

## COMMUNICATIVE LANGUAGE TEACHING (CLT): THEORY VS REALITY IN THE CONTEXT OF SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN BANGLADESH

Mohammad Rahmatuzzman

### ABSTRACT

*This paper attempts a study of the present state of teaching and learning English language in the secondary schools of Bangladesh. It offers an analysis of the current English curriculum provided by NCTB, and the grade 9 and 10 textbook. The main obstacles to implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), role of materials, and the impact of the traditional approach are the key findings analysed. In order to deeper understand the potential discrepancies between the current practice of the existing approach (CLT) and the classroom practice in evidence, a qualitative study was adopted, including teacher interviews and classroom observation. The study found that contextual factors like classroom size, insufficient educational aids, inadequate time for classroom conduct, insufficient teacher training on CLT, and the misalignment of curriculum objectives and testing are key challenges for CLT implementation. It is also found that a gap exists between the formal classroom practice which is mostly examination oriented and the language learning for practical use in real life contexts. Additionally, teachers' reliance on the reference book (Model Question Book) impacts implementing CLT in classroom practice, since it impedes communicative activities. However, the textbook is well-designed for achieving the objectives of CLT. This study recommends that authentic activities should be conducted more frequently in class, as this might assist students in improving the communicative competence required in real-life contexts. This study also suggests effective alignment of the curriculum objectives and testing, i.e. introduction of listening and speaking tests in the assessment process.*

Keywords: ELT, communicative language teaching, communicative competence, secondary schools

### 1 Introduction

Due to the rapid growth of globalisation and the expansion of the economic world, English has already become a strong tool for communication across borders. In Bangladesh, the use of English is growing rapidly, especially in offices and administrative working environments. Moreover, a large number of students intend to study abroad every year. Consequently, English language proficiency has become a vital element to access the global economy and education (Karim, 2004).

To make connections across the economic, technological, intellectual, political, cultural, and social world, the development of communicative competence amongst the learners (especially the students of secondary school) is a must, because they are the future leaders who will play a vital role in the development of the country in all sectors. Therefore, the aim of this research is to explore the successes so far achieved in adopting CLT to substitute the traditional approach (i.e. GTM), the reasons which are obstructing the implementation of CLT, and the ways to ensure its successful implementation, especially in secondary schools, where a larger number of students are taught English language through this approach.

This study is of great importance for English language teachers, and particularly secondary school teachers, since it has collected a useful amount of information about the teaching methods purportedly based on CLT. The effectiveness and appropriateness of the current teaching method, along with the difficulties faced by the teachers, has also been investigated in this study. This study will lead teachers to a better understanding of the theory of CLT and its implementation in the context of Bangladesh. It may also hold significance for the language policy makers, material designers, and assessment bodies for the purpose of revision and modification of the current education programme of secondary level schools in Bangladesh, considering the challenges of the implementation of CLT.

### 2 Literature Review

#### 2.1 Definition of CLT

CLT is best considered as an approach rather than a method (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). It is a broad framework which can be regarded as an umbrella term. A large number of definitions exist in literature, but the essence of CLT is based on the consideration of learners as communicators who are endowed with the ability to learn language naturally (Yalden, 1987 as cited in Chung, 2005). It views language as a tool for communication (Hasan and Akand, 2009). To achieve this communicative view, both functional and structural aspects of language should be integrated (Littlewood, 1981).

#### 2.2 Basic principles of CLT

In his book *Communicative Language Teaching*, the renowned linguist William Littlewood (1981) detailed the goal of CLT, the roles it suggests for teachers and learners in the classroom, the types of communicative activities it requires etc. According to his view, the goal of foreign language teaching is to develop the communicative abilities of the learners. To achieve this, they should complete some pre-communicative activities before performing communicative activities. The aim of these pre-communicative

activities is to encourage the learners to produce a piece of language which places little attention on conveying meaning. He argued that these kinds of activities help the learners to perform communicative tasks at later stages. Furthermore, this and other classroom activities should be largely learner-centred (Walia, 2012). Importantly, under the CLT approach, learners are required to relate language in different social contexts. For this, they should exchange and interact with partners, without depending on teachers. Teachers, meanwhile, play the role of facilitator, after having set up suitable activities based on learners' level. Moreover, additional teacher roles include supporting the learners psychologically, playing the role of co-communicator, and monitoring the strengths and weaknesses of the learners. In choosing communicative activities, Littlewood prefers to devise functional and social interactional activities. Functional activities involve information gaps or problem solving, using the language to share and process the information, whereas social interaction activities are related to the interaction outside classroom where language is used as a functional instrument for social communicative purposes.

In addition, Brown (2006, p214) conceptualizes CLT approach on the basis of the following four features:

1. Learning is not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence: the classroom should place attention on all elements of communicative competence.
2. Language materials should be more engaging so that learners can use the language in a pragmatic, authentic and functional way in everyday life.
3. To motivate learners in language application, fluency should be emphasised more than accuracy.
4. The ultimate goal for learners is to receive and produce the target language in different contexts meaningfully and appropriately.

Similarly, Richards and Rodgers (1986, p83), presented four basic characteristics of CLT, and some related teaching procedures. The basic characteristics of CLT are:

1. emphasis on communication and interaction in the target language
2. introduction to authentic texts in the learning situation
3. focus on learning and the process of learning
4. links between language in and outside of the classroom

The teaching procedures of CLT are:

1. practicing dialogue to show the functional use of language with motivational presentation
2. discussion based on questions and answers, along with pattern exercise
3. structure of language teaching through dialogues
4. oral recognition and interpretative activities
5. oral production and communication, freely ignoring accuracy

As a result of the arguments outlined above, it is reasonable to contend that:

- the goal of CLT is to achieve the communicative competence of the learners in a given social context.
- CLT emphasises negotiation of meaning along with linguistic knowledge, with a view to serving the communicative purpose in real life contexts.
- the classroom environment should be engaging, interactional, and student-centred, with teachers playing the role of mentor and co-communicator.
- dialogue practising, information gap activities, question-and-answer activities, and solving problems in a project are regarded as some noteworthy communicative activities in the CLT approach that can be managed through role play, pair work, and group work. Fluency rather than accuracy is encouraged for communication.
- the materials for implementing CLT include authentic texts as examples, flash-cards, postcards, and games integrated inside and outside the classroom context.
- this approach discourages memorisation, fruitless sentence pattern exercise, and mechanical drilling.

### **2.3 CLT practice in Bangladesh**

Of all the different approaches for language teaching, CLT is a popular one in many countries, as a way to teach both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL). Bangladesh – which can be compared with other post-colonial EFL contexts (Karim, 2004), although Hasan and Akand (2009) noted it as identifying with the ESL context – has used CLT to substitute the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as the primary approach for teaching English since 2001 (Rahman, 2015). That is to say, more than one and a half decades have passed since its adoption. However, Bangladesh has not exhibited a noticeable outcome among the learners, i.e. the development of communicative competence which is the main goal of CLT (Canlae & Swain, 1980; Celce-Murcia, 2007; Savignon, 1983). The present CLT situation in Bangladesh is not at a satisfactory level, and current English instruction is insufficient to promote communication globally (Karim, 2004).

#### **2.3.1 Transition from GTM to CLT**

The English language history of Bangladesh can be traced to the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when the British colonised the Indian subcontinent until the end of 18<sup>th</sup> century. As a consequence of the influence of British people, the Bangladeshi came into contact with the English language and started introducing it in their daily activities. In 1971, the nation of Bangladesh was born, and it adopted GTM as its approach to English language teaching. In line with the modern development in language teaching policy, the government of Bangladesh later introduced CLT, as developed by the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) (Mondal, 2012). In order to upgrade Bangladesh's standard of secondary school English language instruction, the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh worked in collaboration with the ELTIP in 1997. Thereafter, in 2001, CLT was introduced into the English language curriculum for the first time, and is still prevalent in official government policy (Hasan & Akhand, 2009). That

is to say, the transition in the paradigm from GTM to CLT took place about seventeen years ago. It is, therefore, high time to uphold the discrepancies between the policy and purpose of the government's introduction of CLT, and the real classroom scenario for implementing CLT in secondary education in Bangladesh.

### 2.3.2 Challenges for implementing CLT in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a small country with a large population. A good number of Bangladeshi ELT researchers, for example (Abedin, 2013; Hamid, 2010; Huq, 2014; Rahman & Karim, 2015) identified different contextual factors impacting CLT implementation in Bangladesh. Large class size, insufficiently trained teachers on CLT, limited teaching resources, pressure to complete syllabus, challenging educational environments, and difficulties with engaging learners are some significant factors to mention. The number of students in the class has been viewed as a major factor to implement CLT in Bangladesh. On the contrary, Sanders *et al.*, (1997) oppose about the influence of class size obstructing to teach. They argue that class size is a minor aspect regarding academic achievement. Additionally, lack of training on CLT is also a significant factor to be addressed. According to Sohel and Banks (2012), teachers are the principal catalyst to expand, improve and reform education systems of any country. In Bangladesh, they further pointed out that 1 in 5 teachers do not have teaching qualification. Hamid (2010), however, add that not only the incompetency but also lack of experience, sincerity, and commitment of the teachers are also responsible for not seeing the expected outcome of CLT in Bangladesh.

Moreover, the education system is largely responsible for the failure of CLT. In most cases, tests are designed to judge the students' linguistic competence rather than communicative competence. In addition, the academic curriculum puts least attention on speaking and listening though CLT focuses on four language skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing (Richards, 2006). Das *et al.*, (2014) found a big gap between the goal of CLT and the current education system of Bangladesh. They found that measurement of four skills development is not appropriately focused in the exams in local or national exams even in the university admission test that creates a direct conflict with the interest of CLT methods in delivering the curriculum.

Based on the arguments mentioned above, it can be concluded that CLT provides a broad theoretical framework for language instruction and curriculum design, (Breen & Candlin, 1980; Higgs, 1982; Richard-Amato, 1996; Savignon, 1983; Widdowson, 1978) but the experiences of this theory vary from one national context to another (Karim, 2011). Although issues related to importance of CLT for language teaching in Bangladesh have received attention over the years, issues related to context adaptability, materials availability and assessment process have not been researched thoroughly. Therefore, this can be well-documented through examination of the teacher's beliefs about, experiences and expectation of CLT. It might also be a pathway for further research since it also analysed the assessment process, and the materials for approaching language teaching in secondary schools of Bangladesh.

Taken as whole, this study investigated the dominant causes for the failure of language teaching, present current shortcomings of English instruction, and uncovered procedures to fruitfully implement English education for communicative purposes. For this, the following research questions were posited:

1. How do the English language teachers in secondary schools of Bangladesh adapt CLT approach in the classroom practice?
2. Are there any discrepancies between the adaptation of CLT and the expectations of school and school policy, why or why not?

### 3 Methodology

This study is less interested in the size of data than the depth of meanings of human activities. Indeed, it chiefly focuses on the daily routine activities of teachers and students, and their problems in language teaching and learning. Additionally, this study further intends to examine the materials used for language teaching following the CLT approach. Based on the above, it seems that qualitative methods would be closer to the spirit of the study and research question.

Given the exploratory nature of this study and the desire for more open answers, data collection was made through semi-structured recorded interviews; classroom observations; analysis of the language materials adopted for language teaching; and transcribing of said interviews, and analysis of transcriptions.

Those selected for participation in this study are teaching English language in five different schools. There are ten participants, ranging in age from thirty to fifty five years, equal in number in terms of gender with five male and five female teachers. They have been involved in this profession for between five and thirty five years, having held different academic posts and teaching experiences. In varying participants in terms of gender, age group and experiences, the study not only becomes more representative, but also collects data from different points of view regarding opinions on CLT practice in secondary education.

**Table: 3.1 The demographic information about the participants**

Name (pseudonym)	Educational Qualifications	Sex	Age	Teaching Experience
Nasrin	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Female	35	9
Sumona	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Female	39	15
Alam	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Male	6	33
Mamun	Bachelor Degree Masters in English	Male	45	18
Mahfuja	Bachelor Degree Masters in English	Female	38	10
Mizan	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Male	46	17
Salma	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Female	59	35
Sajal	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Male	47	19
Jahanara	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Female	47	22
Jahir	Bachelor Degree in English Masters in English	Male	34	8

#### 4 Findings and Analysis

The data collected for analysis and interpretation is a significant part of any research project (Collins & Hussey, 2003). The researcher put much effort to manage the data effectively with the purpose of strong analysis and synthesis (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2008). In order to analysing the collected data, thematic analysis, therefore, has been chosen, since it allows the researcher to identify the perceptions of the teachers in terms of CLT implementation in secondary schools.

The data sources analysed here are: (a) ten teacher interviews from five schools, two from each school; b) five classroom observations, one from each school; c) the English curriculum and syllabus document of NCTB along with the Grade 9 and 10 textbook. In analysing the data, the following themes are prioritised:

- Reviewing the curriculum in the essence of CLT objectives and implementation
- The impact of GTM in classroom practice
- Practical obstacles to CLT implementation

#### 4.1 A Review of the curriculum

The principal objective of the present English syllabus of NCTB is to improve the level of communicative competence of the learners by engaging them in communicative activities. It is clearly described in the preface of the present EFT named '*English for Today*'. It is for the students of grade 9-10 who belong to the age groups of 14-16.

##### 4.1.1 Teaching Methodology

According to the curriculum document of NCTB, the following teaching methodology is suggested to follow:

The basic aim of teaching methodology is to give the learners opportunity to practice English language use as much as possible. Since language learning is a participatory activity, teacher should have a close personal engagement with the students both as a group and as individuals. (NCTB, 1996, p153)

Some other instructions have also been specified in the curriculum document for effective teaching and learning:

- Students' involvement in various activities and skills.
- Use of English in most of the time in the classroom. Mother tongue (Bangla) can be used as a 'checking the device where the teacher feels it appropriate to ensure that the English has been correctly used'
- Classroom should be largely student centred where teachers will be the monitor and guide.
- Students should be engaged in pair work and group work in order to promote the cooperation.
- Teachers should emphasise fluency more than accuracy. They should avoid grammatical mistake while they produce the learned language.

(NCTB, 1996, p153-154)

##### 4.1.2 Students' learning outcomes

The learning outcomes of classes 6-12 as stated in the curriculum are:

- The key objective of teaching and learning English is to develop the students' competencies in four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing.
- For achieving an effective outcome of teaching and learning, the above four skills should be considered with separate attention. However, in classroom practice, tasks and activities should be planned by integrating these skills in real life contexts.

- c) By defining learning outcomes in terms of skills, the syllabus focuses on teaching methodology that encourages the learners to get involved in pairs and groups. The classroom practice is more learner-centred where students participate actively in developing these four skills.

(NCTB, 1996, p135-136)

## 4.2 The impact of GTM

### 4.2.1 Findings from classroom observations

All English language teachers (except one) used English language most of the time while conducting classroom activities. Furthermore, while teaching English language, two teachers out of five taught grammar deductively. At the beginning, they wrote the grammar item on the board after seeing the content of the syllabus. It seemed that there was no previous plan about the content of the teaching. One of the teachers was teaching 'articles' in grade 8. She was using the mother tongue throughout the classroom. She taught the definition of the article in Bangla (both the students' and teacher's mother tongue), and wrote down its definition on the board, sometimes translating the example sentences into Bangla. Another teacher used English language most of the time while teaching English in the classroom. He also used the deductive approach while teaching 'Sentences and its Kinds' in the same grade classroom. Then he explained the definition as well as kinds of the 'Sentence', without presenting any communicative context. In the other three classroom observations, two teachers were found teaching grammar implicitly. They presented a text and generated the grammar content within that text. One teacher was found not to teach any grammar, though she translated the text into Bangla. The teachers seemed to adjust to the communicative approach by following some of the characteristics of GTM. However, translation practice from Bangla to English, and English to Bangla (one of the principal features of GTM) appears to no longer exist. It seemed that vocabulary memorisation with meaning in the mother tongue was encouraged, while teachers translated the passage into the mother tongue, feeling that students find it difficult to comprehend the meaning of a passage.

### 4.2.2 Findings from interviews

In terms of the impact of GTM in classroom practice, a mixed set of responses emerged from the participants. Some teachers said GTM no longer exists in the classroom. They added that GTM is outdated now in real terms, and so they do not use it in the classroom. In reply to the question regarding the existence of GTM, Mr Mijan said:

*GTM is not available now in the classroom. At once this approach was applied. Now communicative approach is applied in most cases.*

In contrast, Mr Mamun said that that GTM does exist, but in a different style. He said that though they are supposed to apply the CLT method, the principles of GTM influence their teaching process:

*Our English 2<sup>nd</sup> paper is based on grammar. When we practise grammar, we have to reproduce it in Bengali so that the students can understand well. We try to use our target language but sometimes we translate it in our mother tongue.*

The above quotation was echoed by most of the participants, who described how they must make the text easy by translating it into the mother tongue. Moreover, the memorisation element of GTM is also prevalent in the syllabus curriculum and assessment format. When asked about students' memorisation, most of the teachers replied that students memorise the writing items set for the exam. For example, paragraphs, letters, applications, and compositions are memorised by the students, since they are already fixed, and students can obtain a high score if they memorise a good example. Mamun expressed that the evaluation system is totally based on memorisation, and that students routinely reproduce what they have previously memorised. Another feature of GTM – and which is opposed to CLT – is that of a focus on accuracy. Regarding this, most of the participants informed the researcher that they always encourage students to produce language, even if they make mistakes. They further said that they usually ignore the mistakes made while speaking. Furthermore, in terms of error correction, they make this in a friendly way. In the words of Mahfuja:

*I always encourage them to be more fluent though they make mistakes. Because our mother tongue is Bangla. So, if they continue, we inspire them to do so forgetting about the errors. If I stop them, they will get scared.' Nasrin described 'I encourage to remove their shyness and reluctance to speak and if they make mistakes, I correct them in a very friendly way.*

Overall, it appears that the impact of GTM still exists to some extent, and was being applied by mingling with the communicative approach.

## 4.3 Practical obstacles to CLT implementation

### 4.3.1 Findings from Classroom observations

The largest challenge for the English language teachers seemed to be classroom management. In every classroom, there were 60-85 students, and a time allocation of 30-45 minutes. Within this short space of time, a teacher was found to take the record of present and absent students. They also allocated time to change classrooms (i.e. as soon as finishing teaching in one class he/she had to go to another room). It was seen that, for example, one teacher took a class on the ground floor, while the next class was to be conducted on the fifth floor, which he/she has to reach on foot because of the unavailability of a lift. Therefore, a considerable amount of time was also spent in moving from room to room. Moreover, some teachers were also found spending time setting up the multimedia classroom, i.e. connecting his/her laptop to the multimedia system. Therefore, it can be argued that the classroom management setup is not conducive to efficient language teaching and learning.

The lack of training and motivation for CLT implementation among the teachers was also reflected, since they were found teaching traditionally without incorporating contexts outside of the classroom. They were always observed teaching from textbook passages, which might not be effective for the learners to develop communicative competence in real-life contexts. It was also evident from classroom observation that some teachers were struggling to speak fluently in the target language. Out of five classroom observations, 2 teachers used multimedia in class, while the others used the textbook. One common facility was observed in all schools: in each case there was at least one multimedia classroom, though they seemed insufficient for such a large number of students. Furthermore, only one teacher was found using posters in the classroom. Otherwise, the classrooms were mostly bare of learning materials. Maximising wall space for resources can be a source of knowledge for students, here absent in all classrooms.

Another key difficulty for implanting CLT is the teachers' formal language teaching, which seems to have more contextual attachment to syllabus completion, rather than to language teaching to support communication in real-life contexts. Almost all teachers were found to emphasise completing the syllabus within a certain timeframe. They only followed what they have been instructed to do through syllabus information, and were more focussed on completing the syllabus, as opposed to concentrating on communicative activities in the classroom with a view to develop learner competence. As a result, the goal of language teaching and learning might not be successful.

#### 4.3.2 Findings from interviews

The challenges observed in the classroom practice and the data collected through interview are not similar in all respects. Regarding large class size, for instance, opinions were mixed. Though most teachers considered that the number of students is a factor in conducting the class following the principles of CLT, two teachers held the opposite view, arguing that large classes can be beneficial if the situation is handled aptly. They considered that in a large class, some students are motivated when they see others in the same class putting effort into speaking in the target language:

*Sometimes large class is very much helpful because you find that there are some shy students who do not communicate, when they see other students communicating, they get inspired and after a certain period, they start to respond.*

Besides this, some of the participants regarded that the variety of students in terms of level of attainment also hinders following the characteristics of CLT. Specifically, the weaker students have to compromise in using the target language in the classroom. Moreover, the syllabus is designed with weaker students in mind, and as a consequence, they have to adhere to some fixed topics (such as paragraphs, letters, applications, dialogues, and compositions) that will help them to pass the exam. It appears that these fixed topics lead students to memorisation, which is contradictory to CLT principles. One of the ten participants believed that the number of exams in one academic calendar is also an issue impacting the proper application of the communicative approach. She opined that the number of exams should be decreased in order to attain an effective adoption of CLT in classroom practice. She said:

*Time is limited but we have to take 6-7 exams in one academic year: class tests, tutorial and lots of exams. All the students have to go through this system.*

It seems that the participants intended to communicate that they followed the syllabus and test systems, which are not CLT-based. As a result, they cannot follow CLT features even if they want to do so. Therefore, the aims of CLT are ignored, because all learning and teaching focuses on examination content.

Besides the above challenges, the participants mentioned that the following factors inhibit CLT in their regular classroom practices:

- (i) the unavailability of adequate equipment and educational aids,
- (ii) the small duration of the class,
- (iii) the misalignments between syllabus curriculum and the assessment process,
- (iv) much dependence on reference books ('Model Question' book),
- (v) students' reluctance to learn a foreign language,
- (vi) the lack of opportunity to practise and experience the language in real-life contexts,
- (vii) small classrooms in proportion to the number of students,
- (viii) the lack of time to collect authentic materials,
- (ix) inadequate support from the school authority.

Given the findings, it can be concluded that almost all teachers ranked the same difficulties they generally face in applying the communicative approach in practice. Some of them worth mentioning include the traditional grammar-based national syllabus and according test taking, and insufficient time to conduct proper preparation for applying CLT in their regular classroom practice. The key challenges to implement CLT seem to be the national grammar-based syllabus, where writing and reading are the only skills that are measured, since there is no opportunity to assess the speaking and listening skills in the exams. What is more, a teacher has to spend 30 to 35 hours teaching in the classroom, which hinders them from collecting authentic materials and making an effective lesson plan before class. Teachers' attitudes to and perceptions of these challenging factors were discovered through classroom observations as well as interviews.

## 5 Discussion

The principal objective of this study is to explore the current situation of CLT application in Bangladeshi secondary-school classrooms in terms of school policy provided by the NCTB and the relevant literature containing the aims and features of CLT. Following the thematic categories described in the previous section, this section attempts to discuss the findings in light of the

research questions, which subsequently served as a basis for deeper analysis, and allowed this analysis to relate directly to the literature review.

### **5.1 Adaptation of the CLT approach in classroom practice**

This section attempts to discuss the language teachers' adaptation of the CLT approach in real classroom practice, posited as the first research question. The current place of CLT in the Bangladeshi English teaching system has been influenced by a range of factors, including teachers' previous and current standard of training, and the pressures placed on the practicalities of the school system. These factors have a direct influence on the application of key CLT principles in class.

GTM seems to have impacted the implementation of CLT. The teachers – themselves mostly trained in GTM as learners and educators – appear not to have overcome the impact of this traditional approach. For them, the practice of explicit grammar instruction still seems preferable to communicative activities. This has its roots in traditional approaches to attaining linguistic knowledge, still much favoured by teachers in Bangladesh. NCTB (1996) and Littlewood (1981) suggest the importance of integrating these two aspects of language: functional and structural. The teachers, however, seem to place more emphasis on the latter aspect, i.e. linguistic or grammatical. In this case, the views of Hinkel and Fotos (2001) can be related, as they suggest that explicit knowledge of grammar might not be effective for immature learners. In brief, it can arguably be said that grammar teaching should not be discouraged (Ahmed, 2013), and might rather assist the effective employment of CLT, if integrated with communicative activities.

Furthermore, the observation findings demonstrate that teachers use their first language more than English, which obstructs exposure to the target language (NCTB, 1996) and may suggest insufficiently proficient teachers. To counter this, a large amount of training on using target language usefully might help teachers more effectively adopt CLT in real classroom practice. The need for training is evident in light of one participant saying, 'I got training once in my 35 years teaching career.' Therefore, it can be inferred that more training programmes should be arranged in order for teachers to understand how to use target language with learners and thus apply one of the principles of CLT more effectively.

The use of authentic materials also helps expose students to language in the perspective of practical life, where they are required to use language appropriately and meaningfully (Tomilson & Masuharar, 2013). However, the teachers in question seemed not to focus on using authentic materials in the classroom, which is contradictory to CLT principles. Most linguists (see Brown, 2006; Richards & Rodgers, 1986) emphasise the value of authentic and engaging materials. This is not, however, happening in classroom practice. To explain this, practical reasons might be taken into consideration. In proportion to the students, the number of teachers in Bangladesh is highly inadequate. As a consequence, a teacher has to take six to seven classes in one day, and the school authority cannot allocate more than 40 minutes for conducting one class. Consequently, teachers may not have sufficient time to collect adequate, authentic materials. It is unsurprising, then, that the findings indicate that many teachers do not undertake adequate preparation. For instance, they seem to adapt their teaching to follow the syllabus content. Therefore, the helping hand of the MoE should be extended to develop a necessary teaching environment and provide materials accessible to the teachers.

Finally, NCTB (1996) and Brown (2006) suggest that promoting fluency over accuracy helps learners develop their communicative competence. From the findings here, it does seem that teachers encourage students to speak in English even if they make mistakes. Therefore, increased interaction in the target language might gradually develop the communicative skills of the students (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). Evidently, there are signs that some elements of CLT are being adopted, but significant changes need to occur in terms of training and educational provision before this can be maximised.

### **5.2 Discrepancies between school and government policy, and CLT adaptation**

The discussion of the above section overviews how the English language teachers adapt CLT in the classroom. Now the exploration of this section will follow the discrepancies between the adaptation and the expectation of introducing CLT in the context of secondary education in Bangladesh, which was formulated as the second research question of this study.

Literature suggests that developing learners' communicative abilities and consequently their target language communication in real-life contexts are the key objectives of CLT (Celce-Murcia, 2007; Littlewood, 1981; Richards & Rodgers, 1986, 2006). The school policy of Bangladesh also seems to follow the advice of the above researchers by suggesting that the four language skills (namely listening, speaking, reading and writing) are developed (NCTB, 1996). Nonetheless, this goal of introducing CLT does not appear to have been successful. Despite the CLT approach being considered as a tool for communication (Littlewood, 1981; Hasan & Akhand, 2009), it seems that English language teachers adapt this methodology as a way of achieving good exam scores. This is evident from the findings, which show that teachers rely more on the reference book, i.e. 'Model Question Book' (Question Bank), than the well-designed communicative textbook provided by NCTB and distributed to teachers and learners (Harun Or Rashid, 2015).

This CLT-aligned textbook is not the only example of policy support for communicative teaching. Eminent linguists like Richards and Rodgers (1986), Brown (2006), and Littlewood (1981) recommend some basic features to follow for classroom implementation of CLT, including the role of teachers, classroom activities, teaching methodology, and language materials. Likewise, NCTB guidelines outline the syllabus and curriculum, teaching methodologies, learning outcomes, and assessment strategies. However, a considerable gap is still discernible between the purpose of CLT introduction and the adaptation of CLT in the actual classroom.

In respect of teachers' role in the classroom, both literature and school policy indicate that teachers should pay individual attention to the students. The role of teachers is to be guides, monitors and co-communicators (NCTB, 1996; Littlewood, 1981; Walia, 2012). In reality, this rarely happens. Classrooms seem largely teacher-centred, which is also contradictory to the teaching methodology described by the school policy (NCTB, 1996), and hinders attainment of the students' expected learning outcomes. Admittedly, the large class sizes might be a valid reason why it is difficult for teachers to engage students in such activities. Moreover, due to the lack of authentic and engaging materials, students' learning seems more technical rather than functional in real-life contexts. On the other hand, teachers' ignoring of accuracy compared to fluency seems to increase the communicative abilities of the students, as NCTB (1996) encourages. In sum, the school and government policies themselves are not opposed to CLT, but this does not necessarily filter through to classroom practice.

In spite of their positive attitude towards CLT, it seems that the teachers in Bangladeshi secondary schools compromise the CLT principles. It appears that the application of CLT, following its basic principles, is far removed from practical application in the classroom. Moreover, it is likely that the English language teachers cannot fully adapt CLT due to specific practical obstacles. Among them, misalignment between syllabus curriculum and test content is prominent. Furthermore, a lack of opportunity to experience English outside the classroom also impedes effective harnessing of CLT. In addition, contextual factors greatly impede the implementation of CLT. It can be argued that CLT works more effectively in an environment where all modern amenities are provided, as in the western contexts from which it originated.

## 6 Conclusion & Recommendation

In order to examine the effectiveness of CLT in the context of secondary schools in Bangladesh, this research project set out to investigate the potential gap between the purposes of the government's CLT introduction at secondary level and the actual classroom practice in evidence. It also attempts to explore the teachers' attitudes and belief towards CLT and its implementation in the classroom, and the facilitators and constraints for said implementation.

One of the key findings that is worthwhile to mention is that teachers have a positive attitude towards CLT for students' language learning. They believe that this approach would be effective if some practical contextual constraints were removed. The research also reveals that the teachers face several challenges in applying CLT principles in practical use, as most often the context is unfavourable for them to work in line with CLT. Moreover, a large number of teachers are still practising the traditional method (GTM), which also obstructs putting CLT into practice. The textbooks, however, are focused on the communicative approach, though teachers largely rely on reference books instead (Model Question Book). This reliance seems to be to a certain extent unavoidable, since all language teaching and learning stakeholders focus on the grades achieved in large scale-tests. Aside from the above, the government cannot afford all the necessary logistic support due to the socio-economic condition of Bangladesh. Since there are some obstacles on the way to applying CLT in the context of Bangladesh, it seems logical to consider the contextual factors and accordingly modify the CLT approach.

In conclusion, for the further improvement of the current situation of English language teaching of secondary schools in Bangladesh, this study makes the following recommendations:

- A wide-scale, thorough programme of training should be made available for English language educators.
- Teachers should be provided with adequate teaching resources which support CLT.
- The classroom environment must be favourable to CLT.
- The alignment of international standardised tests and the test items of the textbook might prove effective for learners at a later stage in real-life contexts.
- More test activities on speaking and listening skills might facilitate the improvement of the learners' communicative competence.
- The government should create a long-term policy which outlines how schools should implement CLT.
- The monitoring body of the MoE should reconsider the curriculum design, reflecting upon the limited facilities, resources, and funding in light of Bangladesh's socio-economic profile.
- Finally, whatever the method used, teachers should ensure that students develop the capability to use the language outside the classroom, when they require functional language for real-life communication.

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