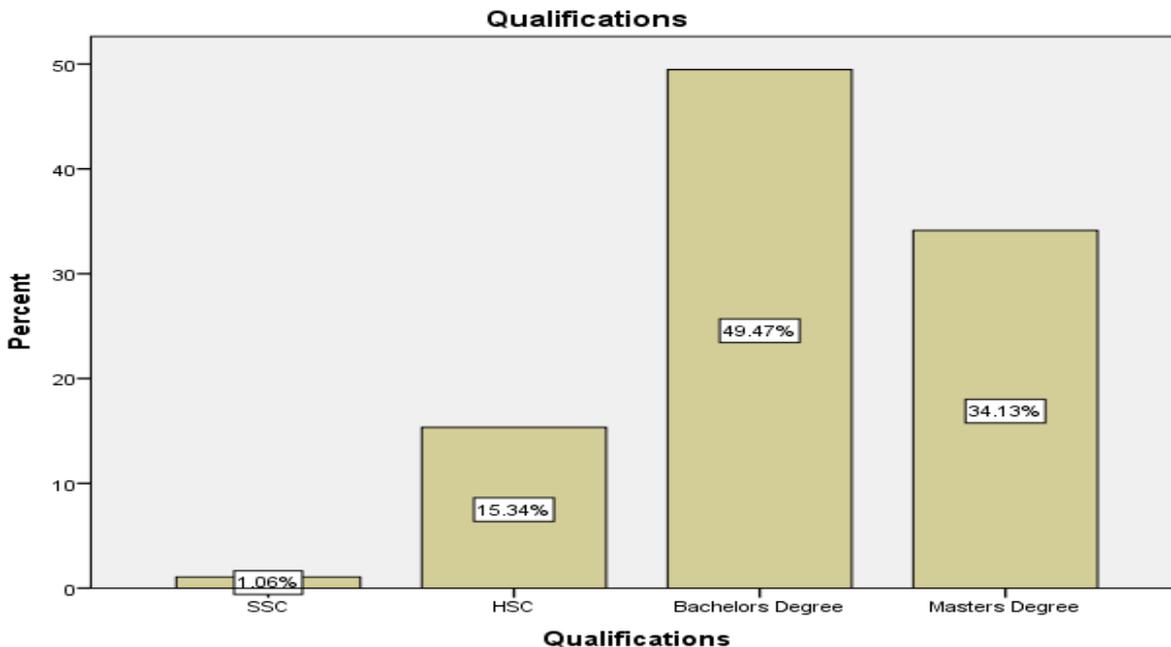


Figure 1. Academic qualification of the participants (primary school English teachers)

Despite their academic qualifications, about 95% teachers completed pedagogical training/degree (PTI, C-in-Ed, B. Ed. etc.) which is mandatory to work as a primary teacher in Bangladesh. Only 5% do not have any training. Additionally, among the respondents only 3% teachers received either 7 or 3 days ToT (Training of Trainers in CLT) to train further lots of English teachers for even a shorter period of time, e.g., two hours in total to go and teach the CLT curriculum. Rest of them do not have such type of training. 70% (7 out of 10) Heads were of the opinion that teacher training does matter in case of teaching at primary schools but 30% (3 out of 10) of them disagreed. 100% of the Heads agreed that not only training in teaching English with emphasis on the methods and techniques of CLT but also improving their own English language skills, specially, listening and speaking, are of extreme importance to ensure success of the CLT programs at primary schools in Bangladesh. 97% of the practicing English teachers strongly felt that at least a month-long rigorous training for both pedagogical knowledge and skills and for improving their own English language skills were a crying need if CLT curriculum were to be actually implemented in the Primary Schools of rural Bangladesh.

5.2 Teaching Experience and Lesson Delivery

The teachers have different levels of teaching experiences (fig below). At least 20% teachers are new and have experience of 1-3 years. Most teachers have varying numbers of years of experience from 4-20 years as shown in Figure 2 below.

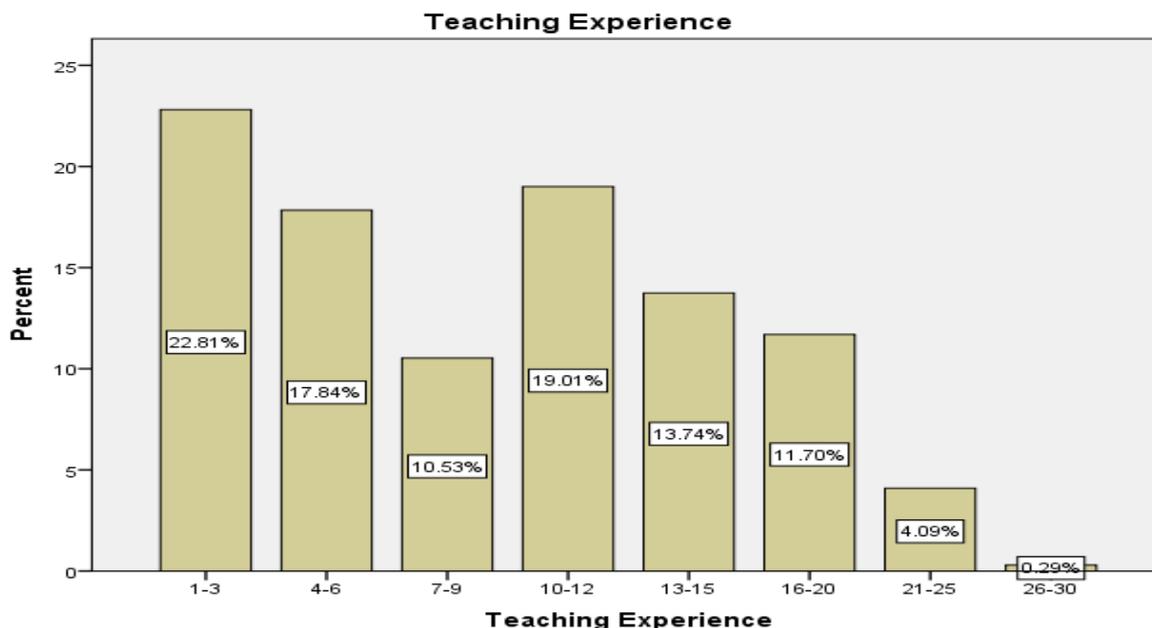


Figure 2. Teaching experience of the participating teachers

All the teachers are assigned to teach different grades/ levels from class one to class five. Most of them teach multiple grades.

Most of the teachers use L1, Bangla, in their English lessons at all levels. The Table 1 below presents the number of teachers who mostly use L1, Bangla, in their English lessons.

Table 1. Percentage of teachers who use Bangla at various levels in English classes

Use of mother tongue	No of teachers	Percent
About 20% of the total teaching time	4	4%
About 40% of the total teaching time	12	12%
About 60% of the total teaching time	48	48%
About 80% of the total teaching time	32	32%
About 100% of the total teaching time	4	4%
Total	100	100%

Although use of L1 is pedagogically discouraged in an English lesson under CLT approach, one may compromise to allow a small proportion, say, 10-20% of the total class-time to use it considering the disadvantaged backgrounds of the young learners (YLS) of primary classes in rural Bangladesh, Special Educational Needs (SEN) of some and the absence of a congenial environment surrounding the learners' life for most of time in exposure to the target language, English. In that sense, 100% use of L1, Bangla, by only 4% of the teachers in the English lessons may be considered quite an achievement. These respondents were clearly revered by colleagues, students and parents/guardians, which the researchers experienced during the workshop, interviews and informal discussions. Along with this, there are only nine teachers (4% of the total respondents) claimed to be using 80% English in their lessons. When that is the case, then we have 92% respondents who use L1 for 20% - 100% of the total lesson times. This, according to 100% of the Head-teachers and 90% of the teachers interviewed and 80% of the teacher trainers is an unacceptable scenario if CLT curricula were to be implemented following its prescriptions.

5.3 Confidence with English Curriculum

The teachers have mixed opinions regarding the English text book. 75% of them experience a range of difficulty

in dealing with the language of the English text. However, 40% teachers state that teaching English is comfortable for them but 60% of them find it difficult as shown in Figure 3 below.

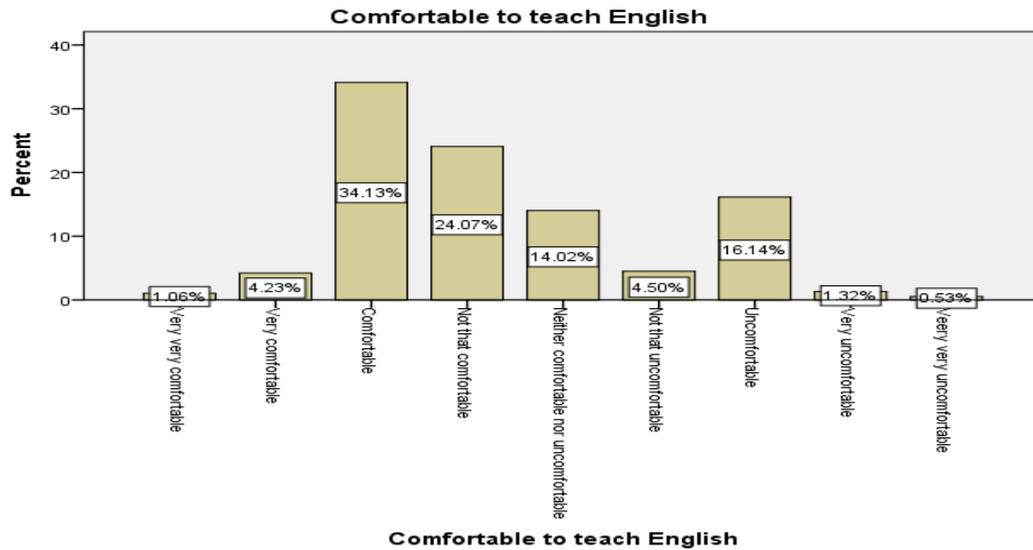


Figure 3. Level of comfort in teaching English

The data also show that the teachers (40%) who are comfortable to teach English are confident to deliver lessons fully in English, presented in Figure 4 below.

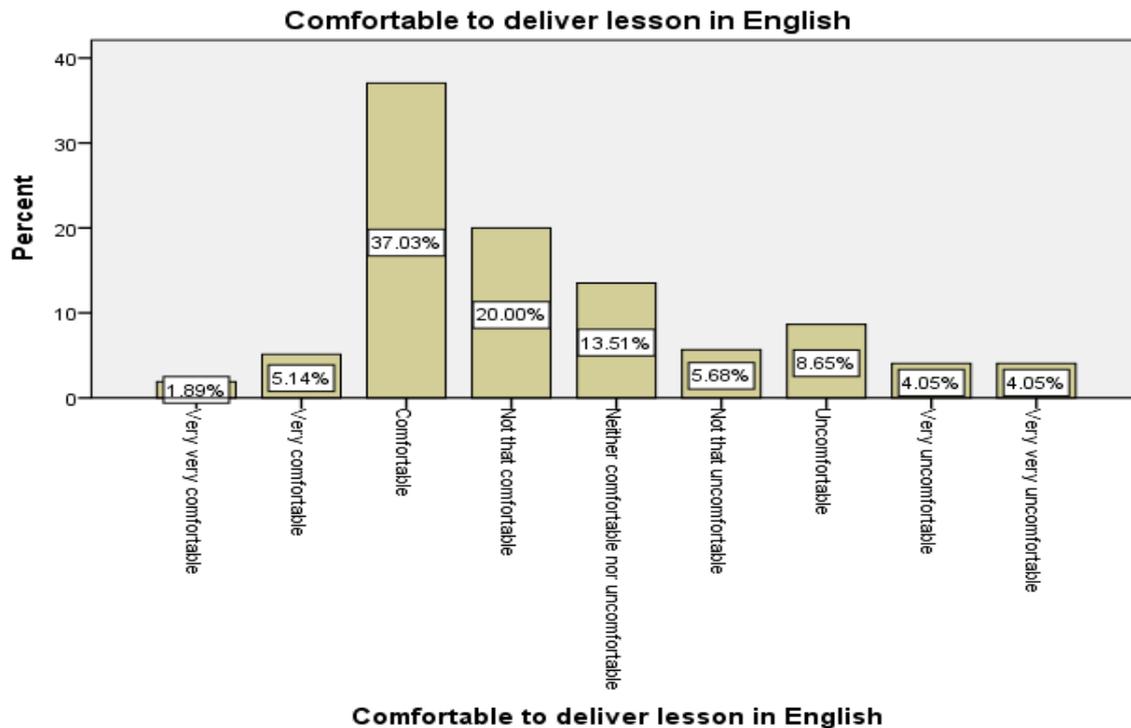


Figure 4. level of comfort to deliver lesson in English

5.4 Learner Needs

The data from questionnaire reveals the teachers’ view of student ability to cope with delivery of English lesson in English only. Their responses are presented in the following Table 2.

Table 2. Students' ability to cope with delivery of lesson in English

Percentage of students understand the delivery of lesson in English	No of teachers viewed	Percentage of teachers viewed
About 20%	45	45
About 40%	37	37
About 60%	13	13
About 80%	5	5
About 100%	01	01
Total	100	100

According to the teachers, only 19% students are good in English at different levels. 81% students were ranked 'not that good' or 'very weak' in their participation in English lessons in class.

5.5 Areas of improvement

The following table shows teachers' language needs. Among the respondents, 100% of the teachers state that they need to improve their own English skills, e.g., listening, understanding, speaking, reading and writing. The data show the weakest area of language skill the teachers need to improve is speaking. 44% respondents agreed that they lack proficiency in speaking English; 33% inform that they have deficiency in listening; 12% inform they are not confident in understanding English spoken by competent speakers and 9% find it difficult to communicate in English. 01% reports they are poor in reading and 01% in writing. It is so evident that the teaching English in those schools in CLT methods would be miserable with 77% of the so-called English teachers with urgent needs to improve their listening and speaking. Added to this scenario, another two elements of CLT, difficulty in "understanding" (12%) and difficulty in communicating (9%) bring the difficulty level of delivering an English lesson through only English to 98%. One would surely surprise themselves to see the mismatch between the CLT prescription and its practice and between the aims of the government and the outcomes in the receiving end in the primary schools of rural Bangladesh.

Table 3. The skills need to be improved as suggested by the participants

Skills need to be improved	Number of teachers	Percent
Listening	33	33%
Speaking	44	44%
Reading	1	1%
Writing	1	1%
Understanding	12	12%
communicating	9	9%
Total	100	100%

5.6 Familiarity with CLT

Among the 54% of the participants acknowledged that they are familiar with the CLT. However, they have a range of difficulty levels for implementation of CLT. Only 14% of the respondents claimed that the implementation of CLT was either easy (9%), very easy (3%) or very very easy (2%). The difficulties they pointed out on a 9 point scale are presented in details in the table below.

Table 4. Difficulty levels in implementation of CLT

Difficulty level in implementation of CLT	Number of Teachers	Percent
Very very difficult	17	17%
Very difficult	15	15%

Difficult	41	41%
Not that difficult	10	10%
Neither easy nor difficult	5	5%
Not that easy	4	4%
Easy	4	4%
Very Easy	2	2%
Very very easy	2	2%
Total	100	100

5.7 Familiarity with the Technology for Teaching

Just above one-thirds of the 100 participants are familiar with different technologies for teaching such as projector, mobile phone, laptop etc. (Figure 5).

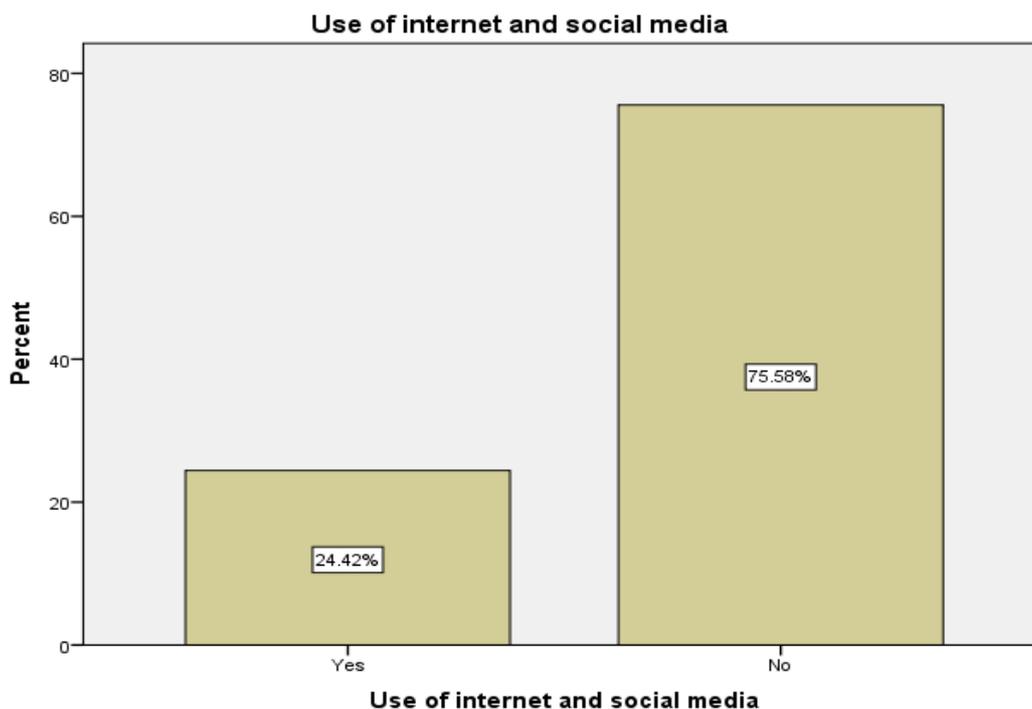


Figure 5. Teachers' familiarity with the technologies in teaching

Just about 25% primary school teachers use internet and social media (Figure 6). They use the internet and social media for several years ranging from 1 to 10 years. However, 90% teachers are motivated to use these technologies for professional development training but they are unsure of its effective use in the lessons at the rural primary schools as it will require financial ability of the parents/guardians, assurance of regular power supply and infrastructural inefficacy.

6. Recommendations

The responses and suggestions of the practicing English teachers at Primary Schools and many Heads reflect the findings of a few research articles, reports of different projects and surveys on the prevailing ELT situation in Bangladesh. Based on the findings of this investigation, the following recommendations are made:

6.1 Improvement of Teachers' Own English Skills

An overwhelming majority, 97%, of the primary English teachers should be trained sufficiently to improve their own English skills. Without this measure, the implementation of CLT in Bangladesh is bound to be “bogged down.” (Hamid, Baldauf Jr. & Richard, 2008)

6.2 Teacher Training in Teaching English

With almost 0% properly trained English subject teachers and “inefficiency of ELT practitioners”, (Barman, Sultana, & Basu, 2007), almost all of the present rural primary school English teachers need professional development training academically sound and pedagogically powerful, particularly in CLT, along with their immediate efforts to improve their basic language skills in English.

6.3 CPD, Well-Structured Supervision and Guidance

An effective framework for supervision and guidance for CPD (Continued Professional Development) of the practicing rural primary English teachers should be in place immediately to ensure effective teaching-learning of English using the methods and techniques of CLT approach.

6.4 Culturally Appropriate and Attractive Teaching Materials

An implied suggestion of culturally appropriate user-friendly attractive and durable text-books and teaching-learning materials presenting contents etc. focusing on the real-life experience, needs and issues of the learners and their surrounding may also be made basing on many oblique and informal comments made during the questionnaire survey, interviews and class-observations.

6.5 Instructional Module

A user-friendly Instructional Module, initially in L1 at the lower level of primary, and gradually making up to 100% in English at the last phase of primary through a bilingual phase in the middle primary can be of good use to keep the boat of CLT in Bangladesh floating on a ‘sea of troubles.’ This need has been emphasized by 100% participants in the final workshop attended by all stake-holders of CLT in Bangladesh.

7. Conclusion

The national CLT program which started in 1999 with a revision of the ELT curriculum ensured a paradigm shift by the Department of Education of Bangladesh to get rid of the much blamed Grammar-Translation Methods and implement a recently acclaimed new approach popularly known as CLT, Communicative Language Teaching. Although the new textbooks somewhat reflect the prescriptions of CLT, the manpower that have been empowered to power the wheels of the ambitious CLT program at primary levels have been feeling powerless to deliver the curriculum as per the aims and objectives set by the Education authorities of the country. The findings from the questionnaire survey, the semi-structured interviews with the English teachers, Teacher Trainers, Head teachers, the final workshop and the lesson observations expose the reality of no effective CLT is being delivered, no communicative skills, whatsoever, the young learners are mastering, none of the expected outcomes are being achieved up until now. The teachers interviewed and the teachers that took part in the workshop followed by group discussions and reporting revealed quite a few painful pictures of punitive predicaments like 0% properly trained CLT English teachers followed by the least teacher-motivation, lack of CLT classroom environment coupled with boring teaching-learning, incongruity between Government policy on digitalizing teaching-learning and the absence of such facilities in the classroom, impractical demands of CLT for “English only” lesson activities, no home-school liaison input in learner intake, lack of professionalism in practically absent supervision and guidance resulting in zero CPD of the so-called English teachers at the primary schools and negligible achievement of the young learners of English of rural Bangladesh, which must be addressed now or never to ensure a positive and productive direction of the ELT, if not CLT.

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