

EFL Teaching Methods Used at the Private Universities in Bangladesh: Effectiveness and Challenges**Professor Sazzad Hossain**, Professor, Department of English, Dhaka International University, Bangladesh**Sifat Ullah**, MPhil Researcher, Applied Linguistics and ELT, Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh

Abstract: The study particularly sought to investigate the effectiveness of the methods that the EFL teachers were using for teaching English language at the private universities in Bangladesh and the challenges they were facing while using the methods. A Mixed Method Research approach was used for data collection and data analysis. For the present study, purposive sampling was used where 10 teachers teaching English to the students at the private universities in Bangladesh were selected from 5 universities located in Dhaka city. The data for the present study were collected through the teacher questionnaire, classroom observation checklist and in-depth interviews. The data were analysed using the descriptive statistical process. Qualitative analysis involved the use of a constant comparative method. The researcher found that most of the EFL teachers did not follow the teaching method prescribed by the curriculum of the universities; rather they chose an eclectic approach considering the aims of the lessons and abilities of the students. The lack of proper teaching materials, time constraint, heavy work load and large class size affected the use of the prescribed method by the curriculum. The use of the eclectic method made the teaching of English to be practical which increased the achievement of teaching English and stimulated language development of the students.

Keywords: EFL Teaching Methods, Private Universities, Effectiveness, Challenges

1. Introduction

We live in a bilingual and multilingual world. Bilingualism and multilingualism, from both a contemporary and a historical perspective, is the norm rather than the exception (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Students in many countries at the tertiary level are taught all their courses in English, in order to create a more accessible material for international students because English has been considered to be the first global Lingua Franca. English has been being studied worldwide gradually in time. English is being taught at the tertiary level with utmost importance throughout the world though Teaching English as a foreign language is intellectually, emotionally, and physically challenging work. With the postmodern methodologies and materials, many developed countries have reached a very standard level in the arena of teaching English at the tertiary level.

In Bangladesh, almost all private universities at the tertiary level offer BA and MA in English. For teaching English as a foreign language, the National Education Policy 2010 took initiative and incorporated new curriculum to improve English language among the learners. It was published in 2013 which focused on CLT approach. It advocates “learning by doing” and proposes that grammar is not to be taught explicitly; rather, the structural and functional aspects should be presented in a systematic and graded way within contexts. Before it, all the skills had an equal importance for practising but only reading and writing skills were set for examination. Actually, there were different types of education policies in different times attributed in Bangladesh to teach English as a foreign language. For teaching and learning English in Bangladesh, the teachers were accustomed to follow Grammar Translation Method (GTM) for a long time. The textbooks were included prose and poetry with supplementary grammar books where most of the teachers felt free to work on grammar items structurally without being interactive exercise which did not fulfill the demand of learning English painstakingly. Though the new curriculum highlighted all four skills for testing and evaluation system, the teachers do not still have the right environment to implement them. After introducing CLT approach in the education system in Bangladesh, different patterns of interaction such as Teacher- Students (T-Ss), Students – Students (Ss- Ss), Student – Teacher (Ss - T), etc. are seen in the classroom rather than GTM prompted Teacher – Students (T – Ss) leading pattern.

However, according to the teaching strategies and their impacts the results of previous studies demonstrate that the use of different methods and number of strategies might depend on the characteristic and setting in which teaching-learning occurs and the language task to be completed, limiting the generalization of the results of previous studies. Beginning in the 1970s, voice for improving students’ communicative competence became louder; the thought of adopting another practical teaching method emerged. The Grammar-Translation and Audiolingual have been two of the most popular teaching approaches. Then Communicative Language Teaching emerged highlighting communicative competence as the goal of language teaching.

In case of private universities, students coming from different background claim different demands. Thus, the same materials and methods are not compatible with all; nevertheless, the teachers use the same materials and methods in the class. Most of the textbooks do not contain tasks from which learners can draw samples from everyday experience. Sometimes teachers are democratic and sometimes autocratic. Teachers are called upon to play different roles in language teaching classrooms. According to Harmer (2007), in the

language learning classroom, a teacher needs to replicate the situation as closely as possible and then provide sufficient support to learners, to be a controller, prompter, participant, resource, tutor, feedback provider so as to identify the students' problems and should be able to switch between these roles. The teacher has to apply it when it is appropriate to use one or another of these roles.

Private universities in Bangladesh have their curriculum where different methods and approaches are prescribed for different topics and subjects. The teachers are supposed to use those methods and approaches while teaching English language at the tertiary level. It is important to sketch the real situation of teaching English at the tertiary level at the private universities in Bangladesh and the challenges the teachers face. So, this study particularly aims to investigate the effectiveness of the methods that the EFL teachers use for teaching English language at the private universities in Bangladesh and to point out the challenges they usually face while using the methods.

2. Literature Review

Kun-huei Wu (2011) found that most of the students preferred the communicative language teaching approach as a means to improve their English proficiency. But the teachers face some problems while using CLT in teaching English. As the research revealed that low confidence in spoken English, deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, unfamiliarity with the target culture, lack of proper training in CLT, and low willingness to prepare communicative materials create problems in teaching English at the tertiary level. Thomas and Sakil Ahmed (2014) found that the challenges the teachers faced in implementing CLT were classroom size, available resources and verbal English proficiency of teachers and student.

In a case study Sabrin Farooqui (2014) explored how teachers implement the prescribed methods in classroom. It focused on teachers' use of the language of instruction and showed there is a gap between policy imperatives and classroom realities. The study reveal that various contextual factors interact with teachers' use of methods and strategies in teaching English as the language of instruction as had been suggested in the curriculum. Suresh Babu Moparthy (2017) conducted a study which witnessed different viewpoints on the issue of the best method in language teaching. Each method had its own advantage and disadvantage and the success of a particular method not only depend on the methodology the teacher adopts but, it also depends on the context and culture of the particular teaching environment. Mohammad Shamsuzzaman and John Everatt (2014), in their research, shared their experiences across several institutions, related to curricula and teaching methods, skills and reported backgrounds of students, and advice and comments of senior colleagues have shaped much of the discussion. They found that, typically in Bangladesh, instructors focused on identifying every surface error in the students' work. However, some of the issues covered relevant to other levels of education in Bangladesh like the problems of focusing on grammar and pertinent literature were referred to as part of the critique of present practices.

Akhter Jahan (2008) suggested that in order to make the classroom instructions more effective, it is necessary for the teachers to carefully examine the underlying nature, factors, conditions and components of the four skills. Farid Saydee (2016) found that the impact of using prescribed methods, in most cases, was not statistically significant. The findings affirmed that change was a hard and slow process. In other words, it would be unrealistic to expose teachers to certain teaching strategies for a short period of time and expect them to embrace and immediately adopt those methodologies. It was also important that educators consider teachers' backgrounds and diversify their curricula when they designed a workshop.

3. Methodology

Based on the objectives of the research, the researchers choose to conduct this study utilizing such an approach. The present researchers combined both the aspects of quantitative and qualitative methods in the stages of data collection and data analysis. Qualitative data was collected by in-depth interviews, classroom observations. The quantitative data collection covered the completion of a questionnaire. The MM approach seemed an appropriate way because of its strength for addressing the research questions and the objectives of the present study. The mixed method approach was chosen based on some aspects of the study.

3.1 Subject

The respondents were selected from five UGC approved private universities of Bangladesh located in Dhaka city by following the mixed method. A questionnaire survey was conducted among 10 university teachers from five private universities. Among the teachers six were male and other four teachers were female. Five classes were observed from five different universities. The classroom observation participants varied from class to class but the minimum number of students was 25 and the maximum number of student was 40. In

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every class there was at least one teacher. The teachers were currently teaching English at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. They have enough academic and professional knowledge in teaching English at the tertiary level in EFL context and all of them had at least an M.A degree in English. However, the interview participants were interviewed through semi-structured questions.

Table 3.1: General Characteristics of the Participants

General Characteristics of the participants	T 1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	T8	T9	T10
Sex	M	F	M	F	M	M	F	F	M	M
Teaching Years	12	11	15	10	8	9	2	1	4	6
Education	PhD	MA	PhD	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MA	MPhil
Experience of Working abroad	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	NO	YES	No
Training in ELT	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	NO	YES	YES	YES	No
University Location	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka	Dhaka

3.2 Instrumentation of Research

The research instruments employed to collect data for this study were questionnaire, interview and class observation. The researcher chose the five-point Likert scale format to design questionnaire because they are simple and reliable. The questionnaire was in Five-point Likert scales (Likert, 1932) ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree” (strongly agree; agree; neutral; disagree; strongly disagree). The in-depth interview was conducted in an informal setting with 10 teachers in their university campus. They had to answer seven questions and justify their claim. However, enough time was given by the teachers though they were very in taking classes and attending meeting. A mobile phone was used to record the interview taking the permission of interviewees. Together with interview and questionnaire, the researchers observed five classes to see how the teachers carried out classes and which methods they preferred to use in EFL teaching.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedure

After obtaining the data through interview and class observation, it is very important for the researchers to point out how the gathered data is analysed. The data collected from the interviews as well as the data from classroom observations were analyzed qualitatively by searching for themes and patterns. The data collected through the self prepared observation checklists were compared whether they overlapped or went beyond systemic analysis. The data that were collected from the classroom observations were first coded according to the categories developed in the observation schedule. Quantitative data were analysed using the SPSS 20.0 for Windows; the descriptive statistics were also used to analyse the responses of the participants. The researchers first relied on frequency counts to know about the frequencies and percentages of the teachers’ responses by category.

4. Findings

The field of curriculum development is large and complex. It includes all of the planned learning experiences in an educational setting. Normally, English language curriculum includes teaching methodology. However, this section analyses the collected data from questionnaire, interview and classroom observation. The findings have been presented based on the objective of the current study.

4.1 Findings from Questionnaire

Quantitative data were collected from the questionnaire survey that was given to the teachers who teach EFL in different private universities of Bangladesh. However, the teachers spontaneously took part in the

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questionnaire survey and answered the questions mentioned above. The results of the findings are shown in the table below.

Table 4.1: Response of the teachers to the questionnaire

Statements	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Inclusion of method in the curriculum	9 (90%)	1 (10%)			
Knowledge of the method	5 (50%)	3 (30%)	2(20%)		
Using the method prescribed in the curriculum	2 (20%)	2 (20%)	3(30%)	3(30%)	
Getting proper support to implement the prescribed methods in the classroom		2(20)	3(30%)	3(30%)	2(20%)
Using own methods	2(20%)	4(30%)		2(20%)	2(20%)
Teaching four skills	5 (50%)	4(1%)	1(10%)		
Facing problems to implement the curriculum prescribed methods	2(20%)	6(60%)	1(10%)	1 (10%)	
Inclusion of new methods in the existing curriculum	2 (20%)	3(30%)	3(30%)	2(20%)	

From the response it is clear that curriculum of all the universities included methods for teaching English. Almost all the teachers had sufficient knowledge on the methods. But most of the teachers (60%) did not use the prescribed methods in teaching EFL. They used their own methods. 90% of the teachers agreed that they taught all the four skills using the methods. At the same time they expressed that they faced problems while implementing the methods prescribed by the curriculum of the universities. Half of the teachers thought that the curriculum should add some more methods based on the materials and syllabus.

4.2 Findings from Interview

The interview questions were consistent with the research objectives and the researcher tried to find the real picture of teaching English language at the tertiary level in Bangladesh through those interview questions.

In response to question one all the teachers said that the curriculum of the universities prescribed EFL teaching methods. Most of the university curricula followed either GTM or CLT.

In response to the question two it was found that a few teachers followed the prescribed methods according to the curriculum of the universities. But majority of the teachers said that they did not usually follow the prescribed methods. One of the teachers was found who used TBLT in teaching speaking and listening. They liked to implement their own methods as they were comfortable with the method in EFL teaching. One of the teachers said:

I use the eclectic method to teach the English language. The reason for adopting this method is that it allows me to utilize and experiment a number of teaching methods in the same class.

Another teacher remarked:

In selecting methods I use Eclectic Approach which combines Grammar-translation Method, Direct Method, Communicative Language Teaching and Task-based Language Teaching.

In response to question three the teachers said that they used different kinds of activities to teach four skills. The teachers mainly used traditional activities in EFL teaching. A teacher said:

“For speaking the learners work in group and speak and discuss on given topics. For listening, the learners listen to the taped speech, news etc. For reading, learners do some activities like MCQ, filling gaps, summary writing etc. on given reading passages. For writing the learners practise random writing, then arrange the writing with topic sentence, supporting evidence and thus elaborate it.

In response to the question four it was found that all the teachers face more or less problems in EFL teaching. The lack of proper teaching materials, time constraint, heavy work load and large class size affected the use of the prescribed method by the curriculum. One of the teachers said:

I did not think that those materials were relevant and sufficient enough for teaching English at the tertiary level in Bangladeshi context. Facilities and number of teaching materials should be increased.

In response to the question four, the teachers expressed that curriculum should have been appropriate and adequate for teaching English. As it was designed on the basis of needs analysis, it filled the basic requirement of teaching language to its learners. But, there were a few gaps, which should have been solved as soon as possible. The syllabus, which she used, was the blending of situational, functional-notional, and task-based syllabi in their opinion. "As eclectic approach adds all these kinds of syllabus pattern, it enhances students' language proficiency", one of the teachers remarked.

4.3 Findings from Classroom Observation

The findings represent a clear picture of the classroom organization. Most of the classes were teacher-centered. Students had minimum participation in the teaching learning process. The classrooms were not well organized in terms of involving the students into the communicative activities. The students were not divided into any group or pair in the classroom. Sometimes teachers involved the students into activities but most of them were performed individually by the students.

The researchers explored the state of English language teaching in the private universities of Bangladesh. The observation focused exclusively on EFL teaching methods and approaches followed by the teachers in different private universities in Bangladesh. From the findings, it is evident that in case of English language teaching, most of teachers followed techniques that fall under neither GTM nor CLT that was prescribed in the curriculum of the universities. Besides, it was found that most of the teachers gave importance to students' getting good grades while organizing classroom activities. They did not give importance to developing students' communicative ability. It seemed to the researcher that a few teachers did not have enough ideas about the CLT approach. It was also observed that the large number of students was a big challenge for the teacher to give feedback to the individual students within the class time.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

From the analysis the researchers have found positive attitude of the teachers about the methods they are using. The teachers also said that they conducted a lot of activities for promoting English language teaching at the tertiary level. Most of the teachers expressed that they did not use any particular method while teaching English language to the students studying at the tertiary level. They used a method of their own combining existing method of English language teaching. They did it because they thought it was necessary for the students as the students were from different socio-economic backgrounds, they had different competence levels in English language, they had different learning styles and above all in their universities they had different English learning systems. However, the teachers faced some challenges in using the methods in EFL teaching. Based on the findings and the discussion above, the following suggestions could minimize the problems and solve the challenges the teachers faced in using the methods in EFL teaching and make the methods more effective.

- The English teachers should participate in different training programs at home and abroad on different teaching techniques and strategies.
- Teachers need to create student-centered classroom.
- Teachers ought to improve their classroom management techniques.
- Teachers should plan every lesson considering the context, interest of the students, needs and competency level of the students.
- The teachers should facilitate enough activities for each language skill.
- The university authorities should update the curriculums every year so that they can ensure international quality in education.
- The university administration should take steps about the large class size. They should not allow more than twenty students in a batch.

Moreover, the teachers must have perfect knowledge about the teaching methodologies and approaches. Depending on the needs of the students, the teacher should follow the best English teaching method. They can even combine different methods if it is needed.

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