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Policy, Perception, and Practice: EFL Teachers' Perspectives on the Implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching Approach in Bangladeshi Secondary Education

by

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Abstract

My thesis sought to investigate how the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach is implemented in Bangladeshi secondary school EFL classrooms, specifically focusing on the viewpoints and real-world experiences of the teachers involved. Applying a case study approach, I have used qualitative research methods such as semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and policy document analysis. The study has been conducted with a range of educational stakeholders including EFL teachers, EFL teacher trainers, trainees, assistant head teachers, head teachers, and administrative staff. Using Fullan's theory of educational change, Fullan and Hargreaves' concept of professional capital, and Steiner-Khamsi's interpretive framework of educational policy borrowing as lenses, I have explored the perspectives and lived experiences of the EFL teachers regarding the CLT implementation.

My investigation reveals that the influence of international organisations on government policy formulation, the divergent views of teachers towards the CLT, the lack of trained EFL teachers, the large class size, and the disconnect between traditional teaching methods and the principles of the CLT approach are some of the major obstacles. I have also noted other issues such as ineffective school leadership, insufficient support from the government to teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, a lack of a collaborative culture among teachers, inadequate formal teacher training with a focus on the CLT approach, and excessive reliance on foreign funding to keep teacher training programmes running. These difficulties are made worse by structural barriers like excessive teacher workloads, an excessive emphasis on exams, and the expansion of private tutoring.

The study deepens understanding of structural and systemic barriers to educational reform in Bangladesh by focusing on the views of people who are at the centre of educational change. The aim is that this study will lead to a more critical and reflective approach to policy formulation and implementation, which will lead to a better and more supportive environment for teaching and learning the English language.

Acknowledgements

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ABBREVIATIONS

ADB   Asian Development Bank

BERA   British Educational Research Association

CL   Co-operative Learning

CLT   Communicative Language Teaching

CPD   Continuing Professional Development

DD   Deputy Director

DEO   District Education Officer

DFID   Department for International Development

DSHE   Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education

EFL   English as a Foreign Language

EFT   English For Today

EIA   English In Action

ELE   English Language Education

ELT   English Language Teaching

ELTIP   English Language Teaching Improvement Programme

ESL   English as a Second Language

GTM   Grammar Translation Method

HSC   Higher Secondary School Certificate

ICT   Information and Communication Technology

JSC   Junior School Certificate

MoEdu   Ministry of Education

NCE   National Curriculum for English

NCF   National Curriculum Framework

NCTB   National Curriculum and Textbook Board

NEP   National Education Policy

NEST   Native English Speaker Teacher

OECD   Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

OSSTTEB   Orientation to Secondary School Teachers for Teaching of English in Bangladesh

PLC   Professional Learning Community

RQ   Research Question

SEDP   Secondary Education Development Programme

SEQAEP   Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project

SSC   Secondary School Certificate

TESOL   Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages

TQI   Teaching Quality Improvement

TTC   Teachers' Training College

USAID   United States Agency for International Development

WB   World bank

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.0 Introduction

The purpose of this research was to investigate how secondary EFL teachers in Bangladesh interpreted and implemented the educational change suggested in the updated National Curriculum for English (NCE) 2012 (NCTB, 2012). The context for the rest of the research is laid forth in this first chapter. Section 1.1 provides background information for this study which discusses the recent initiatives to change the EFL curriculum in Bangladeshi schools and the gaps in the existing research literature on the implementation of curriculum restructuring. In Section 1.2, I have presented my personal journey to the study. The research gap and aims of my study are discussed in Section 1.4 after its justification has been presented in Section 1.3. Section 1.5 presents the research questions that will be investigated throughout this study. In the last section (1.6) I have outlined the structure of the thesis.

1.1 Background to the Study

The ascendancy of English as the global lingua franca has seen many countries reconfigure their educational agendas, bringing English language teaching to the forefront of their curricular deliberations (Jenkins and Leung, 2014). Consequently, the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has risen to prominence in English language education. The approach, respected for its learner-centric philosophy and its emphasis on authentic and purposeful communication, has been broadly endorsed across various educational contexts (Lightbown and Spada, 2013; Richards and Rodgers, 2014).

Situated within South Asia, Bangladesh has been proactive in aligning its English language teaching methodologies with this global trend. The country officially incorporated the CLT approach into its national English language teaching curriculum in the late 20th century (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014). This strategic policy decision was underpinned by the recognition that communicative proficiency in English could potentially equip Bangladeshi students to participate more effectively in an increasingly globalised economy (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). Nevertheless, despite its

adoption, the successful classroom implementation of the CLT has proven to be a complex task, particularly within the context of secondary education (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009).

Existing literature identifies a range of systemic, pedagogical, and contextual issues that compromise the successful implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. Such impediments include but are not limited to, large class sizes, resource scarcity, deficient teacher training initiatives, an exam-focused culture that prioritises rote learning over communicative competence, and varying levels of English language proficiency among teachers themselves (Karim, 2004; Hamid and Nguyen, 2016). Additionally, the interplay of local and international dynamics, such as the influence of international financial organisations on domestic education policies, further shapes the landscape of English language education in Bangladesh (Adhikary and Lingard, 2019; Ali and Hamid, 2023; Maksud Ali *et al.*, 2023).

In recent times, the widespread disruptions triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic have added an entirely new dimension to the challenges surrounding EFL teaching and learning. The unprecedented shift to remote learning has had profound impacts on pedagogical practices and teacher experiences (d'Orville, 2020), specially in the context of the CLT approach. Amid these challenges, it is crucial to delve into teachers' perspectives, as they are at the forefront of policy implementation, thereby facilitating a more nuanced understanding of the intricacies of CLT implementation in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

1.2 My Personal Journey into the Study

My teaching journey began when I completed my Bachelor's and Master's degrees in English Language and Literature, and joined the Bangladesh Civil Service General Education Cadre. With no pre-service training or teaching practicum under my belt, I was launched into the role of an English teacher at a higher secondary education institution in my home district. My first years as a teacher were marked by overcrowded classrooms with more than 150 students and a lack of fundamental audio equipment, including a microphone to project my voice. This scenario vividly depicted the infrastructural challenges that would come to define my teaching experiences in the years to come. Because of the large number of pupils, it was challenging for me to provide each student individualised attention, answer questions, and involve them in engaging activities. This was

exacerbated by the absence of a sound system, which made it difficult for me to effectively communicate with all pupils, particularly those seated further away.

However, it was not just the structural elements that presented difficulties. My lack of pedagogical knowledge contributed to the complications. As an inexperienced teacher with no prior training, I struggled with lesson preparation, classroom management, and developing engaging content for such a large and diverse student body. This was, to say the least, a daunting challenge, and I found myself gradually giving in to frustration as I grappled with the realities of teaching English in this difficult environment.

It was evident that I lacked the practical skills necessary to manage a real-world classroom situation despite my university education. I found myself desiring pedagogical training and pondering the causes of my difficulties. Was my ineffectiveness as a teacher due to a lack of training, a large class size, a lack of instructional aids, or a combination of these factors?

These obstacles prompted me to attend an 11-day English language teaching training course. The training centred on the Communicative Language Teaching methodology, which was supported by government policy, and appeared to be the solution to the problems I had been experiencing. However, I had no idea at the time that this training would present its own set of challenges and unresolved questions, fueling my desire to gain a deeper understanding of the pedagogical realities of teaching English as a foreign language. This training opened my eyes to new teaching techniques and methodologies, marking a turning point in my teaching career. The training, held in a training centre with sophisticated technology and support, aimed to instill twenty trainees with the principles and practices of the CLT approach. The knowledge came from experienced trainers with international exposure, having studied TESOL programmes at renowned universities in the UK and Australia.

The training was initiated to make English language instruction more collaborative and interactive, in line with the Western pedagogical principles that form the basis of the CLT methodology. I was exposed to interactive English teaching techniques for the first time, something that was largely absent from my previous experience in large classrooms.

However, the ideal environment of the training centre was in striking contrast to the realities of our daily teaching. As the training progressed, it became clearer and clearer that, despite being effective, the methodologies we were being trained in seemed somewhat detached from our teaching

environments. The issue of magnitude stood out immediately. Our cohort of 20 trainees was a far cry from our usual classroom size of over 150 students.

Our conversations with the trainers and amongst ourselves revealed a shared sense of concern. Without any technological support, how could we implement these interactive techniques? How could we engage 200 students as effectively as we did with 20 trainees? How could we modify these techniques to accommodate the constraints of our local environment? To bridge the gap between the realities of the training centre and the challenges in our classrooms, I confronted the trainer with these queries one day. To my dismay, the answer did not provide a satisfactory response. It appeared that the CLT approach we were being taught was not designed with our specific circumstances in mind, resulting in a divergence between the approach's theory and its application in our classrooms.

This experience strengthened my conviction that there is a need for a broader, more context-specific understanding of language teaching methodologies. In 2015, I decided to pursue a master's degree in TESOL at the University of Glasgow to delve deeper into this topic. The decision was motivated by a desire to comprehend how teaching techniques taught in the Western TESOL programmes could be adapted to various contexts, specially those analogous to my own teaching context in Bangladesh.

While pursuing a master's degree in TESOL at the University of Glasgow, I found myself immersed in an environment where various teaching methodologies and approaches were debated, practised, and critically evaluated. As a student pursuing an MSc in TESOL, I was thrust into a thorough investigation of the CLT approach, including not only its methodologies and principles, but also the contextual variables influencing its implementation. In this course, I gained a deeper understanding of language instruction as I learned the significance of context in determining instructional strategies. This course, unlike my previous training, emphasised the importance of local contexts in education and urged us to adapt our teaching methods to the cultural, technological, and infrastructure aspects of the environment. I was enlightened by how, within this framework, even the most advanced teaching approaches could potentially be adapted to any context, a perspective that seemed to offer solutions to the problems I confronted at home.

Upon my return to Bangladesh, however, I was confronted with reality despite my extensive comprehension and newly acquired insights. The lessons I learnt in Glasgow were difficult to implement in my professional field. I had hoped that my newfound knowledge would make a

significant difference in my classrooms, but the practical obstacles I faced were daunting. Despite having a deeper understanding of the CLT approach, it was difficult to translate this comprehension into practical, viable solutions due to the realities of our education system.

In my fifteen years as an EFL teacher in Bangladesh, my experiences have been both enlightening and challenging, affording me a comprehensive understanding of our educational landscape. Throughout this time, I have witnessed firsthand how the structural and systemic characteristics of our educational context generate situations that pose a challenge to conventional teaching practices. In this context, the absence of teacher participation in curriculum development is conspicuous. I was never invited to contribute to the English curriculum, share my insights, or provide feedback on its structure and content, despite my qualifications and experiences. This exclusion became even more apparent upon my return from Glasgow, where I had acquired a substantial quantity of TESOL-specific expertise. Nonetheless, despite my plethora of experience and expertise, I found myself unable to contribute to my field of expertise within the education system.

Moreover, I observed that I was not alone in my frustration. Many of my colleagues also struggled with feelings of disconnection from their roles as EFL teachers. Rather than focusing on their formal teaching responsibilities, I witnessed a growing trend of teachers engaging in private supplementary tuition, also known as 'shadow education'. This shift away from the classroom towards more mercenary, business-focused engagements appeared to be the result of widespread discontent with the current system. Interestingly, this trend did not elicit positive feedback from our peers and parents. It was frequently criticised by both parents and teachers from other disciplines, who saw it as a commercialisation of the teaching profession. However, what struck me the most was the authorities' indifference to these issues. There appeared to be a general disregard for the concerns and desires of teachers. Instead, there was palpable pressure on teachers to increase their students' pass rates in public examinations, frequently supported by punitive measures. This meant that teachers, who were already struggling to adjust to less-than-ideal teaching conditions, were now under additional pressure to improve exam scores of students. My colleagues and I also had to remain unconcerned about the students achieving the intended learning outcomes.

As a result, it became clearer and clearer to me that the systemic problems afflicting our educational system required attention. Even though I had a thorough comprehension of various teaching

methodologies and approaches, including the CLT approach, the environment in which I was required to implement them was not conducive. This ongoing difficulty sparked a desire in me to delve deeper into the issue and investigate it from an academic standpoint. Considering this, I chose to investigate the perspectives of EFL teachers on the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary EFL classes for my PhD study.

My PhD research is both an academic endeavour and a personal mission, based on my experiences as an English teacher in Bangladesh. This journey has not been linear; rather, it has been marked by obstacles, moments of self-doubt, and professional frustration. Despite this, I consider these elements to be significant landmarks that have shaped my comprehension of the pedagogical landscape in Bangladesh and honed my research interests.

I see myself as both an insider and an outsider in this research. As an EFL teacher, I am intimately familiar with the pedagogical practices, systemic obstacles, and cultural nuances that characterise the EFL teaching landscape in Bangladesh. I am aware of the disconnect between policy and practice, the repercussions of under-resourced classrooms, the pressures of rising student performance rates, and the frustrations existing in silence within the teaching community. This 'insider' perspective equips me with cultural sensitivity and intuitive understanding that can enrich the data interpretation process and give my research findings an additional layer of depth.

On the other hand, my 'outsider' perspective, gained through my international academic exposure and TESOL degree at the University of Glasgow, has enabled me to analyse the local teaching context critically. It has provided me with a variety of pedagogical theories and methodologies, knowledge of global best practices, and familiarity with research methodologies. These abilities enable me to objectively investigate the implementation of the CLT strategy within the Bangladeshi context. Moreover, the issue I am researching has significant implications for policy, instructional practice, and ultimately students' learning outcomes in Bangladesh; it is not merely an abstract academic question. I am acutely aware of this, and as a researcher, I feel a sense of responsibility to ensure that my research can inform future educational strategies and contribute to practical solutions.

The personal aspect of my research voyage is possibly what makes it the most distinctive and significant. This research represents not only an objective academic inquiry, but also a significant portion of my personal narrative and path as an EFL teacher. Every experience I have had, every obstacle I have surmounted, and every insight I have gained throughout my teaching career serve

as the backdrop for this research. This personal connection to my research topic provides a certain amount of motivation and engagement that transcends a mere academic pursuit.

However, this personal involvement does not compromise my ability to maintain the necessary critical distance for conducting rigorous and impartial research. In fact, it strengthens my research by imparting a sense of purpose and dedication. My personal connection to my research topic also enables me to empathise with my fellow EFL teachers and gain a deeper understanding of their experiences and perspectives. In addition, my journey from a local EFL teacher to a student in an international TESOL programme and back has provided me with a unique understanding of the contrast between theory and practice, as well as the complexities involved in adapting global teaching methodologies to local contexts. This information is invaluable to my research because it enables me to better comprehend the challenges encountered by my fellow EFL teachers and the potential solutions that may be effective in our context.

Again, it is my personal investment in enhancing the quality of EFL instruction in Bangladesh that motivates my research. I am researching this topic not only for academic purposes but also to enhance the state of EFL education in my country. The insights and solutions that arise from my research will not only contribute to academic knowledge, but may also inform future teaching practices, influence policymaking, and ultimately enhance the learning outcomes of EFL students in Bangladesh. Consequently, my research reflects my dedication to enhancing EFL education in Bangladesh along with my academic abilities.

In conclusion, my unique position in this research, which is a result of my personal experiences in the Bangladeshi EFL teaching context, enables me to conduct this PhD research. My journey thus far has been marked by multiple junctures of skepticism and annoyance, casting doubt on the efficacy of the theoretical frameworks I have learned during my academic pursuit. This tension between theory and implementation in the classroom has been a constant source of my curiosity, prompting me to investigate the factors that contribute to the challenges of implementing the CLT approach in the Bangladeshi context. The equilibrium between my theoretical knowledge and practical experience will enable me to bridge the divide between global best practices and local realities, providing valuable insights for improving the effectiveness of EFL instruction in Bangladesh. I hope to shed light on the perspectives and experiences of EFL teachers in Bangladesh through my research. By giving them a voice, I expect to identify the obstacles they face in implementing the CLT approach and propose potential solutions.

To conclude, my professional experiences, academic achievements, and personal passion for teaching position me not only as a researcher but also as an active participant in the story I am attempting to unravel. I am not merely an observer of the phenomenon but rather an essential component of it. My position in this research is defined by this unique balance of objectivity and subjectivity, of personal engagement and academic distance. It is a journey to which I am deeply committed, with the intention that my research will contribute to the development of an EFL teaching environment that is more effective and contextually relevant.

1.3 Justification for the Study

The Communicative Language Teaching approach, though widely acclaimed as an effective teaching strategy in language learning, frequently encounters hurdles in successful implementation, specially within EFL contexts (Canale and Swain, 1980; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). This gap between policy enactment and effective classroom practice is often underpinned by a constellation of factors, encompassing cultural and contextual variances, inadequate teacher training programmes, structural limitations, and teachers' beliefs and attitudes towards the approach (Borg, 2006; Richards and Burns, 2012).

Teachers, despite being at the heart of policy implementation, are often marginalised in policy formulation processes, underscoring a systemic disregard for their professional insights and experiences (Borg, 2006). Therefore, exploring teachers' perspectives is not just an exercise in inclusivity but a critical pathway towards gaining an in-depth understanding of the challenges associated with implementing the CLT approach within distinct educational contexts (Li, 1998; Borg, 2006). This becomes particularly pertinent within the context of Bangladesh, where previous research indicates significant impediments to the successful integration of CLT, but a comprehensive exploration of teachers' perspectives and experiences remains scant (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009; Sultana, 2018).

Additionally, the role of international organisations and donor agencies in the shaping of national education policies and curriculum reforms in countries like Bangladesh necessitates further investigation. The process of policy borrowing or transfer under the aegis of these international entities can have far-reaching impacts on classroom practices (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004).

Consequently, a thorough understanding of teachers' perceptions of this phenomenon can unravel the intricate interplay between global influences and local educational practices.

Lastly, the COVID-19 pandemic has catalysed unprecedented disruptions in the EFL teaching and learning ecosystem, necessitating a shift towards online learning platforms. This emergent paradigm has implications for the implementation of the CLT approach, making it crucial to examine teachers' experiences during this transition. Such exploration can provide invaluable insights into the practical challenges and necessary adaptations associated with facilitating communicative language teaching within a virtual learning environment.

In the light of these considerations, my study intends to address a distinct research problem, investigating teachers' perspectives and experiences regarding the implementation of the CLT approach within secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. Moreover, my inquiry will probe into how these experiences are shaped by broader policy dynamics and the evolving challenges precipitated by the global pandemic.

1.4 Research Gap and Aims of the Study

This research intends to exert significant implications for English language education, policy implementation, and teacher professional development, particularly within the Bangladeshi context. Firstly, the application of the CLT methodology to English as a Foreign Language setting has received a great deal of scholarly attention (Canale and Swain, 1980; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). However, there is a lack of study in this area (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009; Sultana, 2018), and thereof a lack of a comprehensive map of teachers' experiences and opinions in the Bangladeshi context. By illuminating the complexities of teachers' lived experiences and perspectives on CLT implementation, my study hopes to contribute to filling this research gap and gaining a more nuanced understanding of the CLT approach implementation in Bangladesh.

Secondly, because of their vital role in educational or curricular policy implementation, EFL teachers' viewpoints and experiences are crucial to bridging the policy-implementation gap (Coburn, 2005; Fullan, 2015b). Focusing on teachers' perspectives, my study aims to serve two purposes by both bolstering their voices and providing a critical analysis of the policy-practice continuum, in this case in connection to the CLT methodology in Bangladesh. These insights might be used to design more efficient and relevant implementation plans and training courses for

educational practitioners. Thirdly, my study aims to provide a timely investigation of how the COVID-19 epidemic has impacted EFL teaching practices, particularly the use of the CLT approach. This study adds rich empirical data to inform future pedagogical and policy approaches which is crucial as educational systems around the world deal with the ongoing and residual repercussions of the pandemic.

Finally, my study has also implications for educational policymakers and international financial and cultural organisations (such as DFID, British Council, ADB, World Bank etc.) concerned with English language teaching in Bangladesh and related EFL environments. Understanding the complex processes of policy transmission and the impact of international bodies on classroom practices might yield useful insights for future policy and curricular changes (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a).

To conclude, the findings of my research might lead to crucial suggestions for improving the CLT approach implementation in secondary EFL classrooms where I have been struggling since the inception of my EFL teaching profession. Moreover, my freshly gained insights from this research will potentially foster more inclusive policymaking processes and bolster professional development for teachers. In the long run, these kinds of initiatives can help improve the quality of English language education in Bangladesh.

1.5 Research Questions

In this section, I systematically present the fundamental focus of my study on the use and implementation of the CLT approach by EFL teachers in Bangladesh. The overarching research question aspires to capture the lived experiences and perspectives of the EFL teachers. To offer a multi-faceted understanding, four sub-questions have been devised. These explore the intricacies of government policy surrounding the CLT approach implementation, the teachers' perceptions of this policy, the challenges, and changes in CLT implementation pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and lastly, the formal teacher training and continuous professional development opportunities available to EFL teachers. The purpose of the current study was to answer the following research questions. My main or overarching research question is:

What are the teachers' perspectives on and experiences of the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh?

And the four specific sub-research questions are:

1. What is the government policy on the use of the CLT approach in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh?
2. How do the EFL teachers perceive the government policy regarding the CLT approach?
3. What are the EFL teachers' experiences of implementing the CLT approach pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic?
4. What formal teacher training and CPD have teachers received or been offered?

1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 2 presents the context of English Language Education (ELE) in Bangladesh. First, Section 2.1 situates the Communicative Language Teaching approach and Section 2.2 discusses the prospect of the Post-Method Pedagogy in English language teaching. Then after reviewing relevant literature regarding the CLT implementation discourses in the Global North and South (Sections 2.3 and 2.4), I have presented an overview of English Language Education reform in Bangladesh (Section 2.5) with a short review of government policy changes throughout. In Section 2.6, I have critically focused particularly on the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. I also have shown how the English Language Education policy has taken a global and neoliberal turn (Section 2.7) in recent years. In Section 2.8, I have discussed the trend of educational policy transfer in Bangladesh. Before offering my concluding remarks (Section 2.10), I have also delineated a picture of the Education and ELT field during the COVID-19 pandemic situation (Section 2.9) as I had to execute my research, particularly my fieldwork in Bangladesh at that challenging time.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical and conceptual frameworks for the study where the educational policy borrowing theory, Fullan's educational change implementation theory, and Hargreaves and Fullan's professional capital approach are discussed in relation to my research design and purpose. In this chapter, I have shown how I have elicited some concepts (such as street-level bureaucrats, collaboration, shared responsibilities, policy transfer as a lens etc.) from broader educational theories to interrogate my data in the data analysis chapters (**Chapter 6-8**) and discussion chapter (**Chapter 9**).

Chapter 4 discusses the methodological rationale for this study including the research paradigm, the use of case study design, sampling, procedures for data collection and analysis, research ethics, and my reflections on addressing challenges and methodological adaptations.

Chapter 5 offers a detailed analysis of the National Curriculum for English (NCE) 2012 (NCTB, 2012) and the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2021 (NCTB, 2021) policy documents with some references to the National Education Policy (NEP) 2010 (MoEdu, 2010). I have analysed and reviewed the policy documents to discern the difference between policy and practices.

Chapters 6 to **Chapter 8** are my study findings chapters where I have presented an in-depth analysis of my empirical data. I have developed my argument by building criticality in the light of relevant literature in these chapters.

Chapter 9 is the Discussion chapter where the findings have been analysed in more depth in relation to relevant theories and literature.

Chapter 10 concludes the thesis by considering the implications of the key findings. This chapter also offers several recommendations based on the implications of the findings. I have concluded this chapter by presenting suggestions for further research and my personal reflections on the PhD journey.

Chapter 2: Research Context

2.0 Introduction

The increasing importance of the English language as a means of communication in the field of trade and commerce, and scholarly pursuits on a global scale has resulted in the need for educational changes in non-native English-speaking nations across the globe (Crystal, 2003). Bangladesh, a country with a complex history of language policy, is no exception to this trend (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009). In this chapter, at first, I will situate the Communicative Language Teaching approach in English Language Teaching and then discuss the prospect of the Post-Method Pedagogy in English language teaching. I will also critically review the CLT approach implementation in the context of the Global North and the Global South. Then I will focus particularly on the English Language Education reform and the CLT implementation in the context of Bangladesh with a historical background of that reform. I will also provide an account of the global and local educational landscape during the COVID-19 pandemic situation.

In my research, I have used the terms 'Global North' and 'Global South' to articulate economic and socio-cultural disparities. The Global North-Global South divide is rooted in history, economics, and politics. The Global North has benefited from colonialism and maintains dominant economic and political institutions at the expense of the Global South. Global inequality and development imbalances are highlighted by this power dynamic (Mignolo, 2011). The Global North includes developed nations with strong economies, industries, and cultures. North America, Europe, and several Asian and Oceanian nations have advanced technological infrastructure, excellent living standards, and global political power (Pieterse, 2019). On the other hand, economically, industrially, and socio-culturally underdeveloped countries are called the Global South. This term mostly covers Latin America, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. The Global South refers to countries with persistent economic problems, inferior technical advancement, and socio-economic issues. Low Human Development Index ratings, political instability, and systemic inequalities characterise these countries (Dados and Connell, 2012). Bangladesh, my research context, is classified as part of the Global South owing to its poor socio-economic and cultural status.

As a nation with a lower Human Development Index and facing socio-economic disparities, Bangladesh mirrors many of the characteristics associated with the Global South (Conceição, 2020).

Despite its achievements in areas such as education reform and economic growth, persistent challenges such as poverty, limited industrialisation, and infrastructural gaps continue to hinder its development (Rahman and Bari, 2018). The struggles of Bangladesh with political instability and unequal access to global markets further align it with the broader framework of Global South nations (N. Hossain, 2021). Additionally, the educational reforms in Bangladesh, particularly in English language education, are often constrained by these socio-economic realities. Thus, the efforts of the country to adopt and implement approaches like the CLT must be viewed within the larger context of global inequality, where nations in the Global South continually strive to overcome systemic disadvantages while adapting external models to their local contexts.

2.1 The CLT Approach in English Language Teaching

Over time, English language teaching techniques and materials have undergone gradual modifications with the aim of enhancing the effectiveness of both teaching and learning processes (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). During the latter half of the nineteenth century, a progressive shift away from the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) occurred, prompting a reform movement that prioritised oral communication above written expression as the major mode of language instruction. The emergence of the Direct Method was a result of this reaction. The Direct Method emphasised the study of spoken language and promoted an inductive approach to grammar instruction, in contrast to the deductive method employed in the Grammar-Translation Method. Additionally, the Direct Method encouraged the usage of the target language in the classroom. The Direct Method was subject to criticisms, which subsequently paved the way for the emergence of 'The Age of Methods' from the 1950s to the 1980s. This time witnessed the development of numerous specific guidelines for language teaching, as documented by Burns and Richards (2009). During the 1980s, the CLT approach gained prominence and overshadowed the previously dominant methods in language instruction, as it included more interactive perspectives.

With a focus on language as a tool for communication rather than just a subject of study, CLT represented a significant shift in ELT. Hymes (1972) established the idea of 'communicative competence', which included grammatical competence as well as the capacity to use language in a way that is appropriate for a given social context. Lessons started to focus more on interaction, role-playing, and communication in the real world (Savignon and Berns, 1983). The CLT approach went

beyond the scripted situations that characterised earlier approaches like the GTM and recognised that real communication frequently involved spontaneous language use.

The communicative approach to language instruction might be characterised as a 'hybrid' technique that leans towards a progressive rather than a traditional methodology (Wright, 2000). In the CLT approach, the learning items are presented in a contextualised manner (Finocchiaro and Brumfit, 1983). This contrasts with the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which primarily focuses on rote memorization of isolated words and grammar rules (Brown and Duguid, 2001). Kumaravadivelu (2012) asserts that the CLT, which emerged in the early 1970s, has assumed a significant role in influencing the design, execution, and assessment of English language Teaching programmes across many global contexts. The primary objective of the CLT approach, as identified by Richards & Rodgers (2014), is to develop learners' communicative competence. This approach emphasises the learners' ability to effectively use the language in real-life communication scenarios, enabling them to fulfil their communicative needs. This pedagogical technique transitions from the acquisition of linguistic structures to the development of effective communication skills. In this instance, the primary emphasis of the learning process does not solely rest on the teacher, so demonstrating the shift in CLT classes from a teacher-centered approach to a learner-centered approach (Breshneh and Riasati, 2014).

Several scholars have provided substantial theorising about the CLT approach, offering differing points of view. Richards & Rodgers (2014) have proffered a comprehensive description of the widely recognised concepts of the CLT approach that are now employed in language education. These principles are outlined as follows:

i. The primary focus should be placed on the integration of linguistic form, meaning, and function.
ii. It is imperative that learners actively participate in the practical, genuine, and purposeful application of language for meaningful objectives.
iii. The principles of fluency and accuracy are interdependent in communicating approaches.
iv. The principles of the CLT can also be extended to encompass the development of reading and writing skills.
v. The assessment should be conducted with regard to both fluency and accuracy.

According to Larsen-Freeman (2000), the objective of the CLT approach is to impart language skills that extend beyond just grammatical and linguistic knowledge, encompassing the cultural and social aspects of communication. The primary characteristic of this approach lies in its emphasising meaning over the accuracy of language. The primary objective of this approach is to enhance the development of communicative competence among learners through engaging in relevant oral and written activities (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011). The primary objective of the CLT approach is to facilitate learners' ability to effectively communicate in the target language. This is achieved by the implementation of various communicative activities, including language games, role play, and problem-solving tasks, which encourage learners to extensively communicate in the target language (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

The CLT approach also supports the use of trial and error by learners, implying that teachers should demonstrate tolerance towards errors as a means of motivating pupils (Larsen-Freeman and Anderson, 2011; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). When students are given the opportunity to interact and have plenty of opportunities to participate in pair or group work, the power balance in the classroom shifts from the teachers to the students. Richards & Rodgers (2014) further argued that when teachers undertake this approach, they automatically assume the role of a facilitator rather than being the central force in a language classroom.

2.2 From the CLT to the Post-Method Pedagogy

Although the CLT approach has been widely accepted and implemented, it is not without criticism. Some argue that it can neglect the systematic study of language, leading to a lack of accuracy in communication (Swan and Urdang, 1985). Additionally, the feasibility of implementing CLT in classrooms with large numbers, limited resources, or in contexts where exams focus on explicit knowledge has been questioned (Nunan, 2003). In the next section, I will critically look at the CLT approach with some of its contestable features:

Neglect of Language Forms:

While the emphasis of the CLT on communication is seen as a strength by many, it has been criticised for potentially neglecting systematic instruction on language forms (grammar, vocabulary, etc.). There is a concern that without sufficient focus on form, learners might achieve fluency without accuracy (Swan and Urdang, 1985).

Cultural Imperialism:

There is a claim that the CLT approach embodies Western-centric pedagogy, thus overlooking the cultural and educational contexts of non-Western countries. Some argue that the principles of the CLT might not be universally applicable or even appropriate in certain cultural settings (Holliday, 1994; Pennycook, 2017).

Classroom Practicality:

The interactive nature of CLT activities often requires smaller class sizes and ample resources. However, in many educational settings, particularly in the developing world, large class sizes and limited resources pose significant challenges to its implementation.

Teacher development:

For an effective implementation of the CLT, teachers must be well-versed in the approach. However, many teachers, specially in countries where traditional methods dominate, feel unprepared or insufficiently trained to implement CLT (Burns and Richards, 2009).

Nonalignment of assessment:

In many regions, high-stakes tests are still rooted in traditional, form-focused methods. This creates a mismatch between communicative teaching and non-communicative testing, making it difficult for teachers to wholly adopt CLT if they want their students to succeed on these tests (Cheng, 2008).

Overemphasis on speaking skills:

CLT is sometimes criticised for placing a disproportionate emphasis on speaking, potentially to the detriment of reading and writing skills, specially in contexts where these latter skills might be more crucial (Savignon, 2001; Wexler *et al.*, 2018).

The native speaker model:

The CLT approach often utilises the 'native speaker' as the model for linguistic competence. Such an emphasis can overlook the richness and legitimacy of various non-native English varieties and could perpetuate notions of linguistic superiority (Jenkins and Leung, 2014).

My discussion captures some of the central criticisms of the CLT approach, emphasising the complexities and challenges associated with its application across diverse educational and cultural contexts. I will now move on to examine the potential of the Post-Method Pedagogy in the next part.

The post-method pedagogy of Kumaravadivelu (2006,2012) emerged as a counter-narrative to the 'method' orthodoxy, contesting the notion of a universally applicable teaching strategy. In the evolving landscape of English language Teaching, this transition from method-driven pedagogies to a post-method perspective is both timely and crucial. While the CLT approach has undeniably been a monumental stride in emphasising communicative competence, the post-method pedagogy offers a more holistic, adaptive, and context-sensitive approach, which seems apt for today's diverse and dynamic learning environments. Some of the tenets of the post-method pedagogy have been discussed below:

Acknowledging contextual specificity:

The globalised era of education underscores the inadequacies of generic pedagogical strategies. The emphasis of the post-method pedagogy on 'particularity' enables the scaffolded tailoring of teaching strategies, effectively accommodating diverse socio-cultural and linguistic landscapes (Kumaravadivelu, 2012). In contrsast, the broader tenets of the CLT occasionally fall short of resonating with specific learner communities, specially in non-Western contexts.

Teacher agency and autonomy:

The CLT, with its set guidelines and practices, can sometimes inadvertently sideline the teacher's lived experiences and insights. The post-method pedagogy, conversely, recognises and reinstates teachers as reflective practitioners, able to adapt, innovate, and even challenge prevailing norms (Canagarajah, 2016). This autonomy is pivotal, specially in contexts where external methods may not align with on-ground realities.

Beyond mere linguistic capability:

The pedagogical landscape now demands more than mere linguistic proficiency. By foregrounding the socio-political dimensions of language, post-method pedagogy cultivates critical linguistic awareness, prompting learners to engage with language as both a communicative tool and a sociocultural construct (Block, 2008; Pennycook, 2017). The CLT, though commendable in its communicative emphasis, occasionally neglects these deeper dimensions. Kumaravadivelu (2012) argues that a sole focus on communicative competence may sideline other linguistic and cultural facets. The post-method framework, therefore, permits a more holistic view of language teaching.

Flexibility:

The post-method pedagogy does not discard methods, including CLT, but rather transcends their rigidity. It offers a flexible framework that can integrate best practices from various methods, tailored to specific contexts. In an era where change is the only constant, this adaptability is not a luxury but a necessity.

Empowering diverse learner profiles:

With the increasing recognition of diverse learner identities, needs, and backgrounds, it is imperative for pedagogies to be inclusive. The emphasis of the post-method pedagogy on localised, bottom-up strategies ensures that diverse learners, often marginalised in standard methods, find representation and resonance in the learning process (Larsen-Freeman and Celce-Murcia, 2016).

To conclude, the post-method pedagogy, with its focus on contextual specificity, teacher agency, critical awareness, and flexibility, seems more in tune with the current issues and dynamics of language teaching, even though the CLT has significantly contributed to the ELT domain. In advocating the post-method pedagogy, the objective is not to entirely negate the value of CLT or other methods, but to advocate for a more nuanced, responsive, and holistic approach to language teaching and learning. I have constructed this position around my assumption that embracing post-method pedagogy might be a progressive step towards a more inclusive, adaptive, and contextually relevant ELT paradigm in my Bangladeshi EFL teaching context.

2.3 The CLT Approach Implementation Discourses in the Global North

The CLT approach has been included in the English language curriculum in most areas of Asia and Africa over the last two decades (Orafi and Borg, 2009) where English is being used as a second or foreign language. Several studies of CLT-based English Language curriculum innovation indicate a mismatch between policymakers and ground reality in implementing the CLT. According to Nunan (2003), CLT is not compatible with the Asian context, and thus, the CLT-based curriculum has failed to spread in most countries. Research on the CLT approach shows that the implementation of the CLT substantially depends on teachers' beliefs and perceptions about the CLT and that belief eventually influences their classroom practices (Feryok, 2008).

Instances from countries in the Global North such as Japan, Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore, and Hong Kong also portrayed a bleak picture of the CLT approach implementation. Curriculum innovation often fails due to educational policies that are incompatible with the realities of the teaching context, insufficient levels of professional support, and inadequate teaching materials (Waters and Vilches, 2008). In a case study of an abortive endeavour to initiate curriculum innovation into a Japanese school context Humphries & Burns (2015) proffer insights into some of the longstanding impediments to curriculum reform. To them, teachers' beliefs, understanding of the new approach and lack of ongoing support appear to be the main obstacles in this case. They contend that change should not minimise the importance of the expectations and beliefs of the teachers who must implement the change and should consider carefully what training and ongoing support must accompany the gradual transition to new practices. Their stance is much in line with Fullan's (2015a) educational change implementation theory (which is explained in **Chapter 3**) where he underscores the overriding importance of integrating teachers in the policy formulation process. Finally, they argue that it is almost impossible to bring a CLT-led curriculum into Japanese classrooms. Similarly, Samuell & Smith (2020) reveals that Japanese learners are typically reticent, and they are unwilling to interact in English because they consider themselves weak English speakers. In Japan, along with other issues grammar-focused examinations, and influence of traditional teaching methods, and the university entrance examinations pressure are the reasons that affect CLT implementation (Mitchell, 2017; Thompson and Yanagita, 2017).

Similarly, in Taiwan, Chang & Goswami (2011) pointed out that teachers' existing beliefs impact the English classrooms and inhibit the implementation of the CLT approach in Taiwanese schools. In an empirical study aiming at uncovering the difficulties rural EFL teachers in Taiwan have encountered when implementing CLT in their classrooms, Huang (2016) revealed that the teachers have faced various problems such as students' low First Language cognitive resources, parents' indifferent attitudes toward communicative English education, and the mixture of students with heterogeneous language skill levels into the same class, which are unique to the rural setting because of geographical and socio-economic confinement. To tackle the situation, the upgradation of teachers' in-service training and assistance from native English-speaking teachers (NESTs) are recommended (Huang, 2016; Huang and Yang, 2018). Adopting an action research approach to study classroom practice in a Taiwanese EFL secondary school, Sasi et al. (2020) show that the teachers' limited understanding of the communicative approaches seemed to be a dominant factor

and further suggest that some commonly cited obstacles such as the syllabus, the textbook, time constraint, perceptions of teachers' role, learners' role etc. to the implementation of communicative approaches result from the teachers' lack of understanding.

Again, in a study conducted to provide insights and understanding of Korean EFL pre-service secondary school teachers' beliefs about English language education and their perceptions and implementation of the communicative approaches, the government-initiated reforms of English language education, Cahnmann-Taylor et al. (2017) contend that teachers did not perceive the MOE reform policies and mandates very positively but with some reservation primarily due to constraints of local educational conditions. He further maintains that there are gaps and mismatches in the implementation process which can be explained at least in part by constraints of local educational conditions or realities such as students' low English proficiency, teachers' lack of English fluency, poor teaching quality of native English teachers, large class size, inadequate practical training in CLT, and grammar and reading based high-stakes English exams and tests (Cahnmann-Taylor *et al.*, 2017).

Against a historical backdrop examining the ecology and evolution of ELT in Singapore, Kim & Hwang (2006) reviews how CLT was conceptualised, advocated, and implemented in stages reflected in the different syllabuses by the Ministry of Education, Singapore. He indicated a policy-practice gap. According to him, 'this skewed practice could have been attributed to a certain extent of teachers' lack of what the CLT was actually meant to be' (Kim and Hwang, 2006). Lu & Ng (2013) question the overuse of the CLT approach in the Hong Kong context. The study pinpoints the key principles and features of the CLT and examines the reality of Hong Kong students against these principles and features. It concludes through the comparison that although the CLT is in vogue and meets the general desire to learn a new language, it has some limitations in a context like Hong Kong. Reality shows that the CLT does not match the Hong Kong context in many aspects; overuse of it can only cause detrimental effects and fail the intended aim of using it to develop learners' communicative competence (Lu and Ng, 2013).

2.4 The CLT Approach Implementation Discourses in the Global South

In an empirical study conducted both in Bangladesh and Thailand, Islam & Bari (2012) show that there are quite several major problems that both Bangladeshi and Thai English teachers experienced in implementing the CLT in their contexts and most of the problems are very similar in nature although the two countries are different in regard to contextual specifics. The findings of the study confirm that in both countries EFL teachers are still relying heavily on the traditional GTM as their classroom practice. In a study investigating their experiences in order to gather insights into the difficulties that many Thai teachers were facing in implementing this approach to teaching English, Kwon (2017) showed that the teachers found it difficult to use English textbooks to promote communicative competence as the textbooks were not selected with the purpose of setting CLT objectives. He further argued that teachers often found it difficult to utilise communication-oriented activities as they felt burdened to prepare their students, through the teaching linguistic elements of English, for the National Entrance Examination. Furthermore, teachers often felt burdened by large class sizes and did not feel adequately trained to implement the CLT successfully. Again, conducting a small-scale study on 8 Thai EFL teachers, Jansem (2019) found teachers' pedagogical content knowledge and subject matter knowledge crucial for implementing the CLT approach in the Thai EFL context.

In a case study designed to elicit information about the EFL teachers' perceptions of teaching English and the application of methods and techniques in their classrooms at secondary level education in Nepal, Bashyal (2018) notes that most teachers commented that they intended to use the communicative approach but the level of the students, the school environment and their usual styles of teaching pushed them to follow the grammar-translation method and structural approach, which was the major focus of the previous curriculum. He concludes that the practice of ELT methods and techniques in Nepalese classrooms is not compatible with the curricular expectation of developing communication skills. Teachers' current awareness of methods needs to be transformed into future performance in the classrooms. They realise that student-centered teaching is good and effective for their students but their knowledge of its practice is not adequate (Bashyal, 2018).

Similar kinds of experiences and instances are reported about the implementation of the CLT approach in Malaysia, a country in the Global South. In Malaysia, Pandian (2002) reported a weak English curricular innovation as his findings showed that despite the introduction of CLT into the

classroom, EFL teachers went back to the old, practiced methods of teaching as their instructional practices. Luo & Garner (2017) in China assert that due to the deeply Confucian culture, learners are preoccupied with passive learning from the teacher instead of engaging in active participation. In Indonesia, Susanto (2017) shows that the application of the CLT is effective when it is incorporated with extracurricular activities.

In the same vein, Astuti (2016) and Astuti & Lammers (2017) suggest the use of Cooperative Learning (CL) to improve communicative competence. Whereas Muthmainnah et al. (2022) propose the idea of an English Corner, an arranged space to practise English to improve students' English skills in Indonesia. Ariatna (2016) argues that teacher expertise and limited teaching time impede the adoption of CLT in Indonesia, and suggests providing school-based, collaborative professional development for English teachers to 'connect theory, practice, and student outcomes' (Ariatna, 2016, p. 7). But Fadilah (2018) contends that given the complexity of the concept of the CLT approach and the fact that this approach was developed by and for English native-speaker teachers, many teachers in Indonesia are somewhat confused about this language teaching approach. She further argues that although there is consensus among teachers that the CLT approach emphasises communicating by using a foreign language, there are societal classroom constraints that make the achievement of this goal difficult.

2.5 English Language Education Reform in Bangladesh

2.5.1 Historical Background of English Language Education in Bangladesh

The English language education system in Bangladesh, much like other former British colonies, is a legacy of British colonial rule and bears the imprints of a turbulent socio-political history. Introduced during the British colonial period in the 19th century, English language instruction in the education system served the primary purpose of establishing a class of English-speaking locals who could act as intermediaries between the colonial government and the indigenous population (Phillipson, 1992a; Rahman, 2000). This period saw the establishment of English as the medium of instruction, particularly in higher education, and the language of the administration (Banu and Sussex, 2001). The consequences of this legacy continue to influence the socio-educational landscape of Bangladesh today, with English language skills often being associated with social prestige and upward mobility (Rumnaz Imam, 2005; Hamid, Jahan and Islam, 2015).

Under the Pakistani regime (1947-1971), the status of English was retained as the primary language of power and administration, reflecting a continuation of the colonial policy Rahman (2005). However, this period was marked by significant political and social unrest related to the language rights of the Bangladeshi (the then East Pakistani) people, culminating in the Language Movement of 1952. The struggle for the recognition of Bangla as a state language played a pivotal role in shaping the nation's identity and was a precursor to the independence movement of 1971 (Rahman et al., 2019). With the advent of independence in 1971, a surge of linguistic nationalism led to significant changes in the language policy. English was replaced by Bengali (aka Bangla) as the official language and the medium of instruction in schools and higher education institutions (Hamid and Honan, 2012). This shift aimed to foster national unity and consolidate the cultural and linguistic identity of the newly independent nation.

However, English maintained its instrumental value as a global lingua franca, and despite the policy shifts, its use continued in the spheres of higher education, legal systems, and international trade and commerce (Hamid, 2011). This led to a paradoxical situation where nationalist ideologies coexisted with pragmatic needs, thereby creating a dichotomy in the language policy of Bangladesh (Hamid, 2011). Towards the end of the 20th century, the rising tide of globalisation and the recognition of English as a 'linguistic capital' (Park, 2011) compelled the government to rethink its stance on English language education policy. The following decades saw major reforms in the English language education system, which will be elaborated on in the following sections.

2.5.2 Recent English Language Education Reforms

Recognising the centrality of English as a tool for socio-economic mobility in the increasingly globalised world of the 21st century, Bangladesh embarked on a significant reform of its English Language Education policy (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014; Chowdhury and Kamal, 2014). One of the most decisive shifts was the move from English as an elitist language to a mass educational requirement. English was introduced as a compulsory subject at all levels of schooling, starting from primary education (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009). This move was motivated by a recognition of English as a 'linguistic capital' that could provide Bangladeshi citizens with the linguistic skills necessary to compete in the global market (Hamid, 2020; Maksud Ali *et al.*, 2023).

To align with international trends in English language teaching, the CLT approach was adopted as a part of the national curriculum in 1995 for the first time. This represented a significant departure from the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM), and aimed to develop communicative competence among learners, encouraging interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning English (Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). In 2008, Bangladesh launched a landmark initiative aimed at enhancing the quality of English language education - the English Language Teaching Improvement Programme (ELTIP). Funded by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the project aimed to improve the English language skills of primary and secondary teachers, develop new English textbooks and supplementary reading materials, and upgrade the language testing and assessment system (Hamid, Nguyen and Baldauf Jr, 2015). I will discuss ELTIP in detail in Section 2.5.4.

While these reforms were undeniably ambitious, their effectiveness has been a matter of ongoing debate. Several studies have identified various challenges to their successful implementation, ranging from teacher training, and resource availability, to structural issues in the education system (Kirkwood and Rae, 2011; Shrestha, 2013). The following sections will provide a more detailed analysis of these specific reforms.

The CLT approach, a significant part of the English Language Education reforms in Bangladesh, marks a paradigm shift from traditional language teaching methodologies. Initiated as part of the national curriculum in 1995, it reflects an effort to make English language education more relevant, engaging, and effective in the 21st century (Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). However, the adoption of the CLT approach in Bangladesh has not been without challenges. Researchers have highlighted the difficulties of implementing this methodology in classrooms (see Section 2.6) with large numbers of students, a lack of teaching materials, and insufficient teacher training (Islam *et al.*, 2021). Teachers, often accustomed to traditional didactic teaching methods, may find it challenging to adapt to the learner-centered, interactive pedagogies that the CLT approach entails (Ahmad, Rao and others, 2013).

2.5.3 The Introduction of English from the Primary Level

A significant change in the English Language Education policy of Bangladesh in the 21st century was the introduction of English as a compulsory subject from the primary level. Recognising the global importance of English and the necessity for early language learning, the Bangladeshi government introduced this policy change to prepare students for the demands of the global market (Hamid, Sussex and Khan, 2009). Research in language acquisition suggests that younger learners have a higher propensity for learning languages due to their cognitive flexibility and less developed first-language interference (Lightbown and Spada, 2013). Learning English from an early age is, therefore, assumed to provide Bangladeshi students with a competitive edge in mastering the language.

The curriculum for primary English focuses on developing students' proficiency in the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It aims to create an environment where students can practice English in meaningful and authentic contexts, moving away from the traditional focus on rote learning and grammar-translation method (NCTB, 2012). The implementation of English from primary level education has not been without challenges. The major issues include inadequate teacher training, large class sizes, lack of appropriate teaching materials, and assessment systems that do not align with communicative teaching practices Shohel & Banks (2010), Islam et al. (2021). Moreover, teachers' proficiency in English and their confidence in using communicative teaching methods have also been highlighted as areas of concern.

Despite these challenges, the introduction of English from the primary level signifies a pivotal move in Bangladesh's ELE policy. The key to realising its full potential lies in addressing the identified challenges, thereby ensuring that all students can gain functional proficiency in English from a young age.

2.5.4 The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP)

Launched in 2008, the English Language Teaching Improvement Programme (ELTIP) represents a pivotal initiative in Bangladesh's efforts to enhance English Language Education. Backed by funding from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the project aimed to address the increasing need for better English language skills among teachers and students in primary and secondary education (Hamid, Nguyen and Baldauf Jr, 2015). The core objectives of the ELTIP were to bolster the

communicative competence of English teachers, create improved English textbooks and supplementary reading materials, and modernise the testing and evaluation system. Central to this project was the understanding that teacher quality directly impacts student outcomes; therefore, investing in teacher development was paramount (Al Amin and Greenwood, 2018). The project facilitated extensive teacher training programs, focusing on modern pedagogical techniques consistent with the CLT approach. These programs were designed to equip teachers with the skills and confidence needed to foster interactive, student-centered English language learning atmosphere (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2014).

Moreover, the ELTIP introduced new English textbooks and supplementary reading materials consistent with the CLT approach. These materials were intended to promote more interactive and communicative classroom activities, aligning with the shift of the curriculum towards practical language use (Rahman, Pandian and Kaur, 2018). However, while the ELTIP represented a significant step towards improving ELE, it has faced considerable challenges. The implementation of teacher training initiatives has been criticised for inadequate reach and inconsistent quality, with many teachers reportedly not receiving sufficient training (Hamid, 2011; Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Furthermore, despite the introduction of new materials, lack of resources in many schools remained a significant barrier to the effective application of the CLT approach (Seargeant and Erling, 2011).

2.5.5 English In Action (EIA) Programme in Bangladesh

English In Action (EIA) is a nine-year-long teacher education project beginning in May 2008 and running through 2017 (Power *et al.*, 2012). In response to the growing demand for proficient English language skills in Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh requested the project, and it was then funded by the Department for International Development (DFID) of the UK government. The project is an international partnership, led and managed by BMB Mott McDonald, with The Open University (UK) and The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) Media Action.

The EIA project had to work within a number of parameters defined by the Bangladeshi government, which included working within the confines of the government-prescribed textbook English for Today and the assessment system (Erling, 2017). The British Council played the role of local coordinator in executing the project successfully, providing technical assistance to the programme. The textbook was itself a product of earlier reforms in English teaching through the

ELTIP project and adopted a broadly communicative approach to learning. In Bangladesh, teacher education programmes are generally executed removing teachers from their workplace to teacher training colleges (Mahruf C. Shohel and Banks, 2012). Consequently, the goal of the CLT curriculum to develop students' communicative competence becomes difficult to achieve (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008; Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Hamid and Nguyen, 2016). In order to bridge this gap, Shohel & Power (2010) recommended school-based professional development for Bangladeshi secondary EFL teachers to develop their own English language and teaching skills. In line with this recommendation, English in Action introduced a teacher development program in schools using mobile phones as the core tool to impart training (Karim, Mohamed and Rahman, 2017; Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

A distinctive aspect of the EIA programme was the innovative use of mobile technology. Participants were provided with multimedia resources, including audio and video materials, on portable devices like iPods and mobile phones. These resources were designed to provide interactive, engaging content for language learning and teaching, consistent with the Communicative Language Teaching approach (Walsh *et al.*, 2013). The EIA programme has achieved considerable successes. An impact assessment study found significant improvements in students' English language competencies who were taught by teachers participating in the EIA programme compared to those who were not. The programme has also helped to increase the confidence and motivation of teachers and students alike (Erling and Khatoon, 2018).

Despite these successes, the EIA programme has faced challenges similar to other English Language Education reform initiatives. These include resource limitations, particularly in rural areas, as well as issues related to the sustainable integration of mobile technology in classroom teaching (Shohel and Banks, 2010). Moreover, the need for consistent and high-quality teacher training (Hamid, 2011), particularly in the effective use of technology for language teaching, has been highlighted (Haque, 2018). Overall, the EIA programme represents an innovative approach to ELE reform in Bangladesh, utilising mobile technology to foster interactive, communicative language learning and teaching.

2.5.6 Present status and future turn

The English Language Education reform in Bangladesh has undoubtedly made significant strides so far. The adoption of the CLT approach, the introduction of English from primary level, and the establishment of projects like the English Language Teaching Improvement Project, reflect concerted efforts towards modernising ELE. Yet, there remain substantial challenges that need to be addressed to fully harness the potential of these reforms (Rahman *et al.*, 2021). Teacher training remains a pressing concern (Hamid, 2011). While initiatives like ELTIP have aimed to enhance teacher competencies, the reach and quality of these training programs are yet to meet the demand. There is a need for more systematic, high-quality in-service and pre-service teacher training programs that not only focus on the development of English language proficiency but also equip teachers with modern pedagogical skills aligned with the CLT approach (Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

The lack of resources, particularly in rural areas, is another area of concern. The successful implementation of the CLT approach requires an environment conducive to interactive learning, which often demands a range of learning resources and small class sizes. Addressing resource limitations, reducing class sizes, and improving classroom conditions should therefore be prioritised (Seargeant and Erling, 2011). Assessment reforms are also crucial. There is a persistent misalignment between the CLT approach, which emphasises communicative competence, and the examination system, which often leans heavily on written skills and grammar.

Again in 2021, the government published the latest curriculum for all phases of education in Bangladesh. In the latest curriculum (not implemented yet), the NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021) the development of effective communication skills has been emphasised following its predecessor. This curriculum has not yet been implemented. This policy document NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021) mentions that in order to effectively engage in communication using fundamental English language skills for various contexts such as daily interactions, academic pursuits, and specific objectives, it is essential to possess the ability to express oneself creatively and critically in an aesthetically pleasing manner. Additionally, it is important to develop an appreciation for English literary texts. Furthermore, it is crucial to uphold democratic principles in communication within individual, social, national, and global settings.

With this objective, the new curriculum has advocated the concept of the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) approach. The concept posits that effective communication is not

just dependent on specific knowledge and skill sets, but also necessitates contextual comprehension, cultural sensitivity, and a democratic disposition.

Sociolinguistic competency has cast doubt on the current definition of communicative competence in ESL instruction (NCTB, 2021). Non-English speakers must be careful when learning English due to its linguistic and cultural differences. The curriculum framework also posits that intercultural communicative competence as a framework for monitoring learners' comprehension and communication, adhering to language rules, helps them use English as intended. According to it, the ICC approach propagates a context-sensitive cultural consciousness in communication. The new curriculum framework has also stated that,

> *Additionally, being recognised as an international language, English enables learners to access and appreciate arts and literature from different contexts and cultures across the world. Apart from real-life application and creative expression, another field of application is unveiled with the language users' capability to demonstrate a sense of identity in their practice. Learners' sense of identity equips them with the ability to recognise and evaluate the linguistic norms with regard to the power relation in a particular cultural context; and therefore, empowers them with the ability to prefer appropriate norms over others in accordance with the context. Consequently, it enables the learners to minimise the discriminatory aspects of linguistic practice and promote democratic practice in communication.*

> *On that account, this framework attempts to connect the dots and incorporate an integrated approach in order to decipher the curricular competencies into meaningful classroom activities. This approach aligns with the recent global trends in ELT concerning the EFL pedagogical context; thereby, the tenets of critical and post-method pedagogy are contemplated and their implications are embedded in this curriculum framework (NCTB, 2021, p. 42).*

From the above extract, it is clear that the national curriculum is taking a turn towards Post-Method Pedagogy. However, since the focus of my research is EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach according to the current curriculum (NCTB, 2012), I do not intend to focus more on this new curriculum framework here.

2.6 The CLT Approach Implementation in Bangladesh: A Critical Review

There is an increasing amount of scholarly literature that discusses the efficacy and shortcomings of Communicative Language Teaching in Bangladesh. This may be observed in works such as Alam (2015), Rumnaz Imam (2005), Jahan (2008). The government of Bangladesh has identified English language education as a significant policy concern. The language teaching methods employed by instructors in Bangladesh have been seen to adhere to traditional practices, hence hindering the implementation of the CLT in the EFL classroom (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008; Hamid and Honan, 2012; Kirkwood, 2013).

The adoption of this language teaching approach in Bangladesh is regarded as a remedial strategy (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008), as the previous utilisation of the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) resulted in students who possess limited proficiency in English, hindering their ability to effectively apply the language in real-life contexts (Nuby, Ab Rashid and Hasan, 2019). The results of the CLT implementation endeavour in Bangladesh have not met the anticipated level of success, as indicated by several studies (Nuby, Ab Rashid and Hasan, 2019). While the government acknowledges the potential of the CLT in enhancing students' communicative competence, it is observed that learners in the rural regions of Bangladesh often graduate from school with a limited level of English proficiency (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Amin, 2017). The academic achievement of students, particularly in the peripheral areas of Bangladesh, is significantly substandard. This phenomenon can be attributed to the shift in the instructional approach to teaching the English language. Instead of using English as the medium of instruction, it is now taught as a core subject in the syllabus alongside the native language Bengali, as seen by Nuby et al. (2019). The lack of motivation for teachers and students to engage in English communication or conversation can be attributed to the primary objective of teaching and learning, which is to achieve success in examinations. It is also worth noting that the existing examination system does not include any provisions for assessing or evaluating speaking and listening skills (Amin, 2017; Al Amin and Greenwood, 2018; Sultana, 2018). Consequently, students do not obtain the direct exposure to grammar provided by the Grammar-Translation Method, nor do they fully reap the anticipated advantages of the CLT approach (Alam, 2015). The decline in students' reading and writing skills, as evidenced by the disproportionately high failure rate in English compared to other subjects in nationwide public examinations (such as JSC, SSC, and HSC), is a matter of concern (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Choudhury, 2010; Rasheed, 2012). The application of traditional assessment methods leads to a reduction in the

implementation of the curriculum, which suggests that the assessment system is incongruent with the national policy and curriculum objectives (Nur and Islam, 2018; Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

Ali & Walker (2014) propose a comprehensive framework that might potentially ensure the effective adoption of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. However, the existing classroom practices in Bangladesh lack certain elements of this framework, as noted by Karim et al. (2017). Nevertheless, the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh has not yet reached a fully established and widely accepted state, as noted by Hamid & Baldauf (2008). Kirkwood & Rae (2011) also demonstrated that the CLT approach does not effectively encourage students to communicate in English, despite its assertion of promoting students' communicative skills in the Bangladeshi context. Furthermore, Abedin (2012) assert that the presence of the CLT is limited to the written curriculum material, while its implementation in actual classroom practices is lacking. According to Abedin (2012), there is still a lack of adoption of the CLT among teachers, with many still predominantly employing the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in their classroom instructional practices. Huda (2013) concludes that engaging in such activities may result in a decrease in the effectiveness of the CLT methodology in the context of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Ahmed (2014) outlined that the lack of implementation of the CLT curriculum can be attributed to both teachers and students. On the other hand, Ali & Walker (2014) critiqued the CLT approach itself. They raised questions regarding the availability and suitability of instructional resources, including textbooks, and identified this as a significant obstacle to the effective implementation of the CLT in Bangladesh. Similarly, Karim et al. (2017) identified instructional materials (English textbooks and teachers' curriculum guides) as a potential obstacle to the effective application of the educational approach. Ali (2010) highlights the discrepancy that exists between the chosen textbook English for Today and the objectives outlined in the English language curriculum of 2012.

Insufficient provision of professional training and development programmes for teachers has been identified in previous studies (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008; Amin, 2017; Rahman and Pandian, 2018a; Rahman *et al.*, 2019). During the initial stages of the CLT, teachers were predominantly trained in the Grammar-Translation Method (Nuby *et al.*, 2020). The implementation of the CLT approach was carried out without enough training for teachers and without soliciting input from local teachers during the English curriculum change (Ali and Walker, 2014; Rahman *et al.*, 2019). As a result, the attainment of teaching-learning objectives is hindered by the inadequate performance of EFL teachers (Kabir, 2015; Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). According to Richards & Rodgers (2014),

teachers lacking enough preparation and training will struggle to effectively utilise teaching resources, regardless of their quality of design. Furthermore, it has been argued by Fullan (2007, 2015b) that the implementation of a curriculum via a top-down approach lacks efficiency. According to Barman et al. (2014) and Rahman et al. (2018), there is a contention that the concepts of the CLT and the practices of teachers are incongruous, leading to teachers' lacking a clear understanding of the CLT curriculum and having varied perceptions regarding its implementation.

Research has indicated that the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching might be impeded by challenging teaching conditions, including but not limited to, exceptionally large class sizes, restricted class time, inadequate teaching resources, and substandard infrastructure (Roy, 2016). Nevertheless, it is widely acknowledged by numerous experts that teachers play a central role in the successful implementation of curriculum as the front liners (Borg, 2009; Fullan, 2015b). Wang (2008) also identifies that the responsibility for implementing the curriculum lies substantially with the teachers in the classroom.

In the field of second language research, it is important to note that the findings derived from one country or educational context may not be directly applicable to language pedagogy or policy-making in a different country (Ellis, 2010; Rahman and Pandian, 2016). Furthermore, there is a growing recognition that policymakers cannot simply adopt and modify language teaching approaches 'transferred' from Western countries without taking into account the specific contextual limitations and conditions (Humphries and Burns, 2015). Regrettably, there appears to be a lack of awareness among policymakers in Bangladesh on this matter.

According to Hamid et al. (2009), the education policy and reform in Bangladesh have pre-dominantly been influenced by international financing rather than expert opinion. Ali & Hamid (2022) also demonstrated that the English language education policy of Bangladesh has taken a turn to the global and neoliberal trends (see Section 2.7). According to Chowdhury & Le Ha (2008), the implementation of the CLT necessitates teachers to not only embrace a Westernised instructional approach but also align with a distinct pedagogical and learning culture. According to Chowdhury (2003), teachers in Bangladesh are familiar with a pedagogical style that places the teacher at the centre of the power relation, resulting in limited student engagement and a more formal and less amicable dynamic between teachers and students. These factors further pose challenges to the effective implementation of the CLT curriculum in the Bangladeshi secondary educational context.

Since its inception, there has been a persistent study by an increasing number of researchers (e.g. (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008; Kirkwood and Rae, 2011; Hamid and Honan, 2012; Ali and Walker, 2014; M. S. Rahman, 2015) into the efficacy of the CLT in the context of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh. Despite the continuous efforts made by policymakers and curriculum developers, doubts have been raised regarding the contributions of the CLT approach. In the context of a centrally-based education system in Bangladesh, the implementation of curriculum objectives by teachers is likely to encounter various challenges, particularly in relation to their understanding of the expectations placed upon them (Karim, 2004). Therefore, the implementation of the CLT curriculum in this context has numerous challenges. Rahman et al. (2018) has identified two primary problematic areas in this context. One aspect pertains to the disregard for the requirements of the EFL teachers involved in the implementation of curricular reforms, while the other aspect is relating to the broader deficiency in the teacher training infrastructure in Bangladesh.

Curriculum reforms frequently encounter obstacles due to a lack of awareness on the part of policymakers regarding the requirements and perspectives of educators (Fullan, 2015b). The neglect of the educational atmosphere in Bangladesh has resulted in a disregard for the actual conditions within the EFL classrooms. According to Ali (2010), a lack of collaboration is evident throughout all stages of curriculum creation in Bangladesh, resulting in the marginalisation of teachers' perspectives. One issue that arises is the lack of clear explanations provided to teachers regarding the CLT curriculum, leading to the proliferation of varied perspectives on how to effectively implement the CLT curriculum (Barman *et al.*, 2014). The educational change implementation process is characterised by a deficiency in 'shared understanding' among the teachers, as argued by (Fullan, 2016a, p. 107). Hence, it is unsurprising to observe that teachers promptly reverted to traditional instructional methods, commonly known as the 'chalk-and-talk drill method' (Littlewood, 2007, p. 24; Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008). Additionally, it is noteworthy that the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) continues to exert a significant influence on teachers' pedagogical approaches, resulting in a large impact on their classroom practices (Khan, Mahmood and others, 2010).

According to Hamid et al. (2015), a limited number of teachers have undergone the CLT training in some specific schools. Additionally, Hoque (2011) highlight the insufficient availability of resources such as professional journals, magazines, and training materials for teachers. Rahman et al. (2019) also raise concerns over the efficacy of current teacher training methods and approaches and the substandard results they yield. According to Hamid & Baldauf (2008), a considerable number of

English Language Teaching practitioners in Bangladesh lack the necessary qualifications in the field of ELT. In the beginning, the implementation of the CLT approach was limited to secondary schools on a temporary basis (Rahman *et al.*, 2019). Between the years 1990 and 1995, a project known as OSST-TEB, which aimed to provide training for secondary school teachers, received funding from a donor based in the United Kingdom. Paradoxically, the aforementioned donor body exerted pressure for the adoption of the CLT approach via the British Council (Rahman *et al.*, 2019).

2.7 Neoliberal Turn in English Language Policy in Bangladesh

In recent years, a discernible neoliberal turn has characterised the English language policy in Bangladesh. The English language has been increasingly framed as a commodity in line with global neoliberal ideals, with this trend noticeably manifesting in the English Language Education policy of Bangladesh (Hamid and Luo, 2016; Hamid and Rahman, 2019; Ali and Hamid, 2023). At the heart of neoliberal ideology is the conviction in the efficiency of market, privileging notions of individual competition, free trade, and economic liberalization (Harvey, 2005). In language education, this often manifests in the positioning of language as a marketable skill or commodity, which is seen as vital for individuals and countries to compete effectively in the global economy (Park, 2011; Lee, 2012).

The concept of economization of education, as conceptualised by Spring (2015), refers to the adoption of market-oriented approaches in education policy and curriculum. In the light of the economic opportunities and challenges associated with globalisation, the government of Bangladesh has implemented reforms in English language teaching policy throughout the past decades. Ali & Hamid (2023) examined the process through which, beginning in the 1990s, educational authorities in Bangladesh introduced a new trend in English language teaching by aligning the curriculum with the demands of the job market. These reforms have placed a strong emphasis on the importance of developing human capital. The focus of the curriculum on job preparation or its alignment with economic objectives has been influenced by global policy actors, such as international agencies and development partners (for example, DFID, British Council, ADB, WB etc.). This influence has had the effect of diminishing the authority of nation-states in shaping education policies (Coleman, 2017; Erling, 2017; Hamid and Rahman, 2019; Ali and Hamid, 2022).

Ali & Hamid (2023) presented a comprehensive exploration of the economisation of the English curriculum in Bangladesh which opens the door for broader discussions on the role of education, the influences shaping it, and the implications of such shifts. In a globalised world, education has increasingly leaned towards 'economisation', bridging policy and employment needs. This shift is evident in English language teaching curricula in developing nations, aiming to produce a skilled workforce for economic contribution. Using a critical discourse analysis (CDA) framework this study examined the secondary English curriculum to explore the underpinning forces and discourses. They suggested that this economisation aligns with the wider political-economic landscape of Bangladesh, dominated by globalisation and neoliberal ideologies. They further argued that other factors like internal politics, societal values, or historical colonial legacies might also play a pivotal role along with globalisation and neoliberalism.

The English language policy of Bangladesh seems to reflect this neoliberal influence. The government's endorsement of English language proficiency has increasingly been tied to economic advancement and integration into the global marketplace. The English for Today textbook, for instance, is explicitly designed to develop language skills necessary for international communication and participation in the global economy (NCTB, 2012). This shift signifies an alignment with neoliberal logic, whereby English becomes an 'economic resource' (Block, Gray and Holborow, 2013). Moreover, large-scale projects such as the English Language Teaching Improvement Project and the English in Action programme are driven by the vision of English proficiency as a key skill for socioeconomic development and global competitiveness (Hamid and Rahman, 2019).

While these initiatives may create opportunities, they are not devoid of critique. Scholars like Roshid (2018) argue that neoliberal language policies can exacerbate social inequalities. For instance, privileging English proficiency can favour those who can afford quality English education, inadvertently marginalising those who cannot, thereby potentially deepening socio-economic divides. They caution against the reduction of language education to merely an economic endeavour and argue for a more holistic understanding of language education that incorporates cultural, social, and political dimensions, thereby enriching human potential beyond market-oriented outcomes.

2.8 Trend of Policy Transfer in English Language Education in Bangladesh

In recent years, the trend of educational policy transfer has been prominently noticeable in the English language education policy of Bangladesh. Educational policy transfer refers to the process through which educational ideas, policies, or practices are borrowed or adapted from one socio-political context and implemented in another (Phillips and Ochs, 2003). This phenomenon, primarily associated with globalisation, is increasingly shaping education policies and practices across the globe, including in Bangladesh.

The adoption of the CLT approach in Bangladesh provides a significant example of educational policy transfer. The CLT approach, which originally emerged in the Western context (Richards and Rodgers, 2014), has been adopted in Bangladesh as a means to foster communicative competence in English among learners. This adoption signifies an effort to align Bangladesh's English language education with global pedagogical trends, representing a clear case of policy borrowing. Moreover, the prioritization of English language education from the primary level can also be seen as an outcome of global policy influences, particularly from countries where English is the medium of instruction from early education stages.

The influence of international donor agencies on Bangladesh's English education policy also underscores the role of educational policy transfer. Projects such as the English Language Teaching Improvement Project and the English in Action programme, funded and supported by agencies like the UK Department for International Development (DFID), have been instrumental in shaping English language teaching and learning practices in Bangladesh (Chowdhury, 2023). However, the process of policy transfer is not without challenges. Steiner-Khamsi (2014) points out that transferred policies often need to be adapted to local contexts to ensure their effectiveness. Likewise, scholars like Ramanathan (2013) warn against the potential danger of educational neocolonialism, where transferred policies may inadvertently perpetuate power dynamics of the past.

2.9 Education and the ELT during COVID-19 Pandemic

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused tremendous negative impacts on society, education, and the economy around the world. Most governments across the globe have incidentally closed schools in order to curb the spread of the pandemic. The United Nations SDG-Education 2030 Steering

Committee considers the COVID-19 pandemic as a global health crisis as well as an educational crisis, with over 1.5 billion learners affected by near-universal school closures. They call on all governments to renew their commitment for inclusion and equity to prevent educational, socio-economic and digital inequalities from widening and to ensure equal opportunities for all – specially for the most vulnerable and marginalised, including refugees. The Steering Committee urges governments to maintain strong political commitment and investment in education throughout and after the crisis, and calls upon bilateral and multilateral institutions to mobilise funding for education in low- and middle-income countries (UNESCO, 2020). Similarly, The OECD report 2020 also expressed grave concern about inequality and the digital divide existing among the member countries. The report showed children and students have had to rely more on their own resources to continue learning remotely through the Internet, television or radio. Teachers also had to adapt to new pedagogical concepts and modes of delivery of teaching, for which they may not have been trained. The report emphasised that learners in the most marginalised groups, who do not have access to digital learning resources or lack the resilience and engagement to learn on their own, are at risk of falling behind (Schleicher, 2020).

Burgess & Sievertsen (2020) contend that the global lockdown of educational institutions due to the COVID-19 pandemic will cause an inexorable short-term disruption to many families around the world. Teaching and student assessments are moving online, with a lot of trial and error and uncertainty for everyone. On top of it, many assessments have simply been cancelled. And the cancellation of public assessments for qualifications or their replacement by an inferior alternative will exert an adversary impact on learners in general. Burgess & Sievertsen (2020) suggested that to mitigate long-term negative impacts, schools need resources to rebuild the loss in learning once they reopen. Considering the evidence of the importance of assessments for learning, schools should also consider postponing rather than skipping internal assessments.

In a survey conducted through all the districts of Bangladesh about the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education system of Bangladesh and its possible solution, Mahmud et al. (2021) postulate that in spite of earnest government initiatives there exists a clear digital divide between developing countries like Bangladesh and the developed countries. They argue that not only technologies but also technicalities are required to run the education system smoothly during this pandemic situation. Attempting to explore the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on tertiary education in Bangladesh through the students' perspectives, Dutta et al. (2020) show that numerous unprecedented disruptions in students' learning, decrease in motivation and study hours, and

various physical, mental, and economic problems regarding academic studies were prominently caused due to the COVID-19 ordeal. The study findings concerning online education such as unavailability of electronic devices, limited access to the internet, high cost of internet, low speed of internet, and difficulties in using online platforms also provided valuable insights into the present scenario of online or virtual education in Bangladesh during the pandemic. They recommend specifically that necessary steps should be taken to improve internet speed and provide free or cheaper internet packages and technical training on online education to tertiary-level students in Bangladesh during this COVID-19 period.

Like other fields of education, English language teaching landscape has also changed drastically during the worldwide pandemic COVID-19 (Hartshorn and McMurry, 2020; Shahzad *et al.*, 2020; Yi and Jang, 2020). In an exploratory qualitative case study Putri & Refnaldi (2020) obtained data about the constrictions and consequences of the pandemic COVID-19 on teaching and learning activities at elementary schools. They revealed some challenges and constraints experienced by students, teachers, and parents in online learning. The challenges related to students were limited communication and socialising among students, even a greater degree of challenge for students with special educational needs, and longer screen time. Parents considered the problem related more to the lack of learning discipline at home, because they had to spend more time to assist their children's learning at home. Moreover, lack of technology skills and higher internet bills also were regarded as obstacles (Putri and Refnaldi, 2020). Teachers identified more challenges and constraints such as some restrictions in the choices of teaching methods normally applicable in a regular face-to-face class, less coverage of curriculum content, lack of technology skills that hinder the potential of online learning, the dearth of e-resources in Indonesian language resulting in more time needed to develop e-contents, longer screen time as a result of e-content creating and giving feedback on students' work, more intense and time-consuming communication with parents, the challenge for better coordination with peer teachers, school heads, and a higher internet bill (Putri and Refnaldi, 2020). However, in an empirical study, Shahzad et al. (2020) depict a different picture of online or virtual teaching and learning of the English language in Pakistan. They show although language teaching is quite different from other subjects in terms of being more interactive, it is very difficult to hold fruitful language teaching classes online. They report virtual teaching brings a positive change in students' attitudes making students committed and motivated towards their studies. Learners welcome online teaching during COVID-19 pandemic situation as it is a new but happy experience for them. Students seem to be excited about learning through online teaching.

Students think teachers are easily accessible and they students can ask questions by voice or text messages and teachers can reply to them on the spot. Students also report that online teaching also saves their time and money (Shahzad *et al.*, 2020).

Yi & Jang (2020) investigated how the COVID-19 school closure affected English language Teaching in South Korea. Drawing from teachers' practices, they discussed the possibilities for English language teachers around the world during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Shifting to remote teaching, according to them, would ensure a collaborative culture in teaching and learning process. They argued that the shift from face-to-face to remote teaching and learning has challenged all including teachers, students, parents, and administrators. Moreover, they hoped that such challenges might reassert the opportunities to leverage teachers' experience, interest, and knowledge as resources. They further argued that both the pandemic and remote teaching have forced teachers to become more creative and collaborative in their instruction.

In a study seeking to understand the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on a group of university ESL learners and their teachers in the United States, Hartshorn & McMurry (2020) showed that the effects of the pandemic increased stress for both students and teachers across an array of contexts. The priority for teaching and learning decreased for both the practitioners and their students during the pandemic due to a variety of new stressors in their lives. The transition to online instruction was more challenging for the students than the teachers. They suggested that institutions need to be ready to provide general training for both students and teachers on how to use specific technologies as well as ongoing support for those who may be struggling. They further showed that during the pandemic students experienced less language development for speaking than for writing.

Using a combination of recorded online observations and measured learning outcome objectives, Kawinkoonlasate (2020) provides and discusses the reaction and results obtained from online Thai EFL learners. The majority of the learners felt nervous at the onset of the course; however, the learners were able to familiarise and adapt to the new normal teaching method and they began to enjoy their learning anew as in the case of Pakistani EFL learners (Shahzad *et al.*, 2020). He further maintains that even without the need to adapt to the situation created by COVID-19, it is natural that the way we access language instruction and learning match our increasing utilization of digital technology. He considers technology's role in making collaborative learning more possible and varied. Collaborative learning promotes activities in which the learners cooperatively work

together to create tasks or assignments and learn from each other. He concludes with a presentation of potential methods that may help instructors improve the English language acquisition of their students.

2.10 Conclusion

This chapter has traced the trajectory of English Language Education reform in Bangladesh, highlighting both its progress and persistent challenges. A historical examination reveals a nation striving to adapt its English education system to suit the evolving linguistic and economic landscape. In critically examining the trajectory of English Language Education reform in Bangladesh, the complexities and multifaceted nature of this journey become apparent. As Hamid & Erling (2016) assert, language policy and planning, particularly in post-colonial contexts, must negotiate a multitude of linguistic, socio-political, and economic considerations. This chapter has endeavoured to navigate these intricate dimensions in the context of the English language education reforms in Bangladesh. The communicative turn in our country's English language education, signified by the adoption of the CLT approach, marks a significant shift from the previous grammar-translation method. Chowdhury and Le Ha (2014) note that such pedagogical shifts reflect a broader global trend in language education towards skills that enable meaningful communication and active participation in a globalised world. However, the effective implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh, as I have already discussed earlier, has met with several practical challenges, suggesting a gap between educational policy and its translation into classroom practice. Moreover, I have presented an account of how the fields of education broadly and of English language education in particular were surviving during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. In the following chapter, I will discuss the educational change implementation theory of Fullan, the concept of Professional Capital of Hargreaves and Fullan, and Steiner-Khamsi's interpretive framework for educational policy borrowing to explore how teachers are key actors in implementing educational change and investigate how the education policy and practice environment in Bangladesh can be analysed by drawing on them.

Chapter 3: Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.0 Introduction

My research seeks to explore secondary-level teachers' perspectives on and experiences of implementing the Communicative Language Teaching approach within EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. The underpinnings of this investigation are three distinct yet interrelated theoretical paradigms: Educational Policy Transfer Theory, Fullan's Theory of Educational Change, and Hargreaves and Fullan's Concept of Professional Capital. This chapter aims to justify the selection of these theoretical frameworks, elucidating how they align with the overarching research question and the four sub-research questions, while simultaneously shaping the research design. I will utilise the educational policy borrowing theory and different models and frameworks of educational policy borrowing to set the context of my research so that the policy landscape of Bangladesh's education system can be better mapped. In my project, I have intended to investigate the EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. As I discussed earlier in the Introduction chapter (**Chapter 1**) of my thesis, the introduction of the CLT approach, a kind of pedagogical innovation in the realm of English language education in Bangladesh, is a manifestation of an educational reform initiative carried out by the government that requires all the indispensable components of the policy implementation process to be successfully implemented. After this, I will move to discuss the educational change implementation theory of Fullan and the concept of Professional Capital of Hargreaves and Fullan to further my discussion on policy formulation and implementation in Bangladesh. I will discuss Fullan to explore how teachers are key actors in implementing educational change. I will then combine the key messages from all theories and concepts and investigate how Bangladesh's education policy and practice environment can be analysed by drawing on them.

3.1 Educational Reform in the Current Globalised Context

In the current world of globalisation, educational policy-making is truly a complex issue worthy of exploration. Therefore, it is important to consider the larger context of globalisation in which educational reform initiatives might be most effective. Both globalisation and educational change are in a symbiotic relationship and are also affected by developments in other fields (Portnoi and

LAURA, 2016). This sort of contextualisation, as Portnoi and LAURA (2016) put it, would probably provide us with renewed insights on the issues such as the connection between globalisation and education, emerging trends in the educational landscape due to globalisation, the challenges to the implementation of public policies, difference between educational lending and borrowing, and the politics involved in these processes, and finally lessons learned from researching globalisation, policy borrowing, and educational reform.

Portnoi & LAURA (2016)argues that for a comprehensive awareness of local reform initiatives, understanding both global and local educational changes require educators to be aware of globalisation's effects and the relationships between global and local actors in policy processes. He emphasises the involvement of the set of local stakeholders which comprises the policy implementers who directly interact with the policies on a very regular basis. In the domain of education, he considers administrators, teachers, other educators, students, and parents as policy implementers. Those responsible for carrying out a policy's implementation may frequently have a major impact on how that policy is implemented in reality. These stakeholders will be involved in policy implementation in some capacity, even if they were not consulted during the policy development process (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

In a similar manner, (Tikly*, 2004, p. 124) argued that in the contemporary world educational change 'has been profoundly shaped by global forces'. Education can play a crucial role in development, but it must be adequately funded, and access widened to accomplish this. Policymaking needs to be democratised and vested interests be challenged. Additionally, policymakers need to find new ways to work with and manage cultural diversity. Finally, to be successful, educational change must be integrated into a larger process of economic, political, and cultural transformation on the international, regional, and national levels (Tikly*, 2004).

3.2 Implementing Educational Reform

One of the most intricate components of formulating policy is seeing it through to actual implementation. It is not uncommon for policymakers to misjudge the responses of policy implementers and the people who are supposed to benefit from changes (Birkland, 2019).

Malen (2006, p. 27) contends that the implementation process is quite challenging because 'policies embody values, theories of intervention, and orientations to social and educational issues that may

or may not conform to the ideas, interests, and ideals of the actors' involved with implementation. It is important to consider power dynamics and the relative influence of different players while implementing changes in the current political, social, and economic settings (Ball, 1994). Because of these factors, local policy implementation often requires some leeway (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

Top-down policy implementation, also known as the technical-rational viewpoint or forward mapping, and bottom-up policy implementation, also known as mutual adaptation or backward mapping, have traditionally been the two principal methods used by governments and reformers (Elmore, 1979; Datnow, 2006). The technical-rational perspective places emphasis on central planning, organisation, coordination, and control, while largely disregarding the contextual factors that influence policy implementation. Richard Elmore (1979) termed the top-down approach 'forward mapping' which assumes policymakers are central to implementation and exercises authority and control. However, this strategy often leads to an 'implementation gap' between what policymakers expect to occur and what transpires due to the disconnection between policymakers and the implementers.

On the other hand, the bottom-up technique, labelled as 'backward mapping' by Elmore (1979), emphasises cooperation between policymakers and implementers. This approach challenges the notion that creating a rational procedure with well-defined outcomes would ensure successful implementation. Elmore's approach, which has been extensively used in policy research, takes into account that there will be multifaceted influences on policy implementation that policymakers cannot anticipate. More importantly, the flexible, dynamic, and multidimensional backward mapping process, also known as 'mutual adaptation', takes into consideration the social, political, and organisational aspects of educational or other policy contexts (Datnow, 2006).

Backward mapping is a shared policy implementation mechanism based on reciprocity and delegating discretion to lower levels. This approach maximises discretion where it is most effective and with individuals closest to the issues being addressed (Elmore, 1979). Since educational reformers might see it as a shared responsibility (also see Fullan (2015b), Fullan and Hargreaves (2012)) rather than a change imposed upon them, a dispersed model may work (Bates, Lewis and Pickard, 2019). Elmore posits that the effectiveness of reforms could be enhanced if policymakers take into account the desired minimum level of behaviour exhibited by 'street-level bureaucrats', who are responsible for implementing policies on the ground. This consideration should be

incorporated throughout the stages of policy development and implementation. As in my study, I intend to explore the perceptions and experiences of EFL teachers regarding educational policymaking in Bangladesh, the concepts of 'forward mapping' and 'backward mapping' will help shape my research design such as framing interview questions and selecting samples. In the context of my research, 'forward mapping' would mean understanding how the decisions about the CLT approach made at the policymaking level are perceived, interpreted, and implemented by EFL teachers in their classrooms. Using 'backward mapping' approach, I will be exploring whether the experiences and practices of EFL teachers align with the policy's intended outcomes and what gaps or challenges exist. I wanted to investigate how EFL teachers perceive the government policy regarding the CLT approach (see RQ 2). This 'mapping' approach will help capture a holistic understanding of teachers' perceptions, not just in terms of their knowledge of the policy but how it influences their daily teaching practices. It will also identify gaps or challenges in policy implementation by comparing classroom realities against the intended outcomes of the CLT approach. Using the concepts of forward and backward mapping will offer a broad perspective on how educational policies, specifically the CLT approach, are perceived, interpreted, and implemented by EFL teachers in Bangladesh. This two-fold lens ensures my capturing both the intended and actual impacts of the policy, providing valuable insights into areas of alignment and discrepancy. These concepts will also help me analyse data collected on this particular research question.

3.2.1 The Influence of Street-level Bureaucrats

From the backward mapping perspective, the influence of street-level bureaucrats is crucial to the success of policy implementation (Lipsky, 2010). Considering teachers, police officers, social workers, and other public service representatives as 'street-level bureaucrats', Lipsky (2010) argues that frontline bureaucrats are subject to competing policy imperatives and often lack the resources (such as time, money, and knowledge) to effectively implement them all. It is possible that the policies they are tasked with implementing do not adequately address the specific contexts in which these employees operate. Therefore, local bureaucrats have to balance a lot of different requests, and they do it by using their own judgement. 'Street-level bureaucrats' play a crucial role in carrying out policies. In my study, the EFL teachers, teacher trainers, trainees, head teachers, and assistant head teachers may be considered as street-level bureaucrats. Top-down implementation

strategies, which policymakers often insist on applying, do not ensure that policies are carried out as intended. Research suggests that local bureaucrats' willingness to implement a policy rises due to what Portnoi & LAURA (2016) called the 'mediation effect' when they realise they can adapt it according to the needs of their constituencies (Tummers and Bekkers, 2014). This suggests that giving local bureaucrats some autonomy in how the policy is implemented can improve the possibility of its successful implementation.

In contrast to Lipsky's research that focused on adaptation rather than resistance, the 'divergence' literature (Brodkin, 2011) in this field has centred on active resistance. Due to the widespread implementation of neoliberal principles in secondary and higher education around the world, we have the opportunity to investigate the relative contributions of coercion, agency, and hybridization in the formation of policy 'consensus', or isomorphism (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

The implementation of a policy is not an either/or scenario. The context determines whether or not it is coercive or flexible. Policy implementers also have the option of strategic compliance, in which they publicly show their approval of the policy but implement it in any manner that they deem appropriate (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016). When changes are prescribed by global governance organisations and essentially imposed on different countries, symbolic adherence to global trends and norms is a typical strategy for countries to adapt global policies to their local context. Portnoi & LAURA (2016) further argued that the results of policies will change depending on the local environment. He also pointed out the emergence of resistance and coercion along with agency due to the significance of context (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

In my research, I want to explore the perceptions of 'street-level bureaucrats' (EFL teachers) regarding their engagement and involvement in policy making and policy implementation (RQ 2). I also intend to investigate their experiences in the implementation of the CLT approach in classrooms.

3.3 Educational Policy Transfer

The application of Educational Policy Transfer Theory in my research is critical in examining and understanding the macro-contextual elements, particularly in relation to the first research question that investigates the Bangladeshi government policy on the use of the CLT approach. After

introducing the term 'policy transfer' and its various frameworks, I will critically discuss Steiner-Khamsi's interpretive framework that I will draw on in my research.

The term 'policy transfer' is often used to describe the spread of successful policies and practises from one region to another (Cairney, 2012) (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996, p. 344) define it as:

> *Policy transfer, emulation and lesson drawing all refer to a process in which knowledge about policies, administrative arrangements, institutions etc. in one time and/or place is used in the development of policies, administrative arrangements and institutions in another time and/or place.*

3.3.1 Various Frameworks of Policy Borrowing

Scholars provide a variety of conceptual frameworks to describe the intricate processes involved in policy transfer, despite the fact that there are significant variations among the numerous terminologies that relate to the cross-border movement of policies. In 1996, David Dolowitz and David Marsh created a concept that they later refined into a policy borrowing and lending continuum in 2000. In 2004, David Phillips and Kimberly Ochs developed a spectrum of policy lending and borrowing. Later in 2016, Laura Portnoi simplified these two models to give a unified spectrum of educational policy borrowing and lending. All of these models conceptualise the procedures of policy transmission in terms of whether or not the transfer is completely voluntary.

3.3.2 Steiner-Khamsi's Interpretive Framework

Steiner-Khamsi argues, referring to Tyack & Cuban (1997) and Cuban (1998), that both these forms of externalisation are closely linked to the notion of globalisation which is used by policymakers to legitimise their actions towards educational reforms in their countries. While most authors deal with the mapping of the borrowing and lending processes, Steiner- Khamsi's research, therefore, focuses on the politics involved in these processes and particularly the economic motives behind the transfer of policies in the name of 'best practices'.

While the borrowing of reform ideas from other countries is voluntary and selective for developed countries, it is coercive and wholesale for developing countries. Most importantly, these institutions tend to ignore the contextual variations of different countries when diagnosing the problems in the

different educational systems of those countries and also when prescribing solutions to amend those deficiencies (Alshumaimeri, 2023). They not only use the same set of indicators to assess the various educational systems against common international benchmarks devised by them but the same sort of 'best practices' reform policies are also recommended to every country irrespective of their various socio-political and cultural contexts.

According to Perry & Tor (2008), since the expansion of globalisation has altered national and supranational interactions, there is less frequent educational transfer at the two extreme ends of total voluntary adoption and absolute coercive imposition. Rather, the educational transfer is a mixture of voluntary and forced actions, depending on the environment and the time period (Perry and Tor, 2008). A lot of low-income nations' educational institutions are reliant on foreign aid, and it frequently seems that change happens while grants or loans are available (Dolowitz and Marsh, 1996). Coercive policy transmission is intertwined with voluntary policy transfer in certain situations, as the explanation above illustrates. To further disseminate global educational discourses, several international organisations and agencies are becoming more involved.

To understand the politics of policy transfer, one must comprehend the 'donor logic'. For example, Steiner-Khamsi & Waldow (2012) points out that assistance organisations such as USAID have a self-referential donor logic, whereas development banks (e.g. the World bank) have a self-referential donor logic that is tied to the bank's own notions about education. Some of the finest methods from their own education systems are exported to low-income nations by these international organisations.

The phenomenon of global actors, global monitoring instruments, and global education policies exerting a growing influence on national education reforms can be better understood through the lens of the interpretive framework of policy borrowing research (Liu and Steiner-Khamsi, 2022). These global actors, including organisations like the OECD and World bank, as well as monitoring instruments such as ILSAs, Education at a Glance, and the Global Education Monitoring Report, and education policies like test-based accountability in school reforms and competency-based curriculum reform, are increasingly shaping the direction of national education reforms.

Steiner-Khamsi's (2004, 2012) interpretive framework explicates how educational policies are not formulated in a vacuum, but are often influenced, borrowed, or adopted from different socio-cultural and political contexts. The theory provides a framework to analyse the dynamics of policy

borrowing and lending on a global scale, as well as the processes by which these policies are adopted, adapted, or resisted in the recipient's local context.

Within the context of Bangladesh, an understanding of how global trends and recommendations in language teaching, such as the CLT approach, become translated into national policy is crucial. This theory allows me to delve into the nuances of this policy transfer process - the transnational flow of the CLT policy, the actors involved in this transfer, and the political, economic, and social dynamics that may influence the translation of this global policy into the national context. The theory also provides a framework for understanding the potential impact of international educational trends, networks, and organisations on the formulation of the policy, thus situating the local Bangladeshi context within a broader global educational landscape.

The application of Educational Policy Transfer Theory is also invaluable in the exploration of the second sub-research question, which probes EFL teachers' perceptions of the government policy concerning the CLT approach. Teachers' perceptions are likely to be influenced by their understanding and experiences of the policy transfer process (Vandeyar, 2021). The theory allows for a consideration of the potential mismatch between the policy in its original context and its implementation in the new context, and the implications of this for teachers' attitudes towards the policy. Understanding these discrepancies will provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities presented by the policy, and the subsequent strategies teachers employ in response.

Furthermore, this theory could help investigate the role of different institutional, social, and individual actors involved in the policy transfer process. This involves an examination of the dynamics of power, agency, and negotiation in the shaping and interpretation of the policy. It also entails an investigation into the mechanisms through which the policy is communicated and enacted, as well as the potential modifications to the policy during the transfer process.

Overall, Educational Policy Transfer Theory provides a comprehensive lens through which to analyse and understand the complexities and nuances of the policy environment within which the CLT approach is being implemented in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. The theory guides the research towards a multi-layered understanding of the policy context, which is vital to address the main research question effectively.

3.3.3 Fullan's Educational Change Implementation Theory

Michael Fullan has developed a comprehensive theory to understand and manage the multifaceted process of educational reform and innovation. Fullan's Educational Change Implementation Theory delves into three critical dimensions: (1) the change process, (2) the roles of various stakeholders, and (3) the conditions necessary for successful implementation (Fullan, 2015b). Fullan's Educational Change Implementation Theory proffers a comprehensive framework that accentuates the significance of collaboration, coherence, and capacity building in the efficacious implementation and management of educational reforms. The key components of Fullan's theory have been explored below in relation to their importance for educational change.

Collaboration constitutes a critical aspect of Fullan's theory, as it highlights the imperative of engaging diverse stakeholders in the change process. Teachers, administrators, students, parents, and policymakers all contribute to the shaping and implementation of educational reforms (Fullan, 2015b). Fullan posits that change efforts are more inclined to succeed when stakeholders share a common vision, participate in collaborative decision-making, and actively engage in the implementation process. The establishment of a culture of trust, communication, and shared responsibility among stakeholders is vital for nurturing collaboration and enhancing the likelihood of success in educational change.

Coherence pertains to the alignment of goals, strategies, and practices within and across various levels of the educational system, encompassing policy, curriculum, assessment, and pedagogy (Fullan and Quinn, 2016). Fullan underscores the importance of coherence in ensuring that educational change efforts remain focused, consistent, and well-integrated. This involves fostering a shared understanding of the change initiative's objectives, devising a logical and comprehensive plan for implementation, and aligning the diverse components of the education system to support the change effort.

Fullan & Quinn (2016) propose a 'Coherence Framework' outlining four indispensable components for achieving coherence: focusing direction, cultivating collaborative cultures, deepening learning, and securing accountability. By addressing these components, educational leaders and practitioners can establish a cohesive and well-coordinated approach to managing and implementing educational change.

Capacity building is an essential component of Fullan's theory, emphasising the necessity to develop the knowledge, skills, and competencies required for effective change implementation among teachers and administrators. This entails providing ongoing professional development, support, and resources to equip educators with the tools and expertise necessary for successfully navigating the change process (Fullan, 2016a).

Fullan's Theory of Educational Change (2015b) is pivotal for my research as it exposes the complexities of the change process within an educational context. This theory is particularly valuable in answering the third research question, which explores the experiences of EFL teachers implementing the CLT approach both pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Fullan proposes that educational change is a dynamic, complex process, involving a multiplicity of elements including the individuals within the system, their roles, reactions, and interactions. He delineates three broad phases in the process of educational change: initiation, implementation, and continuation. Each of these stages presents distinct challenges and involves different sets of factors that contribute to the success or failure of the change.

With numerous educational initiatives being generated through government policymaking and legislation in prioritised areas of education, Fullan (2015a) emphasises the point of whether and how governments invest in capacity building of educators. He shows that there are two basic ways to look at educational reform. One is innovation-focused approach which examines and marks specific innovations to see how they perform, to determine which factors are associated with success. The other is capacity-building focused approach intending to develop the innovative capacity of organisations and systems to promote continuous improvement (Fullan, 2015b). As educational change is 'technically simple and socially complex' (Fullan, 2015b), teachers need to increase their capacity for dealing with change.

The initiation phase involves the decision to adopt or reject a proposed change. The exploration of teachers' perceptions of government policy regarding the CLT approach (RQ 2) could be examined within this phase. Fullan's theory provides a lens to explore how teachers' attitudes towards the CLT approach may have influenced their decision to adopt this teaching method.

Changing the culture of institutions is the real agenda, not implementing single innovations. The reason for lack of implementation might be other than absolute rejection of the values embodied in the change, or hard-core resistance to all change. There might be other possible reasons such as value rejection, inadequate resources to support implementation, poor capacity etc. (Fullan,

2015b). The implementation phase is marked by the actual use of the innovation or change. This phase is closely linked to research question 4, exploring the role of formal teacher training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in the implementation of the CLT approach. Fullan's theory sheds light on the importance of these aspects in facilitating a successful change process, by providing teachers with the necessary knowledge and skills to adapt their teaching practices. In the continuation phase, the change is either incorporated into the regular activities of the system or is terminated. This is where the study of the teachers' experiences of implementing the CLT approach (RQ 4) comes into play. Fullan's theory can be used to understand whether the change has become institutionalised or whether teachers have faced challenges that have hindered the continuation of the CLT approach.

Moreover, Fullan's theory goes beyond the conceptualisation of change as a linear process, highlighting the complexities and unpredictable elements involved in the implementation of educational changes. This is particularly relevant in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The theory can help explore how the sudden shift to remote teaching, induced by the pandemic, may have disrupted the implementation of the CLT approach, and how teachers have navigated this challenge.

Fullan's Theory of Educational Change Implementation also emphasises the importance of systemic factors in educational change, such as the role of the government, school administration, and policy measures. By integrating this perspective, my research can examine the relationship between teachers' individual experiences and broader systemic influences.

To conclude, Fullan's Theory of Educational Change Implementation offers an invaluable framework for this study, providing comprehensive and multi-dimensional insights into the dynamics of implementing the CLT approach within the context of Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. This theory has guided me to include EFL teacher trainers, trainees, school leaders, and educational administrators as the participants in my research. It also guides my research towards a holistic understanding of the change process, acknowledging the interplay of individual, institutional, and systemic elements.

3.3.4 Teachers and Educational Change

Educational reform is a complex socio-political process that necessitates persistent and rigorous efforts to facilitate collaborative engagement among teachers. This collaboration involves joint planning, mutual observation of teaching practices, and the active pursuit, experimentation, and refinement of teaching approaches (Fullan, 2015b). Reform is not just putting into place the latest policy. Fullan (2015a) examines change within the school by analyzing the roles of key participants and their organisational relationships. Implementation is the essence of change as it refers to what really happens in practice. And the teacher 'as implementer is central' (Fullan, 2015b). As teachers are defined by their experiences and understandings of educational change, all teachers do not respond in a similar manner when an educational change happens or is initiated (Hargreaves, 2005).

3.3.5 Change in Practice

Fullan (2015a) contends that the implementation of educational change involves 'change in practice' (Fullan, 2015b, p. 28). The complexity is that educational change is in most cases multidimensional rather than being a standalone entity even at the simplest level of an innovation in a classroom. He operates with three components or dimensions in implementing any new programme or policy: a) The possible use of new or revised materials such as curriculum materials, standards, or technologies b) The possible use of new teaching approaches such as new pedagogies etc., and c) The possible alteration of beliefs such as new policies or programs (Fullan, 2015b, p. 28). All three aspects are essential to gain what Fullan calls 'real change' or 'change in practice'. In the absence of corresponding modifications in teaching techniques, the introduction of new resources may have little effects. Similarly, when changes are articulated merely in terms of ideas and values, without an adequate understanding of their practical implications, the impact may be limited (Burner, 2018).

3.4 The Concept of Professional Capital

Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) introduced the notion of professional capital as a pivotal element in fostering sustainable and efficacious educational change implementation. They contend that through investment in and cultivation of professional capital, educational systems can enhance the

quality of teaching and learning, consequently leading to improved student outcomes. Professional capital comprises three interconnected components: human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. The next section has provided a critical discussion of the concept of professional capital and its implications for educational change implementation.

3.4.1 Human Capital

Human capital encompasses the knowledge, skills, and expertise possessed by individual educators. Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) emphasise the significance of investing in the development of educators' human capital via high-quality initial teacher education and ongoing professional development opportunities. However, this is arguably true that an exclusive focus on individual expertise might overlook the importance of collaborative practices and shared knowledge within schools. Human capital refers to the individual competencies, skills, and knowledge that teachers possess. In the context of this research, human capital can be analysed in terms of teachers' linguistic proficiency, their understanding of the CLT approach, and the pedagogical skills necessary to implement this approach effectively in their classrooms. This concept thus underscores the importance of high-quality teacher training programs and CPD initiatives in enhancing teachers' human capital, providing them with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate and implement policy changes.

3.4.2 Social Capital

Social capital involves the relationships and collaborations among teachers and between teachers and other educational stakeholders. The role of social capital is paramount when exploring the influence of collective teacher efficacy on the implementation of the CLT approach. It helps to scrutinise how shared goals, cooperative learning, and collaborative problem-solving among teachers can facilitate or hinder the implementation process. The significance of a supportive professional culture in fostering collaboration and shared learning is illuminated under this construct. Social capital pertains to the relationships, trust, and collaboration among educators within a school or learning community. Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) posit that social capital is essential for promoting collective responsibility, sharing best practices, and fostering a culture of continuous improvement. Critics contend that the concept of social capital may be challenging to

measure and quantify, and its impact on educational change implementation might be context-specific, varying across different schools and communities (Moolenaar and Daly, 2012).

3.4.3 Decisional Capital

Decisional capital refers to the professional judgment and decision-making capabilities of teachers, developed through experience and reflection. This aspect of Professional Capital is closely linked with the second and fourth research questions, where teachers' perception of the CLT policy and their experiences in its implementation come into focus. It emphasises the importance of teachers' autonomy and professional discretion in adapting the CLT approach to their specific classroom contexts and in making pedagogical decisions that best meet their students' learning needs. Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) assert that decisional capital is crucial for enabling educators to adapt and respond to the complex and evolving demands of educational change implementation. Critics argue that decisional capital can be influenced by external factors, such as policy, accountability measures, and resources, which may constrain or enable educators' decision-making capabilities (Honig and Hatch, 2004).

Fullan & Hargreaves' concept of professional capital offers valuable insights into the critical elements necessary for effective educational change implementation. Although there are potential limitations and challenges, the concept underscores the significance of investing in and fostering human, social, and decisional capital to ensure sustainable and successful educational reforms. Hargreaves and Fullan's Concept of Professional Capital offers a multidimensional view of the resources and capabilities teachers bring to their professional practice, serving as an instrumental framework to address the third research question regarding the formal teacher training and CPD experiences of teachers in the context of the CLT approach implementation.

Fullan (2015a) notes that planning will possibly fail every time if leaders do not gather information from actors in the ground level by engaging them through partnerships and collaborative cultures. Educational change depends on what teachers do and think. So, the main solution as advocated by Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) is developing the professional capital of teachers and their collective efficacy. Referring to the findings of a study conducted by Day & Gu (2010) on the career cycle of teachers in England, Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) show that teachers complain about the 'massive workload' that 'eats away at your life,' about excessive paperwork, about policies that are 'very

prescriptive,' and about training that is overwhelmingly directed toward government initiatives—making teachers lose focus because they have no time for their own professional learning and reflection.

Fullan (2015a) maintains significant educational change consists of changes in beliefs, teaching style, and materials (discussed earlier in Section 3.3.5), which can come about only through a process of personal development in a social context. Purposeful interaction is essential for continuous improvement. Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) propagated the concept of professional capital which means collaborative work culture for teachers. Fullan (2015a) argues that as policies usually focuses solely on human development, this does not change the culture. He concludes that social capital is the stronger leverage point which can make the group and individuals ever stronger. The acquisition of professional learning within a specific context is the only form of learning that holds true significance in generating meaningful changes within educational settings. Thus, in addition to teachers themselves, other roles in the system are key in fostering teacher learning. He considers the school principal as the most direct source of assistance or hindrance, perhaps the most crucial role for building collaborative cultures.

To sum up, Fullan & Hargreaves's concept of Professional Capital provides a comprehensive understanding of the factors influencing teachers' professional practice and their capacity to implement the CLT approach. By focusing on the interconnectedness of human, social, and decisional capital, this framework elucidates how teachers' individual competencies, their relationships with others in the professional community, and their professional judgment skills collectively contribute to the effective implementation of the CLT approach. Consequently, it provides a solid foundation for investigating the impact of teacher training and CPD initiatives on enhancing the professional capital of teachers in Bangladeshi secondary-level EFL classrooms.

3.5 Potential Drawbacks of Educational Change Implementation Theory

Fullan's emphasis on collaboration and capacity building may conflict with market-driven reforms promoted by globalisation, such as performance-based incentives and competition among schools (Verger, Parcerisa and Fontdevila, 2019). These market-driven approaches may undermine the collaborative culture and shared responsibility advocated by Fullan's theory, posing challenges to educational change implementation. While Fullan's theory stresses the importance of local context

in educational change, it may not adequately address the global forces shaping education, such as neoliberalism and globalisation (Lingard and Rizvi, 2020). As a result, Fullan's theory may provide insufficient guidance for navigating the complex interplay between local and global factors in educational change implementation. Moreover, this theory focuses primarily on the process of educational change implementation, with less attention to the issues of equity and social justice often associated with globalisation (Connell, 2019) By not explicitly addressing these concerns, Fullan's theory may fail to sufficiently challenge the power dynamics and inequalities inherent in the global educational landscape.

3.6 Implications for Educational Practice

The interplay between educational policy transfer theory, and Fullan's educational change implementation theory has significant implications for education policy and practice. In the next section, I will critically analyse and examine these implications by exploring the potential benefits and drawbacks of Fullan's theory in the context of educational policy transfer, as well as the resulting challenges and opportunities for education policy and practice.

Teachers and school leaders may face tensions between the collaborative culture advocated by Fullan's theory and the competitive environment fostered by neoliberal policies (Bowe, Ball and Gold, 2017). In such situations, practitioners should strive to maintain a focus on collaboration, shared responsibility, and the collective improvement of teaching and learning, while also acknowledging the external pressures and expectations associated with market-driven reforms.

Fullan's emphasis on local context encourages educators and school leaders to develop context-specific solutions to educational challenges (Fullan, 2015b). This approach requires practitioners to critically engage with global policies and practices, adapting and refining them to suit their specific contexts, rather than uncritically adopting them wholesale. The interplay between educational policy transfer, and Fullan's theory raises concerns about equity and social justice in education (Connell, 2019). Educators and school leaders should prioritise these issues in their practice, working to challenge power dynamics and address inequalities within their schools and communities.

The interplay between educational policy transfer, and Fullan's educational change implementation theory has significant implications for education policy and practice. Policymakers and

practitioners must critically engage with these complex and non-linear relationships, balancing global influences with local contexts, fostering coherence and collaboration, and prioritising capacity building, equity, and social justice in their efforts to implement educational change.

3.7 Conclusion

To conclude, this chapter has explored two prominent theories and one related concept to guide the research design and provide an analysis and interpretation of the data set, specifically addressing the EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. The application of Steiner-Khamsi's interpretive framework for the Educational Transfer theory, and Fullan's Educational Change Implementation theory, in conjunction with Hargreaves and Fullan's Professional Capital concept, has facilitated an incisive understanding of the multifaceted policy landscape within Bangladesh's education system. Steiner-Khamsi focuses on the contextual divergences between the lender and the borrower countries and the consequent resistance among implementers emanating from the recipient contexts. The integration of Fullan's theory accentuates the critical role teachers occupy as catalysts of change, while Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of Professional Capital underscores the imperative of investing in professional capital for the realisation of successful educational reform.

By synthesising the key tenets of these theories and concepts, an analytical lens has been forged, capable of scrutinising the complexities inherent in Bangladesh's education policy and practice environment. This comprehensive approach allows for the examination of the numerous factors influencing the adoption of pedagogical innovations, such as the CLT approach in Bangladesh, and renders a more profound understanding of the consequent challenges and opportunities confronting the education system of the nation. Ultimately, the theoretical and conceptual framework established in this chapter will serve as a bedrock for subsequent analysis and discussion in the following chapters of the thesis. In the next chapter, I will present the research methodology that I have employed for my thesis.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I have presented the methodological approach employed for the study and proffered justifications for the specific preferences made during my research process. Additionally, my role as the researcher all over the research process is also expounded here. This chapter details the research paradigm (4.1), the research design (4.2), selecting participants (4.3), data collection methods (4.4), and data analysis techniques and approaches (4.5) for my project. Furthermore, I have considered relevant ethical concerns (4.6) with my personal reflections on addressing challenging and methodological adaptations (4.7) and conclusions (4.8).

4.1 The Research Paradigm: Interpretivist Paradigm

I situated my study in the interpretivist research paradigm. The interpretivist paradigm was relevant to the project because of its central focus on the teachers' perspectives on and experiences of the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. The interpretivist ontology posits that social realities are not fixed, but rather contingent upon the perspectives, beliefs, perceptions, culture, and experiences of social actors (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018). I have taken an interpretive ontological stance because my fundamental aim was to understand the teachers' views, perceptions, and experiences of the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary classrooms in Bangladesh. I wanted to explore what the teachers' perceptions are about the government policy relating to the implementation of the CLT approach at the secondary level of education in Bangladesh. I wanted to investigate the EFL teachers' experiences with the implementation of the CLT approach pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic situation. I also wanted to obtain insights into the teachers' and stakeholders' (school leaders, EFL teacher trainers, EFL teacher trainees, education administrators) understanding of the support offered to the EFL teachers for their Continuing Professional Development in relation to English language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic and pre-pandemic situation. This worldview has helped me interact with participants in their social context by asking them open-ended questions and observing them to make sense of their experiences and interactions. This means that multiple realities based on the researcher's understanding and the participants' worldviews were

constructed (Check and Schutt, 2012; Creswell and Poth, 2016), because as the researcher I wanted to 'understand the subjective world of human experience' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 19).

4.2 The Research Design: A Qualitative Case Study

I designed my study as a qualitative case study. Case studies can improve one's comprehension of complex situations in a more comprehensive manner (Brown, 2008). It can provide descriptive data about how our work environments function. In the following sub-sections, I will evaluate case study as a methodology, my case in focus, and the rationale for adopting case study research.

4.2.1 Case Study as a Methodology:

This methodological approach, as discussed by scholars like Stake (1995), Merriam (1998), and Yin (2018), emphasises a holistic, empirical, interpretive, and emphatic understanding of the subject matter. Stake (1995, p. 2), in particular, views the case as 'a bounded system', where researchers investigate it as an object with defined boundaries and working parts. Merriam (1998) aligns with this view but offers a broader definition, allowing for flexibility in what can be considered a case. According to (Yin, 2018, p. 45), 'a case study is an empirical method that investigates a contemporary phenomenon (the "case") in depth and within its real-world context, specially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context may not be clearly evident'. Merriam & Tisdell (2016, p. X) define a qualitative case study as 'an intensive, holistic description and analysis of a bounded phenomenon such as a program, an institution, a person, a process, or a social unit'.

There are various approaches to defining a case, and its application or interpretation often differs based on the context and research objectives. Broadly speaking, a case represents an instance through which the researcher aims to generate insights. Thus, case study research involves exploring the distinctiveness and intricacies of a single case to better understand its dynamics within relevant contexts (Stake, 1995). This type of research seeks to deepen comprehension of a specific situation or environment, emphasising the unique aspects of the case, both well-known and yet to be discovered. Similar definitions of a case have been offered by Stenhouse (1980), MacDonald and Walker (1975), and Bassey (1999).

MacDonald and Walker (1975) suggest that studying a case is equivalent to observing an instance in action. The term 'action' here highlights that a case is dynamic and evolves over time, reflecting how contexts continuously change. Bassey (1999) considers case-based research as part of the 'study of a singularity', which can also encompass non-random surveys and experiments. Stenhouse (1980) addressed this by stating that 'cases are always cases of something', meaning that a case is exemplary of a broader category, though it may not directly represent that category since the specific realities of the case could differ from the broader class it is part of.

In addition to previous definitions of a case, it is important to clarify that case study research is often debated as to whether it qualifies as a methodology. While Stenhouse (1980) pointed out that some researchers consider it to a form of ethnography, case study research is methodologically flexible, not confined to specific ontological or epistemological assumptions (Elliott, 2008). This means that the methods used in case studies are determined pragmatically, based on the goals of the study and the realities of the research context. Although qualitative methods are frequently used in case studies, quantitative approaches are not excluded (MacDonald and Walker, 1975; Stake, 1995; Bassey, 1999; Elliott, 2008). As a result, statistical data can be meaningfully incorporated into case studies to complement descriptive findings. This suggests that case study research should not be limited to qualitative inquiry but can involve quantitative or even mixed methods (Yin, 2009). The flexibility of the case study approach also enables it to address various research focuses, develop or test theories, and assess the effectiveness of educational programmes (Stake, 1995, 2008; Bassey, 1999). Such flexibility would not be possible if case study research adhered to a rigid theoretical framework.

Considering these characteristics, case study research is often referred to as an umbrella approach (Simons, Olssen and Peters, 2009), encompassing various methods that focus on specific instances. These features indicate that case study research is not bound by a particular methodological philosophy but remains eclectic in nature.

4.2.2 The Case:

The case under my study was the EFL programme run for the Grade-6 to Grade-10 EFL learners in two secondary schools in Bangladesh. Within this case, I endeavoured to inductively explore the teachers' perspectives on and experiences of the implementation of the CLT approach in these EFL

classes. Bangladesh has a single EFL programme prescribed and regulated by the NCE 2012 of the government for all secondary schools. These two schools are selected purposefully from the same teaching context to gain extensive insight into the phenomenon. To explore the teachers' perspectives on the issue, data were gathered from EFL teachers, school leaders, teacher-educators, education administrators, and relevant policy documents. This case is precisely defined and bounded by multiple factors. Firstly, the context of my study is crucial: the EFL program is uniformly prescribed and regulated by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of the Bangladesh Government, ensuring consistency across all secondary schools. This regulatory framework provides a clear boundary for my case, defining the scope of the EFL programme being studied. My selection of two purposefully selected secondary schools within the same teaching context further bounds the case. These schools provide a focused environment for exploring the implementation of the CLT approach, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon. By concentrating on these two schools, I ensure that the insights gained are rich and contextualised within a specific educational setting. This purposive selection aligns with Stake's (1995) view of a case as a specific, functioning entity and Merriam's (1998) emphasis on the delimitation of the case. My research participants also help define the boundaries of the case. I collected data from EFL teachers, school leaders, teacher-educators, education administrators, and relevant policy documents. This diverse group of stakeholders provides a comprehensive view of the implementation of the CLT approach, encompassing multiple perspectives within the educational system. This approach aligns with the holistic and empirical characteristics of qualitative case study research, as it draws on a wide range of observations and interactions within the field (Stake, 1995).

4.2.3 Rationale for Case Study Research:

The main reason for adopting a case study research design can be expressed through its inherent flexibility as presented above and its ability to give voice to the participants (Stake, 2008). I considered the case study as a natural approach to use, given my desire to understand how the EFL teachers conceptualise and experience the implementation of the CLT approach in their classes and what they do in this regard. The case study was my choice of research approach for the exploration of the EFL teachers' perspectives on CLT implementation in secondary level EFL classrooms because the use of a case study is a consolidated means to understand organisations of education as socially constructed establishments (Brown, 2008). The case study enabled me to research a

'single bounded unit' (Duff, Zappa-Hollman and Chapelle, 2013) or case, employing illuminating and contextual data to understand my findings about the case that I was exploring.

Yin (2018) presented an exceedingly detailed and methodical framework for carrying out the design and execution of a case study. He advocated for the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2018). In my study, I used different sources of evidence such as EFL Teachers, head teachers, assistant head teachers, EFL teacher trainers, trainees, educational administrators like DEO and DD. My purpose was to triangulate my data from various sources. Yin maintains that the researcher is able to cover a wider variety of topics and generate converging lines of inquiry through the process of triangulation when they employ numerous sources of data. This is because triangulation is made possible by the use of multiple sources of data and various data collection modes. Still, the issue of generalisability of findings seems to be a potential weakness of case study research. Snow & Anderson (1991) show that the most frequently cited weakness of all is the case study's 'presumed lack of generalisability' (Snow and Anderson, 1991, p. 164). However, Flyvbjerg (2011) examined and refuted five misunderstandings about case study research among which two were that one cannot generalise from an individual case and that it is difficult to develop generalizations based on specific case studies. Again, we can also mention here Stake's (2008) naturalistic generalisation which is a form of conclusion reached through "personal engagement in life's affairs or by vicarious experience so well constructed that the person feels as if it happened to themselves" (Stake, 2008, p. 85). Moreover, Yin (2018, p. 73) argued for 'analytic generalization' emerging from the case study's findings whether it involves one or several cases. This variant of generalisation is not statistical or numeric like its counterpart in the positivist paradigm; it is rather like making an argumentative claim at the conceptual level.

All these justifications for case study research apply well to the current study since I intended to explore the convolutions of EFL teachers' conceptualisations and experiences of implementing the CLT approach in secondary classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic and pre-pandemic situation in Bangladesh. Dovetailing with this purpose, I also aimed to furnish a comprehensive account of the Continuing Professional Development support offered to the EFL teachers both in the micro context of their school leadership and in the broader context of local and regional level educational administration.

4.3 Participants

The present study embraced 'purposive' or 'purposeful' sampling on the principle that it 'provides a way of getting the best information by selecting people most likely to have the experience or expertise to provide quality information and valuable insights on the research topic' (Denscombe, 2017, p. 41). I selected my participants for this research from two different schools: one was urban and another, suburban; both were high-performing schools in national public examinations. At first, my plan was to select two different types of schools such as rural and urban to explore any valuable findings that could offer me better insights into my study. However, due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the country-wide lockdown hindered me from accomplishing that. Finally, I had to end up with choosing two schools: one from my hometown and the other from the suburban areas to make my data collection process smooth. Of the six EFL teachers, three were from an urban school (school 1 pseudonymised as AHS), all were currently teaching secondary students from 6 to 10. The three participants in the interviews were from school 2 (pseudonymised as PMHS) situated on the outskirt of my home town. Both can be described as high-performing schools in terms of the results of the SSC examination, 2019 with the pass rate of 98% and 96% respectively. Another important point is that I was in search of such a school where I would get three EFL teachers, one head teacher and one assistant head teacher at the same time. On top of it, there was prevailing school closure due to COVID-19 pandemic situation; maintaining social distance and movement control were imposed all over the country by the Bangladesh government. So, I had no choice except selecting those two schools which were within 7 miles of my house although initially I aimed for diversity in my selection for the study schools and study teachers. Fortunately, I received positive responses from all I requested at that hard time. I have got only two female English teachers among my six EFL teachers. I was not in a position to make any choice based on the variation in terms of teaching experience and gender as well. I wanted to guarantee the inclusion of at least three female teachers (half of the total number of EFL teachers) and two early-career EFL teachers along with other senior teachers. But it was not possible at that time for two reasons—one was the COVID-19 pandemic situation and another was the unavailability of that combination, that is, such three EFL teachers at the same school.

4.4 Data collection

In my study, I aimed to investigate the policies adopted by the Bangladesh Government on the application of the CLT approach at the secondary level education, to address the EFL teachers' implementation and practice of CLT in secondary EFL classrooms, and to shed light on the EFL teachers' experiences of implementing CLT in classrooms. I also aimed to explore how English language teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic is different from what it was at the normal time, and to explore the range of formal training and Continuing Professional Development support offered to the EFL teachers at the normal time as well as during the COVID-19 ordeal. To attain this purpose, I decided to draw on multiple sources of data (i.e. semi-structured interviews, virtual class observations, policy document review and analysis). I discussed the data-gathering procedure for my study in detail below (from 4.4.1 to 4.4.3).

4.4.1 Semi-structured Interviews

Interviews use 'conversation as a learning tool' (Leavy, 2017, p. 139) in order to accomplish a conceptual mapping (Hochschild, 2009). In-depth interviews are conducted, as (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 535) note,

> *"to explore issues, personal biographies, what is meaningful to, or valued by, participants, what they know about a topic, what they have experienced, how they feel about particular issues, how they look at particular issues, their attitudes, opinions and emotions. They tend to be semi-structured. . . . . . ."*

Focusing on the logic of conducting 'intensive interviews', Hochschild (2009) contends that intensive interviews may be used to investigate issues to a greater depth and to examine how and why people frame their ideas in the ways that they do, as well as how and why they draw linkages between ideas, values, events, opinions, behaviours, etc. Hochschild believes that intensive interviews can be used to investigate issues to a greater depth. Borg (2015) considers the interview as the most extensively employed data collection tool to conduct the study of second language teachers' experiences and perspectives because these are frequently extrapolated from their verbal statements.

In this study, I conducted virtual interviews using ZOOM app with the 6 EFL teachers, 2 headteachers, 2 assistant head teachers, 3 EFL teacher trainers, 3 teacher trainees, 2 DEOs. I also

conducted several follow up interviews with some of them. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation, we were under movement restrictions imposed by the Bangladesh government. Moreover, the ethics committee of my university did not permit me to conduct face-to-face in-person interviews. Therefore, I was compelled to hold 'synchronous—real-time—virtual interview' (Cohen, Manion and Morrison, 2018, p. 538) through computer mediated communication (CMC) tool, ZOOM. My interviews were 'verbal interviews with a video component that are more like face-to-face interviews' (Merriam and Tisdell, 2016, p. 115). However, I could not manage to hold interviews keeping the video ON in the cases of my female participants. As a Bangladeshi citizen, I was aware of cultural and religious issues and this consciousness helped me substantially to manage the whole process successfully. Another rationale for choosing ZOOM among other virtual platforms like Microsoft Teams, Skype etc. was that this application was being used by many of the teachers in Bangladesh at that time. All the interviews were held in Bengali, our mother tongue. The interviews with each of the participants continued for 50 to 60 minutes.

During the data collection phase of this research, the scheduling of the interviews depended largely upon the ease and availability of the interviewees. In some cases, I had to postpone interviews and reschedule later at their requests over the mobile phone. Almost all the participants provided me their mobile phone numbers and email addresses and it was of great help in dealing with rearranging the interviews. As I was encountering conflicting and contradictory views and opinions about different issues from each participant cohort such as EFL teachers, head and assistant head teachers, EFL teacher trainers, EFL teacher trainees, and DEOs, I decided to conduct 9 follow-up interviews with some of the participants for a better clarification of their answers. All the follow-up interviews were shorter because I asked the participants to focus only on the points of conflicting views they had already expressed during their main interview for further verification and explanation.

Earlier, I had developed an interview guideline (see Appendix 2) using relevant points elicited from background studies, policy document scrutinization and literature reviews. I had also piloted the guideline with a secondary EFL teacher who was previously and personally known to me and then polished it for the use with my actual interviewees. Even after that, I had to modify the interview questions according to the participants' viewpoints during the interviews. Participants' responses to my open-ended questions frequently opened up avenues with clues for additional follow-up questions.

I either audio-recorded, or video-recorded all the virtual interviews using the ZOOM app with the participant's permission and transcribed. Since the interviews were held in Bengali, I translated all the transcripts into English. I supplied the participants a one-page summary of what they had said in their interviews both in Bangla and English so that there might not exist any misunderstandings about their meanings and interpretations due to my translation.

4.4.2 Class Observation (Virtual)

Observation is used when questions are about actual behaviours rather than about how people think or feel. Only observation allows the researcher 'to empirically explore how people actually act rather than how they say they act' (Loseke, 2017, p. 99). Cohen et al. (2018) notes that observations create opportunities for researchers to generate a rich account of teachers' pedagogical practices in real classrooms. Borg (2006) has argued that the utilisation of observation holds significant importance in the realm of language teacher cognition research because it offers a 'concrete descriptive basis in relation to what teachers know, think and believe' (Borg, 2006, p. 231). In this research, I observed the EFL teachers' video-recorded lessons to see how they taught and implement the principles of the CLT approach in their classrooms as recommended in NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012).

Initially, my plan was to video-record the classes, but I had to change the plan later due to the school closure because of the COVID-19 pandemic situation. I developed an observation guideline for conducting the observation of virtual classes. Observing their virtual classes, which were pre-recorded and uploaded on Facebook and YouTube, I noted down important points, and my reflections aligning with the guideline. I executed the observation taking their prior permission to collect their class from Facebook or YouTube. Unfortunately, there were no interactive classes that I could observe. Yet my observation was valuable in evaluating teachers' understandings of the curricular recommendations and objectives about the implementation of the CLT approach by matching them with their classroom practice. I have provided my personal reflections on my fieldwork in the last section of this chapter.

4.4.3 Document Analysis

While doing case study-based research the most essential application of documentary research is to validate and supplement the information obtained from other sources (Stake, 2008; Yin, 2018). Documents can provide specific details to validate information from other sources (Yin, 2018). I utilised document analysis in this study because this supported and informed the results obtained from other data sources like interviews and observations (Creswell and Poth, 2016). The main reason for exploring the documentary evidence was to triangulate my data from the observations and interviews. Yin (2018, p. 113)opines that a good case study will want to depend on 'multiple sources of evidence and documentary information (whether paper or electronic) is likely to be relevant to every case study topic'. The relevant policy document analysis was required for my study because this study aimed to map the extent to which the objectives of the NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012) are in line with the classroom practices of the EFL teachers. Therefore, it allowed me to explore the government policies for the teaching of English in secondary-level EFL classes, the recommendations suggested in the NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012), English Curriculum papers the guidelines mentioned in NCE 2012, and Teachers' Curriculum Guides. The National Curriculum of English 2012, the National Educational Policy 2010 and two types of coursebooks (*English for Today* and *English Grammar and Composition*) were downloaded from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board website. I had scrutinised relevant policy documents before starting my fieldwork with a view to categorising the aims and objectives, the syllabus content about the teaching and learning of four language skills and grammar, the recommended language teaching approach, teachers' and learners' roles, and proposed evaluation and assessment measures.

I have elicited many important points from the preliminary analysis of the policy documents which helped me not only in structuring and modifying interview and observation guidelines but also in the eventual analysis of my interview and observation data. Since the required textbooks were meant to be prepared according to the NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012) requirements, I also conducted an investigation to determine the degree to which the required textbooks actually reflect those curriculum recommendations and facilitate the execution of those guidelines. I have provided an in-depth analysis of the NCE 2012 aligning it with *English for Today* textbooks and teachers' curriculum guide in the following chapter (**Chapter 5**).

4.5 Data Analysis

Like other early career researchers, I also felt it quite challenging to determine how to conduct my qualitative data analysis. In my study, I have utilised Thematic Analysis (TA), an analytic method very frequently applied to identify patterns or structures across the language-based data (Braun and Clarke, 2006, 2022). Since I did not opt for the 'fully automated touch-of-a-button analysis' (Clark and Sousa, 2018), I had to spend much time reflecting on the first phase of data collection which helped me a lot in digging deep. As qualitative studies build much on voluminous reflection and reflexivity (Finlay, 2003; Finlay and Gough, 2008), I made great use of them in my analysis.

4.5.1 Justification for the Use of Thematic Analysis

I selected Thematic Analysis as the method for analysing qualitative data in my study due to its methodological robustness and adaptability. TA provides a rigorous framework for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data, making it particularly suitable for the exploratory nature of my research (Braun and Clarke, 2006). My study seeks to investigate the complex perspectives and experiences of EFL teachers regarding the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. The reasons for my choosing TA are as follows:

Flexibility and adaptability: The flexibility of TA is particularly advantageous for my study as it allows me for an inductive approach to data analysis that can accommodate the multifaceted and context-specific nature of the data (Braun and Clarke, 2021). This flexibility is critical given the diverse cultural, social, and educational contexts influencing EFL teaching practices in Bangladesh.

Rigorous and transparent process: The systematic nature of TA enhances the rigor and transparency of the analytical process, contributing to the trustworthiness and credibility of the findings (Nowell *et al.*, 2017). Each phase of this involves meticulous documentation and reflection, ensuring that the analysis is comprehensive, rigorous, and replicable (see the next section 4.5.2 for a detailed discussion).

Depth of analysis: TA facilitates the identification of both manifest and latent content within the data, enabling a rich and layered interpretation of the participants' experiences (Vaismoradi, Turunen and Bondas, 2013). This depth of analysis is essential for understanding the complex

interplay of policy, practice, and professional development opportunities in the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh.

4.5.2 Analytical Framework: Thematic analysis

I conducted my data analysis for the study in three stages. In the first stage, government policy documents pertinent to the study were scrutinised and analysed in the light of research questions, which is discussed in the section above (Section 4.4.3). In the second stage, I conducted data collection and preliminary analysis simultaneously. After completing virtual interviews with all of my 18 participants (EFL teachers, head teachers, assistant head teachers, EFL teacher trainers, EFL teacher trainees, and education officers of district and divisional levels), I started to transcribe and analyse them. The flexibility of Thematic Analysis (TA) was critical here, allowing me to conduct an inductive analysis while adapting the process to the evolving nature of my data. As the interviews were held in Bengali (the mother tongue of both the interviewers and interviewees), I transcribed them at first in Bengali and then translated them into English. This process was a bit time-consuming. However, the rigorous and transparent process of TA, through careful transcription and translation, helped ensure that I preserved the integrity and authenticity of the data across languages.

When I was getting engaged with the data to become familiar with it—the step which Lester et al. (2020) considered as 'light or initial analysis'—I encountered some conspicuous conflicts and contradictions of views, opinions, and perspectives of the participants. After broadly categorising the tension between my participants, I felt a pressing urge to get back to at least some of them for follow-up interviews. The adaptability of TA proved essential in this phase, allowing me to respond flexibly to emerging insights and adjust the analysis by conducting follow-up interviews. As the pandemic situation persisted in my field, I faced some difficulties connecting with participants at this stage. Nevertheless, I could manage follow-up interviews with nine participants.

In the third and final stage of data analysis, as I mentioned earlier, I followed the thematic analysis approach (Braun and Clarke, 2006), which involved 'seven phases to engage when completing a qualitative analysis' (Lester, Cho and Lochmiller, 2020). These phases, such as preparing and organising the data for analysis, transcribing, becoming familiar with the data, memoing the data, coding the data, and moving from codes to categories and categories to themes, ensured a rigorous

and transparent process throughout. During the analysis, the depth of analysis offered by TA became crucial, as it allowed me to delve into both the explicit and implicit meanings of the data. This enabled a comprehensive exploration of participants' perspectives and experiences, which was vital for answering my research questions.

Largely, I considered an inductive approach to data analysis to be more suitable for my study because I intended to glean insights that were data-driven. In this case, the research questions helped me only to guide the data gathering, not the analytical process itself. Rather, I drew on codes, categories, and themes emerging out of the data. According to Dörnyei (2007, p. 245), categories in qualitative research 'are not predetermined but are derived inductively from the data analysed'. The flexibility of TA enabled this inductive approach, allowing themes to emerge naturally without forcing the data into pre-existing frameworks.

The first phase of the data analysis was the transcription of the interview data. During transcription, I avoided repetitions, greetings, false starts, and any irrelevant data. As I mentioned earlier, all the interviews were transcribed in Bengali and eventually translated into English. Listening to the audio and/or video recordings of Zoom interviews, transcribing the data in Bengali, and translating into English took much longer than I had projected; but still, the process had a positive side that it helped me acquaint myself with my datasets. The transparent process of Thematic Analysis ensured that my transcription and translation were methodical and replicable, contributing to the rigor of the analysis.

The next step was coding the transcripts. Between the first and second steps, there was a 'pre-coding stage' (Dörnyei, 2007), when I read the transcripts more than once, reflected on what I had read, and made notes in the margins of the printed versions of the transcripts. During coding, I applied 'descriptive coding,' which 'summarises in a word or short phrase – most often as a noun – the basic topic of a passage of qualitative data' (Saldaña, 2021, p. 88),

Descriptive Coding is appropriate for virtually all qualitative studies, but particularly for beginning qualitative researchers learning how to code data, ethnographies, and studies with a wide variety of data forms (e.g., interview transcripts, field notes, journals, documents, diaries, correspondence, artifacts, video). Here again, the flexibility of TA was beneficial, allowing me to handle diverse forms of data while remaining open to the complexities within.

After getting the initial codes, I combined and renamed some of them. While I was coding, I took notes of my thoughts, ideas, and intuitions, which later became the foundation of what is known as 'analytic memos' (Holliday, 2015; Saldaña, 2021). In addition, I created brief narratives, commonly known as 'vignettes', to provide focused accounts of events or the experiences of my participants. This iterative coding process underscored the rigorous and transparent nature of my analysis, ensuring that every stage of the process was well-documented and open to scrutiny. When it came time to write the analysis and discussion chapters of the case study, having the memos and vignettes already written was an enormous advantage in obtaining mental concentration and getting the work done faster.

My next step was to produce categories or sub-themes and themes out of the codes. When classifying the codes, I had to consider each code's features, look for patterns among the codes, and organise the codes into categories according to the attributes they shared in common (Charmaz, 2014; Creswell and Poth, 2016; Adu, 2019; Saldaña, 2021). This process, also known as sorting or clustering (Adu, 2019), highlighted the depth of analysis provided by TA, as it allowed me to draw rich and nuanced interpretations from the data. Following this process, themes typically emerged as a result of additional investigation of clusters or categories, reducing them to ideas that reflect sets of codes and empirical indicators that answer the research questions (Adu, 2019).

Once I had developed the categories, I then moved towards producing their themes. At first, various related categories were brought together based on the differences, similarities, and relationships across the categories. With these differences, similarities, and relations acknowledged, I then assigned a statement to these categories. I was conscious of making this theme name inclusive of all the underlying categories and descriptive of their content. Themes are usually, as Lester et al. (2020, p. 101) note, "aligned with the conceptual or analytic goals of the study and therefore are designed in response to the study's primary research questions or focus." The adaptability of TA allowed me to remain responsive to the emerging themes, ensuring that they were comprehensive and inclusive of the multifaceted perspectives reflected in the data.

To make the analytic process transparent, Lester et al. (2020, p. 101) recommend that 'researchers develop a detailed audit trail that delineates the connection between data sources, codes, categories, and themes'. I presented this audit trail in tabular form (see in Appendix 4). I took a sample of a data set, chose a few segments representative of the whole, highlighted which codes had been applied to those segments in the beginning, and then stated which categories and themes

those segments were receptive to. Because of this technique, my interpretation and coding process have been made apparent to a broader audience from the outside, which has contributed to an increased level of trustworthiness in connection to the interpretations of my dataset. This emphasis on a rigorous and transparent process enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of my analysis.

Thus, I accumulated the data obtained using multiple sources and tools to provide a 'thick description' (Geertz, 2008) and arrive at a grounded understanding of individual EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary EFL classrooms. The depth of analysis enabled by Thematic Analysis played a key role in achieving this rich understanding.

4.6 Research Ethics

Ethical standards for conducting research are necessary because they offer researchers a number of guidelines to accomplish it in a manner that fits with ethical requirements (Pring, 2000; Oancea and Pring, 2008; Denscombe, 2017). However, Oliver (2010) reflects ethical issues in education and the social sciences are so intricate as to start a never-ending debate while taking into consideration a particular research project. As to the ethical considerations applicable to qualitative research, (Tracy, 2019, p. 87) notes,

> *"Research invariably influences and affects other people, and therefore, taking account of ethical considerations is imperative, including issues of permission, confidentiality, participation, researcher relationship, and transparency."*

I have conducted my research within the Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research fourth edition of British Educational Research Association (BERA) (2018)and through University's ethics policy (University of East Anglia). Due to my adherence to ethical commitments, before I collect my data, I applied for ethical approval from the School of Education and Lifelong Learning Ethics Committee.

At first, using my professional and personal acquaintance I collected email addresses and mobile phone numbers of several school heads and EFL teachers, and contacted them over the phone. In a similar manner, I also contacted principal of TTC, EFL teacher trainers and EFL teacher trainees of TTC, DEO and DD of the Education Office. As gatekeepers, the head teachers, principal of TTC, DEO and DD were emailed a letter of invitation to give permission to conduct the study. After getting permitted, I emailed consent forms and participant information sheet (both translated into Bengali) to all the participants to sign. The issue of signing the forms created an air of confusion among some

of the participants, as they were concerned with Digital Security Act 2018 of Bangladesh. Two participants from school 1 directly asked me over phone if there is any possibility of publishing these data on social media such as Facebook, YouTube etc. I reassured them that they should not be worried about this as all data would be preserved securely and their names or identities would not be expressed anywhere or in any form. I furthermore convinced them that there were no risks of affecting their profession or status since their names would be pseudonymised in my thesis and other subsequent publications. I also reminded them that they had an option for withdrawal without showing any reasons or justifications. Their hesitation made me a bit anxious about the completion of my paperwork following ethical guidelines I was committed to. Anyway, finally they participated in my research process. An account of all these awkward moments were recorded in my fieldnotes.

At first, I contacted the gatekeepers of intended secondary schools, teacher training college and education office to get the permission to enter the field and conduct the study. I used simple language to explain the aims and objectives of my research to all of my participants, and I did so in a way that ensured none of their original thoughts, beliefs, or behaviours would be changed. Before conducting the interviews, I ensured that I had the participants' consent and secured their confidentiality by giving them pseudonyms. All data that were obtained from the participants were kept strictly confidential, and they were free to withdraw from the study at any moment or decide not to take part in it at all.

Although in the beginning, I wanted to video-record the classes, I had to give up my plan because of school closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic. I requested the head teachers and the EFL teachers of the selected schools for permission to observe their previously video-recorded lessons. The lessons were uploaded mostly in Facebook and YouTube. Thus, I adopted the only alternative — pre-recorded and uploaded class observation by making observation notes on paper. These recorded classes were open source and therefore I managed to use them ethically with the prior permission of the EFL teachers. I also kept the participants informed about the storage, ownership, and use of data. I preserved all the data in the password-protected devices where the folders and files were pseudonymised to uphold the anonymity of the participants.

4.7 My Reflections on Addressing Challenges and Methodological Adaptations

The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic posed unforeseen challenges to my research methodology, necessitating significant adjustments to my initial plans. The lockdown that was implemented worldwide caused the fieldwork to be delayed. As a result of the travel ban, I was unable to go back to my home country. I was required to remain in this country (the UK) until the middle of August in the year 2020. My first drafting of the plan called for the data collecting to get underway in April 2020. However, as a result of the epidemic, I was unable to accomplish that. This delay eventually had an influence on my work, which increased the level of stress I was experiencing. Anyway, when I could finally get to Bangladesh to collect data in August of 2020, there was still a lockdown there because of the school closure, and it was exceedingly difficult for me to obtain authorization and clearance from the gatekeepers and the participants. In addition to this, I was having trouble conducting interviews because the internet service in my country is quite slow. I was forced to reschedule the interviews a number of times. This considerably slowed down both the stage in which I collected data and the overall pace of my research. Due to the pandemic crisis, I was unable to conduct face-to-face interviews in my country because the country was placed under a lockdown. Although I had initially intended to do face-to-face interviews with my participants, I was forced to conduct the interviews virtually instead. Even though some of my participants granted me interviews while the ZOOM video camera was active, I got the impression that I may have missed several expressions that would have been visible in a face-to-face meeting. As a result, I may have lost some insightful information because of this. Since the school was closed, I was unable to attend any classes in order to make observations in person. I was forced to rely on the recorded lectures that my participants provided; however, these courses were mostly focused on instructing grammar and were not participatory. This was due to the fact that the government instructed the teachers to adopt a far more condensed curriculum. In addition, in terms of test preparation, grammar was the most important topic covered in the brief curriculum. This was because the evaluation back then consisted primarily of grammatical activities. During the pandemic, the main priority of the government was to ensure that classroom instruction and student learning continued unabated. For the reason that I did not see a genuine class in person, I believe that I have lost out on a lot of information.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also had an effect on the way I designed my study. My research questions required quite a few revisions, so I went ahead and made them. As a direct result of this, I was required to adjust the guidelines for both my interviews and my observations. Again, in order to acquire insights into the training and support provided for EFL teachers during the pandemic, I needed to recruit five additional participants: three EFL teacher trainees and two educational administrators, DEO and DD.

All these factors impacted the latter stages of my research, including data analysis and writing of the thesis. I think my data set could have been enriched more if the data collection had been accomplished as planned initially. In retrospect, while the delays and changes to my initial plan caused stress and required substantial adaptation, they also had some positive effects. The enforced changes, such as adjusting my methodology and conducting virtual interviews, helped manage my workload by allowing me to work around the limitations imposed by the pandemic. Furthermore, these adjustments opened up an unexpected opportunity to explore how Bangladeshi teachers adapted to the new demands of online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic, which added a valuable dimension to my research. This shift in focus provided insights into how teachers, who were previously unfamiliar with remote instruction, adapted to technological tools, online platforms, and new methods of engaging students virtually. The necessity for rapid change in teaching methods and the challenges they faced in the transition highlighted not only their resilience but also revealed gaps in professional development and support systems for online teaching.

By capturing this transition in real-time, my research contributes something new to the field of English Language Education in Bangladesh, where studies on online teaching adaptation during a global crisis are still scarce. The enforced changes of the pandemic allowed me to document and analyse teachers' innovative approaches, their struggles with digital infrastructure, and their evolving pedagogical strategies and techniques—insights that might not have been captured if I had followed my original plan of face-to-face interviews and observations in traditional classroom settings. This unique aspect of my research has enriched the data and expanded the scope of my study, providing a meaningful contribution to understanding how EFL teaching in Bangladesh can evolve in the face of unexpected challenges.

However, this elongated period of study and writing made my life stressful. At a certain stage, with my supervisors' advice, I was required to make an appointment with my university's well-being

service seeking support from them. They helped me to better manage my workload and stress. Their advice and guidance allowed me to develop strategies for maintaining a balance between my academic responsibilities and personal well-being, which ultimately helped me continue with the writing and analysis more effectively.

4.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have detailed the comprehensive research methodology I employed to explore the perspectives and experiences of EFL teachers regarding the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary-level classrooms in Bangladesh. Anchored in the interpretivist paradigm and designed as a qualitative case study, my research utilised semi-structured interviews, virtual class observations, and document analysis to gather rich and robust data. I selected Thematic Analysis for data analysis, offering a systematic and rigorous framework to identify and interpret patterns within the qualitative data. My study faced significant challenges due to the COVID-19 pandemic, necessitating methodological adaptations such as virtual data collection methods to ensure the safety and participation of participants. Despite these hurdles, I meticulously upheld ethical standards and maintained the integrity of the research. This methodological approach has provided rich, contextualised insights into the complex realities of CLT implementation, contributing valuable knowledge to the field of EFL education in Bangladesh. In the next chapter, I will present the results of the policy document analysis.

Chapter 5: English Curriculum Policy Document Analysis

5.0 Introduction

In the last chapter, I presented the research methodology that I had adopted for my current study of EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach. In this chapter, I provide a critical review and analysis of the current national curriculum policy document of 2012 and the (proposed) NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021). The domain of English language teaching and learning in Bangladesh has always been a complex interplay of historical influences, socio-cultural dynamics, and evolving educational paradigms. At the core of this intricate environment is positioned the National Curriculum of English 2012 (NCTB, 2012), an ambitious policy document that seeks to recalibrate English language teaching and learning in secondary schools to match the demands of a rapidly globalising world. Rooted in the Communicative Language Teaching approach, the curriculum reflects a paradigm shift from traditional rote learning methods to a more holistic, skill-based approach to ELT. This shift aligns with global educational trends emphasising communicative competence and practical language use, as highlighted by Richards and Rodgers (2014) and supported by Brown (2007). The emphasis on communicative competence also aligns with Hymes' (1972) notion of communicative competence, which includes both grammatical knowledge and the ability to use language appropriately in various contexts.

The NCE 2012 endeavors to equip learners with not just the system of the language but also the capability to use it confidently in real-life contexts. In this chapter, I have analysed the details of NCE (2012), unpacking its vision, objectives, and teaching guidelines. At its core, this curriculum document envisages the creation of expert English users, proficient across the spectrum of linguistic macro-skills — reading, writing, speaking, and listening. It strives for a balance between linguistic accuracy and appropriacy, underscoring the importance of both in authentic communication. Yet, as with any policy initiative, there is often a tension between intention and implementation. The journey from the neatly articulated guidelines of a curriculum document to the dynamic, unpredictable terrains of the classroom is fraught with challenges. My own experience as an EFL teacher also shows that these challenges arise from ambiguities in the policy, resource constraints, pedagogical habits, and sometimes even the socio-cultural context of the learning environment.

In this chapter, I offer a nuanced analysis of NCE (2012) in order to gain some insights from this policy document which I would compare with the perspectives of EFL teachers who are the frontliners in the teaching and learning process. I wanted to juxtapose the curriculum's theoretical framework against the lived experiences of my participants, shedding light on the convergences and divergences between policy aspirations and classroom practices. My main goal was to better understand the curriculum's strengths, areas of ambiguity, and potential avenues for modification, providing a comprehensive blueprint for stakeholders (including myself) vested in the evolution of English education in Bangladesh. Earlier in **Chapter 2**, I provided this contextual backdrop for readers so that they can dive into the depth of policy document analysis that follows in the next sections.

The National Curriculum of English 2012 (NCTB, 2012) clearly establishes a goal of communicative competence in its instruction of English. The central theme is to make English teaching more functional and practical so that students can apply their English skills in real-world contexts. This goal aligns with global shifts towards the CLT which emphasises the use of language as a medium of real communication rather than as a set of grammatical rules (Littlewood, 2014).

5.1 The Learning Outcomes and Objectives

The NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012, p. 73) declares the teaching-learning of English as a "skill-based subject so that learners can use English in their real-life situations by acquiring necessary knowledge and skills. . ...". Skills practice 'in meaningful contexts' has been suggested. In section 2 of NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012, p. 73) five objectives have been sketched out:

- To help students develop competence in all four language skills, i.e. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing.
- To help students use their competence for effective communication in real-life situations.
- To help students acquire appropriate language and communicative competence for the next level of education.
- To support learners gain accuracy.
- To facilitate learners to be skilled human resources by using the English language appropriately.

A skill-based approach, in a broader sense, mirrors the demands of the modern world. The 21st-century job market often values skills over rote knowledge. By emphasising skills, the NCE 2012 might be positioning students to be better prepared for real-world challenges, not just in terms of language use but in terms of a mindset that values practical, applicable skills. While the NCE 2012's designation of English as a 'skill-based subject' is progressive and aligned with global best practices in language education, the success of this approach greatly hinges on the practicalities of its implementation.

Skills practice 'in meaningful contexts'

Practicing skills 'in meaningful contexts' emphasises the need to embed language learning within situations that mirror or are directly relatable to real-life experiences. For instance, rather than just teaching the vocabulary of shopping, a meaningful context would involve role-playing a shopping scenario. By practicing in contexts that resemble real-life situations, learners can more easily transfer their language skills from the classroom to their daily lives. This approach is supported by Nunan (2003), who argues that contextualising language instruction in meaningful and authentic contexts enhances learners' ability to use the language in real-world situations. Furthermore, according to Widdowson (1990), the practice of language in meaningful contexts aids in the internalization and retention of language skills, making them more applicable outside the classroom setting. The NCE 2012's emphasis on such practices aligns with this theoretical perspective and suggests an understanding of effective language pedagogy.

The link with the CLT approach

CLT emphasises interaction as both a means and a goal of learning. "Meaningful contexts" inherently promote interaction, as they encourage students to communicate as they would in real-life scenarios. A significant feature of CLT is task-based language teaching, which involves students completing tasks using the target language. These tasks are set in 'meaningful contexts', promoting practical language use. According to Ellis (2003), task-based learning encourages the use of language in a way that is authentic and purposeful, aligning closely with the principles outlined in the NCE 2012. Skehan (1998) also supports the notion that task-based learning facilitates natural language use, which is essential for developing communicative competence.

In an increasingly globalised world, individuals often find themselves in diverse situations requiring intercultural communication. Practicing language skills in varied meaningful contexts prepares learners for such global challenges. This perspective is reinforced by Byram (1997) and Byram and Porto (2013). Byram emphasises the importance of intercultural competence in language education and extends this thinking to the internationalisation dimension (Byram and Wagner, 2018). As Siqueira (2017) argues, teacher education must now respond to the demands of a globalised world by fostering critical reflection in both teachers and students. Teachers need to be equipped to help students become more critical of their own socio-cultural realities and sensitive to the intercultural encounters they will face. Reflexivity is crucial here, as it allows teachers to understand how their own backgrounds influence their teaching practices (Kubota and Miller, 2017). This reflexive stance ensures that educators can guide students to engage critically with global power dynamics, encouraging them to question inequalities and assumptions in intercultural communication (Porto and Zembylas, 2022). Moreover, as global citizenship becomes increasingly complex, teacher education must prioritise critical pedagogy to help students not only understand diverse perspectives but also challenge global structures that perpetuate inequality (Deardorff, 2020). Without this shift, intercultural competence within CLT risks remaining superficial, particularly in contexts like Bangladesh, where the socio-political realities of English education intersect with global imperatives (Rahman and Pandian, 2018b).

In essence, while 'practicing skills in meaningful contexts' is pedagogically sound and aligns with modern best practices in language education, its effective incorporation requires thoughtful planning, adequate resources, and a shift from traditional methods. The depth and breadth of such practice in real classrooms can offer a valuable dimension to research, shedding light on the interplay between curriculum design, pedagogical intent, and classroom realities. Here a sign of the turn of the curriculum toward a more eclectic approach to English language teaching has been traced. This approach was later manifested more clearly in the NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021).

Discussion on the five objectives from Section 2 of NCE (2012)

A. Develop competence in all four skills of language

This objective emphasises a holistic approach to language learning. The inclusion of all four skills ensures students don't just study the language but actively use it. It challenges the traditional EFL

teaching models that often focus heavily on reading and writing, neglecting listening and speaking. According to Harmer (2008), a balanced approach that includes all four language skills is essential for developing communicative competence. By integrating listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the curriculum aligns with the integrated skills approach advocated by scholars such as Brown (2001) and Newton (2009), who argue that language skills should not be taught in isolation, but as interconnected and mutually reinforcing.

Moreover, in the context of Bangladesh, incorporating all four skills is particularly significant given the historical emphasis on rote learning and the lack of focus on oral skills. As Rahman and Pandian (2018b) note, there has been a traditional bias towards reading and writing in South Asian EFL contexts, which often results in students who can pass written exams but struggle with oral communication. Thus, the holistic approach of NCE 2012 is a progressive step towards addressing this imbalance and fostering more well-rounded English proficiency.

B. Use competence for effective communication in real-life situations

This objective reinforces the communicative intent of the curriculum. Knowledge of English isn't the end goal; effective communication is. It aligns with the global trend in English language teaching, where English is taught not as an academic subject but as a tool for communication. As Savignon (2002) argues, the ultimate goal of language teaching should be communicative competence, which involves not just linguistic knowledge but also the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in various contexts.

This objective is particularly relevant in the Bangladeshi context, where English is often seen as a key to socio-economic advancement. According to Hamid and Baldauf (2008), English proficiency is highly valued in Bangladesh for its role in education and employment opportunities. By emphasising real-life communication, the curriculum aims to equip students with the practical language skills needed to navigate and succeed in these spheres. Furthermore, the focus on effective communication is in line with Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, which includes grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and strategic competence.

C. Acquire appropriate language and communicative competence for the next level of education

This ensures continuity in language education. The curriculum intends for each level to prepare students for the challenges of the next, fostering gradual and consistent progression. This objective reflects the importance of scaffolding in language learning, a concept supported by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory, which emphasises the role of guided support and gradual progression in cognitive development.

In the context of EFL education, this continuity is crucial for maintaining and building upon students' language skills as they advance through different educational stages. As Van Lier (2004) points out, language learning is a cumulative process, and ensuring a coherent progression of skills is essential for sustained language development. In Bangladesh, where students often face a significant leap in language expectations between secondary and higher education, this objective aims to bridge that gap and ensure students are adequately prepared for future academic challenges (Kirkpatrick, 2010).

D. Support learners to gain accuracy

While communicative competence is crucial, this objective emphasises that accuracy in language use should not be overlooked. This ensures students can express themselves clearly and are understood as intended. The dual focus on fluency and accuracy reflects a balanced approach to language teaching, as advocated by Brumfit (1984).

Accuracy in language use is important for clarity and precision, particularly in academic and professional contexts. According to Richards (2015), while fluency involves the flow and ease of communication, accuracy ensures the correct use of grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation. The emphasis on accuracy aligns with the focus on form by Long et al. (2001), which argues that attention to linguistic form is necessary for developing accurate language use, specially in formal settings.

In the Bangladeshi context, where English is often used in high-stakes situations such as exams, job interviews, and international communication, ensuring students achieve a high level of accuracy is crucial. As Haider and Chowdhury (2012) note, the ability to use English accurately is highly valued in Bangladesh, and this objective aims to address this need.

E. Facilitate learners to be skilled human resources by using the English Language appropriately

This links English language learning to broader societal and economic goals. By ensuring students can use English effectively, the curriculum aims to produce individuals who can contribute meaningfully in globalised work environments or higher education settings. This objective reflects the instrumental role of English in global mobility and economic advancement, as highlighted by Phillipson (1992a) and Graddol (2006).

In the context of Bangladesh, English proficiency is often seen as a critical factor for economic development and access to global opportunities. As Hamid (2020) points out, English is viewed as a key skill for participating in the global economy and for upward social mobility. By focusing on the practical and appropriate use of English, the curriculum aims to equip students with the language skills necessary for these opportunities, thus contributing to the nation's development goals.

The five objectives in Section 2 of the NCE 2012 (2012) encapsulate a comprehensive vision for English language education in Bangladesh. From my personal reflections, I can add here that while they exhibit a forward-thinking approach, each objective brings its own set of challenges, specially in translating the vision into practical classroom realities.

5.2 Content of the Curriculum

The National Curriculum of English 2012 (NCTB, 2012) stands as a pivotal document charting the course for English language education in Bangladesh's secondary sector. Delving deeper into its chapters reveals a meticulously planned framework, juxtaposing language skills against thematic content, ensuring learners get a holistic grasp of the language in a multitude of real-world contexts. This comprehensive approach reflects current best practices in curriculum design, as discussed by Graves (2008), who emphasises the importance of integrating thematic content with skill development to create meaningful learning experiences.

Matrix structuring in English 1

Sections 5, 6, and 7 of NCE 2012 offer the readers comprehensive matrices for grades 6, 7, and 8. These matrices are not merely skeletal structures; they brim with details, encompassing learning materials, envisaged outcomes, pedagogical strategies, and assessment methods. The content, particularly in English 1, appears methodically bifurcated, based on the four cardinal language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The broad classifications of 'themes' and 'language points' serve as the pillars upon which the curriculum's content rests. According to Macalister (2010), such a matrix structure helps ensure that all essential components of language learning are systematically addressed.

Themes in English 1

The 'themes' are multifaceted. On one end, they encapsulate speech acts, painting scenarios of everyday communication, like 'requests' and 'instructions.' This helps simulate real-life conversational encounters, prepping learners for day-to-day exchanges. Additionally, text forms offer a variety of genres – from the more formal 'airport announcements' and 'reports' to the colloquial 'conversations' and creative 'poetry' and 'biographies.' Such a broad spectrum ensures that students are adept at understanding and crafting diverse text types. This thematic diversity aligns with Richards and Schmidt's (2013) emphasis on the importance of genre-based approaches in language teaching, which help learners become familiar with different text types and their specific linguistic features.

Moreover, 'text themes' delve into various topics – families, national holidays, personal experiences, and careers, ensuring that learners are exposed to a plethora of subjects, enhancing their contextual understanding and making language learning relatable. This exposure to varied themes is crucial for developing intercultural competence, as highlighted by Byram (1997), who argues that understanding different cultural contexts is essential for effective communication in a globalised world.

Language points in English 1

'Language points,' on the other hand, cater to the more technical facets of the English language. Structures such as 'Wh-questions' lay the foundation for querying, while grammatical constituents like 'tenses,' 'modal verbs,' and the nuances between 'active and passive voices' fortify the linguistic scaffolding. The inclusion of 'connectors' and degrees of comparison exemplify the attention to detail, ensuring seamless transitions in communications and a nuanced understanding of qualitative comparisons. This content, synergised with the learning objectives rooted in the four language skills, creates a cohesive educational blueprint. As Ellis (2006) notes, focusing on specific language forms within communicative contexts can enhance both accuracy and fluency, supporting comprehensive language development. The curriculum masterfully bridges the often-gapped chasm between linguistic proficiency, anticipated outcomes, and technical language intricacies.

Content in English 2

In contrast, English 2 appears more composition-centric. With a pronounced focus on 'short compositions and letters,' the emphasis is evidently on honing written communication. Furthermore, the curriculum is replete with discrete grammar topics — from the basics of 'verb tenses' to the complexities of 'direct and indirect speech,' 'infinitives,' 'gerunds,' and 'participles.' While English 1 dabbles in the practical application of the language, English 2 plunges deep into its grammatical depths. This bifurcation aligns with Larsen-Freeman's (2014) approach, which advocates for a balance between form-focused instruction and meaningful language use.

However, a palpable ambiguity arises here: the overt emphasis on writing, specially when juxtaposed against the curriculum's broader skill-based focus. The conspicuous absence of a clear correlation between these grammatical intricacies and the application in the four foundational language skills adds to this ambivalence. This gap reflects the ongoing debate in language education about the best ways to integrate grammar instruction with communicative practice, as discussed by Thornbury (1999).

English 1 and 2

A panoramic view of both English 1 and 2 elucidates a balance. The spirit of English 1 resonates with the application, grounding learners in practical language usage, with 'language points' being secondary. English 2, conversely, pivots towards the structural anatomy of the language, putting grammar in the spotlight. This dual focus mirrors Ur's (2012) perspective, which argues for a balanced approach that incorporates both communicative activities and explicit grammar instruction to develop comprehensive language proficiency.

In sum, while the NCE 2012 is commendably thorough, ensuring a balance between practicality and technicality, certain aspects could benefit from greater clarity. As educators and stakeholders navigate this curriculum, a deeper understanding of these nuances could potentiate a more holistic and effective English language learning journey for Bangladeshi students.

5.3 Recommended Pedagogical Approach

The pedagogical bedrock on which the NCE 2012 is situated is the CLT approach. This decision to integrate the CLT reflects a commitment to a more holistic and pragmatic style of language instruction.

Understanding the CLT within NCE 2012

The tenets of the CLT, as underlined in the NCE 2012, center on integrating all four language skills – reading, writing, listening, and speaking – into the teaching and learning process. By positing these skills not as isolated entities but as interwoven threads of the language tapestry, the curriculum is positioning learners to emerge as comprehensive language users, capable of navigating diverse linguistic landscapes. This holistic integration aligns with the views of scholars like Littlewood (2014), who emphasise that language skills should be developed in tandem to reflect real-world communication.

One of the most salient attributes of the CLT approach, as mentioned in the document, is its "learning by doing" philosophy. This means moving away from the rote and passive methods of yesteryears to a dynamic, student-centric paradigm. Instead of treating students as mere receptacles of knowledge, they become active participants, engaging in real-world tasks, group

discussions, role plays, and other interactive activities that simulate authentic language usage scenarios. Moreover, the approach to grammar in CLT, as quoted in NCE 2012, is non-explicit. Instead of confining grammatical concepts to strict theoretical compartments, they are presented within relevant contexts. This makes grammar not an intimidating set of rules but rather a natural component of communication. This aligns with the views of Ellis (2006), who advocates for grammar teaching within communicative contexts, highlighting its role in facilitating meaningful interaction. This is also in line with global language teaching trends that underscore the importance of understanding grammar as a means to an end – that is, effective communication – rather than an end in itself.

Pedagogical flexibility

However, NCE 2012 is commendably circumspect in recognising the inherent challenges of a one-size-fits-all methodology. While CLT is the overarching recommendation, there's an acknowledgment of the fluidity of classroom dynamics. As stated in section 12.2, the method's applicability can vary based on numerous factors, ranging from the specific goals of a lesson to the unique characteristics of a student cohort. This flexibility is encapsulated in the document's assertion: "It's the teacher's role to select an activity or activities/techniques according to the need of the lesson to make it fruitful. . . " Teachers are, thus, recognised not merely as implementers of a predefined curriculum but as seasoned pedagogues capable of adapting their teaching strategies to suit the immediate demands of their classrooms. This perspective aligns with Lamb's (2008) and Allwright's (1984) emphasis on teacher autonomy and the need for teachers to adapt methodologies to their specific teaching contexts.

Prescribed method and teacher autonomy

There exists a delicate balance in the curriculum between the promotion of the CLT and granting teachers the autonomy to diverge when necessary. On one hand, there is a strong institutional endorsement for a communicative approach, reflecting the global shift towards functional proficiency in language learning. On the other, there is a recognition that classrooms are dynamic entities. Factors like students' cultural backgrounds, prior language exposure, learning preferences, and even logistical considerations like class size and available resources can influence the efficacy

of a teaching method. As Kumaravadivelu (2001) argues, the notion of "postmethod pedagogy" empowers teachers to go beyond rigid methods and adapt their teaching to the needs of their learners.

Implications for EFL teachers

For EFL teachers in Bangladesh, this dual message has profound implications. Firstly, it emphasises the need for professional development around the CLT to ensure they are equipped to implement its tenets effectively. Simultaneously, it underscores the importance of reflective teaching. Teachers are encouraged to critically evaluate their practices, continually adjusting and refining their methods based on real-time feedback from their classrooms.

The design of the curriculum for both English 1 and English 2 seems to weave together two dominant pedagogical methods: communicative instruction and form-focused teaching. English 1 is enriched with activities that emphasise the communicative approach. This includes a plethora of strategies such as group discussions, debates, pair interactions, collaborative writing, role-playing, engaging in dialogues, peer reviews, and even gamified language exercises. Many of these techniques align with renowned methodologies in the CLT, as emphasised in academic works such as that by Richards and Rodgers (2014).

Contrastingly, the curriculum for English 2 leans more towards form-focused exercises. Absent are the interactive communicative tasks. Instead, the curriculum prescribes traditional, discreet grammar exercises: tasks like error spotting, sentence transformations, and fill-in-the-blank challenges.

While reviewing the curriculum, I observed that the curriculum is attempting a marriage of traditional grammar drills and contemporary, interactive activities. This integration of methods, while innovative, may risk ambiguity. There is a lurking danger that EFL teachers might misconstrue the curriculum's intent, gravitating more towards one teaching approach at the expense of the other. There is a conceivable risk that the classroom could become a space dominated by grammar drills, sidelining the richer, interactive methodologies of CLT. As Swan (2005) cautions, the balance between communicative activities and grammar instruction needs careful management to avoid the pitfalls of overemphasis on one at the expense of the other.

The NCE 2012, while supporting the cause of progressive teaching methods, appears to fall short in delivering a clear and concise pedagogical framework. It introduces a myriad of activities but fails to expound on the roles teachers and students should assume. Yet, the curriculum does make an essential acknowledgment: it sees teachers as the torchbearers of change. Alongside textbooks and instructional guides, teachers are heralded as the primary vehicles to realise the curriculum's vision. The phrasing within the NCE 2012 offers insights into its stance on pedagogy. Terms like 'suggest', 'propose', and 'recommend' pepper the document. This choice of vocabulary sends a message: while the CLT is the favoured approach, it is not set in stone. The curriculum, as illustrated by phrases like '. . . ..suggests the CLT approach, ...suggests presentation of grammar points and vocabulary within real-life contexts' (NCTB, 2012, p. 35), is advisory rather than dictatorial.

Furthermore, the Teachers' Curriculum Guide, while resonating with the ethos of the NCE 2012, does not cage teachers within strict pedagogical confines. It advises, rather than dictates, suggesting techniques that align with the curriculum's vision. The underlying message is a pursuit of optimal learning outcomes but with room for teacher autonomy and innovation.

Section 12 of the NCE 2012 stands out as a particularly forward-thinking component of the curriculum. By offering guidelines on diverse instructional strategies and techniques, it does more than merely instruct; it illuminates a path for educators to tread upon. However, its brilliance lies not only in its guiding role but also in the autonomy it accords to teachers.

The curriculum recognises the dynamic nature of the classroom and the complexities of teaching. No two classrooms are identical, and each comes with its own set of challenges and dynamics. This includes different student backgrounds, varied learning paces, distinctive classroom cultures, and unique challenges. Given this ever-changing environment, it is unrealistic and, arguably, ineffective to mandate a one-size-fits-all approach to teaching. Understanding this nuance, the NCE 2012 empowers teachers to be not just consumers of a pre-defined pedagogy, but architects of their own instructional strategies.

This flexibility becomes particularly crucial when a particular teaching method doesn't resonate with students. As the curriculum itself points out, if students aren't benefiting from a specific approach, teachers have the agency to pivot and employ a different method. This adaptability is vital in maintaining student engagement and optimising learning outcomes. The curriculum seems to trust teachers as frontline professionals who can best gauge the pulse of their classrooms and adjust accordingly.

Furthermore, this provision is a nod to the professional expertise of teachers. By encouraging them to use their judgment and be agile in their instructional choices, the NCE 2012 underscores the value of teacher intuition and experience. It appreciates that teaching is as much an art as it is a science. Sometimes, the best decisions are made in the spur of the moment, based on a teacher's deep understanding of their students' needs.

In addition to offering flexibility in methodologies, the curriculum also appears to give teachers the latitude in the selection of resources. This is invaluable in today's diverse educational landscape, where a plethora of resources — from digital tools to interactive kits — are at a teacher's disposal. Having the freedom to select the most apt resources means educators can tailor their lessons to the specific needs and interests of their students, making the learning experience more relevant and engaging.

In sum, Section 12 of the NCE 2012 manifests a refreshing perspective on education. By interweaving guidance with flexibility, it fosters an environment where teachers can thrive as both learners and leaders, continuously adapting to ensure the best outcomes for their students.

5.4 Assessment and Feedback

In modern educational paradigms, the role of assessment has undergone a shift from mere evaluation to an integral component of the learning process. Recognising this transformation, NCE 2012 adopts a dual strategy, emphasising both formative and summative assessments, aligning the curriculum with global best practices.

Formative assessment, often termed as 'assessment for learning', is crucial because of its immediate impact on the teaching-learning process. NCE 2012's emphasis on this continuous evaluation underscores the curriculum's commitment to adaptability and responsiveness. By facilitating regular check-ins on students' progress, it provides educators with a real-time overview of learners' grasp on content. This allows educators to promptly identify students' areas of difficulty and address them, tailoring instruction to the individual needs of the classroom. Such a strategy not only aids in ensuring content mastery but also plays a pivotal role in boosting students' self-confidence and engagement levels. Black and Wiliam (1998) highlight the effectiveness of formative assessment in enhancing student achievement and learning motivation.

Section 6 of NCE 2012 delves deeper into the mechanics of classroom assessment, offering a diverse array of tools and strategies. By including a range of test item types, from multiple-choice questions (MCQs) and True/False to more interactive methods like reading texts aloud, oral replies, and role plays, the curriculum acknowledges different learning styles and intelligences. This variety ensures that assessments are not monolithic, but cater to diverse learners, from the auditory learner who might excel in oral replies to the kinesthetic learner who might thrive in role-playing activities.

The cloze test, often used to gauge linguistic competence, and individual and pair or group writing tasks highlight the curriculum's emphasis on productive skills. Such activities not only test comprehension but also promote critical thinking and collaborative learning. According to Macalister (2010), integrating various assessment methods enhances the reliability and validity of evaluations in language learning.

Beyond the assessment lies the critical stage of feedback. Feedback, if constructive and timely, can act as a powerful catalyst for learning. Recognising its significance, NCE2012 offers a rich tapestry of feedback methods. From 'individual feedback' that caters to specific student needs to 'whole class checking' that fosters a collaborative learning environment, the curriculum encourages educators to diversify their feedback strategies. Hattie and Timperley (2007) emphasise that effective feedback should provide clear, specific, and actionable information to help students improve their performance.

Notably, the inclusion of 'peer checking' is particularly commendable. Peer evaluation not only lightens the teacher's burden but more importantly, it inculcates a sense of responsibility among students. It fosters a learning environment where students become active participants in the assessment process, cultivating skills of analysis, critique, and constructive communication. Topping (2009) supports peer assessment as a method that enhances students' engagement and learning by allowing them to reflect on and learn from their peers' work.

The NCE 2012's approach to assessment and feedback is comprehensive and modern. By intertwining traditional assessment methods with innovative feedback strategies, it aims to craft an educational experience that is both rigorous and supportive, ensuring that students are continually nurtured and challenged in their learning journey. The NCE 2012 English 2 syllabi seem to adopt a decidedly structuralist approach to language instruction, particularly evident in its emphasis on detached point grammar tasks. In language pedagogy, detached point grammar tasks focus on specific, isolated language structures, often without integrating them into a broader communicative

context. Such tasks are reminiscent of more traditional, grammar-translation methods which concentrate predominantly on the form and rules of a language, rather than its function or usage in real-life situations.

Furthermore, the English 2 curriculum's strategy of integrating linguistic points with particular topics provides a dual focus. On one hand, it ensures that learners are exposed to specific grammatical structures; on the other hand, it does so within a thematic context. This combination, ideally, would lead to a more in-depth understanding of both the topic and the language structure, allowing students to see the grammar point in action. However, it is essential to note that the mere juxtaposition of a grammatical point and a topic does not guarantee effective integration. The success of such an approach depends largely on how seamlessly the linguistic point is weaved into the topic and how relevant it is to real-life communicative purposes.

The types of examination questions for English 2, notably "transforming sentences" and "correcting mistakes", reinforce this observation. Such tasks are squarely centered on linguistic form, requiring students to demonstrate their understanding of the structural aspects of English. While these tasks undeniably have their merits in honing a learner's accuracy, they might not necessarily assess a student's ability to use the language effectively in communicative situations. A focus on transformation exercises, for instance, can assess a student's understanding of passive voice or direct and indirect speech, but it might not provide insight into whether the student can use these structures appropriately in a conversation or written discourse.

This unambiguous concentration on linguistic form in the English 2 curriculum might be interpreted in various ways. Some may argue it lays a strong grammatical foundation, ensuring students have a solid grasp of English structures which can then be applied in communicative contexts. Others might contend that such an approach is somewhat outdated, potentially sidelining the equally crucial aspects of fluency, pragmatics, and real-world applicability.

While the NCE 2012 English 2 syllabi's approach ensures a meticulous study of the form of the English language, it raises questions about the balance between form-focused instruction and communicative competence. This balance is paramount in contemporary English language teaching, specially in contexts where the ultimate goal is not just structural accuracy but also functional proficiency.

The NCE 2012 curriculum exhibits a holistic view of language learning, underscoring the importance of nurturing both receptive (listening and reading) and productive (speaking and writing) language skills. The approach taken by the curriculum is reflective of the communicative competence model, wherein language learners are expected not just to understand the language when it is spoken or written, but also to produce it in a coherent, contextually appropriate manner.

The delineation of skills across the curriculum – with writing being present in both English 1 and 2, and speaking featuring prominently in English 1 – reveals a concerted effort to ensure that learners receive ample exposure to and practice in all facets of the English language. While the inclusion of writing across both segments accentuates its significance, particularly in academic contexts, the attention to speaking in English 1 underscores the importance of oral communication in everyday life, social situations, and even professional environments.

The pedagogical activities proposed further cement this approach. Activities such as discussions, debates, and oral presentations stimulate critical thinking, promote active engagement with the language, and foster a collaborative learning environment. These activities are not only beneficial for developing speaking skills but also for building listening comprehension, as students engage with and respond to their peers. Pair and group work activities, in particular, can be instrumental in breaking the barriers of hesitation and fostering a supportive, interactive learning milieu. According to Long and Porter (1985), collaborative activities encourage interaction and enhance language acquisition.

On the other hand, the emphasis on crafting paragraphs, essays, letters, and stories caters to the written aspect of language learning. Such tasks demand learners to organise their thoughts, adhere to grammatical norms, and express ideas coherently in written form. This not only refines their writing skill but also deepens their understanding of language structures and conventions. Hyland (2003) emphasises the importance of writing as a process that involves drafting, revising, and editing, all of which contribute to a deeper understanding of the language.

The inclusion of formative assessment for evaluating speaking skills is another progressive step. Formative assessments, by their very nature, are ongoing and provide continuous feedback, allowing for real-time adjustments in teaching methods based on learner needs. The examples provided in NCE 2012 for speaking test items – such as 'describing' and 'narrating' various aspects of daily life and current events – demonstrate an intention to make language learning relevant and relatable. These topics are drawn from students' everyday experiences, making them both engaging

and authentic. Moreover, tasks that involve describing routines or narrating events challenge students to deploy a range of vocabulary and grammatical structures, thus ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of their speaking prowess.

In conclusion, the NCE 2012 curriculum, through its strategic emphasis on both receptive and productive skills and its array of suggested activities, seeks to provide a well-rounded, immersive language learning experience. The real-world relevance of the proposed tasks and assessments further underscores the curriculum's commitment to equipping learners with practical, functional language skills, ready to be deployed in diverse contexts.

5.5 Learner Collaboration

Learner collaboration is an integral part of the pedagogical strategies espoused by the NCE 2012 curriculum. It is anchored not just on the practicality of teaching and learning but also on substantial theoretical underpinnings that support the advantages of cooperative and collaborative learning in language acquisition. The curriculum is not solely concerned with imparting linguistic knowledge but seeks to foster a comprehensive skill set that prepares learners for real-world challenges.

When the curriculum states that students will 'learn from each other in a group through cooperation' (NCTB, 2012, p. 19), it points to the concept of social constructivism, a theory propagated by Vygotsky. This theory posits that learning is a socially mediated process where students, by interacting with peers, can achieve understanding and mastery of concepts that they might not have reached on their own. In this interactive space, students can share perspectives, challenge each other's viewpoints, and clarify misunderstandings, leading to a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the subject matter.

Moreover, collaborative activities such as group work and pair work are not just strategies to break the monotony of traditional teaching. These methodologies transform the classroom into an active learning environment. When learners engage with one another, they are not just passive recipients of knowledge. They become active constructors of their understanding, articulating thoughts, defending opinions, and negotiating meanings.

Furthermore, the NCE 2012's mention that such collaborative tasks will help learners 'develop their leadership, cooperation, and communication skills' (NCTB, 2012, p. 12) underscores the

curriculum's broader vision. It recognises that language learning is not an isolated academic endeavor. The process of acquiring a new language, specially in a collaborative setting, simultaneously nurtures other essential life skills. Leadership is honed as students take charge of group discussions or delegate tasks. Cooperation is developed as they navigate differences, reach consensus, and strive towards a common goal. And of course, communication skills are refined as they articulate thoughts, listen actively, and respond constructively.

Beyond these immediate skills, fostering a collaborative classroom environment can also have long-term benefits. Students learn the values of empathy, patience, and mutual respect. They become more open to diverse perspectives and learn the importance of giving and receiving feedback graciously. In essence, they become better prepared not just as language users but as global citizens ready to navigate the multifaceted challenges of the modern world. This perspective is supported by Slavin (2011), who highlights the positive social outcomes of cooperative learning, including improved relationships and attitudes towards peers.

In sum, the emphasis on learner collaboration in the NCE 2012 is both a practical pedagogical strategy and a visionary approach. It acknowledges the multifaceted benefits of cooperative learning – from deepening linguistic understanding to nurturing essential life skills. This approach, if implemented effectively, can create a transformative learning experience, equipping students with the tools they need for both academic success and personal growth.

5.6 General Classroom Climate

Classroom climate, as understood from the recommendations and guidelines of the NCE 2012, plays an indispensable role in facilitating effective learning, particularly in language acquisition. The atmosphere of the classroom, both physically and emotionally, has a profound influence on students' ability to engage, communicate, and internalise concepts.

One of the primary concerns NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012) addresses is class size. By emphasising the teacher-student ratio of 1:30, as recommended by NEP 2010 (MoEdu, 2010), the curriculum aims to ensure that each student gets individualised attention. Smaller class sizes can lead to more focused instruction, allowing teachers to address individual learning needs, cater to diverse learning styles, and provide more immediate feedback. In larger classes, individual students might get lost in the crowd, hindering their participation and diminishing the effectiveness of the learning

experience. Blatchford et al. (2011) found that smaller class sizes positively impact student engagement and individualised instruction, leading to better academic outcomes.

Beyond the quantitative aspect of classroom size, the NCE 2012 dives deeper into the qualitative elements of the learning environment. The mention of using audio-visual materials is a nod towards multimodal learning. Recognising that students have varied learning preferences, the integration of audio-visual resources can cater to auditory, visual, and kinesthetic learners. Such materials can make abstract linguistic concepts more tangible, engaging, and memorable.

Furthermore, the emphasis on flexible seating arrangements is particularly innovative. By suggesting configurations where "all students in a group have face in" or where they can "sit around a table in circles," the curriculum recognises the importance of peer interaction in language learning. Such seating arrangements can break down traditional classroom hierarchies, making the environment more democratic and conducive to open discussions. The allowance for more informal settings, like sitting on the floor or mats, can also make the classroom feel less intimidating and more inclusive, specially for younger students or those coming from diverse socio-cultural backgrounds.

The overarching philosophy of NCE 2012 seems rooted in constructivism. When it speaks of "learning by doing" (NCTB, 2012, p. 35), it underscores the active role students must take in their education. Rather than being passive receptacles of knowledge, they are encouraged to interact, challenge, and collaborate, thereby constructing knowledge collectively. This pedagogical approach has been proven to be effective, specially in language classrooms, where the very nature of the subject demands constant interaction, negotiation of meaning, and collaboration.

Lastly, the emphasis on teacher-student and student-student interaction captures the essence of communicative language teaching approach. The classroom becomes a microcosm of the real world, where students practice and refine their linguistic skills in authentic, meaningful contexts. Savignon (2002) advocates for a communicative approach, emphasising that language learning should involve meaningful communication that reflects real-life use.

In essence, the NCE 2012's recommendations on classroom climate serve as a holistic guide for educators. It understands that effective learning is not just about curriculum content but also about the environment in which this content is delivered. By fostering a welcoming, interactive, and flexible classroom atmosphere, the curriculum ensures that the learning experience is not just

effective but also enjoyable and memorable for students. This comprehensive approach is supported by Richards and Rodgers (2014), who argue that the physical and emotional environment of the classroom significantly impacts language acquisition. Hamid and Honan (2012) also emphasise the importance of creating supportive learning environments, particularly in the context of Bangladesh, where diverse socio-cultural factors can influence classroom dynamics. They highlight that a positive classroom climate can significantly enhance student motivation and engagement, leading to better learning outcomes.

5.7 Grammar Teaching

The role of grammar in language education has often been at the forefront of pedagogical debates. In countries like Bangladesh, where a traditional approach to language teaching has been the norm, explicit grammar instruction has dominated classrooms for years. This traditional approach emphasises the formal rules and structures of a language, often at the expense of communicative competence.

The NCE2012, while recognising the importance of accuracy in language use, seems to tread a middle path. By setting the appropriate use of the English language as one of the learning objectives, it aligns itself with the global shift towards the communicative language teaching. This approach prioritises language use in real-world contexts, often integrating grammar instruction within meaningful communicative activities. This integration is supported by scholars like Richards and Rodgers (2014), who argue that grammar should be taught in context to facilitate communication rather than as isolated rules.

However, the curriculum also reveals certain contradictions, specially when one delves into the specifics of the English 2 syllabus in the NCE 2012. By spotlighting discrete-point grammar items, it echoes the traditional approach to language teaching. The list, which includes the likes of active and passive voice, tenses, modals, sentence types, transformation of sentences, prepositions, and articles, speaks to a distinct focus on linguistic form. This emphasis on discrete grammar points could inadvertently reinforce the conventional method of teaching grammar in isolation, making it an end in itself rather than a means to achieving communicative competence. This reflects a tension described by Thornbury (1999), who notes that while grammar instruction is necessary, it should not overshadow the need for communicative practice.

This dichotomy is further complicated by the recently released Teachers' Curriculum Guide (TCG). While the TCG is designed to provide educators with clearer directives and examples on how to achieve the goals set in the NCE2012, its approach to grammar is somewhat ambiguous. By replicating the goals, objectives, and pedagogical recommendations of the NCE 2012 and offering a myriad of sample lesson plans aimed primarily at the instruction of the four language skills, it seemingly sidelines grammar. The glaring absence of instructions or guidance on grammar teaching raises questions about the curriculum's stance on this fundamental aspect of language instruction. In examining this issue, it is useful to consider the perspectives of various scholars. Canale and Swain's (1980) model of communicative competence, which includes grammatical competence as one of its components, supports the notion that understanding grammar is essential but should be integrated within a communicative framework. Savignon (2002) also emphasises that while grammatical knowledge is important, it should serve the broader goal of effective communication. Nunan (1998) suggests that a balanced approach to grammar teaching, which integrates form-focused instruction with communicative practice, is most effective. This balance allows students to understand the rules of the language while applying them in meaningful contexts.

In summary, while the NCE 2012 and its accompanying TCG mark a progressive shift in English language teaching in Bangladesh, they also underscore the complexities and challenges of balancing tradition with innovation. The role of grammar, as depicted in these documents, serves as a reflection of the broader pedagogical tensions inherent in any curriculum reform. It remains to be seen how these guidelines will be interpreted and implemented in classrooms across the country, and whether they will bring about the desired change in students' linguistic competence and confidence.

5.8 Critical Analysis of the NCF 2021 for English

The NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021) for English marks a pivotal shift in the pedagogical landscape of English language teaching in Bangladesh, positioning it within broader global trends. However, an analysis of its key components reveals both the potential for transformation and significant challenges in the context of its implementation. This analysis critically examines the framework in relation to the socio-political and educational realities of the country to consider the implications of its stated goals for teachers, students, and the wider system.

A comprehensive approach to language learning: beyond the ideal

The emphasis of NCF 2021 on a comprehensive approach to language learning is arguably one of its most progressive features. It seeks to equip students with not only proficiency in linguistic skills but also a set of life skills, including critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. This aligns with the global movement toward holistic learning, where language learning is situated within a broader framework of cognitive and affective development (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). However, it is essential to interrogate how such a comprehensive approach can be reconciled with the existing educational infrastructure in Bangladesh.

The education system of Bangladesh, particularly at the secondary level, remains largely exam-oriented, with a predominant focus on rote learning (Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). This disconnect between policy and practice raises concerns about the feasibility of implementing the holistic pedagogical vision of the NCF 2021. While the framework encourages critical thinking and creativity, these skills are unlikely to be nurtured in a system that still prioritises memorization over higher-order cognitive skills. Moreover, the lack of sufficient teacher training in these areas exacerbates the problem. Teachers, many of whom have been trained in traditional pedagogical methods, may struggle to adopt the innovative strategies outlined in the curriculum without adequate professional development support (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008).

Real-Life applications: between aspirations and reality

The focus of the NCF 2021 on real-life applications of language skills reflects a significant shift toward competency-based education, which aims to prepare students for the demands of the 21st-century globalised world (Warschauer, 2006). The intention of the curriculum to make language learning practical and contextually relevant is a positive step forward. However, it is crucial to critically assess how these goals can be achieved in a country where the socio-economic and educational conditions often do not support such aspirations.

While the framework promotes the idea that students should use English in meaningful contexts, the socio-economic realities of Bangladesh present substantial barriers. Many students, specially those in rural and underprivileged areas, lack access to English-speaking environments outside the classroom (Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014). This raises important questions about equity and access.

If the curriculum is designed to promote communicative competence in real-life contexts, but students have limited exposure to such contexts, there is a risk that the curriculum will disproportionately benefit students from urban, middle-class backgrounds who have greater access to English through media, private tutoring, and other resources.

Moreover, teachers themselves may not have the proficiency or pedagogical training to create these real-life contexts in the classroom. Studies have shown that many EFL teachers in Bangladesh still rely on grammar-translation methods and teacher-centered approaches, which are antithetical to the communicative, student-centered methodologies promoted by the NCF 2021 (M. Rahman, 2015). This raises concerns about how well the framework's focus on real-life applications can be realised in practice.

Intercultural communicative competence: A clash of identities?

The inclusion of Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) in the NCF 2021 represents a significant advance in English language education, acknowledging the importance of equipping learners with the skills to navigate the complexities of a globalised world (Byram, 1997). However, while the promotion of ICC aligns with global trends, it also introduces tension within the Bangladeshi context, where the role of English has long been fraught with socio-political implications.

English in Bangladesh carries with it the legacy of colonialism and remains a marker of social stratification, often serving as a gatekeeper to socio-economic mobility (Hamid and Honan, 2012). The emphasis of the NCF 2021 on intercultural competence, while laudable, may inadvertently exacerbate existing inequalities. Students from rural or lower socio-economic backgrounds, who often have limited access to English language education, may find it difficult to acquire the intercultural skills promoted by the framework. This may further alienate them from the elite urban students, for whom English proficiency is both more attainable and more valuable in socio-economic terms. As Canagarajah (2005) points out, the promotion of intercultural competence in postcolonial contexts must be carefully managed to avoid reinforcing existing hierarchies of power.

Furthermore, the focus on intercultural competence raises questions about the relationship between local and global identities. The framework's emphasis on global citizenship and intercultural communication risks overshadowing the importance of fostering a strong national

identity, particularly in a country like Bangladesh, where language and identity are deeply intertwined. Therefore, there is a pressing need for a balanced approach that promotes both global competence and respect for local linguistic and cultural identities (Hamid and Honan, 2012). Without careful attention to these dynamics, the curriculum could be seen as promoting a form of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992b), privileging global over local cultures and reinforcing English as the language of power and privilege.

Digital Literacy:

The focus of the NCF 2021 on digital literacy is undeniably forward-thinking, specially in a world where technology plays an increasingly central role in communication and education. The framework's commitment to integrating digital skills into the curriculum reflects the growing recognition of the importance of preparing students for a digitalised global economy (Warschauer, 2006). However, the practicalities of implementing this digital literacy in Bangladesh are fraught with challenges.

While the framework promotes digital literacy, it does not fully account for the significant digital divide that exists in the country. Many schools, particularly in rural areas, lack the necessary infrastructure, such as computers, internet access, and educational technology, to effectively teach digital literacy. Additionally, teachers often lack the training to integrate technology into their classrooms, and many are unfamiliar with the pedagogical strategies necessary to teach digital literacy alongside language skills (Haider and Chowdhury, 2012). As a result, the emphasis of the framework on digital literacy, while well-intentioned, risks widening the gap between students who have access to technology and those who do not, thereby intensifying existing educational inequalities.

Post-Method Pedagogy: Flexibility or Fragmentation?

The NCF 2021's endorsement of post-method pedagogy reflects an important shift toward teacher autonomy and flexibility, allowing educators to adapt their teaching strategies to the specific needs of their students (Kumaravadivelu, 2001). This move away from a one-size-fits-all approach to language teaching is particularly relevant in Bangladesh, where classrooms are diverse and students come from varied linguistic, socio-economic, and cultural backgrounds. However, the

success of post-method pedagogy is contingent upon the capacity of teachers to make informed, pedagogically sound decisions about how to implement it.

In the Bangladeshi context, where many teachers have been trained in traditional, method-based approaches, the shift to post-method pedagogy may be difficult to implement effectively. Without sufficient professional development and support, there is a risk that teachers will revert to familiar, teacher-centered methods, rather than embracing the learner-centered, flexible approaches that post-method pedagogy requires (Lamb, 2008). Moreover, the framework's reliance on teacher autonomy assumes a level of professional expertise and reflexivity that many teachers, particularly in rural and under-resourced areas, may not possess. This raises questions about whether the flexibility offered by the framework could lead to fragmentation in the quality and consistency of English language instruction across the country.

Assessment: Rhetoric or Reality?

The innovative assessment practices of NCF 2021, including project-based assessments and digital portfolios, represent a significant departure from the traditional exam-based assessment methods that have long dominated the Bangladeshi education system (Black and Wiliam, 1998). While these new approaches to assessment are in line with competency-based education and offer a more holistic view of student achievement, they also pose practical challenges in a context where standardised exams such as SSC and HSC are still the primary mode of evaluation.

In Bangladesh, where the education system is deeply entrenched in a culture of high-stakes exams, the shift toward formative, continuous assessment may face significant resistance from both teachers and students. Many teachers are not trained in the use of alternative assessment methods, and students, particularly those preparing for national exams, may be reluctant to embrace project-based assessments that are perceived as less rigorous or less important (Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). Furthermore, the lack of resources in many schools makes it difficult to implement these innovative assessment methods on a large scale, raising concerns about whether the ambitious goals of the framework can be realised in practice.

While the NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021) for English is undoubtedly progressive, promoting key global competencies such as intercultural communication, digital literacy, and post-method pedagogy, its successful implementation in Bangladesh is far from guaranteed. The framework's ambitious goals

are tempered by the realities of a system that is still deeply rooted in traditional, exam-oriented practices, and where resources and teacher training are often lacking. Without significant investment in infrastructure, professional development, and educational reform, the NCF 2021 risks becoming another well-intentioned but ultimately aspirational policy document.

5.9 A Comparative Analysis of NCE 2012 and NCF 2021:

Points of Similarity:

The NCE 2012 and NCF 2021 stress Communicative Language Teaching to build linguistic macro-skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing. For functional and practical language use, both programmes emphasise developing these skills in meaningful, real-life circumstances. This approach emphasises communicative and practical language teaching and prepares students to utilise English confidently and successfully in their daily lives. Below are the points of similarities:

Skills development: One notable similarity between the two curricula is their emphasis on education that is centred around the development of practical skills. The 2012 curriculum places emphasis on cultivating proficiency in all four language skills, intending to promote efficient communication in authentic contexts. The 2021 curriculum retains its emphasis on these areas but expands by incorporating a wider array of skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving. This comprehensive approach guarantees that students possess not only a high level of proficiency in language usage but also the necessary cognitive and communicative abilities required in the contemporary environment.

Fluency and accuracy: Both language learning curricula emphasise linguistic accuracy and appropriacy in a holistic approach. The 2012 curriculum strives to generate proficient users of English who can communicate effectively, while the 2021 curriculum adds intercultural competence, digital literacy, and other skills. This comprehensive approach prepares students for local and global communication in line with modern educational trends.

Points of Difference:

However, there are notable disparities between the two curricula. The main emphasis of the 2012 curriculum is on implementing the CLT approach and providing education that focuses on

developing skills, all within the specific context of Bangladesh. By contrast, the 2021 curriculum incorporates a broader range of worldwide patterns in English Language Teaching. This integration guarantees that students can compete on a global scale and are well-prepared for international communication. The main points of departure are as follows:

Incorporation of ICC: A significant distinction is the emphasis on Intercultural Communicative Competence in the 2021 curriculum. Although the 2012 curriculum recognised cultural aspects, it did not specifically give priority to ICC. The 2021 curriculum prioritises the development of ICC skills, equipping students with the ability to interact with different cultures and communicate effectively on a global scale. This emphasis corresponds with worldwide patterns and underscores the importance of cultural consciousness and sensitivity in the process of acquiring language skills. Byram (1997) highlights the importance of intercultural competence for effective communication in a globalised world. Canagarajah (2005) also emphasises the need for intercultural awareness in language teaching to prepare students for global interactions. Hamid and Honan (2012) stress the importance of integrating intercultural competence in Bangladeshi ELT to ensure students are globally competent communicators.

Promotion of digital literacy: The 2021 curriculum also includes digital literacy, acknowledging its vital role in contemporary communication. In contrast to the 2012 curriculum, which placed little emphasis on digital literacy, the 2021 curriculum guarantees that students attain a high level of competence in utilising technology for language acquisition and communication. The focus on digital skills is crucial in equipping learners to excel in a technology-driven society. Warschauer (2006) emphasises the necessity of digital literacy in modern education to prepare students for participation in the digital world. Chowdhury and Haider (2012) also highlight the increasing importance of digital literacy in the Bangladeshi educational context, arguing that it is essential for preparing students for future challenges.

Innovative assessment practices: Assessment practices are another domain of divergence. The 2012 curriculum did not get out of conventional assessment techniques, which frequently proved insufficient for assessing the desired competencies. However, the 2021 curriculum suggests novel evaluation techniques, including project-based exams, digital portfolios, and reflective journals. These methodologies are in line with the competency-based approach and offer a more thorough assessment of student competencies.

Prioritisation of personal and cultural identity: The 2021 curriculum prioritises culture and personal identity to a larger extent. It encourages students to investigate and value their 'cultural awareness' (NCTB, 2021, p. 42) while actively involving themselves with various perspectives. This focus fosters a 'sense of identity' (NCTB, 2021, p. 42) and global citizenship, preparing students to navigate the complexities of the modern world. Byram (2008) argues that language education should promote intercultural understanding and respect for cultural diversity.

To conclude, whereas both the 2012 and 2021 curricula commit to teaching language practically and communicatively, the 2021 curriculum expands on this basis by integrating a broader range of global trends and skills.

5.10 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have provided an in-depth exploration of the NCE 2012 to gain the features of the government policy on the CLT approach in relation to English language teaching and learning in the context of Bangladesh. It is evident that the curriculum takes significant strides towards modernising and optimising language education, echoing global shifts in pedagogical thought. The push towards a more communicative approach, the emphasis on student collaboration, and the recognition of the importance of a conducive classroom climate stand out as notable features. However, while the NCE 2012 showcases progression, it also reveals certain tensions and contradictions. The role of grammar, for instance, remains a point of contention, with the curriculum seeming to waver between traditional, form-focused methods and more contemporary, communicative approaches. Similarly, while there is a clear push for active learner participation and collaboration, the guidelines could benefit from clearer directives to ensure effective and uniform implementation across classrooms. Additionally, the chapter underscores the central role of the teacher in the successful implementation of the curriculum. Whether it is the flexibility they are afforded in choosing pedagogical methods, or the recognition of their pivotal position as 'change implementation agents', it is clear that the success of the NCE 2012 hinges on empowering and equipping teachers adequately.

The diverse recommendations in terms of pedagogical approach, content, assessment, learner collaboration, classroom climate, and grammar teaching highlight the comprehensive nature NCE 2012. However, the success of the curriculum will ultimately depend on its translation into tangible

classroom practices. It is not just about what the curriculum proposes, but how these proposals are adapted, adopted, and actualised in real classroom scenarios. At the end of this chapter, I incorporated a critical review and analysis of the NCF 2021 (NCTB, 2021) for English where I made a comparative analysis of the two curricula (2012 and 2021) for a better understanding of the data analysed in the next three chapters (**Chapter 6-8**). In the next chapter (**Chapter 6**), I will explore the answer to my 2nd research question which investigates the participants' conceptualisations of the importance of English language education in Bangladesh, their ideas and perceptions of the educational policymaking and curriculum development process, and their understandings and feelings about the external influences on the policy-making process.

Chapter 6: Teachers' Views on Government Policy and Curriculum Development

6.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have presented a review and analysis of the NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012) policy document. This chapter will explore the answer to the 2nd research question which investigates the participants' conceptualisations of the importance of English language education in Bangladesh, their ideas and perceptions of the educational policy-making and curriculum development process, and their understandings and feelings about the external influences on the policy-making process. To weave my analysis, I have elicited three central themes from my data which are presented in sections 6.1, 6.2, and 6.3.

6.1 EFL teachers' ideas about the importance and usefulness of ELT

In examining the qualitative data from my participant interviews, a prominent theme that emerges is the perceived importance and usefulness of English language teaching in Bangladesh, specifically through the CLT approach. The teachers' perspectives, as shown in the quotes, seem to converge on the rationale behind the adoption of CLT and the potential benefits that it could have for individuals and the broader socio-economic fabric of the country. EFL Teacher Rafiq stated:

> *The government is trying to develop English skills of young learners mainly because our country is overpopulated, we have limited number of job sectors and so we need to qualify for international job market. English is a global language and without English we can't make economic development as a nation. That's why the govt is trying to turn the Bangladeshi citizens into world citizens through developing their English language skills. Moreover, to keep pace with the age of high technology we need English. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)*

Rafiq's perspective presents a comprehensive understanding of the wider implications of the government policy in the context of English language teaching in Bangladesh. His comments reflect

a keen awareness of the socio-economic realities of the country, thereby bringing into focus the rationale behind the government's emphasis on improving English language proficiency. Rafiq starts by identifying the fundamental challenges Bangladesh faces, such as over-population and a limited number of job sectors. This context underpins the nation's need to equip its citizens with globally relevant skills that enhance their competitiveness in the international job market. This recognition underscores his awareness of the pressures and challenges faced by an overpopulated developing nation that necessitate such pedagogical shifts.

In focusing on English as a 'global language', Rafiq is highlighting the universality and importance of English in today's globalised world. His comments suggest that he sees English proficiency as more than just a valuable skill—it is a necessity for socio-economic development. He suggests that without English, Bangladesh's capacity to grow and develop economically may be significantly hampered. This implies an understanding that language competency extends beyond communication to become a critical aspect of economic mobility. Furthermore, Rafiq acknowledges the importance of English in keeping pace with the age of high technology. This highlights his understanding that the English language isn't just crucial for traditional forms of communication and economic participation, but it is also vital in the context of digital literacy and the technology-driven global economy. English, often being the primary language of the internet and technology, is hence seen as a key to unlock these avenues.

Rafiq also posits that the government is trying to "turn Bangladeshi citizens into world citizens" by developing their English language skills. This statement reflects his perception of the government's vision for its citizens—an aspiration to make them globally competitive, versatile, and adaptable to the demands of an increasingly globalised and interconnected world. It could also suggest a belief in the transformative power of education, and specifically language education, in shaping the identities and futures of individuals and the nation at large. The perspectives of Rafiq highlight the alignment between national education policies and global trends in educational reform. The government's emphasis on English language proficiency is part of a larger strategy to enhance human capital and integrate Bangladesh into the global economy, consistent with the findings of Chowdhury and Le Ha (2008) on the role of English language education in national development strategies (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008). The neoliberal perspective on education policy, which views language skills as economic assets, is further supported by Holborow's (2015) critique of the commodification of language skills (Holborow, 2015).

Lastly, Rafiq's comments on the CLT approach suggest that he sees it as a tool to enable the application of English in real-life situations, beyond just exams and classroom activities. This highlights a fundamental shift from traditional, exam-focused language teaching towards a more practical, use-oriented pedagogy. Rafiq's view here emphasises the pragmatic aspect of language learning and reflects the fundamental essence of the CLT approach.

In essence, Rafiq's perspective encapsulates the socio-economic imperatives, global dynamics, and pedagogical shifts driving the adoption of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. His viewpoint offers a compelling illustration of the broader implications and potential impact of English language teaching, both on individual learners and the nation as a whole.

Another EFL teacher Belal from the same school expressed similar views:

> *I don't know much about the government policy. But I understand that the government wants the students of Bangladesh to learn and know English language and to be able to communicate with people of other countries at this time of globalisation. It is obviously for the economic development of the country. As an underdeveloped country, Bangladesh needs skilled workforce to enter both the local and the world job market. And English language skill is a must for this. The government has probably introduced the CLT approach, which is 4 skills-based from this viewpoint, I think. (Belal, EFL Teacher)*

Belal's perspective provides an interesting insight into the perceived role of English language teaching, specifically through the CLT approach, in Bangladesh. While he expresses uncertainty about the exact nature of the government's policy, his comments reflect an instinctive understanding of the broader socio-economic motivations behind the emphasis on English language proficiency. He begins by acknowledging his limited knowledge of the government's policy, demonstrating a level of transparency about his understanding of the macro-level decisions affecting his professional sphere. This humility and self-awareness could potentially reflect the extent to which educational policy is understood and disseminated among practitioners on the ground.

Despite his professed lack of detailed policy knowledge, Belal is able to infer the government's intentions through the broader socio-economic context. His comments show an awareness of the crucial role that English language proficiency plays in the process of globalisation. He understands

that for Bangladesh to make strides in its economic development and to uplift its status as an underdeveloped country, the proficiency in English among its citizens is paramount. His inference suggests a perception of English not merely as a language but as a potent tool for economic advancement and international engagement.

Belal further highlights the need for a proficient labour force in order to effectively address the requirements of both domestic and global employment markets. In doing so, he reiterates the strategic importance of English language skills in the context of employability. This understanding resonates with the broader national agenda to enhance the competitiveness of the country's workforce. His mention of the CLT approach being 4 skills-based reflects his understanding of the comprehensive nature of the pedagogical shift — emphasising listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills for a holistic language learning experience. His perception that the government has introduced the CLT approach to serve these broader goals indicates an understanding of the functional nature of this method. This points to an acknowledgment of the shift from traditional, perhaps more theoretical, methods of language teaching towards a more communicative, practical, and globally relevant approach.

In summary, Belal's perspective demonstrates an intuitive grasp of the broader socio-economic forces shaping the emphasis on English language teaching in Bangladesh. Even though he lacks detailed knowledge of the policy, his insights underscore the perceived value and significance of English proficiency in the globalising world, highlighting its role in economic development, employability, and international engagement.

EFL Teacher Nahid's perspective, while less specific about government policy, provides valuable insight into the perceived need for an evolved pedagogy in response to globalisation, specifically through the adoption of the CLT approach for English language teaching in Bangladesh. She said:

> I don't know exactly what happened, but I personally think, with the advent of globalisation our old curriculum should be changed and modernised—from this stance the govt might take such initiatives for introducing and implementing the CLT approach as it is a bit modern method in English language teaching. I think, there was necessity for change, so the government took that initiative. (Nahid, EFL Teacher)

She starts by expressing uncertainty about the precise government policy or strategy, which could indicate a gap in the communication or understanding of such policies among educators. Despite

this lack of concrete knowledge, Nahid brings in an instinctual understanding of the larger forces at play that may have influenced the shift towards a modern method of English language teaching.

Her identification of the "advent of globalisation" as a catalyst for change in curriculum indicates an awareness of the broader dynamics shaping education policy. Nahid recognises that the traditional curriculum might not meet the needs of a rapidly globalising world, and therefore sees the move to modernise as both reasonable and necessary. This view aligns with an understanding of education as a dynamic and evolving sphere that needs to adapt to changing socio-economic and global trends. Nahid's views reflect the principles of Fullan's educational change theory, which emphasises the need for education systems to be responsive to global economic and social changes (Fullan, 2015b). Her recognition of globalisation as a driving force for curriculum change aligns with the arguments presented by Portnoi (2016), who highlights the impact of globalisation on educational policy reforms (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

The fact that Nahid perceives the CLT approach as a "modern method" reveals her perception of this pedagogical shift as being more attuned to current realities and needs. She identifies it as a newer and potentially more effective strategy in language teaching, which suggests an openness to change and innovation in teaching practices. This reflects a progressive stance that may influence how she implements such an approach in her own teaching. The need to modernise the curriculum in response to globalisation is a recurring theme in the Bangladeshi EFL context. Hamid and Baldauf (2008) discuss the historical development of English language education in Bangladesh and the ongoing reforms aimed at aligning the curriculum with global standards (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). Nahid's recognition of the CLT approach as a "modern method" is consistent with Rahman's (2015) analysis of the government's initiatives to enhance communicative competence through the adoption of CLT.

Furthermore, Nahid's comments suggest a belief in the necessity of change. Her perspective reveals an understanding that in order to prepare students for the demands of a globalised world, teaching methods must be revised and updated. This acceptance of change as a positive and necessary factor could indicate a readiness to embrace and adapt to new educational strategies.

In brief, Nahid's view illustrates a forward-looking approach to teaching English in Bangladesh. While she might not have an in-depth understanding of the specific policy decisions behind the shift to the CLT approach, her views underscore the perceived importance of evolving and modernising teaching methods in response to the globalising world. She sees the move towards a more modern,

communicative teaching approach as a necessary and timely response to these broader trends. Nahid's perspective emphasises the need for educational policies that are responsive to global dynamics and the importance of continuous adaptation to meet the evolving demands of the global economy (Portnoi and LAURA, 2016).

Rafiq's another perspective provides a critical view of the practical implications of adopting the CLT approach in English language teaching in Bangladesh. His insights are valuable in shedding light on how the CLT approach is seen as a vehicle for making English a usable tool in everyday situations. He stated:

> If we talk about the CLT, the govt is focusing on the CLT so that we can use English in our
> real-life situation along with exam and classroom purpose. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)

Rafiq focuses primarily on the practical benefits of the CLT approach. He sees the government's focus on CLT as an attempt to extend the use of English beyond the confines of exams and classrooms. This perspective reflects a departure from traditional, exam-centric teaching methods that may not necessarily equip students with the skills needed for real-life communication. His emphasis on "real-life situations" underlines his understanding of language not merely as an academic subject, but as a vital tool for communication in various social, professional, and practical contexts. Rafiq's emphasis on the practical application of language skills mirrors the fundamental tenets of the CLT approach, which prioritises communicative competence over theoretical knowledge. This aligns with Canale and Swain's (1980) framework of communicative competence, which emphasises the ability to use language effectively and appropriately in real-life situations (Canale and Swain, 1980). The practical application of English in everyday situations is also supported by Graddol (2006), who highlights the increasing importance of English as a global lingua franca in various social and professional contexts (Graddol, 2006). This perspective underscores the need for language education that goes beyond exam preparation to include the development of functional language skills that can be used in diverse real-world scenarios. In the Bangladeshi context, the practical emphasis of the CLT approach is particularly significant. Rahman and Pandian (2018a) discuss the challenges and opportunities of implementing CLT in Bangladesh, noting that a focus on communicative competence can help students become more proficient in using English in practical, everyday situations (Rahman and Pandian, 2018a) This shift towards practical language use is seen as crucial for enhancing the employability and adaptability of Bangladeshi students in a globalised world. Hamid and Baldauf (2008) highlight the historical and socio-political

significance of English in Bangladesh, emphasising its role in socio-economic mobility and access to global opportunities (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). Rafiq's emphasis on the practical benefits of the CLT approach aligns with the government's efforts to modernise the curriculum and improve the communicative competence of students to meet global standards (M. Rahman, 2015).

His viewpoint suggests a recognition of the value of interactive, context-rich learning that can foster students' ability to use English confidently and effectively in their everyday lives. This aligns with the broader goal of language education to enable learners to use the language as a medium of communication. Interestingly, Rafiq's emphasis on real-life applicability also speaks to the wider socio-economic implications. The ability to use English effectively in various situations can enhance an individual's employability and adaptability in a globalised world, where English often serves as a lingua franca. His understanding thus encompasses both the micro-level benefits for learners and the macro-level benefits for the country's workforce.

Moreover, Rafiq's viewpoint suggests that he sees the government's emphasis on the CLT approach as being tied to broader educational and policy goals. While he does not delve into these goals in detail, his comments imply an understanding that the adoption of the CLT approach is part of a strategic effort to enhance the practical English language skills of Bangladeshi students. This perspective aligns with the arguments presented by Chowdhury and Le Ha (2008), who discuss the role of English language education in national development strategies and the influence of global economic forces on language policies. The focus on practical language skills reflects the neoliberal agenda in education, which promotes the development of skills that are economically valuable in a globalised market (Park, 2011; Holborow, 2015). Rafiq's understanding of the strategic importance of the CLT approach also resonates with Steiner-Khamsi's (2004, 2012) analysis of educational policy transfer, which highlights the need for educational reforms that are contextually relevant and responsive to global trends (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). The emphasis on real-life applicability of language skills underscores the alignment between national education policies and global economic demands.

In conclusion, Rafiq's insights underscore the perceived practical benefits of the CLT approach in English language teaching in Bangladesh. His perspective reflects an appreciation of language learning that extends beyond academic contexts, emphasising the importance of communicative competence in real-life situations. His viewpoint suggests an understanding of the critical role of

the English language in equipping students with practical skills for their personal and professional lives in a globalised world.

To conclude, the teachers interviewed in this study highlight the relevance of English language proficiency in economic development, globalisation, and practical communication. They view the adoption of the CLT approach as an effective strategy for improving the English skills of the Bangladeshi population and increasing the competitiveness of the country in a globalised world. Despite a certain degree of ambiguity about the exact government policy, these perspectives reflect a strong awareness of the broader socio-economic and global implications of English language teaching in Bangladesh.

6.2 EFL teachers' views about policy making and curriculum development

The overarching theme across all six interviewees' responses is a sense of disconnection and lack of involvement in the policy making and curriculum development process. Each teacher brings forward their unique perspective on the process, however, there is a clear consensus that secondary EFL teachers do not have direct involvement or say in these processes.

Akram's viewpoint paints a clear picture of secondary EFL teachers' lack of direct involvement in the curriculum development process, suggesting a significant disconnection between policy formulation and ground-level implementation. He stated:

> So far I know, secondary teachers are not directly involved in curriculum development, they have almost no direct contact with the process; they are not asked to do anything about English or general curriculum making. Some senior and experienced teachers sometimes get chance in the committee; I have heard it from other colleagues, but I haven't seen yet. (Akram, EFL teacher)

Akram first states that secondary teachers are not typically part of curriculum development and have minimal, if any, direct contact with the process. This reflects a broader systemic issue where the teachers, who are the primary stakeholders in the implementation of curriculum, are left out of the design process. The implications of this gap could be significant as the teachers' on-ground insights and practical teaching experiences might be missed during curriculum development. This aligns with Fullan's (2016a) argument that effective educational reforms require the active involvement of teachers to ensure that policies are practical and relevant to classroom realities.

Further, Akram indicates that not only are English teachers left out, but the views of secondary level teachers of other subjects are also not sought during curriculum design. This highlights an across-the-board disconnect in the educational system, suggesting a top-down approach where the design process is distanced from those who will use the curriculum in real classroom scenarios. It raises questions about whether the curriculum designed this way effectively addresses the realities and needs of the classroom and the students. This critique is supported by Coburn's (2005) findings that top-down policy approaches often fail to meet the practical needs of teachers and students due to a lack of teacher input. Interestingly, Akram mentions that some senior and experienced teachers might occasionally have opportunities to be involved in committees that contribute to curriculum design. However, this appears to be based more on hearsay among colleagues rather than a formalised, transparent process. The fact that he hasn't personally witnessed such involvement underlines the sense of disconnection and potentially hints at a lack of communication and transparency in the system. Ali (2010) discusses similar issues in the Bangladeshi context, noting that the exclusion of teachers from policy-making processes can lead to ineffective educational reforms.

Overall, Akram's perspective articulates a strong sense of disconnect between the practitioners who implement the curriculum and the policymakers who design it. He implies a call for a more inclusive, collaborative approach to curriculum design — one that values the practical insights and experiences of teachers. His viewpoint suggests a need for educational systems to bridge this gap and foster active engagement between teachers and curriculum developers to ensure the designed curriculum effectively aligns with classroom realities. This aligns with Steiner-Khamsi's (2004) argument for participatory policy-making processes that involve local stakeholders to enhance the relevance and effectiveness of educational reforms.

When we hear Akram's voice, there is a palpable sense of resignation that echoes throughout his words. He speaks of a world where secondary teachers, including himself, are left in the shadows of curriculum development. This is the reality that Akram experiences - the feeling of being an implementer of policies and curriculum, but not a contributor. There is a genuine sorrow in his voice when he confirms that teachers' views, their insights and expertise, are rarely if ever, sought during curriculum design. The sentiment is not just about feeling left out; it is about the wasted potential for creating a more effective and responsive curriculum, one that could be enriched by the first-hand experiences of teachers. This frustration is echoed in the works of Rahman and Pandian

(2018a), who highlight the need for teacher involvement in curriculum development to ensure the successful implementation of educational reforms.

His words reveal more than just a professional concern. There is a personal element to it, a deep-seated desire to be heard and contribute to the system that he is part of. Akram's assertion that teachers are not asked to comment or contribute to the curriculum development process is an indictment of the way things are done. It highlights an educational landscape that fails to tap into the collective wisdom and experience of its frontline workers - the teachers. This aligns with the arguments presented by Chowdhury and Le Ha (2008), who emphasise the importance of including teachers in policy-making processes to ensure that educational policies are both effective and contextually relevant.

As the youngest teacher in the group, Meem brings a fresh viewpoint to the conversation. She expresses her observations candidly, pointing out the stark disconnect between policy formulation and the reality of teaching English at the secondary level in Bangladesh. Her claim that secondary EFL teachers are not asked for their opinions on policy or curriculum-related issues underscores the disengagement between the decision-making authorities and teachers. This observation reveals a top-down approach where teachers are merely seen as implementers of the curriculum rather than contributors to its development. She said:

> *You know, I am the youngest English teacher at this school. I joined here only 5 years back. From my short-term experience I can tell you, secondary EFL teachers are not asked for giving their opinions about any policy or curriculum related issues. I didn't see what happened in 2012 as I was a student then. But I know a little bit about the latest curriculum (proposed) of 2020 from newspaper. No opinions of the secondary EFL teachers have not been sought formally or informally. We, the EFL teachers, are trying to follow the orders of the higher authority. We are not related to the development of the English curriculum. (Meem, EFL teacher)*

Meem's comments are specially poignant when she mentions that she was not part of the field during the significant curriculum change of 2012 and has only gleaned information about the latest curriculum from newspapers. This highlights an existing communication gap, with teachers finding out about major shifts in educational policy through external sources rather than through direct engagement from the policymakers. Importantly, her position as a relatively new teacher lends weight to her viewpoint. She represents a new generation of educators who may be more acutely

aware of the necessity for inclusivity and the potential value of their contributions. Her assertion that secondary EFL teachers "are trying to follow the orders of the higher authority" clearly portrays a sense of obligation on the part of teachers, but it also hints at a longing for participation in the policy-making process.

Despite her limited experience, Meem's words underscore the systemic issues prevalent in the educational system. Her perspective suggests that the disconnect between policy makers and teachers is not just confined to more seasoned teachers like Akram but is also felt keenly by those who are new to the profession. This disconnection is further emphasised by Ali (2010), who notes that the exclusion of teachers from policy-making processes in Bangladesh can lead to ineffective and poorly implemented educational reforms.

Listening to Meem, the youngest English teacher in her school, I can sense a fresh energy tempered by a touch of frustration and resignation. She has been teaching for only five years, yet she has already become keenly aware of the disconnect between the policy-making processes and the classroom realities. Her voice carries a youthful idealism tinged with disappointment as she talks about the unacknowledged potential of teachers in contributing to policy and curriculum development.

Meem speaks from her own lived experience, acknowledging that secondary EFL teachers are simply not consulted when it comes to significant curriculum or policy changes. This resonates as a sincere lament, and there is a disheartening sense of not being heard, of having insight to offer but no platform to share it. In her narrative, there is a poignant moment where she recalls learning about the 2020 curriculum updates from a newspaper rather than any official channel. This highlights the lack of direct communication and engagement from policymakers, a gap that Steiner-Khamsi (2012) argues must be bridged for educational reforms to be effective.

Despite her relative inexperience, Meem's voice carries a resounding message: teachers, despite being on the frontlines of education, often feel sidelined in the decision-making processes. The fact that this is expressed by a newer teacher suggests that these feelings are not just confined to more seasoned educators. It also indicates a desire for change among the younger generation of teachers, a craving for involvement and recognition that could well shape the future of education in Bangladesh. Through Meem's account, we are presented with a fresh perspective, reflecting the feelings of a new generation of teachers yearning for involvement, recognition, and a meaningful voice in the development of the curricula they are expected to implement.

Rafiq offers an intriguing contrast to the views expressed by Akram and Meem. His comments reveal a sense of awareness about some degree of inclusivity in the policy-making process, as he mentions the formation of a national curriculum committee which purportedly sought opinions from secondary level teachers via a country-wide survey. He stated:

> *We heard that a national curriculum committee was formed and they sought opinions from secondary level teachers through survey at the field level throughout the country. But I don't know more than this. (Rafiq, EFL teacher)*

Rafiq's insight suggests that while attempts might be made to include secondary EFL teachers in the curriculum development process, these efforts are not being adequately communicated or effectively implemented. The vagueness of his knowledge regarding this initiative underscores the communication gap that exists between policy-making entities and the teaching workforce on the ground. His account, therefore, points to a persisting disconnect between secondary EFL teachers and the policy-making bodies. While there might be attempts to bridge this gap, they seem inadequate and superficial from his perspective. This adds another dimension to our understanding of teachers' perceptions of their role (or lack thereof) in policy-making and curriculum development.

Rafiq's comments introduce a thread of ambiguity and uncertainty that brings a unique shade to the conversation. He seems to straddle a line between hope and skepticism, indicating a cautious optimism that might stem from his experience in the field. His statement about the formation of a national curriculum committee offers a glimpse of potential inclusion. However, his hesitancy to affirm the reality and effectiveness of this initiative creates an undercurrent of doubt. It is almost as if he wants to believe in this outreach, but his experience has left him wary. This mix of guarded optimism and scepticism is a telling reflection of how policy implementation and teacher engagement are perceived at the ground level.

When Rafiq admits, "But I don't know more than this," the sentiment of feeling left out is palpable. There is a sense of him reaching out for information, eager to contribute, yet being met with silence or, at best, half answers. This paints a picture of a teacher who is willing and eager to participate in the curriculum development process, but feels thwarted by a lack of clear communication.

Through Rafiq's account, we sense the emotional undercurrents of teachers who are trying to navigate the system – seeking clarity, striving to contribute, but feeling sidelined due to inadequate

communication and superficial engagement efforts. Rafiq's guarded optimism and palpable frustration underscore the emotional toll of this disconnect, providing a more nuanced view of the complex relationship between secondary EFL teachers and the policy-making bodies in Bangladesh.

Another EFL Teacher Didar said:

> There is no system or example of seeking EFL teachers' views when the higher authority develops or changes any curriculum in Bangladesh. I didn't see any such survey at the secondary level in my 13 years' teaching career. I don't know whether or not they have consulted with the English teachers. (Didar, EFL teacher)
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Didar's comments offer a stark look at the disconnect between the policy-making process and teachers at the grassroots level. He presents a picture of the current situation where there is virtually no system in place for seeking EFL teachers' views when developing or modifying any curriculum. This perspective seems rooted in his 13-year teaching career where he has seen no evidence of such teacher consultation. The absence of any such practice in over a decade of service sends a strong message about the lack of participatory practices in the education system.

Didar's statement, "I didn't see any such survey at the secondary level in my 13 years' teaching career," presents a disturbing reality of EFL teachers' alienation from policy and curriculum development processes. He subtly raises the question of whether this lack of consultation is due to a belief that teachers lack the expertise to contribute to curriculum development or is it simply a reflection of bureaucratic inertia. Furthermore, when Didar asserts, "I don't know whether or not they have consulted with the English teachers," it reveals a distinct lack of transparency in policy-making processes. This reflects Coburn's (2005) findings that top-down policy approaches often fail to engage teachers, leading to ineffective implementation due to the exclusion of practical classroom insights.

In sum, Didar's account offers a bleak view of the current state of EFL teacher inclusion in policy-making and curriculum development. The frustration borne out of years of perceived disregard is palpable in his words. His perspective adds a crucial dimension to the collective narrative, reinforcing the sense of exclusion and communication gap felt by teachers in Bangladesh's secondary education system.

Didar's statements emanate an air of resignation, suggesting a deep-seated frustration and disconnection from the policy-making process. His comments subtly reflect a sense of feeling overlooked, perhaps even undervalued. The years he has spent in his teaching career seem to have cemented a belief in him that teachers, particularly at the secondary level, are not considered crucial stakeholders in the formation or modification of curriculum. His account, therefore, humanises the bureaucratic shortcomings and lack of inclusivity in the policy-making process. His sentiment underscores the emotional toll of feeling sidelined, echoing a silent plea for respect, recognition, and inclusion.

In a similar way, Belal offers a perspective grounded in the reality of working at the grassroot level where he perceives no opportunity for teachers to express their views during the policy-making and curriculum development process. He said:

> *We are working at the grassroot level, we don't have any opportunity to express our views in this process. I have never seen such things so far. Yes, teachers from higher level, I mean, university teachers can express their opinions but not secondary level teachers. I think it would have been very good if the secondary teachers were there, they could have told what they see and face and how they feel while working at the field level. But there is no such chance for them. (Belal, EFL Teacher)*

His statement, "We don't have any opportunity to express our views in this process," underscores a palpable sense of exclusion, and points to a stark disconnection between policy makers and the teachers who are expected to implement their decisions. His account further highlights the existence of a hierarchical divide within the education system. The remark, "Yes, teachers from higher level, I mean, university teachers can express their opinions but not secondary level teachers," shines a light on the differential treatment accorded to teachers based on their position in the educational hierarchy. This distinction implies a lack of trust or faith in the expertise and experience of secondary teachers.

Belal's narrative hints at a missed opportunity in the form of teachers' experiential knowledge. He asserts, "I think it would have been very good if the secondary teachers were there, they could have told what they see and face and how they feel while working at the field level." This statement underscores the valuable insights that could be harnessed from teachers who work at the grassroots level, dealing with real-life classroom situations every day.

Belal's account, therefore, lends weight to the perception of a deep-seated divide within the education system, where secondary EFL teachers feel excluded from the curriculum development and policy-making process. His narrative conveys a strong sense of frustration borne out of this perceived marginalization and the inability to contribute to the decisions that directly impact their teaching practices. His assertion that secondary teachers could provide valuable input if included in the decision-making process highlights a critical point—how the hierarchical structure of the system fails to utilise the wealth of knowledge possessed by those who navigate the practicalities of classroom teaching every day. His critique subtly underlines a systematic failure, a missed opportunity to enhance educational policies through the inclusion of frontline insights.

Emotionally, Belal's narrative surfaces a sense of longing—to be heard, to contribute, to be seen as more than just the implementer of top-down policies. It underscores the emotional toll of feeling overlooked, underappreciated, and distanced from decisions that significantly impact their everyday teaching practices.

EFL Teacher Nahid stated:

> *To be honest, we know little about how policies are made or curriculum is developed. Because we haven't yet seen any circular or govt directives or papers so far in our school about how curriculum is developed, even it is not discussed in any training session. However, about curriculum development I have known from my own masters course. There was a course named curriculum development. That was my only opportunity for getting the idea. (Nahid, EFL Teacher)*

Nahid's statement also appears to convey a fundamental disconnect between the policy-making level and the implementation level in the context of EFL teaching in Bangladesh. Her declaration, "To be honest, we know little about how policies are made or curriculum is developed," reveals a profound lack of information and understanding about these key aspects of the education system amongst teachers. Further, her assertion that "we haven't yet seen any circular or govt directives or papers so far in our school about how curriculum is developed, even it is not discussed in any training session," implies a lack of transparency and communication within the system. It suggests that teachers are largely kept in the dark about important decisions that will significantly impact their professional responsibilities and duties. Interestingly, Nahid's awareness of curriculum development comes from an external source, her master's course, rather than from her role as an EFL teacher. Her comment,

"There was a course named curriculum development. That was my only opportunity for getting the idea," indicates that the education system itself is not providing sufficient opportunities for teachers to learn about and contribute to the curriculum development process. This reflects Hamid's (2011)critique of the Bangladeshi education system, which often lacks comprehensive professional development opportunities for teachers, particularly in areas related to curriculum development.

Nahid's perspective, therefore, suggests a top-down approach in policy-making and curriculum development in Bangladesh, where teachers are expected to implement policies and teach curriculum without being involved in, or fully understanding, their development process. It points to a perceived lack of inclusivity and communication within the system that could potentially lead to suboptimal implementation of policies and curriculums at the classroom level.

Nahid's account highlights a systemic deficiency — a lack of transparency and inclusivity. Her narrative implies a critique of the system's approach to policy-making and curriculum development, one that marginalises the very people tasked with the implementation of those policies and curriculums. Additionally, the fact that Nahid's only understanding of curriculum development came from a master's course, rather than through her experience as an EFL teacher, is critical. This implies a concerning absence of professional development opportunities related to curriculum development within the system itself.

In conclusion, Nahid's perspective portrays a stark picture of EFL teachers feeling excluded, uninformed, and undervalued within the education system. It not only captures the teachers' emotional discontent but also critically challenges the system's top-down approach and its potential implications for effective teaching.

6.3 EFL Teachers' Views about External Influence on Policy and Curriculum Reform

In examining Akram's perspective in detail, transcribed data show that he perceives a differentiated, yet cooperative relationship between local educational governance and international organisations in shaping English language education in Bangladesh. He said:

> Yes, these international organisations are playing role in developing our education
> system in general. ADB and World Bank are funding many projects. But I don't think

they influence us in our education policy and curriculum making. Our national level education experts on the curriculum committee do these activities. The foreign organisations are just funding us. However, we get lots of help from the British Council about our English language education, say for example, it's teacher training, workshop, meeting etc. (Akram, EFL teacher)

Akram fundamentally acknowledges the role of international agencies such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank in supporting Bangladesh's education sector through funding. Nevertheless, he draws a clear line between the provision of financial support and direct influence on educational policy and curriculum making, reserving the latter for national educational experts. This reflects his confidence in the local education system's authority and expertise in determining its educational policies and curriculum.

It is noteworthy that Akram perceives the British Council's involvement differently. Rather than merely a source of funding, Akram recognises the British Council as an active player in the development of English language education in Bangladesh, particularly through its role in teacher training, workshops, and meetings. This perceived role aligns with what Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) highlights as capacity building, emphasising the importance of teacher training and professional development in effective curriculum implementation and educational reforms.

Furthermore, Akram's perspective reflects an awareness of the symbiotic relationship that can exist between national education systems and international bodies. While foreign aid supports economic resources, capacity building initiatives like those provided by the British Council contribute to the development of human resources within the educational sector.

Akram's nuanced understanding thus underscores the intersection of local and global forces in the field of education. His perspective signifies the importance of maintaining national autonomy in policy and curriculum development, while also recognising the crucial role of international cooperation in capacity building and funding. It suggests a recognition of the multifaceted nature of global-local dynamics in educational reforms, where international bodies are seen as allies and resources rather than controllers of national education agendas. A deeper exploration of such perspectives could provide valuable insights for understanding the interplay of global forces in local educational contexts.

EFL teacher Meem's perspective on the influence of international bodies on Bangladesh's English language education policy and curriculum reforms offers an intricate understanding of the relationship between financial aid, policy influence, and capacity-building efforts. She stated:

> ADB and World Bank are frequently financing our education sector. Even at present, the SEDP project is going on which is financed by ADB, World Bank and assisted by British Council. So, I think the British Council is somehow linked with our English language education. (Meem, EFL teacher)

Firstly, Meem acknowledges the financial support of the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and World Bank in Bangladesh's education sector, mirroring Akram's observation. She makes specific reference to the SEDP project, thereby demonstrating awareness of the role these institutions play in broader educational initiatives. This awareness is in line with the international discourse on the role of funding bodies like ADB and World Bank, which often contribute to educational infrastructure and resources in developing countries (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a; Adhikary and Lingard, 2019).

However, Meem's perspective diverges from Akram's as she seems to imply a connection between the financial support provided by these organisations and influence on education policy, particularly with regard to English language teaching. Though she does not explicitly assert the extent of this influence, her linkage of these bodies to policy development represents a critical perspective on the power dynamics in educational policy-making. This is reflective of Rizvi and Lingard (2009a) examination of the nuanced influence of international funding bodies on national educational agendas.

Additionally, Meem's understanding of the role of the British Council aligns with Akram's view that this body has a more active role in Bangladesh's English language education sector. However, unlike Akram, she does not differentiate between the roles of the British Council and the financial donors. Her view seems to suggest a continuum of influence, where financial contributions and capacity building efforts converge to shape the educational landscape. This perspective aligns with the broader scholarship on international cooperation in education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a), and underscores the blurred boundaries between funding, capacity building, and policy influence.

In conclusion, Meem's viewpoint offers a complex understanding of the global-local dynamics in the English language education of Bangladesh. This nuanced understanding can provide a more comprehensive perspective on the role of international bodies in educational reform, informing further research and policy dialogue.

Rafiq's perspective on the influence of international organisations on Bangladesh's English language education policy and curriculum development provides a compelling view on the role of capacity building initiatives and the weight of international references in local educational contexts. He said:

> *From my senior colleagues, I have heard that British Council plays an important role in our English curriculum reform. They have told me that they attended the training named 'Module 6 to 8' arranged by the British Council. I have also got references of DFID and British Council in our B.Ed training materials. So, I think British Council and DFID have contributed to our CLT-based curriculum development. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)*

Rafiq makes a point to highlight the British Council's active involvement in Bangladesh's English language education, referring specifically to training and professional development initiatives. This narrative draws on Fullan (2015a) concept of capacity building, emphasising the importance of professional development in curriculum implementation. The emphasis placed on 'Module 6 to 8' training reinforces the tangible impact of such initiatives in shaping teachers' pedagogical practices and aligns with research emphasising the crucial role of teacher training in effective educational reform.

Moreover, Rafiq notes the presence of references to the British Council and the Department for International Development (DFID) in B.Ed training materials. This highlights the intertextuality of curriculum documents and the power of referenced knowledge, thereby echoing the ideas of curriculum theorists like Apple & Apple (2004), who emphasise the importance of examining whose knowledge is privileged in curriculum materials. Rafiq's observation suggests a tacit acceptance of the expertise of these international bodies in English language teaching, leading to an assumed influence on curriculum reform even in the absence of direct involvement. However, Rafiq does not seem to view this influence negatively, but as part of the global-local interplay in education. This is indicative of the phenomenon referred to as 'glocalization' (Robertson and others, 1995), where global ideas are adapted to local contexts.

Rafiq's perspective thus emphasises the multifaceted roles of international bodies in shaping local education, from the provision of professional development opportunities to the intangible influence of international references in curriculum materials. This complex view can contribute significantly to further research on global-local dynamics in education, offering an understanding of international influence that extends beyond the financial domain.

EFL teacher Didar's viewpoint on the involvement of external agencies in Bangladesh's English language education policy and curriculum reforms provides a balanced insight into the nature of foreign participation and its perceived effects on the ground. He stated:

> *The British Council is linked to our English language education development. But we generally can see this when we attend training sessions, these trainings are once or twice a year only. I know a bit about ADB and World Bank. These two international organisations are giving us fund to develop the secondary education sector. But they are not directly influencing our English curriculum development, I guess. The government has taken decision for modernising the curriculum. That's the case. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

Didar acknowledges the financial support provided by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, mirroring the observations of previous interviewees, Akram and Meem. He is also cognizant of the involvement of the British Council in the English language education development, noting its occasional contributions to professional training sessions. This observation emphasises the value of professional development in curriculum implementation, aligning with the findings of various educational studies that highlight the importance of teacher training for educational reform (Fullan, 2016a). Despite this acknowledgement, Didar is cautious about attributing direct influence over English curriculum development to these international entities. This perspective reflects an understanding of the relationship between international funding bodies and national policy-making. This viewpoint echoes the discourse around international funding in education, where the support does not necessarily imply direct control over the pedagogical processes and curriculum development (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a).

Interestingly, Didar highlights the role of the government in spearheading modernization efforts in the curriculum, a factor less emphasised by the other participants. His emphasis on the government's agency underscores the interplay of local and global forces in shaping educational policies and reforms. He recognises the role of the government as an active agent in appropriating international resources for local needs, thereby stressing the complex dynamics of glocalization in

the educational sector. This aligns with Steiner-Khamsi's (2014) argument that national governments often strategically navigate global influences to serve local educational needs.

To conclude, Didar's perspective offers a balanced view of international involvement in Bangladesh's English language education. His acknowledgement of the roles played by external bodies, alongside the active role of the government, emphasises the intricate dynamics of power, resource, and influence at play in the field of education. This understanding provides a multifaceted insight into the global-local interplay in educational reforms, contributing to a more comprehensive narrative of international involvement in local education. This view aligns with the broader literature on the impacts of globalisation on national education policies, highlighting the need for local adaptation of global educational trends (Graddol, 2006; Hamid, 2016; Rahman and Pandian, 2018a).

Belal's perspective presents a deep understanding of the influence of international organisations on Bangladesh's English language curriculum and policy reform. His viewpoint reveals key aspects of global-local interaction, external aid, and the role of teacher perceptions in the interpretation of these dynamics. He said:

> *So far I know, they donate fund for our education. But I don't know whether or not they dictate about our English language curriculum or the main curriculum. And the British Council has been helping in our English education for a long time, not only in secondary sector but in primary education sector also. They are involved in our English language education sector. (Belal, EFL teacher)*

Belal acknowledges the financial contributions made by international bodies like the ADB and World Bank to Bangladesh's educational sector, reflecting a broad consensus among interview participants about the role of these organisations as financial donors. However, he presents a careful distinction between providing monetary aid and dictating educational policy, implying that while external funds might support educational endeavors, they do not necessarily control or dictate the policy-making process.

Belal also recognises the British Council's longstanding involvement in English language education in Bangladesh. He emphasises that their involvement is not restricted to the secondary level, but extends to the primary education sector as well. This indicates his view of the pervasive influence

of the British Council across various educational stages, and further elucidates the depth of its involvement in shaping English language education in the country.

Despite acknowledging these external influences, Belal remains hesitant about assigning them a definitive role in curriculum development. This reflects an awareness of the complex, multi-dimensional factors influencing educational reforms, and signifies a nuanced understanding of the global-local interplay in educational contexts.

In summary, Belal's perspective adds significant depth to the discourse on the influence of external bodies on educational policy and curriculum reforms. His views highlight the complexity of these influences, acknowledging the role of financial aid and international assistance, while preserving the idea of local control and adaptability in the face of global forces. This view broadens the analysis by reflecting on the intricate dynamics of power, resources, and influence in the realm of education.

EFL Teacher Nahid's perspective offers a thoughtful, yet speculative, insight into the influences of foreign entities on educational policies and curriculum reforms in Bangladesh, bringing attention to both direct and indirect influences of these bodies. She stated:

> *Yes, but I think there might be an at least indirect influence of foreign donors and countries who are the development partners of Bangladesh. And you know, we always try to follow syllabus, curriculum, textbook, education system etc. of UK and USA in most cases because they are developed countries. It may be a cause for our curriculum reform, I'm not sure. (Nahid, EFL teacher)*

She admits to the potential influences of foreign donors and development partners of Bangladesh, but cautiously uses the term "indirect influence," pointing to the complex and multifaceted nature of the interaction between these international entities and national educational policies. This aligns with the discourse in academic literature, where it is recognised that the influence of external agencies, while significant, is often indirect, operating through financial aid, capacity-building initiatives, or policy advisories rather than explicit control over curriculum development (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a).

Nahid further delves into the psychological aspect of influence, identifying a predisposition towards the education systems of developed countries such as the UK and the USA. This observation is significant and resonates with the concept of educational transfer or policy borrowing, a widely recognised phenomenon where practices and policies are adopted from other educational systems,

often those perceived as more successful or advanced (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004). This sentiment suggests a conscious or unconscious inclination to align with the perceived 'global standard', which could influence the shaping of the curriculum reform even without explicit directives from foreign bodies. This inclination is reflective of Phillipson's (1992a) 'center-periphery' dichotomy in global language education, where practices from developed countries (the center) are often adopted by developing countries (the periphery).

Despite this, Nahid expresses uncertainty about the specifics of how these influences play out. This reflects the general disconnection between the grassroots-level educators and the higher-level policy-making processes, reinforcing the need for better transparency and communication in policy formulation and implementation.

In summary, Nahid's perspective presents a complex picture of the influences of external entities on educational reform in Bangladesh. It reinforces the intricacy of this influence, pointing to the indirect pathways of influence and the psychological predisposition towards educational practices of developed countries. Simultaneously, it emphasises the need for greater involvement of local educators in policy processes, thereby enriching our understanding of the interplay between global influences and local realities in the context of English language education in Bangladesh.

Nahid's perspectives, while carefully analytical, seem to bear an undertone of subtle frustration and perhaps, a sense of resignation. Her cautious speculation about the potential indirect influence of foreign donors and development partners illuminates not just the complexities of policy and curriculum influences, but also the emotional landscape of teachers who are in the trenches, delivering these policies and curricula, yet feel distanced from their formulation.

Nahid's cautious speculation, hedged with the tentative "I think," hints at a perceived gap in the information flow between policy makers and educators. This sense of uncertainty ("I'm not sure"), paired with her recognition of an implicit inclination towards the educational practices of developed countries, could suggest a critical viewpoint on the lack of agency teachers experience in shaping educational policies that they are expected to implement.

Her observation that "we always try to follow syllabus, curriculum, textbook, education system etc. of the UK and the USA in most cases because they are developed countries" brings to light a latent critical consciousness about the power dynamics in global educational discourses. This again not only underscores the notion of 'center-periphery' dichotomy (Phillipson, 1992a) in global language

education, where practices of the 'center' (developed countries) are often adopted by the 'periphery' (developing countries), but also hints at an emotional unease - a longing for a more autonomous, contextually grounded approach to language education that truly reflects the realities of Bangladeshi classrooms. Nahid's perspective also aligns with Rahman and Pandian's (2018b) call for educational policies that are adapted to local contexts to ensure their relevance and effectiveness.

Nahid's admission of limited knowledge about the policy-making process can be seen as a critique of the current system's lack of transparency and inclusivity. It underscores a potentially widespread sentiment among educators who desire a stronger voice in shaping the very policies they are responsible for enacting in classrooms. This sentiment is echoed in the works of Chowdhury and Le Ha (2008), who argue for more participatory and transparent policy-making processes in education.

6.4 Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings from my study provide a rich, multi-faceted understanding of secondary EFL teachers' perspectives and experiences of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. The analysis of the interview data revealed significant insights into the teachers' viewpoints on various aspects, ranging from the importance and usefulness of English language teaching, policy making and curriculum development, to the perceived influence of external bodies on policy and curriculum reforms. One clear theme that emerged from the teachers' narratives was the recognition of English language skills as vital for the economic development of Bangladesh and the empowerment of its citizens. Teachers' sense of distance from decision-making processes was palpable from the data. Further, the perceived influence of international bodies like the British Council, ADB, and the World Bank was noted, with varying degrees of ambivalence. While some teachers saw their involvement as primarily financial and distanced from direct influence on the curricular decisions, others recognised the more nuanced ways in which these external bodies might shape educational discourses and practices.

Chapter 7: Experiences of EFL Teachers Implementing CLT in Classrooms

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed EFL teachers' conceptualisations of the importance of English language education in Bangladesh, their ideas and perceptions of the educational policy-making and curriculum development process, and their understandings and feelings about the external influences on the policy-making process. The interview data revealed teachers' views on English language teaching, policy making, curriculum development, and external organisations' impact on policy and curriculum reforms. The teachers' narratives stressed the importance of English language skills for Bangladesh's economic development and citizen empowerment. Alongside, teachers' detachment from decision-making was reflected in the data. Various degrees of ambivalence were also reported about the influence of the British Council, ADB, and World Bank in the policy formulation process. In this chapter, I will investigate the EFL teachers' experiences of implementing the CLT approach in classrooms pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The chapter being shaped around the 3rd research question investigated mainstream secondary EFL teachers' experiences and perceptions about the implementation of the CLT in secondary classrooms both in a normal setting and in a COVID-19 pandemic context. The interpretation of the data that followed would be guided by and classified into the themes that have emerged out of the semi-structured interviews with six EFL teachers and of the video-recorded class observations of those teachers.

7.1 Teachers' Attitudes to the CLT Approach

From the interview data, it is evident that almost all EFL teachers consider the CLT approach a better method to help students acquire all four language skills than other conventional approaches. Most of them reported that they believed that the communicative method might help students grow

into better communicators and utilise language in meaningful contexts. For example, EFL teacher Akram said:

> *I personally support teaching 4 skills of English and so I like the CLT approach. I think, this method is better and easier for enhancing learners' 4 language skills. I think the EFL teachers don't know much about the features and principles of CLT approach as they are not trained on the CLT approach properly. Specially, senior and old teachers do not like this method as they are the product of traditional Grammar-Translation method. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram appears to appreciate the holistic nature of the CLT approach, specifically its emphasis on the four cardinal skills of language: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. His personal endorsement of CLT stems from his belief that it offers a comprehensive framework for language acquisition, which significantly diverges from the Grammar-Translation method that predominantly focuses on reading and writing. This shows that Akram is inclined towards a more inclusive, balanced, and practical approach to language teaching that equips learners with the ability to use the language actively and interactively, rather than merely understanding its grammatical and lexical features. This perspective is supported by the broader literature, which underscores the advantages of CLT in fostering communicative competence (Savignon, 2007; Richards and Rodgers, 2014). As noted by Littlewood (2014), CLT emphasises interaction as both the means and the ultimate goal of learning a language. Akram's outlook aligns with these theoretical underpinnings, highlighting the method's practical applicability in real-life communication.

However, his outlook also holds an undercurrent of concern and perhaps, even a hint of frustration. Akram is acutely aware of the training deficiencies among his peers and the difficulties they face in adopting the CLT approach. His observation about older teachers' resistance to this new approach unveils a personal understanding of their plight. They are not merely resisting change, but grappling with a fear of the unknown, a sense of being left behind in the face of rapid pedagogical shifts, and possibly, a feeling of inadequacy rooted in a lack of training and understanding of CLT. This aligns with Fullan's (2015b) theory of educational change, which posits that resistance to change is often rooted in a lack of understanding and support. Effective implementation of new teaching methodologies requires comprehensive professional development and systemic support, as highlighted by Guskey (2002).

Furthermore, Akram makes an interesting point regarding the generational differences in pedagogical attitudes. He suggests that senior teachers, being products of the traditional Grammar-Translation method, are more resistant to this new approach. This resistance could stem from an inherent comfort with familiar methods, a skepticism of new pedagogical trends, or a fear of the challenges associated with learning and applying a new teaching approach. This reflection on age-related resistance implies that successful implementation of CLT goes beyond simply providing training; it also requires addressing teachers' attitudes and potential resistance to change. It underlines the need for a transformative process that encourages and enables teachers to embrace innovative teaching methodologies. This perspective is reinforced by Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital, which stresses the importance of investing in teachers' professional growth and creating a collaborative culture. Akram's insights indicate that fostering an environment that supports continuous learning and professional development is crucial for the successful adoption of new pedagogical approaches.

Thus, while Akram's perspective reaffirms the potential benefits of the CLT approach, it simultaneously emphasises the crucial importance of strategic professional development initiatives and an inclusive, supportive environment that encourages pedagogical growth and transformation among teachers. It underlines that any transition to a new teaching approach should be thoughtfully planned, comprehensive, and sensitive to the varying attitudes, experiences, and capacities of teachers.

Based on the data, it can also be assumed that there might be several reasons why experienced teachers are less inclined to use the CLT method. Firstly, the established teaching methods of senior teachers have possibly grown to prefer the conventional Grammar-Translation approach. Secondly, older teachers might be resistant to change if they feel their authority and expertise will be destabilised by being forced to master a new teaching approach at such a later stage of their career. This is consistent with the findings of Borg (2003), who highlighted that teachers' beliefs and practices are deeply rooted in their experiences and are not easily altered without substantial and ongoing support.

EFL teacher Nahid, in a similar manner, conceptualised the CLT as a modern Western teaching approach. She emphasised the contextual differences between Bangladesh and developed Western

countries. She also focused on the underdeveloped primary education system and the lack of educational infrastructures and resources in Bangladesh. She reported that,

> *The CLT is an imported thing from developed countries. Facilities, environment, basic education, primary education in those countries are different from that of Bangladesh. Bangladesh primary education standard is very low you know. Most teachers are only SSC or HSC, plainly speaking, they are mainly housewives and part time teachers. We have the problem at the root (primary education). We want to bring CLT, a good thing, a modern approach, but we don't have ability to accommodate this to our context. (Nahid, EFL Teacher)*

Nahid's perspective raises the critical issue of context, recognising that pedagogical methods aren't universally applicable and should be adjusted according to the local context. Her characterization of CLT as an "imported thing" from developed countries highlights a concern for the appropriateness of adopting methods and practices which have been developed in, and for, contexts that significantly differ from that of Bangladesh. This perspective, grounded in the sociocultural realities of her teaching context, reflects a deep understanding of the specific challenges her educational environment faces. This critique is echoed in the literature on educational policy transfer, which highlights the challenges of applying Western pedagogical models in non-Western contexts (Phillips and Ochs, 2004; Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). Nahid's viewpoint aligns with findings from researchers like Wedell (2008), who argue that successful implementation of CLT in non-Western contexts requires careful consideration of local educational traditions, resources, and teacher capacities. Her viewpoint speaks much about the struggle of a teacher seeking to improve their pedagogical practices within a system that might not be fully equipped to support such advancements. Her statement about the CLT approach being an "imported thing" expresses not just a pedagogical observation, but a deep-rooted concern. It is a concern for her students, her fellow teachers, and the educational system at large - grappling with the realities of a context where the standards of education and resources do not measure up to the demands of the more modern, global teaching methods.

Nahid provides a critique of the root cause of these challenges, highlighting deficiencies in the primary education sector. Her description of primary educators as largely underqualified, and the primary education standard as being low, exposes a foundational weakness in the educational

system. This critique implies that to implement a pedagogically advanced approach such as CLT at the secondary level, there needs to be a robust and well-equipped foundational level of education, which she perceives is currently lacking. Moreover, her views reflect a deep sense of empathy for her fellow teachers, specially those at the primary level. By highlighting that most of them are inadequately qualified and are often working part-time, she brings attention to the enormous pressure they face, and possibly a sense of isolation. Her voice becomes a collective voice of the teaching community that's caught in a difficult position—trying to deliver a pedagogically advanced approach with limited resources and training.

Moreover, Nahid's emphasis on the mismatch between the resource demands of CLT and the actual resources available within the educational context of Bangladesh gives weight to her argument. She illustrates a picture of educators striving to do their best with limited resources and, perhaps, unrealistic expectations. This situation inevitably leads to frustration and the feeling of being overwhelmed, which can negatively impact the teachers' motivation and their ability to effectively adopt new teaching methods.

When Nahid talks about the difficulty of implementing the CLT approach due to the local context, we perceive not only a critique but also a sense of resilience. Despite the clear challenges, she still recognises the value of the CLT approach, viewing it as a "good thing," a "modern approach." This resilience, this desire to strive for better methods and approaches even in the face of significant challenges, is a testament to her dedication to her profession and her commitment to her students' learning. Her perspective can be perceived as a call for a more context-sensitive and realistic approach to educational reform in Bangladesh. It marks the need for a broader systemic overhaul that addresses the foundational weaknesses in education, equips teachers with the necessary skills, and realistically aligns pedagogical methods with the available resources. Her perspective underscores that educational reforms should be contextually relevant and feasible, taking into account not just the aspirations for improvement but also the ground realities of the educational landscape.

In summary, the two perspectives analysed above, present a complex picture of EFL teachers' attitudes towards the CLT approach in Bangladesh. They identify the approach's potential benefits but also underline significant challenges - inadequate teacher training, a generation gap in teaching practices, and systemic limitations within the educational context of Bangladesh - which may hinder its successful implementation.

7.2 School Environment

7.2.1 Shortage of Skilled EFL Teachers

The interview data attract our attention to a severe problem in Bangladeshi secondary schools, namely a dearth of qualified EFL teachers. This scarcity is serious, with just two or three EFL teachers sometimes responsible for teaching a large number of students, resulting in an almost unbearable workload and little time for focusing on students in an interactive mode. Because of this shortage, non-English teachers are being pressed into service to instruct EFL classes, despite their lack of expertise in the field. As EFL teacher Akram reported,

> *Actually, we don't have sufficient number of skilled EFL teachers. In most cases, only 2 or 3 EFL teachers have to teach 1200 or 1300 students at a secondary school, you know. To cover the shortage, teachers from other subjects have to work as English teacher. They don't have any subject knowledge of English language, and no additional training is there for them. So, they don't just care about methods of English language teaching, whether it's CLT or GTM, all are equal to them. They just want to carry through. This is happening in most secondary schools in Bangladesh. For example, one of my friends is working as English teacher at a secondary school at Uposhohor area (pseudonym) where he is the only English teacher for around one thousand students; he is supported by a colleague whose major is Geography. This is the case. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram brings to light the stark reality of an overburdened EFL teaching force, challenged by daunting student-teacher ratios. The pressure of having only two or three EFL teachers for 1200 or 1300 students isn't just about numbers; it carries a deeper, personal implication for each student's educational journey. The sheer volume of students to one teacher means less time for individual attention, less possibility for personalised instruction, and an overall decrease in teaching quality. When Akram speaks about the scarcity of EFL teachers in secondary schools in Bangladesh, it is not just a factual observation. Rather, it is a manifestation of his personal concerns and experiences about an issue that directly impacts him as an educator and his students' learning outcomes. His recounting of large student numbers versus minimal EFL teachers paints an overwhelming picture. This image embodies not just the struggle of managing the sheer volume of students, but also the emotional toll it likely takes on teachers, stretching their capacity to provide quality instruction.

More alarmingly, Akram unveils a systemic issue where teachers from other subjects, untrained and unfamiliar with English language pedagogy, are filling in the gap. His remarks about teachers from other subject areas having to step in as English teachers convey a profound frustration and concern. This reality raises not only pedagogical issues, but also emotional challenges for these teachers as they navigate unfamiliar territory without proper training. It is easy to imagine the strain it places on these educators, the fear of inadequacy, and the tension between wanting to deliver quality education and being ill-equipped to do so. Their indifference to teaching methods is not just a matter of choice — it is a survival tactic in a strained system.

His observation that these non-specialist teachers do not differentiate between English teaching methodologies speaks volumes about the impact of the teacher shortage. Their concern is not about employing the best approach — CLT, GTM, or any other — but about getting through the curriculum. This implies that the educational experiences of the students are compromised, as the focus is more on covering the syllabus rather than facilitating understanding and promoting active language use.

The anecdote Akram shares about his friend, the lone EFL teacher in a school of a thousand students, adds a poignant, personal touch to the narrative. It is a snapshot that embodies the broader systemic issue, humanising it in the form of an individual's struggle. One can imagine the enormous pressure his friend faces, the long hours, and the daunting responsibility of shaping a thousand students' English proficiency, all with support from a geography teacher, who is likely grappling with his own challenges. This reality brings home the dire circumstances these teachers work under and the resilience they demonstrate daily.

In essence, Akram's narrative not only highlights the numerical shortage of EFL teachers in Bangladesh's secondary schools, but it also explores the qualitative impact of this issue. His insights call attention to the compromised teaching quality and the professional struggles of EFL teachers in managing large student bodies and pedagogical challenges without adequate institutional support or resources. The shortage of qualified EFL teachers is not an isolated issue but part of a broader systemic problem. According to Banu and Sussex (2001), the challenges faced by EFL teachers in Bangladesh are deeply rooted in inadequate teacher education programs and limited professional development opportunities. This shortage leads to a reliance on non-specialist teachers, which further exacerbates the problem. The lack of specialised training for these teachers often results in ineffective teaching practices, as they are unable to employ the necessary methodologies to facilitate language learning effectively (Rahman, Pandian and Kaur, 2018).

Based on my data set, the effect of this shortfall on the quality of English language education in Bangladesh is anticipated to be severe. Inadequate language learning experiences for pupils may come from a lack of experienced EFL teachers which in turn may lead to low language competency and limited possibilities for further education and employment. There is a persistent shortage of qualified EFL teachers, which might be exacerbated by the use of non-specialist teachers to teach English. This aligns with the findings of Kirkpatrick (2012), who highlights that teacher shortages and inadequate training are significant barriers to effective language education in developing countries.

EFL teacher Didar came up with new but important information about this issue. He reported,

> *Yes, we need expert EFL teachers more and more. According to the latest government rule, there is only one post for English teacher at every secondary school. Can one EFL teacher conduct English classes from class 6 to 10? Is it possible at all? Under these circumstances, schools recruit one or two more English teachers based on their local fund. It's really challenging. Fortunately, we are three English teachers here in this school; you won't get 3 EFL teachers in many old and reputed schools of our country. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

Didar's views clearly echo the prevailing need for more expert EFL teachers, a sentiment also highlighted by Akram. The narrative Didar provides gives a significant insight into the challenges faced due to the shortage and illuminates the critical structural issues at play. The observation he makes about the latest government rule of appointing only one English teacher in each secondary school underscores a concerning policy decision. The logistics of having a single EFL teacher conducting English classes from grade 6 to 10 raise practical and pedagogical questions. Can one teacher truly cater to the diverse needs of students across these grades? Would they be able to adapt their teaching strategies to suit the varying proficiency levels of these students? In fact, his remarks indicate a clear disconnect between policy decisions and their practical implications on the ground. When he speaks about the government policy allowing only one English teacher in every secondary school, there is an underlying layer of concern. The burden placed upon this single teacher is palpable – one can imagine the enormity of the task, the strain of managing such a wide grade span, the difficulty of addressing the distinct needs of students at different stages of their English language learning journey. The emotional strain of such a responsibility could be overwhelming, leading to burnout, and ultimately affecting teaching quality.

Furthermore, Didar brings into focus the contingent measures schools must take to meet the shortage. The recruitment of additional teachers funded by local resources paints a picture of schools struggling to ensure the adequate teaching of English despite resource constraints. This insight also hints at the precarious situation schools find themselves in, tied to the availability of local funds and left without much structural support. His description of the precarious method in which schools are forced to hire extra English teachers hints at a sense of desperation and frustration. The tension between wanting to provide quality English language education and the resources available must create a challenging emotional landscape for school administrators and teachers alike.

Fortunately, in Didar's case, his school has three English teachers, a scenario he acknowledges is not the norm. This admission reflects an awareness of his school's relatively privileged position, in stark contrast to many other institutions, including older and reputed ones. This fortunate situation in his school – having three English teachers – brings with it a sense of relief, yet also a lingering worry for his peers in schools less privileged. This is a powerful emotional undercurrent in his narrative, an awareness of their good fortune contrasted with the knowledge that their situation is not the norm. The idea that even older, reputed schools face this issue is sobering and provides a stark contrast to their reality.

To sum up, Didar's perspectives reinforce the narrative about the acute shortage of skilled EFL teachers in Bangladesh. His comments touch on policy limitations, resource challenges, and systemic issues contributing to this crisis. His observations about the government policy and its practical implications subtly challenge the policymakers' understanding of the teaching profession's realities Furthermore, his narrative draws attention to the gap between policy and practice, raising critical questions about the sustainability of current recruitment and funding practices and their impact on the quality of EFL education. The qualitative depth and critical insight Didar's account provides highlight the need for comprehensive, strategic solutions to address this problem.

In essence, Didar's insights add a rich, personal layer to the theme of EFL teacher shortage, bringing out the emotional struggles, practical challenges, and critical policy concerns associated with this issue. His narrative humanises the shortage of EFL teachers, moving beyond numbers to expose the emotional realities and critical challenges inherent in the situation.

To conclude, the interview data expose that the existing government rule that approves just one post for an EFL teacher in every secondary school is not only a regulatory obstacle but also a practical issue that impacts English language learning and teaching and student learning outcomes. Consequently, schools are compelled to appoint teachers from other academic fields who might not have a strong background in English language teaching or be fluent in the language themselves. This not only undermines language teaching itself but also reveals a failure to appreciate the technical skills needed to instruct EFL learners. Moreover, schools in rural and economically depressed areas are affected worse by the EFL teacher shortage.

7.2.2 Large Class Phenomenon

The findings highlighted the difficulties encountered by secondary EFL teachers in Bangladesh in dealing with huge class sizes. Keeping track of attendance, keeping pupils motivated and engaged, and keeping the class on track in the allotted time are just a few of the difficulties a teacher encounters while teaching a class of more than 75 students. Class sizes that are too big have been shown to negatively affect both student learning and teacher effort. It may be difficult for teachers to provide a productive learning environment, meet the requirements of their pupils, and give individualised attention in courses with many learners. EFL teacher Didar claimed that,

> *Yes, the large number of students, not manageable. It would have been good if the number of students were less. For example, in my class there are over 75 students. To maintain their attendance sheet and motivation for learning takes me lot of time; the class duration is only 45 minutes, you know. So, it's really difficult to make groups and maintain them in class. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

The interview data revealed the teachers' strong views that secondary school classroom sizes need to be reduced via governmental actions. More EFL teachers might be recruited to lower student-teacher ratios as mentioned in the NEP (MoEdu 2010), or teachers could be given more materials and training to better handle big classrooms. Didar's insights vividly illustrate the overwhelming challenges posed by large class sizes, which hinder effective teaching and learning. The logistical challenge of managing attendance and keeping students engaged in such a short time frame (45 minutes) exacerbates the problem. This scenario is supported by research indicating that smaller

class sizes are beneficial for both students and teachers, fostering better academic outcomes and more personalised instruction (Blatchford, Bassett and Brown, 2011).

The findings highlighted the difficulties encountered by secondary EFL teachers in Bangladesh in dealing with huge class sizes. Keeping track of attendance, keeping pupils motivated and engaged, and keeping the class on track in the allotted time are just a few of the difficulties, as Didar mentioned here, a teacher encounters while teaching a class of more than 75 students. The findings also highlighted the necessity of providing teachers with continuous professional development opportunities to expand their pedagogical tools, topic knowledge, and classroom management strategies.

According to the interview data, another EFL teacher Belal also considered the issue of large class size a serious obstacle to the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladeshi secondary schools. He also claimed that large classes make it difficult for teachers to provide each student enough attention and foster the kind of collaborative and interactive classroom situation that is crucial to the success of the CLT. It is already difficult for instructors to properly adopt CLT without additional barriers, such as a shortage of skilled EFL teachers and enough classroom space. Belal reported that,

> *Yes, obviously, large class is a big problem in relation to the CLT implementation. If we could divide the students into smaller sections, it would be manageable. But, in that case we need more EFL teachers, more classrooms etc. We don't have those facilities at present. Things might change if the government employ more EFL teachers at secondary schools. (Belal, EFL Teacher)*

The finding also indicated that the CLT approach is most successful when applied in smaller classes. The CLT relies heavily on student interaction, collaboration, and communication, both of which can only be maximised in classrooms with a smaller number of students. However, in the present context of limited resources, it might be difficult to execute measures such as employing additional EFL teachers in order to achieve reduced class sizes. To conclude, the overall results show that the teachers consider that large classes are a major barrier to introducing the CLT approach in secondary schools in Bangladesh.

7.3 Teachers' Classroom Practice

7.3.1 Common Pedagogical Practice

EFL teacher Didar reported that they usually followed the traditional teaching method, the lecture method in the EFL classroom. He also commented that the learners do not find the traditional approach interesting enough. He then pointed out the issue of mixed-ability students which he claimed usually played a negative role in classroom management. These findings highlighted the shortcomings of the traditional lecture method in producing desirable learning outcomes specially in EFL classrooms. This might be due to the nature of modern EFL classes which apply the CLT or other cognate methods being highly participatory, interactive, and collaborative. Students' lack of participation and interest shows that the lecture method might not be well suited to meeting the demands of learners with different levels of learning abilities and learning preferences. This might validate the efficacy of active learning methods in increasing students' interest, motivation, and knowledge retention. EFL teacher Didar reported,

> *We follow lecture method. The learners do not feel much interested in this, we see. They don't respond well. A proper classroom environment could have helped. There is mix of good and bad students, 80 percent students are weak. This mingling is very bad. Those 80 percent weak students distract attention of the rest 20 percent good students in class by making noise. This is another obstacle. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

Didar speaks to the heart of a traditional teaching approach with his reference to the lecture method. This approach suggests a teacher-centric classroom where interaction might be minimal. The impact on learners, according to Didar, is quite telling – he notes that students are not particularly engaged, a significant observation given that active engagement is critical for effective language learning. This lack of enthusiasm could stem from the dominance of teacher talk, possibly leaving little room for students to explore and practice the language, creating a passive learning environment. This observation aligns with the findings of Nunan (1989), who suggests that traditional teacher-centered approaches often fail to engage students actively in the learning process. There is an undercurrent of frustration and helplessness evident in Didar's testimony. His observation about the lecture method showcases a teacher trapped in an educational approach that he seemingly understands is not optimal for his students. His reference to the lecture method not just as a strategy but as a practice to 'follow' implies a lack of agency and a forced acquiescence to traditional pedagogical norms that might not be conducive to effective EFL teaching. Freire (1970)

critiques such banking models of education, advocating for more participatory and dialogic methods that empower learners.

The mixture of proficiency levels among students, as Didar reports, creates further challenges. With 80% of the students being weak, the issue of differentiated instruction surfaces. In a scenario like this, it becomes extremely hard for a teacher to cater to each student's specific needs, potentially leading to the further alienation of weaker students and the under-stimulation of stronger ones. This situation might be magnified by the fact that more proficient students could be distracted by their less proficient peers, a classroom management issue that could impact overall learning efficacy. His reference to the 'mingling' of the students and the noise it generates provides an emotionally laden glimpse into the chaotic environment he has to navigate daily. The word 'obstacle' not only reflects the physical impediment to teaching and learning but perhaps also an emotional barrier that hinders him from delivering the quality of education he desires for his students. This challenge is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which suggests that effective learning occurs just beyond a learner's current abilities, a balance hard to maintain in mixed-ability settings. His comments also reveal a tacit concern for the lack of a conducive learning environment. The noise created by less proficient learners, as he notes, does not just distract their more proficient peers but potentially disrupts the overall classroom ambiance, making it less conducive to effective language learning.

Another critical shade in Didar's statement is the absence of any mention of measures taken to address these issues. This could suggest a possible lack of resources or support for teachers to implement alternative strategies, which is often a significant barrier in transforming teaching practices. According to Hattie (2009), professional development and institutional support are crucial in helping teachers adopt more effective teaching strategies that can cater to diverse learner needs.

In essence, Didar's perspective paints a picture of a teaching practice that is primarily teacher-centric and, as a result, may not effectively cater to the diverse learning needs in a mixed-ability classroom. It underlines challenges in student engagement, classroom management, and differentiated instruction, while hinting at possible systemic and resource-related constraints.

The results also highlight the importance of considering the classroom setting when designing instruction and assessing student progress. To improve the learning experience and encourage active learner engagement, a comfortable and distraction-free classroom environment is essential.

The classroom setting has been found to have an effect on students' interest, concentration, and motivation (Dorman, 2002). This finding also brings to light the difficulties brought on by teaching a diverse student body. Didar feels that the presence of many underachieving pupils might diminish the learning environment for others who are more proficient and attentive. This also highlights the significance of classroom setting, active learning, and support for improving students' interest, motivation, and achievement in school.

In a similar manner, EFL teacher Meem reported that she also found learners less motivated and engaged due to her use of lecture method. She claimed that it was difficult for her to manage a big class of 90 students. Moreover, she had the responsibilities for finishing the syllabus to get the students ready for exams. She further claimed that although she applied several interactive and participatory approaches oftentimes, she could not be consistent enough with her such practice. She also argued that it is pointless differentiating between the CLT and the GTM approach if teachers could not apply them in classrooms due to excessive exam-orientation. EFL teacher Meem said,

> *I see students in the classroom are not motivated enough. My class contains about 90 students. I face difficulty in my classroom management. Again, I have to complete a certain portion of the syllabus to make the students ready for exams. Exam results are what counts at the end. It matters little whether you have followed CLT or GTM. I personally like CLT techniques. I arrange group work and pair work, public speaking once in 2 weeks. It's not possible to do every day, you know. (Meem, EFL teacher)*

This finding also draws attention to several difficulties teachers encounter in terms of maintaining order in the classroom and inspiring learners to learn. The first obstacle is the large class size, which makes it harder to foster a productive learning atmosphere and control disruptive student conduct. The second difficulty is that teachers often struggle to use student-centered learning approaches ahead of completing the syllabus for examinations. The participant states that she prefers using the CLT techniques like group work, pair work, and public speaking, but that this is not always possible to implement. This finding is consistent with the broader literature, which highlights the challenges of implementing communicative approaches in large classes (Littlewood, 2007).

Meem's account underscores the significant challenge of balancing the demands of exam preparation with the desire to use more interactive, student-centered teaching methods. The emphasis on exam results often forces teachers to prioritise coverage of the syllabus over engaging, communicative activities. This situation aligns with the findings of Carless (2004), who notes that

exam-oriented education systems can hinder the implementation of CLT, as teachers feel pressured to focus on test preparation rather than fostering communicative competence. This might indicate that only EFL teachers' willingness to adopt more student-centered, interactive teaching strategies is not enough to implement the CLT approach in secondary EFL classrooms. There are other factors such as a lack of time or resources to properly apply the techniques which are also very important. Additionally, the result draws attention to the conflict between boosting student motivation and involvement and the need of focusing on test performance. The participant also states that although test scores certainly matter in terms of academic success, a singular concentration on examinations might obscure the development of other vital language skills like communication and analysis. This point resonates with the arguments of Kumaravadivelu (2006), who advocates for a more holistic approach to language teaching that goes beyond mere test preparation. The overall results highlight the need for a positive classroom climate, manageable class size, and synchronisation between studying for tests and actively participating in a class for optimal language learning.

7.3.2 Classroom Interaction through Group Work and Pair Work

The interview data reveals that participants express their concerns over large class size, the seating arrangement in the classroom, and student reticence. EFL teacher Didar said,

> *I do group work and pair work, speaking once a week because I have so many students; large class size, so there is accommodation problem, no proper seating arrangement. So, we can't do these regularly although we want to do. The learners are very shy, they don't want to speak out. They are not interested in speaking loudly. They feel ashamed. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

Didar's account is particularly enlightening as he highlights the twin obstacles of infrastructure and student attitudes to the implementation of group work and pair work within the classroom. His frustration with large class sizes is palpable as he speaks about the difficulties in organising pair or group activities due to the sheer number of students he has to handle. This issue is further compounded by a lack of suitable seating arrangements that would facilitate these activities, revealing an educational infrastructure that has not been optimised for modern teaching methods. This aligns with the findings of Blatchford et al. (2002), who emphasise the impact of physical classroom environments on the effectiveness of group activities.

Beyond the physical constraints, Didar also sheds light on the emotional and cultural barriers that affect classroom interaction. His comments about student shyness and reluctance to speak openly in class touch on deeper cultural norms and behavioural patterns that may be resistant to change. The students' shyness and hesitation to voice their thoughts publicly reveal deeply ingrained cultural tendencies towards reticence and modesty. This reticence then hampers the collaborative and open-ended discussion and interaction at the heart of the CLT approach. As Tsui (1996) notes, cultural factors can significantly influence student participation in language classrooms, often leading to reluctance in speaking activities.

When Didar states that the students "feel ashamed," he not only highlights the students' internalised anxieties about making mistakes in a public setting, but also uncovers a greater social pressure that is often placed on students in educational environments. It signifies the psychological weight of societal expectations and the fear of negative judgment which, in turn, stifles the students' willingness to participate actively and freely in communicative activities. This insight is supported by Young (1991), who identifies fear of negative evaluation as a significant factor contributing to student anxiety in language learning contexts. In essence, Didar's account not only provides an understanding of the immediate, tangible barriers to effective classroom interaction but also invites us to consider the cultural and psychological nuances shaping these challenges in the EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. His insights underscore the urgent need for a more holistic approach to address these infrastructural, cultural, and emotional constraints.

This result highlights the difficulties of coordinating group and pair work in a classroom with so many students and inadequate seating arrangement. Even if the participant knows that engaging learners in such activities more often will improve their language learning outcomes, he or she can maintain that only once per week due to time constraints. This finding resonates with the broader literature on the challenges of implementing interactive teaching methods in large classes (Scrivener, 2005).

Overall, the results shed light on the difficulties of conducting group and pair work activities in the context of large class size and limited resources, as well as the psychological hurdles that students experience when attempting to speak out in class.

EFL teacher Belal draws attention to a number of obstacles teachers experience when trying to implement interactive language learning activities, specially in settings typified by high student-teacher ratios and an emphasis on examinations. The participant notes that although pair and group

work activities are intended to help students practise their communication skills, recurrently students do not feel inspired or motivated to take part in them. The results also indicate a need for more versatile and adaptive ways to language education due to the potential difficulties teachers may experience when applying Communicative Language Teaching strategies in big classes. EFL teacher Belal said,

> *It is very difficult to conduct pair work, group work and interaction in our class. Sometimes, we try but students also are not motivated enough, I've seen. They are not interested in these activities. To make them start speaking is also very challenging. They usually seek suggestions on how they can do well in exams. This is the classroom situation. Again, we have so many students, around 80-90, in the class. So, I face difficulties to follow the CLT techniques in my class. (Belal, EFL Teacher)*

Belal's observation that students are not motivated or interested in these types of activities sheds light on another facet of the problem. He has identified a cultural or attitudinal barrier where students are more focused on scoring well on exams than participating in interactive language activities. This mindset, perhaps borne out of an examination-oriented education system, is seemingly at odds with the principles of the CLT. His voice carries an undercurrent of frustration and perhaps a hint of resignation that echoes the struggles he faces daily in his classroom. He is seemingly stuck in an educational paradox, caught between the desire to engage students through collaborative, interaction-rich activities and the reality of a classroom where students' main focus is on scoring well in exams.

Belal also underscores the difficulty of coaxing students to start speaking. This might suggest that students are apprehensive about making mistakes or they are simply not used to the direct, communicative style of learning that the CLT approach espouses. These challenges extend beyond logistical issues to involve deeper pedagogical issues related to student motivation and learning style preferences. This observation aligns with Young's (1991) analysis of language anxiety, which highlights that fear of negative evaluation can significantly inhibit student participation in communicative activities.

Belal's comment about students' lack of motivation to engage in group or pair work activities is particularly poignant. It reveals a level of disconnection, perhaps even a chasm, between the pedagogical techniques he knows to be effective and the students' perceived priorities. This discordance must be a source of considerable emotional distress for Belal, who, like any educator,

aims to create a stimulating, enriching learning environment for his students. Yet, he is confronted by students' apathy or disinterest in what he has to offer. It paints a picture of a teacher striving to enact change while feeling thwarted at every turn. This resonates with Freire's (1970)s critique of traditional education systems that often stifle creativity and critical thinking in favor of rote learning and exam preparation.

Belal's perspective presents a vivid picture of the struggles EFL teachers encounter in trying to align classroom practices with CLT principles. Despite his personal preference for CLT techniques, the realities of his teaching environment prevent him from fully implementing these methods. This provides an invaluable insight into the difficulties faced by EFL teachers in Bangladesh. The challenges described by Belal are not unique to Bangladesh; they reflect a broader global issue where educational policies and practices often do not align with contemporary pedagogical theories (Nunan, 1987).

The critical analysis of Belal's account indicates a complex interplay of institutional, socio-cultural, and pedagogical factors. While his struggles might be situated in a specific context - the secondary EFL classrooms of Bangladesh, they resonate universally, underscoring the perennial challenges of teaching and the tension between ideal pedagogical practices and the realities of the classroom. In many ways, Belal's narrative encapsulates the experience of countless teachers worldwide, highlighting the need for systemic changes that support teachers in their quest to create meaningful and effective learning experiences. Additionally, the results indicate that there may be a conflict between language learning goals and assessment-driven pedagogies, since exam-oriented pedagogy may be preventing students from developing their communication skills and participating in interactive learning activities. This conflict is well-documented in the literature, where the focus on high-stakes testing often undermines the goals of communicative language teaching (Shohamy, 2001).

In conclusion, this result points to the many hindrances teachers confront when trying to foster interactive language learning activities in a context characterised by high student- teacher ratios and test-centric teaching and learning. The results highlight the significance of fostering student motivation and engagement in a culturally sensitive and empathetic classroom setting, and of investigating different instructional techniques that may be adapted to the current provision.

7.3.3 Four Language Skills Teaching

This finding from interview data underlines the teachers' views to encourage the development of all four linguistic skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) for meaningful communication in everyday life. However, the participant notes that it might be challenging to put the CLT principles into effect in the classroom owing to the prevalence of exam-oriented education and the scarcity of speaking opportunities. EFL teacher Akram said,

> *I know that developing students' 4 skills is very important. If the learners can practise all 4 skills, they will be able to use English in their practical life. But to be honest, we can't follow the principles of CLT about 4 skills practice completely. Most of the time in the class we teach grammar as it is needed for the exam. We also make them practise writing skill by giving tasks like paragraph and composition writing. But rarely, we can make arrangements for speaking skill practice. I understand that I should follow the principles but I can't. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

The results highlight the need of striking a balance between exam requirements and Communicative Language Teaching approaches for optimal language learning outcomes. Although exams play a crucial role in the educational process, they might downplay students' chances to improve their speaking and listening skills. This also imply that it is really challenging for teachers to foster students' development of all four language skills in such an environment that is characterised by high exam-orientation and less opportunities for speaking and listening skills. This is consistent with the findings of Brown (2001), who emphasises the importance of integrating all four language skills in EFL teaching to achieve communicative competence.

The interview data show that current teaching and learning practice in the EFL classroom is exam-oriented and puts emphasis on grammatical and compositional activities in preparation for public and internal examinations. EFL teacher Belal claimed that a lack of assessment in the areas of listening and speaking skills and students' focus on test marks might be responsible for a lack of opportunity for strengthening learners' listening and speaking skills. This demonstrates a disjuncture between the concepts of Communicative Language Teaching, which prioritise the enhancement of all four language skills, and students' actual communication requirements in the assessment and evaluation system. He reported,

We get very little scope for practising 4 skills in the class. As I told you earlier, students only seek suggestions on how they can obtain A+, good grade, in exams. Again, in our syllabus, we don't have any assessment for listening and speaking skills. So, students are not interested in practising these two skills, they ask us why we are forcing them to do it as it's not needed for exam. I would recommend including some marks in listening and speaking skills in public exams. Then, it would be easier for us to motivate them for practice these skills. (Belal, EFL Teacher)

The concepts of the Communicative Language Teaching, which acknowledge the role of evaluation in shaping learner motivation, are consistent with the participant's request to incorporate marks for listening and speaking skills in public examinations. The quality of the assessment and the degree to which it is consistent with the principles of the CLT determine how successfully the approach might be implemented. This aligns with Bachman and Palmer's (1996) assertion that assessment practices significantly influence teaching and learning processes.

Belal's perspective highlights the critical issue of alignment between assessment practices and instructional goals. Without assessment mechanisms that value and measure speaking and listening skills, it becomes difficult for teachers to justify allocating classroom time to these activities. This situation is reflective of what Harmer (2008) describes as the washback effect, where testing practices shape and often constrain teaching and learning activities. Additionally, Rod Ellis (2003) supports the notion that language teaching should be balanced across all four skills to ensure comprehensive language development. He argues that focusing solely on grammar and writing, driven by exam requirements, limits students' ability to use the language communicatively. Ellis emphasises the importance of integrating listening and speaking activities to create a more rounded and effective language learning experience.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the complex challenges teachers face in promoting the development of all four language skills within an exam-oriented education system. To better align teaching practices with the principles of CLT, there is a clear need for systemic changes in assessment policies to include speaking and listening skills in evaluations. By doing so, it would be possible to create a more balanced and holistic language learning environment that supports the development of comprehensive communicative competence.

7.3.4 Grammar Teaching

This interview data focus on the ongoing debate in the area of language pedagogy between proponents of the classic grammar-translation method and those of the communicative approach to language education. Despite widespread recognition of the shortcomings of the grammar-translation technique, it remains a standard practice in many language courses around the world. In this study, EFL teacher Akram said,

> *In the class, at first, I teach the grammatical rules to students, for example 'right form of verbs' then give them some examples of those rules in sentences, then let them practise to make sure they have understood the topic. If you say about CLT techniques, my method of teaching grammar rules is not in line with the CLT approach, I agree and understand. But what can I do then? I am bound to make them pass in English subject in exams. As an English teacher this is my responsibility. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

The participant is fully aware that he is not following the CLT approach to teaching grammar. However, he believes that he must do so to ensure the students pass the exams. Secondary EFL teachers frequently feel this pressure since they are expected to upgrade students' test results while simultaneously improving students' proficiency in the language. Teachers may place more emphasis on test preparation than on the communicative competence practice if they feel the need to teach grammatical rules. This might impede learners' ability to use the target language successfully in real-world contexts. Moreover, this finding leads to further inquiry into the function of assessment in EFL education. Teachers may feel compelled to put less emphasis on the communicative approach in favour of more conventional ways of teaching such as the grammar-translation method if the assessment of language skills is based on these approaches. This resonates with the arguments of Ellis (2006), who highlights that assessment-driven teaching often skews the focus towards grammar and accuracy at the expense of communicative skills.

From the interview data, the conflict between the more conventional grammar-translation method and the more communicative approach to language learning has been reflected. Another EFL teacher Didar also claimed the same thing. He reported,

> *I teach the grammatical rules to learners at first, then go to practice. I give them exercises of grammar for their practice. Then they practice them and I check some of their scripts, make corrections if needed. At last, I solve those on the white board for all*

learners. I don't think my grammar teaching technique is in line with the CLT approach.
In CLT, grammar should be taught in context. But we have English 2nd paper course
which is fully grammar and writing skill practice based on prescribed grammar book
by the NCE 2012. (Didar, EFL teacher)

It is clear that the participant has a comprehensive view of what grammar teaching should look like according to the CLT approach. However, he claimed that his circumstances might prevent the full implementation of the CLT approach. He further pointed out that the English 2nd paper course is totally grammar-based, and the teacher may not have the liberty to depart from the required grammar book by the NCE 2012. In addition, the participant is also tasked with getting learners ready for assessments that may place a higher value on language accuracy than fluency. This situation is reflective of what Harmer (2008) describes as the tension between teaching for communicative competence and preparing students for exams that emphasise grammatical accuracy. The reliance on grammar-translation methods can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, the traditional view of language teaching in many educational contexts, including Bangladesh, prioritises grammatical accuracy and the ability to translate texts as key indicators of language proficiency. This method is often easier to assess through standardised testing, which aligns with the educational systems' focus on measurable outcomes. However, this approach can limit students' ability to use the language effectively in real-world communicative situations. Ellis (2003) argues that while knowledge of grammar is important, it should be integrated into communicative practice to ensure that learners can apply grammatical rules in context.

Secondly, the rigid structure of the curriculum and the emphasis on passing exams constrain teachers' ability to implement more communicative methods. Teachers like Akram and Didar are aware of the benefits of CLT but feel restricted by the need to prepare students for grammar-focused exams. This constraint underscores the importance of aligning curriculum and assessment practices with communicative language teaching principles. Savignon (2002) emphasises that for CLT to be effective, it must be supported by a curriculum that values and assesses all language skills equally.

In conclusion, the interview data highlight the persistent reliance on grammar-translation methods in EFL teaching due to exam-oriented education systems and rigid curricular requirements. Despite recognising the benefits of communicative approaches, teachers feel compelled to focus on grammatical accuracy to ensure students pass exams. This situation calls for systemic changes in

curriculum design and assessment practices to support the implementation of CLT, allowing for a more balanced approach that integrates grammar teaching within a communicative framework.

7.3.5 Teachers' and Students' Roles in the Classroom

The finding reveals a discrepancy between the ideals of the CLT approach, which centre on learner interaction, participation, collaboration, teacher facilitation, and the practicalities of the classroom situation. EFL Teacher Akram understands the significance of taking the lead and initiating class discussions, but they are unable to do so due to classroom size and technological limitations. He reported,

> *According to the principles of CLT, there should be a participatory or collaborative mind both in teachers and learners. Teachers should be like a facilitator and initiator in the class as we find in CLT method. In reality, we can't be like this all the time. In most cases, we give lectures because we have some infrastructural lack like seating arrangements, suitable classrooms etc. Large number of students in class, as I have told you earlier, is also a factor. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

This finding poses serious questions regarding the difficulties of putting CLT into practice in actual classrooms in Bangladesh. While the ideas of CLT have been shown to be beneficial, they are not always easy to put into practice in the classroom due to considerations such as limited resources and large student populations. This aligns with the insights of Ellis (1997), who emphasises that the practical application of CLT is often hampered by contextual constraints, including class size and resource availability.

Another EFL teacher Meem said,

> *I have learnt from my B.Ed training course that according to the CLT approach, an EFL teacher will play the role of a facilitator; he/she will help students learn English without telling them the answer of the questions. The students will be motivated and help the teacher advance the teaching and learning process. But, this is not happening in my class. Students are not motivated enough; they are not much interested in learning*

English, they are afraid of English. So, it becomes difficult for me to play the role of a facilitator in my class. (Meem, EFL teacher)

This participant is also completely aware of teachers' and students' roles in the EFL class where the CLT method is operational. She knows that fostering an environment in the classroom where learners can use language in relevant situations is a key component of the CLT approach. However, the reality of student demotivation and fear of the English language presents a significant barrier to adopting the facilitator role envisioned by CLT. This challenge reflects the broader issues identified by Harmer (2008), who notes that teacher roles in CLT require not only pedagogical shifts but also changes in student attitudes and motivations.

To conclude, the results imply that despite the CLT approach being arguably perceived as an excellent technique for English language teaching in many other contexts, the question raised by my data in this chapter is whether the CLT approach is an excellent technique in the Bangladeshi educational context or not. Hence, it is crucial for EFL teachers to reflect on the elements that influence their students' motivation and interest in learning, and to implement measures to increase student involvement and engagement in the teaching-learning process. This includes considering factors such as class size, resource availability, and cultural attitudes towards language learning, as suggested by Kumaravadivelu (2006) in his framework for post-method pedagogy.

7.4 Teaching Resources

7.4.1 English Textbook

The interview data showed that the EFL teachers had a positive opinion of the secondary-level English textbook named English for Today. EFL teacher Akram said,

I think the EFT textbook is good overall. There are opportunities for developing learners' skills. The text is to a great extent in line with the CLT principles. Still there is a gap you can see, only in EFTs of class 6 and 7 we get all 4 skills; but in EFTs of class 8,9 and 10 there are only 2 skills, reading and writing. The reason might be that, I'm not sure, listening and speaking skills are not evaluated in SSC, the public exam after class 10. But I consider the textbook okay overall. (Akram, EFL teacher)

The participant pointed to the overall efficacy and compatibility of the EFT textbook with the tenets of the CLT approach. However, he maintained that although the textbook is well-received, it does not adequately address all aspects of language learning. This is particularly true for EFTs in grades 8, 9, and 10. This discrepancy hints at a tension between the requirement of the public examinations and those of the NCE 2012 (NCTB, 2012). The issue reflects the challenges identified by Ellis (2003), who argues that effective language textbooks should integrate all four language skills consistently to align with the CLT principles. However, it can be concluded that the finding about the EFT textbook highlights the relative merits of the English language curriculum in Bangladesh.

EFL teacher Didar stressed the need for improvement in the textbooks' content, which might reduce students' enthusiasm to learn. Since language learners require to connect with the subject matter emotionally and cognitively, topics that are interesting and relevant should be incorporated into the textbook. Without this link, it might be difficult for students to retain their motivation, comprehend the language, and develop their linguistic skills. He reported,

> I think it's okay so far, but the contents could have been more amazing and interesting. There are contents for all 4 language skills practice in the textbook. As to listening and speaking skills, in some chapters there are instructions for using CDs; but we don't have that CD and also there is no arrangement, logistic support, for running this listening CD in class. How can I practise listening? (Didar, EFL teacher)

This participant also pointed to a weakness in the textbooks' logistical backing. Student learning in the EFL classroom might be potentially affected by the lack of access to CDs for developing listening and speaking skills. This underscores the need for greater attention to the accessibility and availability of resources and materials when designing textbooks. The challenge Didar describes is consistent with Harmer's (2008) observations on the importance of supporting language learning with adequate materials and resources. The absence of necessary materials like CDs can significantly hinder the effective implementation of communicative activities designed to improve listening and speaking skills.

In conclusion, the findings on the EFT textbooks' appropriateness open up crucial concerns about the pragmatic and pedagogical design of EFL learning resources. They highlight the need for a more integrated approach to developing language skills across all grades and the importance of providing the necessary logistical support to utilise these resources fully. As highlighted by Tomlinson (2012),

the development of effective language teaching materials should consider both the pedagogical goals and the practical realities of the classroom to ensure they meet the learners' needs.

7.5 Pandemic-Induced Changes

The data set reveals a compelling yet challenging picture of how the COVID-19 pandemic has drastically altered the educational landscape, particularly in the context of secondary EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. Rafiq, EFL Teacher said:

> *We now take online class. Percentage of students' attendance is very low, approximately 10 to 15 percent only. We use Facebook, messenger group, Zoom, and YouTube. Internet facilities are not available in many areas. Students of- ten complained about weak internet connection and also about the high price of internet. We have got very limited chance to assess or evaluate students during the pandemic. At first, auto-pass system was also followed for the students. The Ministry of Education issued an order about the assignment submission for the assessment of the students. Since then, the students are being assessed by assignment system in every school. They submit two assignments per week to be evaluated by the teachers. We are now following this technique. (Rafiq, EFL teacher)*

Rafiq's account uncovers not only a vivid portrayal of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on secondary EFL education but also a deep-seated concern for the equitable accessibility and meaningful learning for his students. One of the key points Rafiq reveals is the alarming drop in student attendance for online classes - a meager 10 to 15 percent. This statistic not only raises concerns about the acute decline in student engagement but also exposes the stark disparities in digital accessibility among students. The contributing factors, according to Rafiq, are the unavailability of reliable internet services in many areas and the exorbitant costs associated with these services. The implication here is a stark digital divide, which could be causing irreversible learning losses and further widening of the educational gap, particularly affecting those from less privileged backgrounds. This aligns with the findings of Williamson et al. (2020), who highlight the exacerbation of educational inequalities during the pandemic due to differential access to digital resources.

Rafiq also provides a candid appraisal of the immense challenge of student assessment during the pandemic. The automatic pass system initially implemented during the crisis, while a necessary response to the extraordinary circumstances, may have raised questions about academic accountability and student progress. The introduction of an assignment system, Rafiq points out, seeks to address these issues to some extent. Yet, with students submitting two assignments per week for evaluation, the efficacy of this system in terms of providing in-depth feedback and facilitating meaningful learning remains questionable. This critique reflects concerns similar to those raised by Yu (2017), who argues that emergency remote teaching has often compromised the quality of assessment and feedback.

Rafiq's narrative is a poignant reflection of the ongoing struggles and the demanding transition from traditional to online teaching amidst the pandemic. Yet, it is also a testament to his unwavering commitment to ensure continuity of learning for his students despite the daunting challenges. His story hints at the critical need for targeted strategies and support systems to facilitate the smooth integration of digital tools into EFL classrooms while ensuring that no student is left behind.

Another participant Belal, EFL Teacher said:

> *No, it's not possible now; no interaction or collaboration between students and the teacher. There is almost no chance for us or for them to ask any questions in online class, that is video recorded class. According to the govt directives, during the pandemic the learners are required to submit 2 assignments every week. We assess them and keep a record for the final results. (Belal, EFL teacher)*

Belal's description of the lack of student-teacher interaction in online classes captures an essential drawback of remote teaching. The nuance lies in his acknowledgment of the importance of this interaction and his subsequent lament at its loss. He highlights a crucial challenge: how the relational, dialogical nature of teaching, fundamental to the EFL context, is disrupted in the virtual mode. Belal's statement can be seen as a critique of how pandemic-induced adaptations have inadvertently taken away a critical aspect of teaching and learning – meaningful interaction.

His view about the assessment system during the pandemic, through weekly assignments, underscores an attempt to maintain some form of student engagement and evaluation. Yet, the tone of his recounting indicates a level of dissatisfaction. Perhaps he misses the immediacy of in-person feedback and the rich, nuanced understandings that come from face-to-face interaction with

students. The shift from a holistic assessment of student performance to a somewhat rigid assignment-based system seems to leave Belal somewhat disconcerted. His narrative also taps into the broader issue of the digital divide. While not directly mentioned, it is implied in his mention of video-recorded classes, hinting at the struggles both educators and students face due to limited internet access and other related challenges. This reflects the concerns of Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2020), who discusses the multifaceted nature of digital inequalities that impact educational outcomes.

Belal's account provides a stark reminder of the significant constraints imposed by the pandemic on the teaching environment. The sense of loss in his words, the challenges he outlines, and his concerns for the students' learning journey, all contribute to a compelling critique of the current situation. It is an urgent call to rethink and innovate how we approach EFL teaching in the face of such adversities, a call echoed by educators worldwide as they navigate the COVID-19-induced shifts in education.

7.5.1 Digital Skills Improvement

Interview data uncover significant insights regarding the digital competencies of EFL teachers in Bangladesh, particularly in the context of an abrupt shift to online learning instigated by the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, EFL Teacher Akram said:

> *Most of the teachers don't have enough digital skills to hold online class. Particularly, the senior and old teachers can't run computer, some of them don't have smart phones even. They need ICT training immediately. Sometimes, young teachers try to help them informally. But the government should be more serious about the issue, I think. More and more ICT training should be offered to the EFL teachers. My school head sometimes requests the younger teachers to help and train up the senior teachers. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

In a deeper analysis of EFL Teacher Akram's perspective, the first striking observation is the dichotomy of experience and skills within the teaching community. Akram points out the stark contrast between seasoned educators and their younger counterparts, specifically when it comes to leveraging technology for teaching. The fact that senior teachers struggle with digital skills, with some lacking basic tools like smartphones, unveils a significant digital divide.

It is important to highlight the impact of such a divide on the overall teaching environment. Akram's insights suggest that these deficiencies limit senior teachers' ability to engage with students in a virtual learning environment effectively. In a pandemic-ridden world where online classes are the new norm, such limitations could have profound implications for students' learning outcomes and the overall effectiveness of education delivery. This reflects the broader issues discussed by Hodges et al. (2020), who emphasise the importance of digital readiness among educators for effective online teaching.

Furthermore, Akram points to the response mechanisms to this problem. The informal assistance provided by the younger teachers is indicative of a community spirit within the teaching profession. It also hints at an innate capacity for adaptation within the educational system, where educators are working together to overcome collective challenges.

Interestingly, Akram's insights also suggest that the issue is not just about skills but access to digital tools. The reference to senior teachers lacking smartphones underlines a broader issue of digital equity, where access to the necessary hardware and software is as critical as the skills to use them. This dual challenge of skills and access underscores the complexity of the digital gap among teachers. This is consistent with the findings of Van Deursen and Van Dijk (2020), who discuss the multifaceted nature of the digital divide affecting both access and competency.

Finally, Akram's comments about his school head seeking the younger teachers' help to upskill their senior colleagues bring forth a notion of leadership and initiative within schools. It suggests that at the micro-level, stakeholders are stepping in to address this pressing issue. However, Akram implies that such measures might be insufficient or ad-hoc, highlighting the necessity for a more structured and systemic approach to digital skills training, preferably at the government level. His call for more extensive ICT training elucidates the urgency and importance of enhancing teachers' digital competencies in the current educational landscape.

Another participant Didar, EFL Teacher said:

> *Almost 80 percent teachers overall, not the EFL teachers alone, don't have digital skills required for holding virtual class using different devices and platforms. Even at present, many EFL teachers don't know how to operate laptops or PCs. The government is trying to train them up for enhancing digital skills. Things are changing gradually. They are improving. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

EFL Teacher Didar's account gives us a glimpse into the wider reality of the current digital divide among teachers, not just EFL teachers, in the Bangladeshi secondary education system. Didar's mention of the figure "80 percent" is not just a statistic, but a reflection of the magnitude of the issue at hand. Such a significant proportion of teachers lacking digital skills underlines the scale of the challenge in transitioning to online teaching and learning. This is echoed in the work of Rapanta et al. (2020), who highlight the global struggle among educators to adapt to digital platforms during the pandemic.

Didar's emphasis on the fact that many EFL teachers are still unable to operate laptops or PCs is a stark testament to the severity of the situation. These are basic tools in today's digital era, and it is concerning that a substantial number of teachers are not familiar with them. This observation starkly underscores the pressing need for digital literacy training among teachers, not as a luxury, but as a necessity in the 21st century.

The second part of Didar's statement presents a somewhat more optimistic picture. He acknowledges the government's attempts to bridge the digital skills gap among teachers. His choice of the word 'trying' suggests a degree of uncertainty or skepticism about the efficacy of these efforts. Yet, he also acknowledges that change is happening gradually. This admission carries a hopeful tone, signifying a cautious optimism for the future. It suggests an acknowledgment of the positive strides being made, albeit slowly.

Lastly, Didar's comment 'They are improving' serves as an encouraging note that ends his statement. These simple words reflect a sense of hope and confidence in the potential of teachers to adapt and learn. It brings a human element to the issue, acknowledging the teachers' capacity for growth and adaptation despite the challenges they face. This perspective, grounded in faith in the human spirit's resilience, provides an important counterpoint to the larger narrative of the challenges presented by the digital divide.

7.6 Observation Data Findings

This section presents the findings of my study that explored teachers' perspectives and experiences of the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. The data was gathered from the observation of 12 video-recorded EFL classes conducted by six participants (EFL teachers) and uploaded to Facebook/Youtube due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The

qualitative analysis of the data revealed several key findings that encompassed various aspects of teaching practice, including interaction in class, teaching methods, language use, focus of instruction, and feedback mechanisms.

Lack of Interaction and Collaboration

A key observation from the data is the glaring lack of interaction and collaboration, both between the teachers and students and among students themselves. This has significant ramifications for the learning and teaching procedure, specifically in relation to the successful application of the CLT method.

At the heart of the CLT approach is the concept of 'communicative competence' — the idea that language learning involves not just the mastery of grammatical rules, but also the ability to use language effectively in real-life communication. Interaction is fundamental to achieving communicative competence as it provides learners with practical, authentic contexts to use the target language, negotiate meaning, and make adjustments based on feedback. This aligns with the views of Ellis (2003), who emphasises the importance of interaction in language learning.

However, the lack of interaction observed in the video-recorded classes of all my participants seems to suggest that these opportunities for learning are being significantly curtailed. This void of interaction and collaboration can lead to an instruction that is devoid of the vital communicative element that the CLT approach advocates for. It is thus an indicator that the principles of the CLT are not being fully realised in these classrooms.

The absence of pair or group work also pointed to a concerning trend. Collaborative activities such as these are instrumental in the CLT approach as they offer learners the chance to use the language actively, exchange ideas, negotiate meaning, and develop social and cognitive skills. By not employing such activities, the teachers seem to be missing out on an important tool to foster a communicative environment in the classroom. This observation aligns with the findings of Nunan (1989), who highlights the effectiveness of pair and group work in promoting communicative competence.

It is critical to question why such interactional patterns exist in the observed classes. Is it due to a traditional culture of learning that prioritises teacher-centered instruction? Or could it be influenced by larger systemic issues such as the pressures of examination-focused teaching or

constraints of the online teaching environment during the COVID-19 pandemic? Or is it reflective of the teachers' lack of training or confidence in implementing CLT practices? These are questions that need further exploration. This is supported by Kumaravadivelu (2006), who discusses the challenges of shifting from traditional to communicative pedagogies in different educational contexts.

In addition, it is worth considering the implications of this lack of interaction and collaboration on students' language development. Without sufficient opportunities to interact in the target language and collaborate with peers, students may struggle to develop the necessary communicative competence, thereby limiting their ability to use English effectively in authentic contexts. This could have longer-term impacts on their language learning journey, potentially hindering their proficiency and confidence in using English. Harmer (2008) points out that regular interaction in the target language is crucial for developing both fluency and accuracy, which are essential for communicative competence.

Finally, the lack of interaction and collaboration observed in the video-recorded EFL classes represents a significant departure from the key tenets of the CLT approach. This departure highlights a critical gap between the theoretical underpinnings of CLT and its practical implementation in the classroom. As Brown (2001) suggests, teacher education programs must focus on equipping educators with the skills and confidence to create interactive and communicative classroom environments.

Teaching Methods and Language Use

The teaching methods employed in the observed classrooms also require closer scrutiny. A prevalent reliance on the lecture method was discerned, which contrasts starkly with the interactive, learner-centered approach that the CLT methodology espouses.

The CLT approach encourages a shift away from teacher-centered instruction, such as the traditional lecture method, towards more student-centered, participatory teaching methods. These methods are designed to involve learners actively in the language learning process, fostering a more engaging and effective learning environment. The observed adherence to the lecture method, therefore, seems to signify a departure from the CLT approach and presents a possible obstacle to the successful implementation of the CLT in these classrooms. Furthermore, the dominance of the

lecture method suggests an implicit belief that language learning is a passive process where knowledge is transmitted from teacher to student. This is contrary to the constructivist underpinnings of the CLT, which views language learning as an active, co-constructed process. This discrepancy between teaching methods and the theoretical principles of the CLT might influence the effectiveness of language instruction in these classrooms. Ellis (2003) emphasises that effective language learning involves active student participation and engagement, which are essential for developing communicative competence.

While the classes started with well-delivered introductions and all the participants (EFL teachers) displayed competent presentation skills, it is important to critically examine the implications of such one-sided communication. Proficient presentation skills are undeniably beneficial for effective teaching; however, the over-reliance on this mode of instruction might inhibit the interactive and participatory learning environment that the CLT methodology aims to foster.

Regarding language use, the teachers' use of the learners' first language (L1) to scaffold their learning is a noteworthy point of analysis. The use of L1 in a second language classroom is a contentious issue in the field of language teaching. Some scholars argue that the judicious use of L1 can be a useful tool for explaining complex concepts, providing a sense of comfort, and creating a positive learning environment. On the other hand, an over-dependence on L1 can limit exposure to the target language, inhibit thinking in the target language, and consequently slow down the language acquisition process. This debate is well-documented in the literature, with Harmer (2008) noting that while L1 can be useful, its overuse can detract from the immersive experience necessary for language acquisition.

From the data, it is clear that the teachers have sought to leverage L1 to scaffold the learning of English, potentially as a response to the learners' proficiency level or to alleviate anxieties associated with language learning. However, the degree to which this strategy is employed and the potential consequences on the learners' exposure to and immersion in the target language need to be carefully considered. Littlewood (2014) argues that while L1 use can provide immediate support, it should be balanced with ample opportunities for students to engage with and practice the target language. Nunan (1991) highlights that maximising target language use in the classroom is essential for language development. Richards and Rodgers (2001) further argue that the use of the target language in authentic contexts helps learners develop communicative competence by allowing them to practise and internalise language structures in meaningful ways. The approaches

to teaching and use of language observed in the prerecorded lessons pose many challenges and issues with regard to applying the principles of the CLT approach in the classroom.

Emphasis on Grammar and Writing

The analysis of the video-recorded classes revealed a predominant emphasis on grammar and writing skills. While these aspects are integral to language learning, the overwhelming focus on them raises important questions about the nature of language teaching and learning occurring in these classrooms, particularly in relation to the CLT approach.

The CLT approach emerged as a reaction against the traditional grammar-translation method, seeking to prioritise communication over mere structural accuracy. Despite this, my observation data suggest that the classes leaned heavily towards the teaching of grammar rules, followed by practice exercises. This approach could suggest a form of 'defossilisation' where old teaching habits persist despite new methodologies being introduced. Richards and Rodgers (2001) note that the persistence of traditional methods can hinder the effective adoption of communicative approaches.

The overemphasis on grammar might be symptomatic of a deep-rooted belief that language learning primarily involves learning about the language - its structures and forms - as opposed to learning how to use the language communicatively. Alternatively, it could be indicative of the influence of external factors such as examination requirements or curriculum guidelines. Whatever the cause, the current focus potentially sidelines the communicative aspect of language learning, which is a key tenet of the CLT method. Nunan (1991) argues that communicative language teaching should integrate grammatical instruction within a broader focus on communicative competence, rather than treating grammar as the primary goal.

Moreover, the observation data showed an instructional bias towards writing and reading, with a conspicuous neglect of speaking and listening skills. This imbalance in skill development could limit the learners' overall language competence and communicative abilities. The CLT approach advocates for a balanced focus on all four language skills (reading, writing, listening, speaking) to foster comprehensive language proficiency. By primarily focusing on writing and reading, the lessons might be depriving learners of the opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, which are crucial for real-life communication. This perspective is supported by Ellis (2003),

who emphasises the importance of integrating all language skills in instruction to achieve communicative competence.

It is also important to critically consider the implications of this instructional focus. For instance, could an overemphasis on grammar and writing deter learners from taking risks in spontaneous communication for fear of making errors? Additionally, how might this focus impact their ability to engage in authentic communicative situations that require a balance of all four language skills? In conclusion, the observed emphasis on grammar and writing poses critical challenges to the successful implementation of the CLT approach.

Vocabulary Instruction and Feedback

The instructional approach to vocabulary and feedback as evidenced in the video-recorded classes reveals some intriguing insights into the teaching practices in these EFL classrooms. Firstly, the approach to vocabulary instruction, primarily via rote memorisation of synonyms and antonyms, raises critical questions about the efficacy of such a method. While memorisation is a traditional technique often used in language learning, its effectiveness, particularly in vocabulary acquisition, is a subject of debate in language pedagogy. Vocabulary learning in the CLT approach is typically embedded within meaningful, communicative contexts rather than being isolated as a separate task. The intent is to foster deeper processing and more effective retention of new vocabulary, while also facilitating the application of these words in authentic communication.

However, my observation data suggest an instructional practice that might inadvertently promote mechanical, decontextualised memorization over meaningful engagement with vocabulary. The pedagogical repercussions of such an approach warrant consideration. Learners might acquire lists of words without fully understanding their usage, nuances, or collocations, thereby limiting their effective application in varied contexts. Also, the cognitive load of rote memorization might detract from learners' capacity to focus on other aspects of language learning, such as syntax, discourse, or pragmatics. As Schmitt (2010) highlights, vocabulary should be learned through extensive exposure and use in communicative tasks to ensure deeper processing and better retention.

Secondly, the apparent absence of corrective feedback in the observed classes represents a significant concern. Feedback is an integral component of effective language instruction, providing learners with an understanding of their performance and guiding their learning process.

Particularly in the context of the CLT approach, corrective feedback is crucial as it helps learners notice the gap between their interlanguage and the target language, fostering interlanguage development. Long et al. (2001) argues that interactional feedback is essential for language acquisition as it provides learners with opportunities to reflect on and refine their language use.

The lack of feedback observed could imply missed opportunities for language learning enhancement. Without feedback, students might continue making the same errors, hindering their language development and potentially fossilising incorrect forms. Furthermore, the absence of feedback could impact students' metacognitive awareness and self-regulation in their language learning journey, factors known to influence language learning success. As Ferris (2003) points out, timely and constructive feedback is essential for improving language accuracy and fluency.

This section set out to analyse video-recorded data from EFL classes in two Bangladeshi secondary schools, with an aim to understand the implementation of the CLT approach from the teachers' perspectives. The findings brought o light a range of instructional practices that seem to diverge from the fundamental principles of the CLT approach. The analysis identified a pervasive lack of interaction and collaboration in the observed classes, contrary to the interactive and learner-centered ethos of the CLT. This absence raises questions about the opportunities for authentic communication and language use in these classrooms. Similarly, a heavy reliance on lecture methods and a focus on grammar and writing were noted. These practices suggest a more traditional, teacher-centered approach to language instruction rather than the communicative, balanced-skill approach advocated by CLT. Moreover, the use of learners' first language (L1) for scaffolding and the prevalence of rote memorization for vocabulary learning present potential challenges in fully realising the goals of CLT. The focus on rote vocabulary learning may undermine the development of communicative competence as vocabulary is best learned in meaningful, authentic contexts. Lastly, the lack of corrective feedback in the classes observed could imply missed opportunities for aiding learners in language acquisition and development.

The findings of this study underscore the complexities involved in implementing a communicative approach like the CLT in contexts where traditional pedagogies have been the norm. It is critical to acknowledge that the shift towards the CLT approach in language teaching is not a simple switch but a gradual, complex process involving changes at multiple levels - pedagogy, teacher beliefs, curriculum, assessment, and learner expectations. As Richards and Rodgers (2001) emphasise,

successful implementation of CLT requires systemic support and professional development to help teachers transition from traditional methods to more communicative practices.

7.7 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to investigate the EFL teachers' experiences of implementing the CLT approach in classrooms pre and during the COVID-19 pandemic. The issues that emerged from the data were widely diverse, intricated, and interconnected. For example, when it came to large class issue, the EFL teacher shortage and teachers' usual pedagogical practice met at the same point. All were connected to the government rule of employing only one English teacher per secondary school. It also entails that the obstacles to the implementation of the CLT approach might stem from such regulation of the government. Another important aspect that has been investigated is that it is the government's misaligned assessment policy that hinders the EFL teachers from making the learners practise two important language skills such as listening and speaking. Therefore, based on the interview and observation data it can be concluded that the existing government policy on English language education in general and the CLT in particular, should also be taken into consideration along with the EFL teachers' varied experiences for the successful implementation of the CLT approach in secondary EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

Chapter 8: EFL Teachers' Professional Development Support

8.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed EFL teachers' practice and experiences of the CLT approach implementation in their classrooms. In this chapter, I will show the Continuing Professional Development support they are obtaining from the government, that is, from the school leaders and educational administrators. This chapter is shaped around the 4th research question that investigated mainstream secondary EFL teachers' key beliefs and perceptions about the Continuing Professional Development support provided to them along with the perspectives of the school leaders and the education administrators. These are then mapped onto the current government policy recommendations both in a normal setting and in a COVID-19 context. The analyses in this chapter are related to the fourth research question in my study: What formal teacher training and CPD have teachers received or been offered? I have also investigated what additional support was provided to teachers during the pandemic situation. Following the presentation of this last study chapter, the EFL teachers' beliefs and perceptions will be discussed and evaluated through current relevant literature in the Discussion chapter (**Chapter 9**). The analysis in the following sections of this chapter would be guided by the themes that emerge out of the semi-structured interviews with the participants.

8.1 Teachers' Conceptual Knowledge of CPD

8.1.1 The Idea of CPD

Based on the analysis of the interview data, it is apparent that EFL teachers perceive a connection between their initial teacher training and ongoing professional growth. The majority of participants interviewed expressed dissatisfaction with the CPD offerings, deeming them inadequate for their needs. This dissatisfaction aligns with global findings, such as those by Opfer and Pedder (2011), who argue that effective CPD is often hampered by systemic issues and lack of relevance to teachers' actual classroom needs. The participants conveyed their concerns over the insufficiency of available teacher education possibilities. Nevertheless, the consensus among the majority of participants was that the current training facilities, including both initial teacher training and in-service teacher

training, were considered crucial. This is consistent with the literature emphasising the need for continuous professional development to keep teachers up-to-date with pedagogical innovations (Borg, 2015). For example, EFL teacher Akram said:

> *Very insufficient, I have to say. I did a CPD training on CLT about 8 years ago. We are always applying traditional methods in teaching our students because we couldn't update our knowledge. We don't have latest knowledge about English language teaching. If we gather new knowledge, we can apply it with our students; at least we can try to apply it. So, I think, there is no alternative to training. We need it again and again. It should be continuous. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram's perspective highlights the critical issue of outdated training content, which is a common problem in many educational contexts as noted by Darling-Hammond et al. (2017). The need for ongoing CPD is well-supported in the literature, which suggests that professional development should be a continuous process to be effective (Desimone, Garet and others, 2015).

However, EFL teacher Didar is of a different opinion. He claimed that there was no appropriate training for the EFL teachers. He also considered the current training provision quite inadequate. He rather emphasised the need for continuous teacher training to keep pace with curricular innovation. He stated:

> *There is no specialised training for the EFL teachers on the CLT approach. Even, the B.Ed training is not sufficient, I think. We need more and more up-to-date training for better output from teachers. The govt is changing curriculum, so teachers must be trained accordingly. As new things have come up, teachers must have been prepared for that change. But there are no sufficient initiatives, I haven't seen any. (Didar, EFL teacher)*

Didar's perspective strongly underscores the significance of specialised and continuous training in the EFL teaching context. His main contention lies in the absence of specialised training on the CLT approach. This is of paramount importance, given that the CLT is a primary method for teaching EFL and requires teachers to have an in-depth understanding of the approach to effectively implement it in their classrooms. Didar's perspective implies that without specialised training, teachers may face challenges in applying this teaching methodology effectively, potentially impacting the overall learning outcomes of the students. This aligns with the findings of Farrell (2018), who emphasises the need for targeted CPD to improve instructional practices in specific pedagogical areas.

Moreover, Didar expresses concerns about the insufficiency of the existing B.Ed training. This suggests his perception that the B.Ed course alone does not provide teachers with the comprehensive set of skills and knowledge required for efficient EFL teaching. This view is supported by Hayes (2014), who argues that initial teacher education programs often fail to equip teachers with the practical skills needed for effective classroom practice. The fact that Didar calls for "more and more up-to-date training" indicates his recognition of the dynamic nature of the education field. As pedagogical techniques and learners' needs evolve, so must the skills and knowledge of educators. Thus, Didar envisions CPD not merely as a one-time process but as a lifelong endeavor that continually aligns teachers' competencies with the evolving educational landscape. This perspective is corroborated by the works of Villegas-Reimers (2003), who advocates for lifelong learning in the teaching profession.

Didar also voices a clear call to action in the light of changes to the curriculum. His assertion that "the govt is changing curriculum, so teachers must be trained accordingly" suggests a belief that there should be a direct correlation between changes in the education system and the professional development provided to teachers. He thinks that if the government introduces changes to the curriculum or teaching approaches, these should ideally be accompanied by suitable training initiatives that prepare teachers for the transition. This aligns with Fullan's (2015b) theory of educational change, which posits that professional development should be closely linked to curriculum changes to ensure effective implementation.

Furthermore, Didar's observations provide a critical lens on the educational system at large. His comments, although grounded in personal experience, evoke a wider critique of a system that appears unresponsive to the needs of its educators. The phrase 'I haven't seen any' resonates as a critique of a system-wide apathy towards the genuine professional needs of teachers. By voicing his observations, Didar tacitly challenges the status quo and calls for systemic changes that will create a more supportive, productive, and respectful professional environment for teachers. This echoes Hargreaves and Fullan's (2012) concept of professional capital, which highlights the importance of investment in teachers' professional development to enhance the overall quality of education.

To conclude, Didar's perspective emphasises the need for continuous, specialised, and responsive training as integral parts of CPD in the EFL teaching context. His concerns reflect a broader issue of a system failing to provide teachers with the professional support they need to excel in their roles and adapt to pedagogical advancements effectively.

EFL teacher Nahid is a bit radical in her views on EFL teachers' CPD provision. She questioned about the EFL teachers' conceptualisation of Continuing Professional Development. She was also doubtful about the education leaders' and administrators' having any idea of CPD. She said,

> *CPD support, in fact, no CPD, no initiative about this. I think, most teachers don't have any idea about what CPD is. I think, our authority also doesn't consider that CPD is an important aspect for teaching and education system; that's why they don't take any initiative about this. Rather, PLC (professional learning community) is running sometimes a little bit, and teachers discuss things with other teachers in his/her school and also with teachers of other neighbouring schools, it's good, I think. (Nahid, EFL Teacher)*

Nahid's perspective, distinct yet overlapping with Didar's, throws light on the lack of awareness and structural support for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) within the education system in Bangladesh. Nahid's assertion that "most teachers don't have any idea about what CPD is" suggests a systemic failure not only in the provision but also in the communication and education about the very concept of CPD. This reveals a gap between the educators and the resources that should ideally be helping them to improve their skills and knowledge base, which is alarming in an education system where teachers are expected to foster their students' constant learning. This concern aligns with the observations by Kennedy (2014), who highlights the need for clear communication and understanding of CPD among educators to ensure its effectiveness.

Furthermore, Nahid's criticism of the authorities for not considering CPD important reveals a deeper level of disenchantment. The suggestion that "our authority also doesn't consider that CPD is an important aspect for teaching and education system" reflects an emotional response to a perceived disconnect between the authorities and the educators on the ground. This critical insight portrays Nahid's feelings of being undervalued and ignored in the very system that should ideally be nurturing and supporting their professional development. This sentiment is echoed in the works of Day and Sachs (2004), who emphasise the importance of recognising and valuing teachers' professional development as central to educational improvement.

Nahid's reference to the implementation of Professional Learning Community (PLC) brings out a glimmer of hope and optimism. When Nahid remarks that PLC is "good, I think", we catch a glimpse of the emotional relief and satisfaction that arises from peer-to-peer learning and professional solidarity. However, the optimism is quickly tempered by the acknowledgment that these initiatives

are inconsistent, underscoring a longing for more regular and systematic opportunities for collaborative learning and growth. This reflects the findings of Stoll et al. (2006), who advocate for the establishment of consistent and supportive PLCs to enhance professional development.

On a more critical note, Nahid's narrative serves as a plea for change - a plea for the authorities to acknowledge the value of CPD and take proactive steps towards promoting it among teachers. It is a call to reevaluate and restructure the system in a way that not only recognises but also addresses the professional needs and aspirations of EFL teachers. This aligns with the views of Avalos (2011), who stresses the need for systemic reforms to support effective CPD.

Overall, Nahid's perspective brings forward a critique of the existing system and its handling of CPD, particularly in the context of EFL education in Bangladesh. Nahid's insights highlight the urgent need for raising awareness about CPD, promoting it as an essential aspect of the educational system, and fostering a culture of collaborative learning among teachers. By doing so, the system can better equip its teachers to handle the challenges of EFL teaching and positively impact the quality of English language education in Bangladesh.

EFL teacher trainer Enam acknowledged that CPD support for EFL teachers were insufficient and also not continuous. He reported:

> *CPD support for the EFL teachers is a continuous process ideally. It is unavoidable for teachers' professional development. CPD is a broad idea, it can be anything which is continuous and at the same time beneficial for teachers' professional well-being. In our sector, CPD means mainly training of the teachers. Training facilities are not sufficient for the EFL teachers, and it's not continuous. I know, many EFL teachers haven't yet got any other trainings except the initial one-year B.Ed training. At present the govt is trying to ensure ICT training for teachers of all subjects including English. (Enam, EFL teacher trainer)*

Enam conceptualises CPD as a "continuous process" that is crucial for teachers' professional development. His emphasis on continuity is noteworthy. It highlights the recognition that professional development is not a one-time affair but an ongoing journey of learning and growth for teachers. This perspective aligns with modern pedagogical principles that assert the need for teachers to stay updated with evolving teaching strategies, learner needs, and curriculum changes (Timperley *et al.*, 2008).

Furthermore, Enam positions CPD as a broad concept that could encompass any activity beneficial for teachers' professional well-being. This view implies a holistic approach to professional development, one that goes beyond formal training to potentially include activities such as collaborative learning, self-study, action research, peer observation, and mentoring. It opens up possibilities for diverse forms of professional development tailored to individual needs and contexts, offering a more comprehensive and flexible understanding of CPD. This holistic approach is supported by Cordingley et al. (2015), who argue for diverse and contextually relevant professional development activities.

However, Enam also offers a critique of the current system, indicating that the existing training facilities for EFL teachers are inadequate. His remark about many EFL teachers not having access to any training beyond the initial B.Ed program indicates a severe lack of ongoing professional development opportunities. This critique underscores the systemic barriers that teachers face in their professional growth and development. Such barriers are highlighted in the research by Kennedy (2016), who emphasises the need for systemic support to ensure effective CPD.

Enam also recognises the government's attempt to ensure ICT training for teachers of all subjects, including English. However, the underlying tone suggests that these attempts are not enough to address the overall deficit in CPD support. The observation indicates a perceived need for more comprehensive, continuous, and subject-specific professional development initiatives. This is in line with the findings of Guskey (2002), who asserts that effective professional development must be ongoing and relevant to teachers' specific instructional contexts.

In brief, Enam's insights provide a comprehensive perspective on CPD, both in terms of what it should ideally entail and how it is currently implemented for EFL teachers in Bangladesh. His critique of the existing system, combined with the vision for a broader continuous approach to CPD, underscores the need for systemic changes to enhance teachers' professional development and, ultimately, the quality of EFL teaching.

On the other hand, headteachers and assistant head teachers claimed that there were CPD opportunities for secondary teachers. For example, head teacher Mala reported:

> *After starting the teaching job, like other subject teachers an EFL teacher receives the initial teacher training, I mean, B.Ed course for 1 year; it's compulsory. But afterwards, he may or may not avail other training opportunities, it's optional. Sometimes, there are*

CPD chances for the teachers, but they are a bit reluctant to attend. (Mala, Head teacher)

It appeared that this head teacher considered the existing CPD opportunity sufficient. She further said:

There are many CPD opportunities for teachers. They can attend various trainings. Generally, teachers hold discussions among themselves in times of their need. They talk to their colleagues in this school or their friends at other schools. Some of them take help from online resources, I know. In this age of information technology, it's not difficult for them. (Mala, Head teacher)

Headteacher Mala's perspective suggests a belief that sufficient CPD opportunities exist and that teachers' reluctance to participate is a key issue. This view contrasts sharply with the teachers' perspectives and aligns with the findings of Kennedy (2016), who notes that perceptions of CPD sufficiency often differ between school leaders and teachers. Mala's comments highlight a potential disconnect in understanding what constitutes effective CPD and how it is perceived by those directly involved in teaching.

Away, headteacher Touhid also acknowledged that B.Ed, the initial teacher education was good training. He said:

It is difficult to say if the training is sufficient or not; it depends. I personally think B.Ed is good training and sufficient for taking effective class for all subjects in school . Again, teachers also go to training after finishing B.Ed throughout their career. There are many training programmes all the year round. (Touhid, Head teacher)

Touhid's comments suggest a more nuanced view, acknowledging variability in CPD sufficiency depending on individual needs and contexts. His belief in the adequacy of the B.Ed program and subsequent training aligns with Desimone's (2009) framework for effective professional development, which emphasises the importance of content-specific training and ongoing professional learning opportunities. Both headteachers appeared to believe that the current professional development opportunities were sufficient to meet the needs of the teachers. They also mentioned the availability of online resources for training the teachers. Headteacher Mala's view that teachers are less motivated to participate in training could be indicative of a broader systemic issue where the quality or relevance of CPD is not meeting teachers' expectations, a concern echoed

in the works of Guskey (2002) who points out that motivation and engagement in CPD are often linked to its perceived relevance and impact.

It was observed that both the head teachers were of the same opinion that the current professional development opportunities were sufficient to meet the needs of the teachers. They also mentioned the availability of online resources for training the teachers. It appeared that Head teacher Mala rather held teachers less motivated about participating in training.

On the other hand, assistant head teacher Prodip acknowledged that no teacher training was continuous. He reported:

> *Initial teacher education, Bachelor of Education course for one year, is available at secondary level. Generally, after joining at school, EFL teachers go to take training at training colleges. B.Ed course is mandatory for all teachers. But CPD is not a common term in our country, I think. Actually, almost no training is continuous here; all are one off. If anybody gets it once, that's all for him or her because there are so many teachers who require training. (Prodip, Assistant head teacher)*

Prodip's acknowledgment of the lack of continuous training reflects a critical gap in the CPD framework, which is consistent with international findings on the need for sustained and ongoing professional development (Timperley *et al.*, 2008). His comments highlight a significant issue in the current CPD structure in Bangladesh, where one-off training sessions fail to provide the sustained support and development that teachers need.

So, from the overall discussion on this point, two aspects seemed to emerge. Firstly, there was no clear demarcation line, as perceived by the EFL teachers, between initial teacher training and Continuing Professional Development opportunities; both were synonymous to them. Most of the participants (except school heads and assistant heads) considered the current practice of teacher training inadequate. This perception aligns with the broader literature suggesting that initial training and CPD should be distinct yet complementary aspects of teacher development (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017). And secondly, there appeared to exist a lack of consensus between the EFL teachers and the school leaders about the present teacher education provision. The fact the school heads considered the professional enhancement provisions for EFL teachers ample might be due to their proximity to the higher authorities who formulated educational policies and decisions regarding implementations thereafter. This disparity highlights the importance of

involving teachers in the planning and evaluation of CPD programs to ensure they meet the actual needs of educators, as suggested by Avalos (2011).

8.1.2 No Special Training on the CLT Approach

EFL teacher trainer Delwar considered the training opportunities for EFL teachers inadequate. He stated:

> *Yes, there is CPD opportunities for secondary EFL teachers, but very little. We do not have sufficient number of trained teachers for practicing the CLT approach in classroom. As it is continuous, in our TTC teachers are given training for 1 year, on top of this there are short term trainings under various projects, where they are given ideas on the CLT approach, they are made to practise the CLT, if needed it is given in the form of revised training or refresh training. That is, a teacher even after getting B.Ed training (Initial teacher training) takes short term trainings where they are made to practice the CLT. (Delwar, EFL teacher trainer)*

Delwar's perspective highlights a significant issue in the CPD framework for EFL teachers in Bangladesh. The inadequacy of specialised CLT-based training reflects broader concerns in the literature about the mismatch between available training and the specific pedagogical needs of teachers (Hayes, 2014). Delwar's comments also suggest that while initial training provides a foundation, the lack of continuous and targeted CPD limits teachers' ability to effectively implement CLT in their classrooms. This aligns with the findings of Borg (2015), who emphasises the need for ongoing professional development to keep pace with pedagogical advancements.

EFL teacher trainer Fahad also confirmed that there was a lack of CLT-based specialised training opportunities. He further stated that the CPD opportunities are dependent on foreign funds. If there was available fund, the training would continue. He said:

> *Very few trainings are CLT-based. The CPD support is much needed for professional development of the secondary EFL teachers. Current CPD opportunities are not enough, I agree. Our initial teacher training B.Ed is good but not sufficient for continuous development. Our training opportunities are subject to the availability of project, that is, in most cases international funding. So, it's not continuous. For example, TQI-1, TQI-2 and SEQAEP, EIA are some of the projects. They are finished by now. Currently, a new*

project SEDP has been launched by the govt with the financial help from World Bank
and ADB and technical assistance from British Council. (Fahad, EFL teacher trainer)

Fahad's comments underscore the dependency on international funding for CPD initiatives, highlighting a systemic vulnerability in the sustainability of professional development programs. This reliance on external funds can lead to inconsistent and fragmented training opportunities, which is a common issue in many developing countries (Avalos, 2011). The discontinuation of key projects such as TQI-1, TQI-2, SEQAEP, and EIA further exacerbates the problem, leaving a gap in the ongoing development of EFL teachers. This situation is consistent with the findings of Kennedy (2016), who points out the challenges of maintaining continuous professional development in the face of financial constraints.

The EFL teacher trainees were also of the same opinion that there were limited opportunities for the EFL teachers' professional enhancement. EFL teacher trainee Arnab stated:

CPD is very important for our professional improvement. In our country if a teacher gets
a training once, most likely he will not get that kind of training again. We are attending
B.Ed training (Bachelor of Education) now, an initial training compulsory for all
secondary teachers including EFL teachers. But if we consider Continuing Professional
Development, we have very limited scopes not only for EFL teachers but for all other
teachers. Trainings are not continuous here; (Arnab, EFL teacher trainer)

Arnab's perspective sheds light on the broader issue of limited CPD opportunities not just for EFL teachers but for all secondary teachers. His experience resonates with the concerns raised by teacher trainers about the sporadic nature of professional development in Bangladesh. The lack of continuity in training programs can hinder teachers' ability to stay updated with new teaching methodologies and educational technologies, a concern highlighted by Timperley et al. (2008).

EFL teacher trainee Dulal, as a newcomer to secondary EFL teaching, also mentioned the same points. He said,

We are doing 1 year B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) training now, this is initial training
for all secondary level teachers. This is compulsory also. But as to the scopes for
Continuing Professional Development there are very limited opportunities; I have heard
from my senior colleagues that teacher training programmes are not continuous. If we
do a particular training once, we can't do it again. (Dulal, EFL teacher trainee)

Dulal's observations as a new entrant into the teaching profession highlight the same issues of limited and non-continuous CPD opportunities. His reliance on senior colleagues for information about training opportunities indicates a lack of systematic communication and support structures for professional development. This aligns with the findings of Day and Sachs (2004), who emphasise the importance of structured and continuous CPD for the effective professional growth of teachers.

From the above data set, it is seen that all three EFL teacher trainers and three EFL teacher trainees were of the same opinion about the CPD provisions for EFL teachers. They all agreed on the point that the professional development opportunities for EFL teachers were limited. Those opportunities were also not continuous. This consensus among trainers and trainees underscores the need for a more structured and sustainable approach to CPD in the Bangladeshi education system. The findings reflect a broader issue in many educational contexts where CPD is seen as sporadic and insufficient to meet the evolving needs of teachers (Opfer and Pedder, 2011).

In conclusion, the lack of specialised and continuous CLT-based training opportunities for EFL teachers in Bangladesh is a significant barrier to effective teaching. The reliance on international funding for CPD projects creates instability and inconsistency in professional development programs.

If we hear from educational administrators such as District Education Officer (DEO) and Deputy Director (DD), they also expressed views that were quite similar to those of the head teachers. Both administrators considered the professional development of the EFL teachers sufficient and continuous simultaneously. For example, DEO Akhtar stated:

> *There are teacher training opportunities. Although it is not our main duty to arrange training, sometimes we are also involved in CPD programmes for teachers to assist the teacher training colleges. Yes, CPD is continuous, it runs throughout the year. (Akhtar, DEO)*

And DD Arunlal said:

> *As in most cases, teachers are totally inexperienced when they start their job, so they need training. It may be in the form of CPD or initial teacher training. Sometimes, we coordinate training for teachers locally with the help of master trainers who are trained by the Teacher Training College trainers. It's a continuous process and it's for teachers of all subjects, even for head teachers, not only for English teachers. (Arunlal, DD).*

The stance of the school leaders and educational administrators on this issue might imply that they were closer to the policymakers and higher authorities than the common EFL teachers. So, there was seen a clear divergence between the perspectives of the school leaders and administrators and the EFL teachers. The alignment with higher authorities could influence their perception of the sufficiency and continuity of CPD programs, as they may have a broader view of the policy implementation process. This perspective is supported by Day and Sachs (2004), who note that proximity to policy formulation can shape administrators' views on the effectiveness of CPD initiatives.

One point is quite clear from the interview data that the training programmes in themselves, whether initial teacher training or other non-compulsory training, were continuous. But these were not meant for the EFL teachers as a continuous practice. Rather, from the EFL teachers' side, they were once and for all in their whole teaching career for most of the teachers. This issue highlights a significant gap between policy intentions and practical realities, a concern echoed by Fullan (2015b), who emphasises the importance of aligning CPD initiatives with the actual needs and experiences of teachers. Due to the high volume of teachers and the low number of training colleges, a teacher could get only a single opportunity in his or her professional life. This was also true for the English-related trainings as there were almost no or very limited specialised training on the CLT approach. This scarcity of continuous and specialised training for EFL teachers aligns with the findings of Hayes (2014), who identifies systemic barriers to effective professional development in many developing countries. It can logically be assumed that with such a less professional development opportunity it was really difficult for the EFL teachers to implement the new curriculum of the CLT approach. Therefore, this discontinuity in professional development provision for EFL teachers at the secondary level of education was really an important issue if we wanted to explore the big picture of the policy and practice of the CLT approach in secondary classrooms in Bangladesh.

8.1.3 Modification of Teacher Education Delivery Method

Interview data showed that all the 18 participants I interviewed were of the same opinion about the modification or upgradation of the teacher education delivery method. They expressed clear views strongly supporting the introduction of independent Continuing Professional Development. They hoped that it would be helpful in many ways. Their opinions also resonated with the

government's current policy on the digitalisation of the education system. EFL teacher Akram reported,

> *I support this idea of independent CPD for secondary EFL teachers. We will be benefitted enormously. Consequently, the learners will be benefitted. Probably, it will not cost much money, but sincere initiatives from the higher authority is a must to start and run such training. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram displays a strong belief in the potential of independent CPD to enhance the teaching experience and, by extension, the learning outcomes for students. His view on independent CPD highlights a foundational understanding that improved teacher development invariably leads to improved student achievement. This perspective aligns with the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who emphasise the positive correlation between effective teacher professional development and student outcomes. His enthusiastic endorsement of independent CPD suggests that he values professional autonomy and the opportunity for teachers to guide their development. This viewpoint aligns with the broader shift in the field of teacher education towards more learner-centred, autonomous, and individualised professional development practices (Desimone, Garet and others, 2015). The call for more personalised and teacher-directed CPD reflects a growing recognition of the need for professional development that is tailored to the specific needs and contexts of teachers (Kennedy, 2014).

Akram's emphasis on 'sincere initiatives from the higher authority' underlines his understanding of the structural factors that influence the success of such programs. His call for sincerity implies that he recognises the potential for bureaucratic indifference or tokenism, which could undermine the effectiveness of the initiative. This sentiment is echoed by Fullan (2015a), who argues that genuine commitment from administrative bodies is crucial for the successful implementation of educational reforms. It suggests that Akram believes in the need for proactive and genuine commitment from administrative bodies in launching and sustaining independent CPD. Additionally, Akram's comment about the potential cost-effectiveness of independent CPD offers an economic perspective on the modification of teacher education delivery. His assertion that it 'will not cost much money' reveals a pragmatic understanding of the financial constraints that often impact educational initiatives. This reflects a desire for cost-effective yet impactful measures to improve teacher training.

In summary, Akram's perspective on independent CPD reflects a deep understanding of its potential benefits for teachers and learners. His insights underscore the importance of administrative commitment, financial feasibility, and teacher autonomy, all of which are crucial considerations in the modification of teacher education delivery methods. His insights shed light on the aspirations, concerns, and practical considerations of EFL teachers in Bangladesh, providing a vital perspective for the broader discussion on improving teacher education delivery.

Another participant Head teacher Touhid said,

> *It would be better to arrange independent CPD at present pandemic situation. I don't know what is going on at the policy level about this. Maybe the government is trying to bring changes to present CPD opportunities for teachers. (Touhid, Head teacher)*

From his position as Head Teacher, Touhid's endorsement of independent CPD, particularly in the light of the ongoing pandemic, signals a personal awareness of the profound changes the education sector has been facing. His remarks hint at an emotional struggle to navigate these shifts and find adaptive solutions to ensure the continuation of quality education despite the external constraints. This struggle manifests a deep commitment to his professional role and a resilience to confront and adapt to the challenges of the times. This perspective aligns with the broader literature on the necessity of flexible and adaptive professional development in response to crises (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2020).

Touhid's uncertainty about policy-level actions resonates with a sense of disconnection and perhaps a feeling of being overlooked in the decision-making process. His statement, "I don't know what is going on at the policy level about this," may reflect personal frustration and a critical stance towards the current state of communication between policy makers and educational practitioners. This critical viewpoint suggests a desire for a more democratic, transparent, and inclusive process where the insights and experiences of educators are valued and integrated into policy decisions. When he discusses the possibility of the government bringing changes to the present CPD opportunities, Touhid's sentiment seems to be laced with a cautious optimism. This guarded hope could be rooted in past experiences of unfulfilled promises or slow progress in policy reform, further illustrating a critical awareness of the bureaucratic hurdles that often impact educational initiatives.

In summary, Touhid's insights highlight key areas for consideration in the modification of teacher education delivery methods. His perspective underscores the necessity for adaptability in the face of challenges like the pandemic, a need for greater transparency and involvement in policy processes, and cautious optimism about potential improvements to CPD opportunities. His insights add valuable complexity to the analysis, illustrating the intricate balance between practical needs, policy decisions, and the aspirations of educators.

From the interview data above, the participants seemed to be quite optimistic about this autonomous professional development approach. Although few participants were somewhat pessimistic about the implementation of it, most of them were highly optimistic about the launching of independent CPD for all secondary teachers including the EFL teachers.

8.2 Covid-Induced Changes in Teacher Professional Development

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a variety of effects on schooling at all levels all over the world. Similarly, in Bangladesh, a sudden and enforced switch from in-person instruction to online instruction required institutions and teacher educators to act rapidly. In accordance with the demands of teacher education programmes, they also had to develop learning environments for prospective teachers. According to the interview data, the emerging issues at that time were the lack of any special government policy regarding the teacher professional development at the secondary level education, the absence of face-to-face teaching practicum, and the lack of additional support from the education administrators and managers. These three points are exposed below with relevant data support.

8.2.1 Government Preparedness and Teacher Development Resources during the Pandemic

Almost all the participants reported that the government did not devise any particular policy or step for teacher professional development during the COVID-19 situation except for directing online teacher training. EFL teacher trainer Delwar reported,

We haven't yet got any additional resources. We are getting normal facilities which we usually get as teacher trainers, but there is no special arrangements or materials for COVID situation. (Delwar, EFL teacher trainer)

Delwar's observation highlights the lack of targeted governmental response to the unique challenges posed by the pandemic. This is consistent with global findings that many educational systems were unprepared for the sudden shift to online learning and lacked the necessary infrastructure to support effective professional development (Bozkurt and Sharma, 2020). The absence of additional resources specifically for the COVID-19 situation underscores a critical gap in the government's preparedness and resource allocation.

EFL teacher trainer Fahad also considered conducting EFL teacher training challenging during the pandemic situation. He also pointed out the absence of government initiatives and resources to respond to that disastrous situation. He said,

There is no special policy or initiatives during the pandemic except the transition to virtual class and teaching practice. We are working with resources available to us as before. Online resources for school students are available in some govt websites, but not our training materials. (Fahad, EFL teacher trainer)

Fahad's comments reflect a broader issue of insufficient policy response and resource allocation, which is echoed in the research by Schleicher (2020), who notes that the effectiveness of online education during the pandemic was severely limited by the lack of adequate digital infrastructure and resources. The reliance on existing materials and the lack of new, pandemic-specific training resources highlight the challenges faced by educators in adapting to the new mode of teaching.

EFL teacher trainee Benazir expressed his frustration about his experience of online teacher training. He said,

Just one change. Online training via ZOOM is introduced. So many challenges there are. Weak internet connection is the main factor. Many trainees specially from rural areas can't connect and attend the session. I also feel frustrated when sometimes I can't connect. Again, many trainee teachers don't have smartphones or laptops. All people know these factors, but nothing to do. (Benazir, EFL teacher trainee)

Benazir's frustration with online training underscores significant digital divides and technological barriers that many educators face. This is consistent with findings from the literature that highlight

issues such as unequal access to technology and internet connectivity as major obstacles to effective online learning (Williamson, Eynon and Potter, 2020). The inability of many trainees to participate fully in online training sessions due to these factors further exacerbates the challenges of professional development during the pandemic.

From the interview data set it is evident that the readiness for the COVID-19 pandemic situation on the part of the government with regard to EFL teacher professional development was not sufficient. Neither any special policies were framed nor any resources were arranged for the EFL teachers. Consequently, this lack of government readiness might affect the CLT approach implementation in secondary classrooms in Bangladesh. The lack of targeted support and resources during the pandemic may hinder the effective adoption of innovative teaching methods, as supported by the literature which emphasises the need for robust support systems to facilitate educational reforms (Fullan, 2015b). The insights from the participants underscore the importance of preparedness, adequate infrastructure, and equitable access to technology in ensuring that teacher professional development can continue effectively, even in challenging circumstances. This perspective aligns with the broader educational discourse advocating for more resilient and flexible education systems capable of withstanding such disruptions (Reimers *et al.*, 2020).

8.2.2 Absence of Face-To-Face Teaching Practicum

EFL teacher trainer Delwar expressed his views on the lack of face-to-face teaching practice during the initial teacher training. He thought that even if the teachers had online practice teaching, this skill gap among the new teachers would have a great impact on their future teaching practice. He said,

> *Face-to-face would definitely be better, of course, there is a gap. But as we are bound to do virtual training at this situation, virtual training is arranged for them, they are also trained in how they can conduct online session. And in some cases, they are informed theoretically how real classes should be conducted. Still there is a skill gap, I think. (Delwar, EFL teacher trainer)*

As an EFL Teacher Trainer, Delwar is positioned uniquely to assess the effects of online training on both teachers and students. His statement that "Face-to-face would definitely be better" suggests a strong belief in the value of traditional, in-person instruction. This sentiment points to the tangible

and intangible benefits that face-to-face interactions bring to the learning environment, such as real-time feedback, nuanced communication, and fostering rapport, which are often hard to replicate in an online setting. This perspective is supported by the literature, which highlights the importance of face-to-face interaction in developing teaching skills and professional competencies (Fishman *et al.*, 2013).

Delwar's acknowledgment of a 'gap' indicates an awareness of the deficiencies or missing elements in the current virtual training approach. This perceived gap could be a reflection of the difficulty in achieving the same depth and quality of instruction online as in face-to-face interactions. It may also refer to the diminished practical, hands-on experience that trainee teachers are missing in a virtual context. When Delwar mentions that trainees are 'informed theoretically how real classes should be conducted,' it suggests that the shift to online training may have led to an overreliance on theory at the expense of practical teaching experience. This imbalance might be creating an experiential vacuum that leaves trainees ill-prepared for the realities of actual classrooms. This aligns with the research of Darling-Hammond et al. (2017), who stress the need for balanced teacher training programs that integrate both theoretical knowledge and practical experience.

Furthermore, Delwar's insight into the existence of a "skill gap" offers a critical evaluation of the training process. This 'gap' implies that online training, in its current form, may not be equipping trainee teachers with the necessary skills to effectively implement the CLT approach. Delwar's observations thus underscore the need for substantive modifications in the training process to address these gaps.

Finally, Delwar's perspective encapsulates a well-rounded critique of the online training paradigm from a trainer's viewpoint. His observations and insights bring to the fore important concerns about the effectiveness of online training and the potential consequences of the absence of face-to-face teaching practicum in EFL teacher training.

EFL teacher trainee Dulal also showed his disappointment about the online initial teacher training. He pointed out some obstacles that substantively hindered the training. He said,

> *It's now online. We take classes via Zoom and our instructors observe and evaluate them. But we can't do the teaching practice smoothly due to poor internet connection. To be honest, this portion has lost its importance in our evaluation system. (Dulal, EFL teacher trainee)*

As an EFL Teacher Trainee, Dulal's experiences directly mirror the current struggles of navigating a digital transformation in education, which has been expedited by the global pandemic. His remark on the transition to online teaching and the evaluation of teaching practices through platforms like Zoom reveals some of the logistical challenges of this shift. The mention of a "poor internet connection" highlights the technical obstacles that can undermine the effectiveness of online teaching and learning. It brings into focus the digital divide which can disproportionately affect trainees and students from regions with insufficient technological infrastructure, potentially hindering their ability to fully participate in online instruction.

Dulal's comment that the online teaching practicum "has lost its importance in our evaluation system" provides a critical view of the current evaluation mechanisms in place. This statement implies a dissonance between the traditional evaluation metrics and the realities of teaching in a digital environment. His insights suggest that the existing evaluation system may not fully acknowledge or accommodate the challenges posed by online teaching, potentially diminishing the perceived value of teaching practicum in the training process.

Overall, Dulal's insights offer an invaluable look into the realities of the shift to online learning from the perspective of a trainee. His experiences underscore the importance of reassessing training methods and evaluation systems to ensure they are adapted effectively for online environments, without compromising the quality and integrity of teaching practicums.

8.2.3 Support from Local and Regional Level Offices during the Pandemic

There is a divergence of views on support provided during the pandemic among the group of participants. Data collected from the 6 EFL teachers showed that EFL teachers did not receive sufficient continuous professional development support during the pandemic. Most of the teachers (4 out of 6) claimed that they had not got sufficient help from the school leadership, and educational administrators in terms of their service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teacher trainers and trainees were also of the same view. They stated that there was nothing special from the district and divisional level education office except arranging some meetings with the school heads, not with the EFL teachers. But the education administrators (DEO and DD) expressed different views claiming they had assisted the teachers during this time in a similar way they usually supported them at the normal time. The head teachers and assistant head teachers rather were of

the opinion which appeared to be in between as they had a direct link to the District and Divisional Education Office. EFL teacher Akram reported:

> *I see nothing special about the role of District Education Officer during COVID-19 pandemic. They are doing their duty as usual. They generally liaise with our head teacher about various orders issued by the higher authority. I can't call it assistance though. We the teachers are not directly connected, our head teacher holds meetings with DEO Sir. We are rather linked to Upazilla Education Office. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram's perspective suggests a lack of direct engagement and support from the District Education Office (DEO) during the pandemic, highlighting a gap in the communication and support structure. This aligns with global findings on the challenges of maintaining effective administrative support during crises, where the traditional top-down communication channels may become less effective (Harris and Jones, 2020). The indirect nature of support, funnelled through head teachers, may have led to a perceived lack of responsiveness and assistance from the DEO.

Another EFL teacher Nahid stated:

> *No particular role is there during the COVID-19 pandemic, they are doing their regular activities. They seek some reports about many issues occasionally being ordered by the Ministry of Education. Our engagement with the DEO is less, our head teacher has a link to the District Education Office. We are rather connected a bit to the Upazilla education Office for training, class inspection and other correspondence. (Nahid, EFL Teacher)*

Nahid's experience mirrors Akram's, indicating minimal direct engagement with the DEO. Her comment about the DEO's focus on regular activities and report collection rather than proactive support for teachers during the pandemic highlights a potential misalignment between the needs of the teachers and the priorities of the education administrators. This situation is consistent with the findings of Day and Gu (2010), who emphasise the importance of adaptive leadership and support during times of crisis to address the specific challenges faced by teachers.

In a similar manner, 2 EFL teacher trainers and 2 trainees reported that they had no direct relation to the District Education office or Divisional Education Office. Rather, they worked independently in their institutions. EFL teacher trainer Delwar stated:

> *Not from local or regional office, but from DHSE we get directives from time to time, we are working according to those directives. And as to DEO or regional education office,*

it's an administrative matter, I don't know much about this. (Delwar, EFL teacher trainer)

Delwar's comments indicate a reliance on directives from higher authorities such as the Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education (DHSE), rather than localised support from district or divisional offices. This top-down approach to policy implementation can often result in a disconnect between the administrative directives and the ground realities faced by teachers (Fullan, 2015b). The absence of direct, localised support may contribute to the perceived inadequacy of the assistance provided during the pandemic.

On the other hand, according to the interview data, both the DEO and DD claimed that they had supported the teachers in many ways during the pandemic. They had sufficiently helped the teachers being directly instructed by the Ministry of Education. They cited an example of teachers' decision-making on an alternative assessment system and syllabus curtailment. The DEO proclaimed:

During the pandemic, no government initiatives centering on the English language teaching have been taken. Some broad measures such as ensuring online class and giving directives to teachers how the education programmes can run smoothly at this crisis moment are only found. Another point is that all teachers are instructed to hold online class following the shortened syllabus provided by the Ministry of Education. (Akhtar, DEO)

The DEO's statement underscores a broader, more generalised approach to educational support during the pandemic, focusing on overall continuity of education rather than specific interventions for EFL teachers. This broad-brush approach may not adequately address the unique needs of EFL teachers, particularly those related to implementing the CLT approach in a virtual environment. This aligns with the findings of Reimers and Schleicher (2020), who highlight the need for targeted support and specific policy measures to address the unique challenges posed by the pandemic.

In a similar manner, the DD Arunlal reported:

Actually, there are no special steps taken by the government for English language teaching or the Communicative Language Teaching whatever you say, just the arrangement of online class according to the curtailed syllabus, and that is for all subjects. All of us, I mean divisional and district education officers, upazilla level officers,

teachers, school heads, are concerned with the secondary level general education of the country, not English subject alone. We are now struggling for keeping students busy in online class. (Arunlal, DD).

Arunlal's comments reflect a pragmatic approach to the broader educational challenges during the pandemic, emphasising the need to maintain continuity across all subjects. His statement that no special steps were taken for English language teaching or CLT specifically suggests a lack of targeted intervention for EFL teachers. This approach again highlights the broader systemic challenges in addressing subject-specific needs during a crisis, as noted by Reimers and Schleicher (2020).

Arunlal, as Deputy Director of the Secondary Education Department, provides a unique and valuable administrative perspective on the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. His statement offers critical insights into the functioning of the education system at district and divisional levels amidst the pandemic and its subsequent shift towards online classes. His statement, "there are no special steps taken by the government for English language teaching or the Communicative Language Teaching," gives an impression of a gap in governmental initiatives specifically directed at implementing or supporting the CLT approach during the transition to online classes. Further, Arunlal's emphasis on a holistic approach towards "secondary level general education of the country, not English subject alone," reveals a pervasive concern among educators and administrators. The shift to online classes during the pandemic seems to have prompted an equal emphasis on all subjects, possibly to maintain a balanced academic progression. This reflects the findings of Harris and Jones (2020), who argue for the importance of maintaining educational balance and continuity across all subjects during a crisis.

Arunlal's mention of the collective struggle to "keep students busy in online class" paints a stark picture of the realities of online education during the pandemic. This challenge likely extends beyond student engagement to encompass a range of issues such as access to technology, digital literacy, and maintaining the quality of instruction. This struggle is likely a shared concern across all levels of the education system, highlighting the complexity and interconnectedness of the issues faced.

Regarding the support from local and regional offices, Arunlal's account suggests a strong sense of shared responsibility and focus. However, his narrative leaves unanswered questions about the specific forms of support provided to teachers and schools during this difficult transition. Further, his account indicates an absence of focused, systematic support for implementing particular

teaching methodologies like CLT in the new virtual classrooms. This gap underscores the need for targeted and subject-specific professional development and support to address the unique challenges of teaching English and implementing CLT in an online environment (Farrell, 2018).

In summary, Arunlal's perspective provides a critical look into the operational dynamics of the education system during the pandemic, emphasising the collective concerns and shared struggles. His insights reveal potential areas for strategic intervention, specially in terms of providing targeted support for specific teaching methodologies in the transition to online teaching.

The difference in opinions between teachers and administrators indicates that there was a lack of coordination between the teachers and the school administrators. From the interview data, it is evident that both groups (EFL teachers and education administrators) were claiming strongly from their own perspectives. In fact, EFL teachers were facing various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. There was a lack of readiness among the teachers which could potentially affect their delivery of service in the class. It is assumed that under these circumstances, EFL teachers had not gained any professional development opportunities that could enable them to implement the CLT approach in the classroom.

8.3 Dependence on Foreign Financial Organisations' Funding

Most of the EFL teachers (5 out of 6) expressed their opinion that most of the training facilities were contingent upon the availability of grants or loans from international financial organisations. From the analysed data, it was revealed that foreign organisations like ADB, DFID, and the British Council were related to secondary EFL teacher training in two ways. Firstly, they provided necessary funds either in the form of grants or in the form of loans for educational development projects. And secondly, they intervened in teacher education with logistic support. This meant that if there were foreign funds, there were training programmes, if not then no training. The data also revealed that the ADB and the World Bank gave funds for general education and training projects of the government while the British Council helped in ELT or CLT training programmes such as Connecting Classrooms, EIA, ELTIP etc. The British Council and the DFID had some influence in making the EFL teacher training policy of Bangladesh, they were active in various education projects like EIA, ELTIP, and many more.

For example, EFL teacher Akram reported,

I don't know well about the funding of teacher training. I have heard that different donor agencies like ADB, World Bank etc. finance our education sector. Our government also spend money for training. Yes, DFID and British Council are relevant in our English language teaching in many ways. They may have given financial assistance to our government for English language training. (Akram, EFL teacher)

Akram's comments highlight a general awareness among teachers of the role played by international financial organisations (IFOs) in funding educational initiatives. This dependence on external funding aligns with findings from various studies that emphasise the significant influence of international aid on education systems in developing countries (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009b; Burnett and Felsman, 2012). The reliance on external funding can create vulnerabilities, where the sustainability of educational programs is contingent upon the continuation of foreign aid.

Mentioning names of some training projects such as TQI-1 and 2, EIA, and SEDP, EFL teacher trainer Fahad strongly claimed that the teacher training programmes are entirely dependent on foreign donors' or development partners' financial assistance. He reported,

Our training opportunities are subject to the availability of project, that is, in most cases international funding. So, it's not continuous. For example, TQI-1, TQI-2 and SEQAEP, EIA are some of the projects. They are finished by now. Currently, a new project SEDP has been launched by the govt with financial help from World Bank and ADB and technical assistance from British Council. (Fahad, EFL teacher trainer)

Fahad's perspective underscores the intermittent nature of training programs, which are heavily reliant on project-based funding. This episodic funding model is problematic as it disrupts the continuity of professional development, leaving gaps in teachers' ongoing education. This aligns with the observations of Roberts-Holmes and Bradbury (2016), who argue that reliance on project-based funding can undermine long-term sustainability and consistency in professional development initiatives. Furthermore, this situation aligns with the insights of Steiner-Khamsi (2016), who discusses how international organisations shape national education policies, often leading to a mismatch between external agendas and local needs.

EFL teacher trainee Arnab also expressed a similar view and said,

> *ADB funded TQI, and World Bank funded for SEQAEP, so far I know. These two international organisations sometimes work together for the development of our education sector. The British Council occasionally arranges teacher trainings and workshops for EFL teachers. The reality is when the foreign funding stops, those projects also end. Most of our training projects are donor-dependent. (Arnab, EFL teacher trainee)*

Arnab's comments reflect a common understanding among educators that the continuity of professional development programs is closely tied to the availability of foreign funding. This dependence on donor agencies for educational development can lead to a lack of ownership and sustainability, as highlighted by King and McGrath (2004). When funding cycles end, the programs often cease, leaving teachers without the necessary ongoing support. This observation is supported by Verger et al. (2012), who discuss the complexities and power dynamics involved in global educational governance and the implications of donor-dependency for local education systems.

The important point which emerged from the above data set was that there were shreds of evidence in the data that the IFOs such as the DFID, the British Council, the ADB, and the World Bank had had a substantial influence on teacher education in Bangladesh. This influence can be both beneficial and problematic. While it brings much-needed resources and expertise, it also creates a dependency that can hinder the development of a self-sustaining national professional development framework.

In summary, the dependence on foreign financial organisations for funding teacher training programs in Bangladesh has significant implications. While these organisations provide essential support and resources, their involvement also leads to an over-reliance that can jeopardise the continuity and sustainability of professional development initiatives. The findings align with broader academic literature that highlights the complexities and challenges of relying on external funding for educational development (King and McGrath, 2004; Burnett and Felsman, 2012; Verger, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

8.4 Lack of Effective School Leadership and Collaborative Culture

There is a close connection between school leadership and educational change implementation. In the absence of proper school leadership such as democratic and collaborative, it might be difficult to implement educational reforms on the part of the teachers. If we consider the initiation of the CLT approach at the secondary education level as an educational change, we need to consider the education leadership situation at schools as well.

Four out of six EFL teachers expressed their view that there was no effective leadership and collaborative culture in schools. They stated that it was in both situations: normal times and the COVID-19 pandemic situation. Some of them mentioned that their school heads motivated them to collaborate and cooperate with others. However, they claimed that they did not get support from the school leaders regarding their professional development. They linked this to other issues such as teachers' workload and the overall school environment. For example, EFL Teacher Akram reported that:

> Yes, the head teacher always tries to motivate us about collaborating and cooperating with each other. (Akram, EFL teacher)

> Actually, due to teacher shortage, we have to take 4 or 5 classes per day. The workload is very high. So, we get less opportunity to collaborate with other colleagues. We don't have much time to talk with each other while at school. We know collaborative culture is good but we have limitations. Still sometimes we try to solve any problem unitedly at school. (Akram, EFL teacher)

Akram's comments highlight the challenges posed by high workloads and insufficient time for collaboration, which can significantly impede the development of a collaborative culture. This perspective aligns with the findings of Hargreaves and Fullan (2012), who emphasise the importance of professional collaboration for educational change but also acknowledge the practical constraints that can hinder its implementation.

On the other hand, EFL teacher Meem gave a positive picture of the collaborative culture in her school. She mentioned that they had a practice of collaboration among teachers in their school. She stated:

> Our head teacher often advises us to create an environment of collaboration among our colleagues in all activities. We, the teachers, also try to maintain an atmosphere of

cooperation and collaboration among ourselves; we solve any problem collaboratively, unitedly. That's good. This culture enhances my motivation for personal and professional development. (Meem, EFL teacher)

Meem's positive experience underscores the potential benefits of a collaborative culture, including increased motivation and professional development. Her comments are supported by the work of Leithwood et al. (2004), who highlight the positive impact of collaborative school cultures on teacher motivation and student outcomes.

So, from the interview data, it can be assumed that EFL teachers did not get enough opportunities for collaboration with other colleagues regarding academic or non-academic issues at their workplace. And this was true for both the normal times and the pandemic situation. This lack of a collaborative environment at schools might have a role to play in EFL teachers' resistance to implementing educational change at the ground level. The teachers might not feel engaged in the reform process in this situation. They were not motivated positively or guided in the right direction for the implementation of the CLT approach in the classroom.

However, a completely opposite picture was taken from the interviews with the head teachers and assistant head teachers of the two schools. Head teacher Mala reported that she tried to motivate teachers to collaborate with each other in her school. She said:

I usually try to encourage the teachers for collaboration in most cases, I mean, for both academic and non-academic decisions. For, example, decisions and planning are made unitedly for the academic development of JSC and SSC students. In staff meetings, we decide on priority areas for spending funds we get for the overall development of the school. (Mala, Head teacher)

However, she acknowledged that she could not arrange any professional learning community or other forms of professional development opportunities in the school due to excessive workload on her. She reported that:

We can rarely arrange these things; actually, it's really difficult to arrange such community for professional development because we, the school heads, are under much pressure all the time. Our workload is too high. Sometimes, I have to work till 8 p.m. at my office. (Mala, Head teacher)

Head Teacher Touhid also expressed similar views on this issue. He said:

No, not formally, but teachers hold discussion among them for their professional development. Yes, we always try to encourage teachers work collaboratively in planning and realising those plans. But sometimes, it's not possible and we (head teachers) have to make quick decisions without consulting with the colleagues. (Touhid, Head teacher)

Both the assistant head teachers Prodip and Ripon were also of the same opinion. Prodip said:

Not always decisions are taken unitedly. Our head teacher maintains contact and coordination with the higher authority for example, District Education Office and DHSE etc. But, sometimes, the opinions of colleagues are sought after in the staff meeting if the issue is of greater importance. (Prodip, Assistant head teacher)

Ripon reported that:

We encourage the working together culture. Meetings are held for discussing and making decisions on various issues. We work together and there is a sense of unity among us. (Ripon, Assistant head teacher)

From the above discussion, it was evident that workload was a key factor in maintaining the school leadership culture. It could be the case that in fact there were fewer opportunities for the school leaders to initiate change in school leadership culture. This was true for both the teachers and the school heads. So, they tried to evade their responsibilities and justified it by showing various causes. This kind of blame game exposed the lack of integrity in the school leadership culture at secondary schools in Bangladesh. In line with the insights from the broader academic literature, the lack of effective school leadership and a collaborative culture is a significant barrier to implementing educational reforms like the CLT approach in Bangladesh. Effective leadership is critical for fostering a collaborative culture and supporting professional development, as highlighted by Leithwood et al. (2004) and Hargreaves and Fullan (2012). Hallinger and Heck (2010) also emphasise the role of school leadership in creating conditions that support educational change, noting that leadership practices that promote collaboration and teacher engagement are essential for successful reform implementation. The perspectives of Rizvi and Lingard (2009b) and Verger et al. (2012) on the role of leadership in educational change further underscore the importance of strong, democratic, and collaborative leadership in achieving sustainable educational reforms. Ball

(2012) discusses the importance of policy enactment at the school level, highlighting that effective leadership is crucial for interpreting and implementing policy changes effectively.

Harris (2008) emphasises the need for distributed leadership, where leadership responsibilities are shared among various stakeholders to foster a more collaborative and inclusive school culture. Gunter (2012) also highlights the importance of ethical leadership and the need for school leaders to be transparent, supportive, and focused on the collective well-being of the school community. Hall (2013) and Elmore (2004) stress the importance of instructional leadership, where school leaders actively engage in the teaching and learning process, supporting teachers in their professional development and fostering a collaborative environment that encourages continuous improvement.

8.5 Arrangement of In-House Training at Schools

Five out of six EFL teachers expressed their views that there was an arrangement for in-house training in their schools. However, all of them considered it inadequate and suggested increasing the number of it.

EFL teacher Meem stated that,

> *Yes, in-house training is usually arranged once a year. This training has a very limited scope, all the teachers of our school cannot take part in this at a time. We need some bigger initiatives for in-house training at our school. More training sessions should be arranged at my school so that all our teachers can participate in. (Meem, EFL teacher)*

Meem's comments highlight the limited scope and frequency of in-house training, emphasising the need for more comprehensive and inclusive professional development opportunities. This perspective aligns with the findings of Timperley et al. (2008), who advocate for ongoing and sustained professional development to enhance teacher effectiveness and student outcomes.

Heads and Assistant heads expressed their views that they tried to arrange in-house training in their schools once every year. However, they claimed that it was a bit difficult for them to arrange such training as they were under a heavy workload. Head teacher Mala said:

> *We don't have much time for in-house training. About 5 months per year are spent on different vacations and examinations arrangements both public and internal, Teachers*

require to finish the syllabus in a hurry within a limited time. Yet I try to arrange in-house training once every year. (Mala, Head teacher)

Head teacher Touhid reported:

It's very difficult to arrange in-house training you know. We have limited time to finish the syllabus to make students ready for exams. So, when can we arrange in-house training? Even after that, I try every year to arrange in-house training in a small scale. (Touhid, Head teacher)

The comments from head teachers Mala and Touhid reveal the significant challenges in organising in-house training due to time constraints and workload pressures. These challenges are consistent with the literature, which highlights the importance of adequate time and resources for effective professional development (Harris, 2008; Hall, 2013). The competing demands of teaching, administrative duties, and exam preparations often leave little room for additional training initiatives. Despite these challenges, the commitment of school leaders to arrange in-house training, on a limited scale, reflects an acknowledgment of its importance. Hallinger and Heck (2010) emphasise the critical role of school leadership in fostering a culture of continuous improvement and professional growth. Similarly, Elmore (2004) underscores the need for instructional leadership that prioritises professional development to enhance teaching practices.

Integrating these insights with broader academic literature, it is clear that in-house training is a crucial component of professional development. However, the current arrangements are insufficient to meet the needs of all teachers. Increasing the frequency and scope of in-house training requires addressing the systemic issues of workload and time constraints. As Leithwood et al. (2008) suggest, creating a supportive environment for professional development involves strategic planning and resource allocation to ensure that teachers have the necessary time and opportunities to engage in meaningful training.

To conclude, while in-house training is recognised as valuable, its limited implementation due to workload and time constraints hinders its effectiveness. To enhance the professional development of EFL teachers, it is essential to address these barriers and provide more comprehensive and frequent in-house training opportunities. This approach aligns with the broader educational discourse on the importance of sustained and supportive professional development for teacher effectiveness and student achievement (Harris, 2008; Timperley *et al.*, 2008; Hall, 2013).

8.6 Teachers' Digital Skill Enhancement

Five out of six EFL teachers reported that most of the EFL teachers did not have adequate digital literacy for conducting online classes. They also considered the measures taken up by the government to enhance their digital skill to be quite insufficient. EFL teacher Akram reported that,

> *Most teachers don't have enough digital skills to hold online classes. Particularly, the senior and old teachers can't run computers, and some of them don't have smartphones even. They need ICT training immediately. Sometimes, young teachers try to help them informally. But the government should be more serious about the issue, I think. More and more ICT training should be offered to EFL teachers. My school head sometimes requests the younger teachers to help and train the senior teachers. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram's comments highlight the digital divide among teachers, particularly between younger and older educators, and the pressing need for ICT training. This perspective aligns with findings in the literature that emphasise the importance of digital literacy for effective online teaching (Koehler and Mishra, 2009; Selwyn, 2010). The informal support provided by younger teachers suggests a grassroots effort to bridge this gap, but it also underscores the need for more formal, systematic training initiatives.

Head teachers, assistant head teachers, EFL teacher trainers, trainees, and education administrators were also of the same opinion that EFL teachers did not possess adequate digital skills to conduct online classes. But they differed on the point of government initiatives provided to EFL teachers to enhance their digital literacy. While the school leaders and administrators showed a positive attitude towards the government endeavours to upskill the teachers, the EFL teachers, trainers, and trainees seemed to be somewhat skeptical about this.

For example, EFL teacher Rafiq reported,

> *No, I think about 80% of teachers don't have digital skills. No, I haven't seen such training for them recently. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)*

Rafiq's skepticism reflects a broader concern about the adequacy and visibility of government initiatives to improve digital literacy among teachers. This aligns with research by Koehler and Mishra (2009), which suggests that effective digital literacy training requires ongoing and accessible professional development opportunities.

On the other hand, head teacher Mala claimed,

All training programmes have moved to virtual mode at present. To improve online practices the government is arranging digital literacy training to teachers and trainers through different projects. Master trainers are being prepared first so that they can train up teachers locally. The Ministry of Information and Communication Technology is working with our Ministry of Education to execute the projects. Probably you know about a2i and its activities. That's good and helpful. (Mala, Head teacher)

Mala's comments indicate a positive view of government efforts to enhance digital skills through structured training programs and collaboration between different ministries. The a2i (Access to Information) initiative is a notable example of such efforts, aimed at promoting digital literacy and technological integration in education (Chowdhury, 2023). This perspective is supported by Fullan (2013), who emphasises the role of coordinated efforts and leadership in driving technological integration in education.

A similar voice was heard from the education administrators. Both DEO and DD claimed that the government was trying hard to train the teachers to enhance their digital skills. For example, DD Arunlal argued that digital skills training was a part of the government's usual development activities. He stated,

The government has been trying to ensure using digital technology in education and training since the pre-COVID-19 situation, as part of normal development activities in education. But obviously, it will take a bit of time as we are dependent on international funds for this. So, we have to wait for that. (Arunlal, DD)

Arunlal's comments highlight the government's long-term commitment to digital integration in education, while also acknowledging the dependency on international funding for these initiatives. This reflects the broader challenges faced by many developing countries in achieving sustainable technological integration in education (Selwyn, 2010; Steiner-Khamsi, 2016).

From the above data set, it can be assumed that with the compulsory transition to virtual education due to the pandemic, teachers were unsure of how to proceed with their limited digital skills. They argued that they needed more support. But the school leaders and administrators claimed that the steps taken by the government were sufficient. This discrepancy in views indicated that there might

be a lack of coordination among the different stakeholders that could potentially hinder the implementation of any government policy including the CLT approach in secondary EFL classrooms.

8.7 Other Types of CPD Opportunities for EFL Teachers

Most of the EFL teachers claimed that there was little scope for other types of professional development opportunities such as reflective practice, research article publications, and conference presentations, etc. except teacher training. These were almost impossible for them as they claimed that they were overburdened with 4 or 5 classes per day. Moreover, they had to perform other clerical jobs on a day-to-day basis which kept them busy with non-academic activities. EFL teacher Akram reported,

> *Such opportunities are limited at our secondary-level EFL teaching. We sometimes write in our school magazines. I think, research and conference presentation are difficult, it requires long time and also perseverance. (Akram, EFL teacher)*

Akram's comments highlight the significant challenges that secondary-level EFL teachers face in engaging in professional development activities beyond routine training. The heavy teaching loads and additional clerical responsibilities significantly limit their ability to participate in activities like research and conference presentations. This perspective aligns with the literature on teacher workloads and its impact on professional development opportunities (Day and Sachs, 2004; Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012).

Another EFL teacher Rafiq also expressed the same views on the scopes for other types of teacher professional development as discussed above. He said,

> *Yes, they occasionally encourage us about these, but we have little scope for research activities at secondary-level schools. Secondary school culture in our country is not like that, you know. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)*

Rafiq's statement reflects the broader cultural and systemic issues within secondary schools that hinder the engagement of teachers in professional development activities beyond traditional training. The lack of a supportive environment for research and reflective practice is a significant barrier, as noted by Hargreaves (2003) and (2015b), who emphasise the need for a culture that supports continuous professional learning and innovation.

From the interview data, it can be assumed that the EFL teachers could not manage to participate in various professional development activities except teacher training due to excessive workloads. They acknowledged that their school leaders often encouraged them in this regard, but the overall workload and extra responsibilities hindered them to take part in such kind of professional enhancement. Reflecting on their own teaching practice, conducting classroom research, and presenting at conferences were almost impossible for them.

The situation described by Akram and Rafiq indicates a critical need for systemic changes to reduce teacher workloads and create more opportunities for professional development. This includes rethinking school structures and policies to provide teachers with the time and resources needed for engaging in research, reflective practice, and other forms of professional growth. This perspective is supported by Ball (2012), who argues for the importance of creating supportive conditions for teachers to engage in professional development that goes beyond routine training.

It is clear that professional development for EFL teachers needs to be more comprehensive and supportive of various activities beyond traditional training. Effective professional development should include opportunities for teachers to engage in reflective practice, research, and dissemination of their work through conferences and publications (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017). Addressing the barriers posed by excessive workloads and additional responsibilities is crucial for enabling teachers to take full advantage of these opportunities (Elmore, 2004; Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012).

8.8 Systemic Change of School Culture

Almost all of the EFL teachers claimed that they were under a heavy workload. It hindered their professional development. They could not sometimes participate in teacher education, collaboration, and cooperation with other teachers, and in other professional development opportunities. They claimed that the dimensions of their workload had changed currently. They were busier than in earlier times in non-academic activities in schools. EFL teacher Rafiq claimed that,

> Yes, that's true. Teachers have to remain busier with office management than improving teaching practice. Specially, during COVID-19, we had to complete students' form fill-up, registration etc. Again, numerous orders, circulars are coming from different offices

which we have to fill in and complete in time. All these are clerical jobs just like record keeping. For example, information on tree plantation, record of observing various 'days' etc. are to be sent to the Directorate and the Ministry. There is a programme called 'Home Visit to the Dropouts' where we need to visit their home. These activities are being increased day by day. Now, it has become very difficult for us to concentrate on teaching. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)

EFL teacher Belal also reported,

We have to remain engaged more in office management than in improving our teaching practice. Teaching is of less importance, it seems. The ministry, directorate, district education office and upazilla education office are sending orders and circulars one after another. The education board keeps us busy preparing for holding the exams. Numerous forms and papers we have to fill in and send them to the authorities concerned. (Belal, EFL Teacher)

Rafiq and Belal's comments highlight the administrative burdens that teachers face, detracting from their primary focus on teaching and professional development. This aligns with the findings of Day and Sachs (2004), who emphasise that excessive administrative tasks can hinder teachers' professional growth and engagement in educational reforms.

The school heads however did not agree with them fully on this point. They acknowledged that everybody was overburdened with work but at the same time, they stressed the need for motivation and respect for the teaching profession among teachers. Head teacher Mala said,

Teachers are now held responsible for many administrative activities beside normal class. Often different orders and directions from the Ministry of Education, DHSE and DEO are coming, and they have to carry out those orders maintaining deadlines. For example, the higher authorities sometimes want various types of data which are not ready at school. Teachers then collect information, process them and send them accordingly. Many clerical or bureaucratic activities they need to do now; this is true. Even as the school head, I also have to do many activities which are not related to our academic activities. But what I want to say is these are not at our hand. We don't have

> *nothing to do in these cases. We are also part of managing these orders. This is the system in most schools. (Mala, Head teacher)*

Mala's perspective indicates an acceptance of the systemic nature of administrative tasks in schools, acknowledging the lack of control that school leaders and teachers have over these demands. This situation is consistent with findings by Hargreaves (2003), who discusses the impact of bureaucratic demands on teachers' time and professional engagement.

The interview data provided further evidence that excessive workload on EFL teachers tends to undermine the importance of their continuous professional development, and their belongingness to the whole education system. This inadequacy in professional enhancement opportunities could be a deciding factor in triggering teachers' non-engagement in the educational reform process. Of course, these effects differed in their form and intensity at different groups i.e. EFL teachers, school leaders, and school administrators.

8.9 Excessive Exam-Orientation and Supplementary Private Tutoring Practice

There were some contextual factors that were directly related to the EFL teachers' professional development. For example, excessive exam-orientation reshaped the EFL teachers' urge and motivation for gaining professional enhancement opportunities to a great extent. Due to exam-orientation, students did not seek for learning outcomes, they rather sought for higher grades in examinations. Teachers were put under pressure of preparing students ready for exams. As the time for syllabus completion in class was limited, the students went to the teachers for supplementary paid private tuition that kept the teachers busy outside the class giving them less time to think and reflect upon their own teaching practice. This exam-orientation was also, on the other hand, the outcome of the change in parents' expectations about their children. Both the school heads and EFL teachers were under pressure from the higher authority and the parents. The school heads exerted pressure on teachers so that they could help the schools gain better results in public exams. These good results would be helpful to get more students enrolled next year. The more students they would get, the more money they would gain. This neoliberal approach made it more difficult for EFL teachers to develop professionally.

EFL teacher Akram claimed that due to extreme pressure from the school authorities and parents, they had to be more cautious about students' public examination results than about anything else. He said,

Yes, I think so. We need to finish the large syllabus at a short time. We are under pressure from the head teacher and also from the parents about our students' getting A+ grade in public exams. What the students have learned matters less than what grade they have got in public exams. So, we remain more careful about our students' exam preparation in the classroom. (Akram, EFL teacher)

He further added,

The heads pressurise us if our students can't do well in public exams. They question us why our students are doing bad in terms of exam results and where the problem lies. On the other hand, if they can do better results, we will gain reputation which will bring us more students in future years. More students, more money, simple equation. (Akram, EFL teacher)

Akram's comments highlight the intense pressure on teachers to prioritise exam preparation over genuine learning. This emphasis on exam results is consistent with the findings of Ball (2012), who discusses the impact of neoliberal policies on education, where performance metrics and market competition overshadow educational quality and teacher development.

Another EFL teacher Belal reported that English skill was crucial for success in higher education and in the job market in Bangladesh. He said,

You know, students' performance in English determines their results or grades in public exams in most cases. So, the head keeps us under pressure so that we take good care of the students about exam preparation. The school gains a reputation if the students do good results. And this will bring us more students next year. (Belal, EFL Teacher)

He further added that,

This is not difficult to understand. Everywhere you need better grades, A+, for admission to higher education and even in job market. If the students get better grades in exam, they will be eligible for better universities. (Belal, EFL Teacher)

Belal's observations point to the broader societal and systemic pressures that reinforce exam-oriented education. The focus on grades as a determinant of future opportunities aligns with the research of Rizvi and Lingard (2009b), who argue that global education policies often prioritise measurable outcomes over holistic educational experiences.

EFL teacher Rafiq also added that the English syllabus was vast, and it was difficult to finish it in time. He further claimed that learners voluntarily went to the teachers for private supplementary teaching. He stated,

> *Yes, I agree. We can't finish the syllabus in class in time, so students come to us for private tuition to finish it to do well in public exams. In this situation, parents become compelled to rely on private tutors and coaching centres. It's possible for us to complete the syllabus within the stipulated time, but the learning outcomes will not be achieved properly in such a rush. So, the learners willingly go to the teachers for private supplementary teaching specially for English, mathematics and science subjects. What can the teachers do in this case? Again, basically learners become encouraged to go to private tutors from their sense of competition with others. (Rafiq, EFL Teacher)*

Rafiq's comments underscore the consequences of a heavy syllabus and limited classroom time, leading to a reliance on private tuition. This practice is prevalent in many educational contexts where high-stakes testing dominates (Bray, 2009; Alam and Zhu, 2022).

On the other hand, head teacher Mala claimed that teachers lacked the motivation to continue as teachers. However, she acknowledged that there was pressure on teachers from different quarters including parents, and school administrations:

> *Yes, I know. Teachers have always been complaining about a few points. One is their low salary. But you see there is no change in the private tuition market even after a big salary increase for all in the 2015 national pay scale. Still, the tendency for private tuition is increasing. So, we can say it's nothing to do with salary hike, rather the cause may lie elsewhere. I'm not sure. Might be lack of motivation to continue as a teacher. Anyway, the most horrible thing is that teachers remain tired while they are in school as they have already worked hard with their private students at home or outside the school. The result is very poor class performance by them. They don't have much time to think, to reflect on their own teaching practice. I agree that pressures are on them*

about public examinations results. Parents are demanding, higher authorities are demanding. It's not easy to cope with the situation. But there are chances to improve their teaching practices even at this situation. They can become more motivated and can improve their professional life through engaging more in CPD activities and in their professional community. (Mala, Head teacher)

Mala's perspective reveals the complexities of teacher motivation and the challenges posed by systemic pressures. Her comments reflect the broader issues of teacher burnout and the impact of high-stakes testing on professional development, as discussed by Hargreaves (2003) and Fullan (2015b). In line with the insights from broader academic literature, it is clear that excessive exam-orientation and the demand for supplementary private tutoring significantly impact EFL teachers' professional development. The pressures of high-stakes testing and neoliberal policies prioritise exam results over meaningful learning and teacher growth (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009b; Ball, 2012).

8.10 Conclusion

This chapter has sought to explore how EFL teachers, school leaders, EFL teacher trainers and trainees, and education administrators view the Continuing Professional Development support offered to secondary EFL teachers. Data revealed that there existed multifaceted and complex perspectives of the participants on the issue. EFL teachers' views were broadly in alignment with the views of school leaders (heads and assistant heads), EFL teacher trainers and trainees, and education administrators on the aspects such as the idea of CPD, dependence on foreign funding, COVID-induced changes in practice, and teachers' digital literacy enhancement. However, there were aspects in which their opinions diverged from the views of school heads and education administrators. For example, when it came to providing additional support to EFL teachers during the pandemic, the perspectives of school leaders and education administrators met at the same point. Data suggested that both groups (leadership and administration) tried to justify their activities in that case. These two groups seemed to be reluctant even to acknowledge the hectic workload and unwelcome work environment of EFL teachers that might be considered potential obstacles to teacher professional development. Moreover, they tend to treat EFL teachers as having a lack of motivation and respect for the teaching profession. There emerged other issues rife for in-depth analysis from the divergent and sometimes conflicting views of these two sides such as EFL

teachers and leaders and administrators. However, these various perspectives might proffer different insights that could be valuable for further research.

Chapter 9: Discussion

9.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings on formal training and CPD support offered to the EFL teachers. In this chapter, I will discuss my findings in the light of theories and concepts I have chosen in building my theoretical and conceptual framework. I have elicited four broad themes from my theory chapter (**Chapter 3**): teacher resistance, structural deficiency, promoting professional capital, lack of collaboration and cooperation. I then questioned my data set using these themes and tried to unearth the experiences of the EFL teachers. In the next section (9.1), I discussed them in the light of those theories linking them to relevant literature and reflect on what this means for the English language education and the methods used to teach English as a foreign language and the whole education system of the country.

9.1 Major Themes

I intend to interpret my findings from the theoretical perspectives I have already discussed in the theoretical framework chapter (**Chapter 3**). I have elicited 3 themes from my discussion of the theories and concepts.

9.1.1 Teacher Disengagement and Resistance

The disconnect and resistance thereupon were identified among teachers toward the implementation of the CLT approach in secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. This is symptomatic of an intricate interplay of systemic, professional, and contextual factors that shape educational policy implementation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016). To delve deeper into these dynamics, this section further explicates the sources of resistance as they emerge from my findings.

Primary amongst these sources, as articulated by my participants, is a pronounced sense of alienation from the policy-making process, coupled with a degree of skepticism toward the influences driving these policies. For example, EFL teacher Didar mentioned "There is no system or example of seeking EFL teachers' views when the higher authority develops or changes any

curriculum in Bangladesh". His frustration is noticeable here. This phenomenon aligns with a burgeoning body of literature asserting the centrality of teacher participation in shaping and implementing educational policy reforms (Braun *et al.*, 2011). When the voices of those enacting change are marginalised, the ensuing disconnection from policy discourse can engender resistance, an observation corroborated by my findings.

Simultaneously, the resistance underscores broader systemic realities that impede the successful operationalisation of the CLT approach. As demonstrated in various studies (Farrell and Bennis, 2013; Borg and Edmett, 2019), the limitations imposed by large class sizes, the pressures of an exam-centric educational culture, and the proliferation of private tutoring can significantly encumber the realisation of student-centric, interactional pedagogical practices advocated by the CLT approach. Such systemic challenges necessitate a reconceptualisation of the teaching-learning ecosystem beyond mere pedagogical modifications, recognising the sociopolitical context of teachers' work (Goodson and Cole, 1994; Braun *et al.*, 2011).

My findings also highlight the pivotal role of professional development, or rather, the lack thereof, in contributing to this resistance. Teachers' access to, and quality of, training opportunities profoundly influence their preparedness for change and their engagement with new pedagogical approaches, as corroborated by global studies on teacher readiness (Darling-Hammond, Hyler and Gardner, 2017). Linking back to Hargreaves and Hargreaves & Fullan (2015) concept of professional capital, the findings suggest an urgent need for robust investment in enhancing human, social, and decisional capital to foster change resilience. Thus, the resistance to CLT implementation in Bangladesh is not a monolithic phenomenon. Instead, it serves as a mirror reflecting the complex interplay of policy dynamics, systemic challenges, and professional capacities. Navigating this resistance necessitates an informed, nuanced approach that addresses these multi-dimensional challenges while being acutely cognizant of the new complexities brought forth by the ongoing pandemic.

Therefore, this theme of resistance signifies a myriad of underlying issues related to policy transfer, change management, professional capital, and contextual challenges that demand attention in my quest to successfully integrate the CLT approach into the secondary-level EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

9.1.2 Teachers' Understanding of the CLT Approach

The understanding teachers possess about the Communicative Language Teaching approach plays a pivotal role in its effective implementation (Richards and Rodgers, 2014). The teacher is a significant actor in the educational landscape, and their knowledge and beliefs invariably shape their classroom practices (Borg, 2015).

The disconnect between the theoretical underpinnings of the CLT and teachers' interpretation of the same often stems from a shallow understanding of the approach. This view aligns with Kim & Pollar (2017) study that reported some teachers erroneously believed the CLT entirely eliminates the use of the native language, which is a gross misrepresentation of the approach. Other researchers also emphasise that such misconceptions could indeed impair the creation of authentic communication contexts, a core objective of the CLT.

Furthermore, Lo (2014) underscores the fact that a nuanced understanding of the CLT necessitates a recognition of the embedded social and cultural factors. Any superficial interpretation of the method fails to fully capture its essence, thereby thwarting its successful implementation. This emphasises the need for a more comprehensive teacher training program that delves deeper into the sociocultural tenets of the CLT approach.

It is also crucial to consider that teachers' pedagogical beliefs influence their understanding of teaching methodologies like the CLT. Borg (2017) postulates a reciprocal relationship between teachers' beliefs and instructional practices. Thus, integrating teacher belief explorations within CLT professional development initiatives in Bangladesh might pave the way for better alignment between teachers' perceptions and the guiding principles of the CLT approach.

In summary, the depth and breadth of teachers' understanding of the CLT approach significantly influence its implementation. Hence, restructuring professional development programs to furnish teachers with a well-rounded understanding of the CLT could be a pivotal step towards the successful implementation of this approach in secondary EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

9.1.3 Educational Policy Transfer

I have applied the concept of educational policy transfer as a lens in my study. EFL teachers were seen sometimes unsure of the involvement and influence of foreign organisations in shaping the English curriculum of Bangladesh. EFL teacher Meem's perspective on the influence of international bodies on Bangladesh's English language education policy and curriculum reforms offers an understanding of the relationship between financial aid, policy influence, and capacity-building efforts. She stated, "ADB and World Bank are frequently financing our education sector. Even at present, the SEDP project is going on which is financed by ADB, World Bank and assisted by British Council. So, I think the British Council is somehow linked with our English language education." Here, EFL teacher Meem clearly mentions the role of the British Council. From this findings, it is clear that EFL teachers are aware of the policy transfer. Meem's perception of the British Council's function also accords with Akram's belief (see **Chapter 6**) that this organisation plays a more active role in the English language education industry of Bangladesh. She, however, does not distinguish between the functions of the British Council and the financial benefactors, in contrast to Akram. Her point of view appears to imply a continuum of impact wherein monetary contributions and capacity building initiatives combine to influence the educational landscape. This viewpoint emphasises the hazy lines between money, capacity building, and policy influence and is consistent with the larger body of research on international collaboration in education (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004; Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a).

9.1.4 Teacher Readiness for Professional Development

One of the central themes that emerges from my research is the readiness of teachers for the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh through professional development. This theme exposes a multitude of challenges pertaining to teacher training and Continuing Professional Development (CPD), leadership, and systemic issues that impact the implementation of CLT in the secondary-level EFL classrooms in the country.

Applying the framework of educational policy transfer theory (Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Ochs and Phillips, 2004), the challenges encountered suggest that there may be a disjuncture between global educational policies, in this case, the adoption of the CLT approach, and the local realities and systemic constraints in Bangladesh. My findings reveal a significant shortage of skilled teachers trained in the CLT approach, suggesting that the transfer of this pedagogical approach from other

contexts may not have been supported by adequate professional development initiatives at the local level.

Resistance to change, specifically towards the CLT approach, can often be traced back to a lack of understanding and familiarity with new pedagogical paradigms (Borg, 2015). My findings echo this sentiment, illuminating the divergence of classroom practices from CLT principles. This mismatch further exacerbates the shortage of skilled teachers conversant with CLT, highlighting the need for robust, targeted professional development (Hargreaves and Fullan, 2015).

These findings are also in line with the concept of professional capital proposed by Hargreaves & Fullan (2015), which suggests that significant investments in human capital (teacher skills and knowledge) and social capital (peer collaboration and learning) are necessary for effective reform implementation. My study reveals a lack of effective school leadership and a collaborative culture, factors that are central to the development of professional capital. Furthermore, the dependence on foreign financial funding for training adds another layer of complexity to the scenario, demonstrating the need for more sustainable, locally driven professional development strategies.

My findings also highlight the impact of systemic factors such as teachers' excessive workload, excessive exam-orientation, and the expansion of private supplementary tutoring on teachers' readiness for educational reform implementation. Such factors may pose significant barriers to the effective integration of the CLT approach into teaching practices, emphasising the need for broader structural reforms in the educational system.

The COVID-19 pandemic, as revealed in my study, further compounds these challenges. The shift to remote teaching and learning may have created additional demands on teachers, thus affecting their readiness to implement new pedagogical approaches such as the CLT. This situation underlines the urgency for more flexible, resilient, and context-sensitive professional development programs that can support teachers in navigating the complexities of educational reform during times of crisis and beyond.

9.1.5 Promoting Professional Capital

In addressing the theme of 'Promoting Teachers' Professional Capital for Educational Reform Implementation (Implementation of the CLT Approach) in Bangladesh', it is worth noting that Fullan & Hargreaves (2012) suggest professional capital comprises human, social, and decisional capital.

Human capital, encompassing the professional knowledge and skills of teachers, is revealed in this study as somewhat deficient in relation to the CLT approach. The findings mirror the international literature that expresses the necessity for intensive and ongoing professional development to enable teachers to successfully implement new methodologies (Burns and Richards, 2009; Avalos, 2011). Moreover, it is suggested that this should be complemented by a teacher-centred approach to policy development to ensure its applicability in the classroom (Guerrettaz and Johnston, 2013).

As it pertains to social capital, the research findings indicate a lack of collaborative culture and effective school leadership, which are vital for shared professional growth and the collective capacity for educational reform (Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012; Fullan, 2016). This reaffirms the need for an educational system that not only encourages but provides avenues for teachers to engage in collaborative practices.

Lastly, decisional capital, which relates to the teachers' abilities to make discretionary professional judgements based on experience, seems undermined by the policy-making disconnect and the misalignment of teachers' classroom practices with the CLT approach (Biesta, Priestley and Robinson, 2015).

Drawing from the insights elicited through this research, it becomes evident that policy-makers need to focus more determinedly on cultivating professional capital by fostering a culture of teacher collaboration, implementing high-quality professional development programmes, and promoting decision-making autonomy among teachers. As underscored by Hargreaves & Fullan (2020), nurturing professional capital not only empowers teachers to deliver high-quality education but also provides them with the requisite resilience and adaptability to navigate substantial change and uncertainty.

9.2 Conclusion

In sum, this research has provided significant insights into the lived experiences and perspectives of secondary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh, and their engagement with the CLT approach. The study highlights the complex realities and challenges faced by these teachers, underscoring the importance of context-specific and teacher-informed strategies in education reform (Burns and Richards, 2009). The importance of teacher beliefs and understanding about the CLT was a key finding, in line with previous research emphasising the influential role of teachers' pedagogical

beliefs in language teaching and learning (Borg, 2015). A disconnect was apparent between the ideals of the communicative approach and the reality of its implementation in an examination-oriented system. Structural issues, such as large class sizes and a lack of adequately trained teachers, were identified as significant barriers to the successful enactment of CLT. The finding that teachers were largely excluded from policy-making processes underlines the importance of their inclusion in such decisions. The influence of international organisations was noted as a potential double-edged sword: providing resources and promoting innovative approaches, but also necessitating critical reflection to ensure alignment with the local educational context and needs. The COVID-19 pandemic served to highlight and intensify existing challenges, pushing teachers and the educational system at large towards further adaptation and flexibility. This resonates with recent literature documenting the worldwide struggles and changes in the field of education amidst the pandemic. Through the lens of Fullan's educational change implementation theory and Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of professional capital, this research underscores the necessity for systemic changes, effective leadership, and robust collaborative structures in fostering successful education reform. The critical role of teacher professional development is reaffirmed, moving beyond mere training on the CLT approach to an encompassing approach that supports teachers' growth and empowerment.

Chapter 10: Conclusions and Recommendations

10.0 Introduction

The study engaged in an in-depth exploration of the perspectives and experiences of secondary-level EFL teachers concerning the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh. In this final chapter, I have synthesised the significant findings, recommendations, implications, limitations, and suggestions for future research. In this chapter, I have provided an overview of the findings of my research. After that, I have offered a few recommendations based on my findings and discussion. I have then pointed out where my study has made contributions theoretically and methodologically (Section 10.2). I also showed possible limitations of my study (Section 10.3). I showed the scope for future research (Section 10.4). My personal reflections on the PhD (Section 10.5) rounded off this chapter and the whole thesis.

The first finding underscored teachers' disengagement and unawareness in the educational reform policy-making process, reflecting the worldwide trend of teachers being distanced from policy discourse (Rizvi and Lingard, 2009a; Ball, 2012; Lingard and Rizvi, 2020). Teachers' apprehensions about the perceived influence of international organisations on policy and curriculum reform echo the scholarly debates around the tension between globalising trends and localised educational realities (Steiner-Khamsi, 2014). I have explored mixed perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach emerged, signifying the complex dynamics of educational change. Teachers' endorsements of the principles of the CLT along with their struggle with its practical implementation resonate with the empirical literature (Chowdhury and Le Ha, 2008; Rahman and Pandian, 2018a). I have also identified structural challenges identified, including a shortage of skilled teachers, large class sizes, and misalignment of classroom practices with CLT, were consistent with those found in other contexts (Karim, 2004; Chowdhury and Kabir, 2014).

My data further indicated impediments to successful implementation such as inadequate school leadership, non-collaborative culture, foreign funding dependency for teacher training, systemic school culture changes, and excessive teacher workload, which parallel other findings (Harris, 2002; Burns and Richards, 2009; Hallinger and Heck, 2010). The dominance of exam-orientation and the burgeoning role of private supplementary tutoring magnify these challenges (Silova and Brehm, 2012).

The implications of these findings are manifold. The need for deeper teacher engagement in policy-making, stronger recognition of local contexts by international bodies, and improved professional development opportunities for teachers in CLT methodology are some of the key implications (Kirkpatrick and Zhichang, 2002; Fullan, 2010; Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012). Additionally, addressing structural issues such as promoting effective school leadership, a collaborative culture, sustainable training funding, excessive teacher workloads, and a pervasive exam-oriented focus in the educational system requires urgent attention.

10.1 Recommendations

In this section I have presented a range of recommendations, both policy-level and practical, that emerge from the findings of this research, drawing on the nuanced understanding provided by the educational policy transfer theory, Fullan's educational change implementation theory, and Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of professional capital. These recommendations could serve as a roadmap for future improvements in the EFL sector in Bangladesh and potentially other similar contexts.

10.1.1 Policy-Level Recommendations

Inclusion of Teachers in Policy Formulation: Consistent with the emphasis in literature (Hargreaves, 2009) on the importance of teachers' involvement in policy formulation, it is recommended that mechanisms are developed to include teachers in educational policy making processes in Bangladesh. By incorporating their voices and perspectives, there is potential for the creation of policies that are more attuned to the realities of the classroom. This can be done by eliciting teachers' views through conducting several surveys by the government during any significant modifications of educational or curriculum policies. Consequently, teachers might feel a sense of belongingness which could generate their more engagement in the teaching-learning process and eat the resistance toward the implementation of educational change such as the CLT implementation.

Rational Engagement with International Agencies: While international organisations can contribute a wealth of expertise and resources, there is a need for a more critical engagement with their influence to ensure a balance between global best practices and local contextual realities. This balanced approach has been highlighted in educational literature as essential to the success of educational policies and reforms (Dale and Robertson, 2002; Robertson and Dale, 2002). This is quite a political decision. This is where the government can play its significant role.

Sustainable Investment in Teacher Training: Moving away from heavy dependence on foreign financial funding for teacher training, there should be a commitment to the sustainable investment in local teacher training initiatives. Importantly, these should provide comprehensive training on the CLT approach and continuous professional development opportunities. This can be achieved through the initiatives of the government, for the first instance. Secondly, each school can operate in-house CPD opportunities and generate collaborative culture in their environment.

10.1.2 Practical Recommendations

Addressing Systemic Challenges: Following recommendations from educational scholars (Bryman, 2007; Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012), systemic issues including large class sizes, shortage of skilled teachers, and the misalignment of classroom practices with the CLT approach need to be addressed. This may involve substantial investment in teacher recruitment, teacher training, and re-evaluation of assessment methods.

Fostering a Collaborative Culture and Effective Leadership: In line with Fullan's educational change implementation theory, a culture of collaboration among teachers should be encouraged and school leadership should be strengthened (Leithwood and Day, 2008; Fullan, 2011). This may require leadership development programmes and mechanisms to encourage collaboration among teaching staff.

Reform in Examination Practices: Research has indicated the deleterious effects of an examination system heavily reliant on rote learning on innovative teaching approaches such as the CLT. Therefore, reformation of the examination system should be considered to promote creative thinking, problem solving, and communicative skills.

Regulation of Private Tutoring: Given the potential implications of the proliferation of private tutoring, policies should be developed to regulate this industry, with the aim of ensuring equitable access to education and maintaining the quality of formal classroom learning.

Furthermore, it is recommended that future research continue to explore these areas, in particular examining the impact of the suggested interventions and tracking the continuing influence of major disruptions, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, on EFL education. By doing so, this research will contribute to an ongoing dialogue about EFL education reform, providing a basis for further research, policy making, and practice.

Finally, it is recommended to continue research in this area, with a focus on tracking the outcomes of interventions based on these recommendations and understanding the ongoing impacts of global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic on EFL teaching and learning.

In conclusion, this study offers both a comprehensive understanding of the current state of EFL education in Bangladesh and clear directions for future policy, practice, and research. Engaging with teachers' perspectives and experiences, it has opened a crucial dialogue that has the potential to reshape the future of EFL education in Bangladesh and beyond.

10.2 Original Contribution of the Study

The research delivers several vital contributions to the academic dialogue surrounding the CLT approach in EFL classrooms, specifically within the Bangladesh context. In providing a deeper insight into teachers' perspectives and experiences of the CLT, this study not only enhances our understanding of this educational approach but also enriches associated educational policies.

10.2.1 Theoretical Contribution

My study employs educational policy transfer theory (Steiner-Khamsi, 2004), Fullan's educational change implementation theory (Fullan, 2015b), and Hargreaves and Fullan's concept of professional capital (Fullan and Hargreaves, 2012) in the relatively unexplored landscape of Bangladesh. This theoretical application is novel in terms of offering new insights into the adoption of the CLT within EFL settings in the developing country contexts. As such, my research extends the scope of these theories and deepens their interpretive power.

This research delivers considerable empirical contribution by revealing the intricate realities of implementing the CLT within secondary schools in Bangladesh. An exhaustive exploration of factors that influence the CLT adoption, from teachers' perspectives, presents unique insights that help fill the knowledge gaps in the existing body of research. The study's empirical findings concerning teachers' perspectives on government policy, training experiences, and the realities of the CLT implementation in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, are particularly enlightening (Day *et al.*, 2021).

The third contribution centres on policy implications. By identifying policy weaknesses and avenues for improvement, this study offers valuable insights that can help shape more effective and inclusive language teaching policies in Bangladesh. The findings highlight areas such as teacher engagement in the policy making process, the influence of international organisations, and systemic issues, including a shortage of skilled teachers and a lack of CLT-specific training. These insights offer useful guidance for both policy makers and teachers.

10.2.2 Methodological Contribution

The methodological significance of this study lies in its detailed qualitative investigation of teachers' perspectives on educational reform and change in a developing country context. By leveraging techniques such as interviews, class observations, and document analysis, this research provides methodological insights for similar educational settings.

10.3 Limitations of the Study

My study is not without its limitations, which should be recognised to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the results and the implications derived from them. These limitations provide an essential context for interpreting the findings and identifying potential areas of future research.

The first limitation pertains to the context and the sample of this study. This research focused on secondary level EFL teachers in Bangladesh, thereby making it context-specific. As such, the transferability of findings to other educational contexts, such as primary or tertiary education within Bangladesh or secondary level EFL education in other countries, should be approached with caution.

Secondly, I conducted my study during an exceptional period marked by the global disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, which significantly impacted the educational sector globally, including Bangladesh. Consequently, the findings associated with the implementation of the CLT approach during the pandemic may not be representative of a regular teaching environment (M. M. Hossain, 2021).

Thirdly, the methodological choice of employing a qualitative approach also carries potential limitations. While it provided rich, context-specific insights, it also introduced the risk of subjectivity and interpretive bias, despite diligent attempts at maintaining reflexivity throughout the research process (Bryman, 2016). Furthermore, as this study relied on self-reported data, the results may be susceptible to recall bias or social desirability bias.

Understanding these limitations contributes to a more nuanced interpretation of the findings of my study and highlights areas for further exploration in subsequent research within this field.

10.4 Scopes for Further Research

This research has mapped out the terrain of the EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the CLT approach in the secondary-level classrooms in Bangladesh, highlighting key issues and challenges. It has also illuminated multiple paths for future investigation, inviting more comprehensive explorations to build upon this foundation.

An immediate avenue for future research lies in extending the investigation into diverse educational contexts. While this study is firmly rooted in the secondary education sphere of Bangladesh, replicating the research in alternative environments such as primary, tertiary or adult education sectors, both within and beyond the Bangladeshi context, may yield wider perspectives and reinforce the global understanding of the CLT approach implementation.

The current research was conducted during the unprecedented times of the COVID- 19 pandemic, presenting a unique backdrop to educational practices. Future research may consider a longitudinal study design that tracks the long-term impacts of the pandemic on the CLT practices, and how these practices evolve and adapt in the post-pandemic educational landscape.

Given the broad spectrum of themes emerging from my study, future work may embark upon a deeper exploration of selected themes. For instance, further studies could dissect the influence of

international organisations on policy and curriculum reform or investigate the dynamics of foreign financial aid for teacher training.

To conclude, my research has not only highlighted significant insights about the implementation of the CLT approach in Bangladesh but also has paved the way for future research to further enrich our understanding of the complexities involved.

10.5 My Reflections on the PhD

Completing my PhD has been a transformative journey on my part in many ways. Venturing into the intricate labyrinth of secondary education in Bangladesh and particularly exploring the EFL teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching approach has opened my eyes in many unexpected ways even though I myself have been an EFL teacher in Bangladesh.

When I began my study, I perceived myself as a well-informed individual in the realm of language teaching due to my previous academic and professional background. The vast academic realm of second language education was alluring, and as I delved deeper, I was introduced to a myriad of nuances around curriculum policies, educational policy shifts, and teacher professional development, educational change, education and development, educational policy transfer, professional capital etc. These concepts gradually became the foundation upon which I would situate my understanding of the broader field of education. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, I had to modify my research in a substantial manner (see **Chapter 4**). I had also to change my research questions, research design, and data collection methods. The experience of conducting my research during that challenging period has given me some positive insights as well along with some challenges that I have already described in the Research Methodology chapter (**Chapter 4**). For example, I would not have been able to gain such a clear picture of the digital divide in my educational context. At the same time, it was quite good to see young EFL teachers efficiently using information technology for educational and professional purposes. Their longing for more opportunities for continuing professional development also made me hopeful for a successful policy implementation in future.

The heart of my research, the EFL teachers, revealed stories that were both compelling and intricate. Sometimes these stories made me baffled. Through their eyes, I observed the intense tension

between policy design and real-life classroom implementation. Their beliefs and practices were continually influenced by various factors: from their perceptions of student needs to the broader educational context in which they taught.

At this stage, my striking realisation is how the policy formulated by the Ministry of Education often missed the mark, failing to effectively convey the essence of the CLT approach to the EFL teachers on the ground. Teachers, while adaptive, often felt overwhelmed by changes that seemed detached from their classroom realities. The overpowering emphasis on examinations and their results often overshadowed genuine pedagogical improvements, making it difficult for teachers to integrate innovative teaching methods.

The completion of my research makes me yearn to bridge the disconnect I have identified. Equipped with this new knowledge, I feel a responsibility to advocate for a more inclusive approach to curriculum reform. I aim to persuade the Ministry of Education to involve teachers from various contexts, emphasising that sustainable change necessitates a comprehensive view of all curriculum components. My research has the potential to foster more constructive dialogues in teacher training programmes as well, moving away from mere theory and instead focusing on real classroom scenarios. This has now become more possible for me due to gaining invaluable insights from my PhD.

In conclusion, my PhD journey, enriched with insights, challenges, and self-discovery, leaves me eager to play a role in enhancing the educational landscape of Bangladesh. As an EFL teacher, I am driven to collaborate with fellow teachers, looking forward to the opportunities and challenges that the future holds for me.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

The background details of the participants are presented in the tables below (1, 2 and 3):

Table 1: EFL teachers' educational and professional background

Pseudonym	School	Gender	Teaching experience	Educational qualifications
Akram	AHS	Male	12 years	BA and MA in English Literature; B.Ed
Didar	AHS	Male	13 years	BA and MA in English Literature; M.Ed
Nahid	AHS	Female	10 years	MA in English Literature; B.Ed
Rafiq	PMHS	Male	11 years	BA and MA in English Literature; B.Ed
Belal	PMHS	Male	11 years	MA in English Literature; B.Ed
Meem	PMHS	Female	5 years	BA and MA in English Literature; M.Ed

Table 2: EFL teacher trainers' and trainees' educational and professional background

Pseudonym	Institution	Role	Teaching experience	Educational qualifications
Delwar	RTTC	EFL teacher trainer	16 years	BA and MA in English Literature; M.Ed
Enam	RTTC	EFL teacher trainer	14 years	BA and MA in English Literature; M.Ed
Fahad	RTTC	EFL teacher trainer	13 years	BA and MA in English Literature; B.Ed
Arnab	RTTC	EFL teacher trainee	2 years	BA and MA in English Literature
Benazir	RTTC	EFL teacher trainee	2 years	BA and MA in English Literature
Dulal	RTTC	EFL teacher trainee	1 year	BA and MA in English Literature

Table 3: School Leaders' and Education Administrators' educational and professional background

Pseudonym	Institution/Office	Role	Experience	Educational qualifications
Mala	AHS	Head teacher	20 years	MA; B.Ed
Prodip	AHS	Assistant head teacher	18 years	BA; B.Ed
Touhid	PMHS	Head teacher	18 years	MA; M.Ed
Ripon	PMHS	Assistant head teacher	16 years	MA; B.Ed
Aktar	DEO	DEO	15 years	MA; B.Ed
Arunlal	DD	DD	17 years	MA

Appendix 2

Working Title: Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in Bangladesh

<u>Interview guidelines (Translated into Bangla)</u>

Interview with EFL teachers:

1. **Government policy formulation and the use of the CLT approach**
   - How are polices formulated and curriculum developed?
   - Who formulates the policy?
   - Who develops the curriculum?
   - Are teachers involved in policy formulation and curriculum development?
   - Are teachers' views sought for curriculum development?
   - Do you see any role of international agencies or NGOs in shaping Bangladesh's ELT
   - curriculum?
   - What are govt initiatives during COVID-19 pandemic situation to carry through the ELT policy?

2. **Teachers' experiences of implementation and practice of the CLT approach**
   - Knowledge of and experiences of the features of the CLT approach
   - Experiences regarding classroom activities
   - Experiences about group work and pair work in the classroom
   - Views on four language skills practice in the classroom, what about intercultural skills
   - Experiences about grammar teaching in the classroom
   - Perceptions regarding their role in the classroom
   - Perceptions about learners' role in the classroom
   - Views on the materials, i,e. textbooks etc.
   - Experiences of the assessment and evaluation system

- Views on the use of the Grammar-Translation Method or other language teaching methodologies.
- What changes in teaching practice do you see during Covid 19 pandemic situation?
- Any challenges or obstacles?
- Teaching methods — what are the teachers doing, how are they coping with challenges of COVID situation. And that is in relation to CLT approaches which they are supposed to have been using in their classrooms. Now look at what have changed/ what would they be doing normally in classrooms.

    - What is the change to move online teaching?
    - What are challenges?
    - What are strengths?
    - What are opportunities?
    - How are students engaging?
    - Issue of feedback, interaction and also in terms of assessment.
    - How are the learners being assessed?
    - How are the teachers giving feedback? How do they know progress is being made?
    - Challenges of assessing students.
    - Explore what interaction there is with teachers.
    - Is there a class divide?
    - What percentage are engaging and how do they know if anyone is online?
    - Do teachers have sufficient digital skills and equipment?
    - How are they teaching – which platforms?
- IS TEACHING ANY DIFFERENT online from their actual face-to-face teaching? Or the same?

3. **Continuing Professional Development support offered to the EFL teachers**

- Views and experiences of CPD support/teacher education
- Is there any CPD/ teacher education?
- Is it continuous/for stipulated time?
- Does it come from a particular policy view?
- Does it meet the teachers' need?

- How do teachers meet their training needs?

- Sources of the funding for the training (internal or external funding)

- Role of international agencies (e.g., DFID, British Council, USAID, World Bank, ADB etc.) in training

- Selection process/ How are teachers selected for training?

- Curriculum for the training/who decides the content

- Which authority conducts the training?

- How is it implemented?

- What changes in EFL teacher training do you see during Covid 19 pandemic situation?
    - Any challenges or obstacles?
    - What are the teachers learning from the present situation?
    - How are they being supported?
    - Is the govt putting any resources about this?
    - Is there any training going on?
    - What is the govt doing in order to upskill the teachers?
    - What are they doing to improve online practice?
    - What is going on in the meetings of the teachers and education officers?
    - What concerns and what issues are arising and how are they responding?
    - The way training is happening as it's happening online. How The curtailment of syllabus is dealing with placement practice?
    - Are they continuing the training and placement online?
    - If they are not trained and do not complete their initial practice, there will be a huge gap. Professionals are coming into practice with this gap. What do you think of it?
    - Independent CPD and learning initiatives from the government in a COVID context.
    - What the govt is proposing and regional district offices what are they doing to upskill teachers to go online specifically.
    - Do you see any changes at policy level, national level and district level?
    - What is happening with new teachers coming into the system in training colleges.

- IS TEACHER TRAINING ANY DIFFERENT online from their actual face-to-face teaching? Or the same?

4. **Do you have any comments or suggestions about the practice and implementation of the CLT approach in EFL classrooms at the secondary level education in Bangladesh**

Working Title: Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in Bangladesh

Interview guidelines (Translated into Bangla)

Interview with *Head teachers*, *Assistant head teachers*, *EFL teacher trainers*, *EFL teacher trainees*, *Deputy Director*, and *District Education Officer*:

1. **Government policy formulation and the use of the CLT approach**
   - How are polices formulated and curriculum developed?
     Who formulates the policy?
   - Who develops the curriculum?
   - Are teachers involved in policy formulation and curriculum development?
   - Are teachers' views sought for curriculum development?
   - Do you see any role of international agencies or NGOs in shaping Bangladesh's ELT
   - curriculum?
   - What are govt initiatives during COVID-19 pandemic situation to carry through the ELT policy?

2. **Teachers' experiences of implementation and practice of the CLT approach**
   - Views on EFL teachers four language skills practice in the classroom, what about intercultural skills.
   - Views about EFL teachers' grammar teaching in the classroom
   - Perceptions regarding EFL teachers' and learners' role in the classroom
   - Views on the materials, i,e. textbooks etc.
   - Views on and experiences of the assessment and evaluation system
   - Views on the use of the CLT and the traditional method or other language teaching methodologies (if they have any ideas of these).
   - What changes in teaching practice do you see during Covid 19 pandemic situation?
   - Any challenges or obstacles?
   - Teaching methods—what are the teachers doing, how are they coping with challenges of COVID situation. And that is in relation to CLT approaches which they are supposed to have

been using in their classrooms. Now look at what have changed/ what would they be doing normally in classrooms.

- o What is the change to move online teaching?

- o What are challenges?
- o What are strengths
- o What are opportunities?
- o How are students engaging?
- o Issue of feedback, interaction and also in terms of assessment.
- o How are the learners being assessed?
- o How are the teachers giving feedback?
- o How do they know progress is being made?
- o Challenges of assessing students.
- o Explore what interaction there is with teachers
- o Is there a class divide?
- o What percentage are engaging and how do they know if anyone is online?
- o Do teachers have sufficient digital skills and equipment?
- o Do head teachers/assistant head teachers have sufficient digital skills to manage online teaching?
- o How are they teaching – which platforms?

- IS TEACHING ANY DIFFERENT online from their actual face-to-face teaching? Or the same? What challenges (if any) do you face as a school leader in this regard?

3. **Continuing Professional Development support offered to the EFL teachers**

- Views and experiences of CPD support/teacher education
- Is there any CPD/ teacher education?
- Is it continuous/for stipulated time?
- Does it come from a particular policy view?
- Does it meet the teachers' need?
- How do teachers meet their training needs?
- Sources of the funding for the training (internal or external funding)

- Role of international agencies (e.g., DFID, British Council, USAID, World Bank, ADB etc.) in training
- Selection process/ How are teachers selected for training?

- Curriculum for the training/who decides the content
- Which authority conducts the training?
- How is it implemented?
- Do you arrange any professional learning community to foster teacher professional development?
- Do you encourage teachers to work naturally together in joint planning for educational change both physically and attitudinally?
- Do the teachers have an opportunity for observing one another's teaching practice?
- Do you arrange any scope for teachers so that they can seek, test and revise teaching strategies on a continuous basis?
- Do you encourage teachers' capacity building for dealing with curricular change (such as the CLT approach implementation).
- Do you encourage teachers' engagement through developing partnerships and collaborative cultures?
- How do you develop teachers' collective efficacy?
- What issues are generally addressed in your fortnightly/ monthly meetings with teachers?
- What do you think of teachers' heavy workload (their complain about this)?
- What do you think of teachers' work environment (their complain about unsuitable environment)?
- What changes in EFL teacher training do you see during Covid 19 pandemic situation?
- Any challenges or obstacles?
  - What are the teachers learning from the present situation?
  - How are they being supported?
  - Is the govt putting any resources about this?
  - Is there any training going on?
  - What is the govt doing in order to upskill the teachers?
  - What are they doing to improve online practice?
  - What is going on in the meetings of the teachers and education officers?
  - What concerns and what issues are arising and how are they responding?
  - The way training is happening as it's happening online. How The curtailment of syllabus is dealing with placement practice?
  - Are they continuing the training and placement online?
  - If they are not trained and do not complete their initial practice, there will be a huge gap. Professionals are coming into practice with this gap. What do you think of it?
  - Independent CPD and learning initiatives from the government in a COVID context.

- o What the govt is proposing and regional district offices what are they doing to upskill teachers to go online specifically.
  - o Do you see any changes at policy level, national level and district level?
  - o What is happening with new teachers coming into the system in training colleges.
- IS TEACHER TRAINING ANY DIFFERENT online from their actual face-to-face teaching? Or the same?

4. **Do you have any comments or suggestions about the practice and implementation of the CLT approach in EFL classrooms at the secondary level education in Bangladesh**

Working Title: Teachers' perspectives on the implementation of the Communicative Language Teaching approach in Bangladesh

Classroom Observation Guidelines

- **Introducing the Topic of the Lesson**

Clearly introduce the lesson topic to provide a strong foundation for students.

- **Stating Lesson Aims and Reflective Review**

Systematically state the objectives of the lesson and implement a reflective review at the end.

- **Modelling and Scaffolding**

Demonstrate key concepts or tasks (modelling) and provide scaffolding to support student understanding.

- **Facilitating Think-Pair-Share Activities**

Conduct and manage think-pair-share sessions to encourage student collaboration.

- **Initiating Group and Pair Work**

Facilitate group work and pair work to promote active learning and interaction.

- **Encouraging Self-Evaluation**

Motivate students to assess their own progress and reflect on their learning.

- **Providing Feedback**

Offer constructive feedback to guide student improvement.

- **Assigning Homework**

Set relevant homework to reinforce the lesson's content.

- **Classroom Discipline Management**

Maintain classroom discipline effectively while creating a conducive learning environment.

- **Promoting Student Talk Time**

Encourage more student participation and reduce teacher talk time where appropriate.

- **Planning Lessons and Activities**

Ensure thoughtful planning of lessons, activities, and units of work.

- **Negotiating Learning Moments**

Be flexible and negotiate learning moments when necessary to adapt to students' needs.

- **Creating a Trusting and Respectful Atmosphere**

Foster a collaborative environment built on mutual trust and respect.

- **Encouraging Metacognition**

Motivate students to reflect on their own learning processes and strategies.

- **Recognising Individual Learning Styles**

Acknowledge and value that each learner is unique and has their own learning style.

- **Guiding with Probing Questions**

Use a guiding questioning approach, asking probing questions to deepen understanding.

- **Encouraging Group Discussions**

Facilitate group discussions to enhance collaborative thinking.

- **Practicing Speaking in Pairs**

Encourage students to practice speaking in pairs to improve their language skills.

- **Storytelling**

Involve students in storytelling in front of the class to build confidence and communication skills.

- **Debates and Role Play**

Organise debates or role plays to stimulate critical thinking and language use in dynamic contexts.

- **Dialogue Reading and Recitation**

Have students read and recite dialogues to improve fluency and comprehension.

- **Picture Descriptions**

Engage students in describing pictures to their partner, enhancing descriptive language skills.

- **Dictation Tasks**

Implement dictation exercises to improve listening and writing accuracy.

- **Grammar Exercises**

Provide grammar exercises to reinforce language structure understanding.

- **Dictionary and Vocabulary Activities**

Use dictionary and vocabulary exercises to expand language knowledge.

- **Listening Exercises**

Include listening to audio and answering related questions to enhance comprehension.

- **Games**

Incorporate games to make learning interactive and fun, while reinforcing lesson objectives.

Sample Transcript

Q: How do you evaluate CLT approach for English language teaching from your side being a 12-year experienced EFL teacher? Do the EFL teachers know about the features and components of CLT approach? How do you feel about CLT?

A: I personally support teaching 4 skills of English and so I like the CLT approach. I think, this method is better and easier for enhancing learners' 4 language skills. I think the EFL teachers don't know much about the features and principles of CLT approach as they are not trained on the CLT approach properly. Specially, senior and old teachers do not like this method as they are the product of traditional Grammar-Translation method. Actually, we don't have sufficient number of skilled EFL teachers. In most cases, only 2 or 3 EFL teachers have to teach 1200 or 1300 students at a secondary school, you know. To cover the shortage, teachers from other subjects have to work as English teacher. They don't have any subject knowledge of English language, and no additional training is there for them. So, they don't just care about methods of English language teaching, whether it's CLT or GTM, all are equal to them. They just want to carry through. This is happening in most secondary schools in Bangladesh. For example, one of my friends is working as English teacher at a secondary school at Uposhohor area (pseudonym) where he is the only English teacher for around one thousand students; he is supported by a colleague whose major is geography. This is the case.

Q: How about your classroom experience about CLT? Can you do group work and pair work in class? What about classroom interaction?

A: I usually make a short lesson plan beforehand. So, I know in which class I will do group work and pair work. I also know that it's not possible for me to follow these techniques everyday. So I become a bit of strategic about this. I manage to do that once in every two weeks. I could not make my class interactive all the time. Sometimes, it was possible. Students generally, don't want to speak. Now during COVID-19, the situation is worse. Earlier, we upload video-recorded lessons and they follow them.

Q: What about your class size? How do you consider it in relation to CLT implementation?

A: We have around 70-80 students in a class. Really difficult to manage and practice CLT techniques like group work and pair work, you know. Moreover, there are mixed ability students; three types of students are present in the same class, very few are good, some are medium and most of them are very weak. This is another problem for us. We have to think for the weak students first because they have to pass the public exams at the end of the day. That's very important. If the class contains a smaller number of students, I mean 30 to 40, or even 50, it could have been easier for us to make plans for using CLT techniques and make the class interactive. But it's a hard reality.

Q: What about your idea and experience of 4 skills development in English language classroom as stated in govt policy documents and also in CLT? To what extent can you be careful about teaching these skills in class?

A: I know that developing students' 4 skills is very important. If the learners can practise all 4 skills, they will be able to use English in their practical life. But to be honest, we can't follow the principles of CLT about 4 skills practice completely. Most of the time in the class we teach grammar as it is needed for the exam. We also make them practise writing skill by giving tasks like paragraph and composition writing. But rarely, we can make arrangements for speaking skill practice. I understand that I should follow the principles but I can't.

Q: How do you teach grammar to students? Do you think this grammar teaching technique is in line with the CLT approach?

A: In the class at first I teach the grammatical rules to students, for example 'right form of verbs' then give them some examples of those rules in sentences, then let them practise to make sure they have understood the topic. If you say about CLT techniques, my method of teaching grammar rules is not in line with the CLT approach, I agree and understand. But what can I do then? I am bound to make them pass in English subject in exams. As an English teacher this is my responsibility.

Audit Trail of Data Analysis

Theme	Category	Code	Example from Transcript
Challenges in CLT Implementation	Barriers to Group and Pair Work	• Insufficient opportunities for group or pair work • CLT techniques difficult to implement • Virtual classrooms lack interaction and collaboration	"I know in which class I will do group work and pair work. I also know that it's not possible for me to follow these techniques everyday."
	Class Size as a Barrier	• Large class sizes hinder interactive activities • Mixed-ability groups complicate group work • Focus on weak students for exam preparation	"We have around 70-80 students in a class. Really difficult to manage and practice CLT techniques like group work and pair work you know."
	Impact of COVID-19 on CLT	• Difficulty in adapting to online teaching • Students less engaged in virtual environments	"Now during COVID-19 the situation is worse. Earlier we upload video-recorded lessons and they follow them."
Focus on Skills Development	Limited Skills Practiced	• Emphasis on writing and grammar • Lack of speaking and listening practice • Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) still prevalent	"Most of the time in the class we teach grammar as it is needed for the exam... We rarely make arrangements for speaking skill practice."

	Exam-Oriented Teaching	• Focus on writing due to exam requirements • Teachers prioritizing exam success over communicative competence	"I am bound to make them pass in English subject in exams. As an English teacher this is my responsibility."
Teachers' Knowledge and Attitudes Toward CLT	Knowledge Gaps in CLT	• Insufficient knowledge of CLT among teachers • Lack of proper CLT training for EFL teachers • Older teachers resistant to change	"I think the EFL teachers don't know much about the features and principles of CLT approach as they are not trained on the CLT approach properly."
	Teacher Attitudes Toward CLT	• Negative attitude among senior teachers • CLT seen as incompatible with local contexts • CLT perceived as a foreign method	"Specially senior and old teachers do not like this method as they are the product of traditional Grammar-Translation method."
Teaching Methods in Practice	Grammar-Focused Teaching	• Grammar-Translation Method dominates • Lecture-based instruction common • Teachers play traditional roles, not facilitators	"In the class at first I teach the grammatical rules... then let them practise... my method of teaching grammar rules is not in line with the CLT approach."
	Adaptation to Contextual Realities	• Teachers prioritize exam success • Mixed-ability classes make CLT difficult to implement	"If the class contains a smaller number of students I mean 30 to 40 or even 50 it

			could have been easier for us to make plans for using CLT techniques."
Classroom Resources and Materials	Textbooks and Materials	• Textbooks align with government policy • Textbooks include intercultural content • Materials consistent with CLT principles	"English For Today sufficient... EFT in line with govt policy and CLT principles."