

INTERACTIVE APPROACHES IN THE ELT CLASSROOM: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY IN THE EDUCATIONAL INSTITUTES OF BANGLADESH



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ABSTRACT

In an effort to foster a positive learning environment in traditional English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms, language experts advocate for the implementation of an interactive approach to enhance the effectiveness of education for learners. The interactive classroom encompasses various elements, including active participation in the learning process, active engagement in the exchange of ideas, and active involvement in communication with teachers. From the perspective of authority, learners are motivated to express their views, practises, and patterns of behaviour. Linguistic challenges are encountered by learners, necessitating their engagement in discussions with peers and educators in order to surmount these intricacies. The process of interaction fosters the development of innovative learning, since learners are able to effectively address psychological hurdles by engaging with others. The objective of this study is to examine the application of an interactive method in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom and to analyse the prevailing scenario of interactive education in Bangladeshi educational institutions.

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INTRODUCTION

Educators are most effective in imparting knowledge to students by employing diverse techniques and strategies. They serve as a source of motivation for learners to actively participate in assuming various roles within the physical classroom setting. In order to effectively engage students in the classroom, it is imperative for teachers to provide a well-structured learning environment that takes into consideration several factors such as the age group of the learners, their motivations and attitudes towards learning, as well as their willingness to actively participate in the learning process. In order to familiarise learners with diverse learning experiences, educators have the option to employ alternative approaches that deviate from conventional teaching practises. These strategies aim to engage students in authentic classroom activities. Consequently, individuals would assume the dual role of both learners and monitors in relation to their evaluation and assessment. Contemporary education places significant emphasis on fostering students' independent engagement, facilitating the creation of self-directed learning settings, and providing many opportunities for hands-on experimentation and practical training (Yakovleva & Yakovlev, 2014). Therefore, students will be afforded a range of options and will be able to implement various projects and participate in flexible training sessions or programmes, enabling them to collaborate, coordinate, and assume leadership roles in a comfortable and adaptable manner.

The pedagogical practise of employing an interactive approach in the teaching-learning process involves the utilisation of specific approaches and tactics. According to Cerghit (2006), one of the contemporary approaches in education is the interactive method, which emphasises interactive learning. This method is rooted in the exchange of knowledge, ideas, experiences, opinions, principles, and impressions, leading to a certain level of achievement. Bonwell and Eison (1991),

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Aaker-Smith (2006), Crawford et al. (2005), and Oprea (2009) have underscored the significance of interactive approaches in various scholarly publications and review articles within the field of pedagogy, both domestically and internationally. Similarly, Aaker-Smith (2006), Oprea (2009), and Petruța (2013) have expressed the viewpoint that the utilisation of interactive methodologies and tactics facilitates the advancement of students with diverse intelligences within the educational setting. Moreover, various forms of stimuli encompass the enhancement of cognitive processes, the cultivation of imaginative capabilities, and the development of creative aptitude among each student in a school setting, which can be effectively facilitated by small group or paired activities. According to Albulescu (2008), the interactive technique facilitates learners' engagement in demonstration and consolidation activities, while also promoting ethical values such as true fellowship, sincerity, honesty, modesty, and altruism. Mukhamedyarova and Cotter (2005) assert that interactive teaching approaches encompass various aspects of democratisation, including fostering an open atmosphere, promoting mutual understanding, encouraging support among individuals, cultivating a sense of responsibility, and fostering accountability. By engaging in these activities, students are transformed into active participants in their own learning and active contributors to society.

The development of a teaching technique is contingent upon the instructional process, wherein the teacher and learner engage in interactive, communicative, and discursive exchanges. This form of contact occurs between an educator and a learner with the intention of exchanging shared information, skills, and values to cultivate the ethical and practical understanding of pupils.

In the field of English as a Second Language (ESL) education, there is a lack of consensus about the implementation of interactive approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Instead, many teachers continue to adhere to traditional and authoritative instructional methods. In the specific context of Bangladesh, there is a concerted effort to prioritise learner-centeredness within the classroom, particularly in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT). The aim is to foster an environment where learners take an active role in their own education and become active participants in the learning process. Learners may encounter challenges, whether they pertain to grammar or written expression. In order to address these challenges, they engage in interactive discussions with their peers and collectively present their collaborative creations to the class. Since its establishment in 1971, Bangladesh has implemented several noteworthy education policies that unfortunately prioritise teacher-centeredness over learner-centeredness. This paper aims to examine the utilisation of interactive approaches in English Language Teaching (ELT) classrooms. Additionally, it will present examples of interactive approaches commonly employed in educational institutions in Bangladesh, while also outlining effective techniques that facilitate interactive sessions for both teachers and students.

Interactive Approach in ELT: An Overview

Interactive approach is a functional and instructional method in which learners find a good exposure to introduce themselves with real life by staying in real world. When students get involved in interactive approach, they acquire some essential skills like observational skills, listening skills, communication skills, and interpersonal skills. Since interactive teaching involves facilitators and learners, it encourages and outlays the provision for learners to get engaged in learning activity. In interactive session, teachers use questions to stimulate discussion and emphasize on the value of answers by ensuring hands-on experience to the participants. As it is related to learner autonomy, it provides a range of learning styles which ensure transferable and independent way of learning.

In view of the discussion mentioned above, it is relevant to say ELT classroom of Bangladesh does not go with the interactive features. Autonomy of teachers makes the teaching-learning situation pointless and indifferent to adopting initiating of interaction between teachers and students. Practically teachers are honestly inclined to conduct classes from the perspective of authoritative mouthpiece which is the tremendous feature of Grammar-Translation Method.

Ebrahim (2017) reported that, according to education researchers of Bangladesh that Bangladeshi education system puts much effort and emphasis on rote memorization rather than critical study and thinking when teachers teach inside the class. Researchers further identified that teaching of Bangladesh is highly based on two major categories which include one is teacher-centered which is called traditional method and the other one is learner-centered or participatory approach.

Teachers work alone and they do not feel the necessity to invite students for participatory work. Ebrahim (2017) further talked on the importance of participatory approach which is “through interaction, negotiations, active participation, and critical thinking. In this approach, students directly involve and dominate in the discovery of their own knowledge, skills and attitudes. They can expose their imaginative power and get an opportunity to express their opinion in the classroom”. It is needless to say that Bangladesh still cherishes the space of teacher-centered classroom which restricts the provision of independency of learners in academic and decision making activities.

Abedin (2012) outlined in such a way that the application of Grammar Translation Method (GTM) has been prevalent for many years. He further talked that Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its much usability and application are live issue in the English language arena of Bangladesh and reported that the teaching of Bangladesh has experienced a state of turmoil in the short span of time.

In place of interactive approach almost all of the higher educational institutes follow traditional methods which in fact incur the progressive dimension of ELT in Bangladesh. In some cases, CLT seems to be apparent which is found in a scattered teaching manner. Teachers in Bangladesh follow interactive approach to a somewhat extent. Hasan (2016) opined that the changes in teaching method have not made any constructive or obvious impact since classroom teaching sticks to the same as teachers are widely practicing the old methods. Hasan (2016) further told that classroom teaching practices would require to make a thorough review with the aim of creating new opportunities for adopting and adapting to new

teaching techniques in order to promote communicative skills for learners. However, Bangladesh planned as a part of policy making more interactive teaching approach like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) by replacing memorization and translation based method like Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in 1997 with a generous intention upon mind to teach communicative English to school students.

What Hasan (2016) emphasized that teaching practices along with curriculum set design should go through a thorough change in order that learners can acquire some communicative skills. Similarly he stressed on Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) which will motivate learners to have real life conversation and life oriented discussion on any chosen topics.

The following statement was cited from Lo and Monge (2013):

“In light of the new meaning of student learning, we find the roles of students, faculty, and university administrators being transformed as colleges and universities are recognized to be not only providers of instruction but producers of learning (Barr & Tagg, 1995).

What is understood from the above cited statement is that students, faculty and administrators should lead learning staying out from the provider of learning only.

In this section of this paper, it has been discussed broadly that ELT education, its methods and appropriateness with respect to Bangladesh is by far a complex task which needs strict policy making, fixation of plans and implementation of modern ELT techniques and strategies. Teachers in service should teach topics by inviting students on their part and let them express before the whole class. Teachers while conducting classes should segment classes into different pairs or groups and assign them with various language or general life related tasks which they find communicative and mutually exchangeable. In this regard, generous willing and cooperative motive might work out best in supplanting traditional and orthodox teaching manner.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of paper closely draws the review of literature relevant to this paper which significantly focuses on some features and discussions.

Interactive approach needs to go through the approval of the state policy in utilizing it effective classroom conduction. Rahman et al. (2019) outlined that the constitution of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh which was composed in 1972 recognized Bengali as the state language through article. Then the policy was happily hailed politically, though Pakistanis committed to impose Urdu as the state language of Pakistan-both East Pakistan and West Pakistan. In turn the state attempted to expand the use of Bengali and it came into being for public use.

It can easily be assumed that with state approval of Bengali language speakers of Bangladeshi people have shown a great fondness to Bengali ignoring English of its mass use which in fact leads teachers and students to speak Bengali for both public and private offices and professions.

In effective teaching-learning, learners need to ensure accurate communication which will progress the path of utilizing interactive approach. Rahman et al. (2019) argued:

“Adhikari (2011) reported that the ability to speak accurate, appropriate, and effective English is vital for meaningful interaction that ensures students’ communicative competence in English. He also argued that through the instructional materials, the teacher should provide students with the ample opportunity to relate syntax (rules of grammar) and morphology (vocabulary) to semantics (meaning) and pragmatics (language use) by means of interactive activities during teaching speaking.”

Rahman et al. (2019) demonstrated some of the guidelines like the ability of communicative competence for effective interactive class. He pointed that teachers should engage students for discussion on any course related activities which would make them self-reliant in learning.

Rahman and Rahman (2012) expressed that we can understand that the Ministry of Education has been trying to implement CLT approach at the educational system of Bangladesh for more than a decade. To do so, it has organized teacher training sessions and projects of textbook writing like English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) but sorrowfully attempts taken this Ministry could not find any phenomenal improvement in the process of English teaching and learning.

In interactive teaching approach, teacher adopts certain things to ensure an effective classroom. Rahman and Rahman (2012) opined that teachers are found to function a variety of tasks in class. Contrastingly what teachers usually teach students and do tasks are not equally important. All of the teachers are not interested in doing important and relevant things. For example, during interviews as part of academic activity, teachers ask different things or activities which might apparently be important practice. All of the teachers unanimously agreed that they need to engage students in classroom practice because participation in classroom activity will increase the possibility academic activity. Rahman et al. (2019) positively said that the initiation of interactive teaching approaches and revolutions made some positive changes towards functions and performances of students. The result of interactive session with teachers-students and students-students derived from the change of behavior pattern when they got involved in communicating with teacher. Through these activities, learners found a space of self-exposure and gave their opinions on academic activities confidently.

Rahman et al. (2019) further emphasized that teachers need to ensure constant engagement of students into

communication. To make it practicable, teachers could make a good management of the conversational drills or practices between students. Here management aides or tools are the techniques of indirect impact on the group students who can easily find conversation in a real life manner.

Giordze and Dgebuadze (2017) defined the interactive approach and its function in a clear voice. They told that an interactive approach requires an interactive session in a dialog mode where syllabic pattern would be like “inter” - reciprocally, “act” – do, perform. It can be said that interactive method is a form of learning and communicative approached activity because students get involved in the learning process and express what they know and what they are thinking.

Chilwant (2012) reported that in interactive lecture session, a small subtopic is initiated from which students are encouraged to make queries and questions to students. In this segment of activity, teachers provoke students because initially students do not ask questions to other students. Even in many of the cases teachers do not know whether students have understood the lectures properly, if there is no provision for interaction in classroom activity.

Reviews of literature have been drawn out from different sources maintaining the relevancy in order that we can understand implication and emphasis of interaction in language learning classroom.

DISCUSSIONS

Misappropriation of Interactive ELT Sessions

Bangladesh belongs to some of those countries where interaction plays a scarce role especially in ELT sessions, activities and circles. Since interpersonal and intercommunicative skills are the preface of a successful interactive classroom, it is by far a matter of negligence that teachers and ELT practitioners superficially skip this kind of pedagogical activity. ELT strategy should be like “Teachers play the role of facilitator, not a lecturer” (Ray & Roy, 2017) which signifies the promotion of learner in language learning and sharing activity and regulates the role of teacher entirely in guidance and teaching. Similarly, What Rahman and Pandian (2018) reported that Bangladesh cannot fix a clear and stable language policy, and it has always been persistent for a long time. This point regarding the unstable condition of language policy, teachers very often do not feel well-directed as there are continuous upheavals in the educational planning commission.

Conversation in classroom is a mutual activity which invites students to actively participate and apply critical thinking to their questions and responses. “negotiate meaning across texts and in relation to their individual experiences... fulfilling adult learners' need to find relevance in their studies.” In ELT classroom, teachers need to guide students to struggle for meaning and help them to find a close linkage with real life.

Interaction allows a proportionate independency among learners who are the actual classroom conductors. They encounter many challenges while surfing knowledge through books and listening to teachers on many different topics or sub-topics which can better be resolved in the process of discussing each other. Regarding teaching and learning perspective of Bangladesh, coordination and coexistence of students and teachers are rarely noticeable. For this reason what referred to as “negotiate meaning across texts” and “relation to their individual experiences” do not work appropriately.

Butler (1992) reported that there were results from research that students who were actively engaged in the learning activity learned better than students who were passive receivers of knowledge from course teachers. It can be argued that active learners face problems and seek for remedy by their own and, if unable to resolve problems, go for discussion with teachers.

Nasmith and Steinert (2001) additionally identified that students' active role play in language learning activity increases level of understanding and thus they become able to integrate and synthesize materials.

Learning activities which are active and collaborative have value to the learning of student and satisfaction of student and have found empirical support in research studies. Bangladeshi learners are not active and participatory like other countries as they come across a sense of inhibition and lack of motivation. It in fact impedes the scope of interaction in language learning classroom.

Bonwel and Eison (1991) shared that teachers are not interested in interactive lectures and these lectures are possibly avoided because of time limitation and sense of fear that they might lose control over students.

Control over students and psychological fear are two aspects which drive teachers of Bangladesh not to make classroom interactive and participatory. They think students will have more access to knowledge and interfere in any sort of learning activity which is unacceptable to them.

Rao and DiCarlo (2001) positively opined that active-learning strategy can be applied and incorporated easily into large classrooms. Since interactions give freedom for discussion, reduce the monotony of passive learning, and widely increase the level of students' understanding. Interactive sessions also mobilize students' ability to synthesize and integrate material. What Rao and DiCarlo (2001) focused that interactive teaching or lecture will bring about positive, participatory and commonly sharing atmosphere in language learning activities. Alongside it makes students well prepared for lesson works practically at classroom.

Pajares (1996) commented that classes which are conducted by interactive lectures sort out common misconceptions asked by the students. Through these interactive sessions students find a good space of encouragement to make question when encountered.

Since English is a second language to the learners of Bangladesh, they feel a kind of challenge to solve their problems on their individual part and in such a case they can come out of this challenging situation through mutual discussion with each other.

Popular Techniques to Make Classroom Interactive

In Bangladesh, the acceptance of interactive approach in teaching-learning is not widely followed and accepted. Some classroom teachers follow this method. Teachers come across some cultural or psychological obstructions in the way of implementing learner-oriented class for students-where they will be resources and contributors of class. In this section of the paper, I have drawn some popular techniques from Yee (2019) said that teachers can make classroom more engaging and effective for the convenience of effective ELT classroom. Techniques are as follows:

Prompt of Picture

Teachers need to show an image before the whole class and ask them to explain and justify their answers. Students might go for group work to find answers and of course teachers initially should not give out answers.

Think Break

Teachers ask a rhetorical question and allow students to think over it more than 20 seconds to come prepared with answers. This kind of interactive model encourages students to take part in problem-solving process and in this context students write something as notes and present before the class.

Cliffhanger Lecturing

This interactive technique provides learners a good scope to prepare answer within the allocated time or class period. Students have a provision to start a session from previously existed topic or module. According to Yee (2019), it establishes a sort of understandable relation various forms of learning sessions and understandable discussions which ensure some scientific principles of learning the effect of spacing and interleaving topics among students.

Choral Response

This technique invites learners in the class to make a combined effort when they are asked about one particular question or problem. Students respond staying as chorus with degree of comprehension before the class.

Word Cloud Guessing

Teachers in this technique show them a word cloud on the selected topic by using an online generator like Wordle, Taxedo or Tagul and offer challenges to students to guess what the topic could be. This activity ensures a good interaction among learners.

Instructor's Storytelling

Course instructor illustrates a topic, concept or principle which has relevancy in real life setting. Learners will then attempt to narrate the rest of the story by using their languages and as a result they will have more mutual conversation with each other.

Total Physical Response (TPR)

Students either stand or take their position in class for making answers like True/False what come from the instructor. Total physical response paves the way for learners a wide opportunity to get interacted for answers. Techniques discussed above are designed to make students lively, vibrant and autonomous in the process of learning language in a participatory approach. Learners get involved in on the one hand real life knowledge sharing activities as well as on the other hand actively participating in exposing performance with the function of language.

Recommendation

It is evident from the discussion made regarding the implementation of interactive approach in ELT classroom in the perspective of Bangladeshi educational institutes. It can be said without denying the real scenario of Bangladesh that education system, education policy and education management of Bangladesh largely vacate the scope of interaction, mutual interrogation and independency of learner in learning activity. Learners are thought to be well disciplined, sincere followers and maintenance of instructions from teachers, though a few educational institutes come out of this orthodox and conventional method of teaching. In this section of the paper, some recommendations are offered on how teachers can execute interactive approach in ELT to make it learner-oriented classroom.

Collaborative Activities

Collaborative activities are widely held view that they are conducive to learning of student. Collaborative activities are helpful to ensure maximum participation of learners in learning activity, share opinions with other peers and communicate regarding intellectual and mental development. Vygotsky (1978) called this kind of development as Zone of Proximal Development which focuses not only on social interaction but also on other development related to society. This kind of activity understanding its worth and relative value should be followed in the ELT classroom of Bangladesh.

Learning as Social Construction

Learning in classroom should be devoid of social phenomena, incidents or events. All social constructs or elements should be nurtured in class provided students have much discussion and opinion sharing on those factors. Students need to have

engagement in reflection by which they can engage them in answering questions and solving problems and write and talk in small groups. This in fact allows students to construct knowledge and practice critical thinking

Lecture Driven Class

Students should take the podium to initiate issues, topics or concepts for individual performances in a real life classroom. They should drive their own instincts to make a delivery of lecture within or beyond text where every individual learner will be independent expressionistic in thought or judgment. Exchange of information or knowledge should happen at the time of class discussion or conversation and through a series of questions and answers. In the way of posing an individual as a learner, the teacher or instructor should signal the students to take responsibility for learning and she ushered an environment of teaching-learning instructor like student equality and active learning in the classroom.

Cooperation from Teachers

In language teaching classroom, the teacher should work as a good facilitator and motivator for learners, cooperation from teachers is essential for students for the purpose of live demonstration and conquering affective factors such as fear feeling, nervousness in mind and abnormal pattern of behavior. The scenario of subcontinent is very pathetic where teachers expose them as a source of information, provision of controlling and monitoring students in a restricted manner. He further said that, in classroom, democracy and independency need to be practiced in such a way that students can enjoy much of authority than teachers.

Learning on Their Own

Learners possess such an inherent desire that they would be self-starter of their teaching-learning session. Teachers should perceive that kind of dormant desire of students and let them come true in practical and real life classroom. Silverthorn (2006) relevantly shared experience in terms of releasing the control of class to learners:

“Based on my teaching experience, I think that given well-written objectives and access to good resources, most students can teach themselves the basics. And I believe that by having the expectation that they will learn material on their own, we are fostering the skills and attitudes that they need to become self-directed life-long learners.”

Adoption of Various Games

It is unanimously acknowledged that games are used as simple recreational activities but actually they are not so simple as generally thought so. Teachers need to decide what games students need to perform under considering some of the factors like the aim of games, the level of students' English and students' ages (Sanchez, Morfin & Campos, 2007). Play projects is a kind of method of language learning where learning is effected via problem solving which includes a number of stages initiated by teachers. This gaming method of language learning is most successful in practical classes because they do not require any kind of explanation of new material or exchange of information between teacher and student. Teachers and authority should understand the measures discussed above which are triggering in the way of capitalizing interactive method in the educational institute of Bangladesh. Since the factors are intensely related to policy making aspects, psychological aspects and entertaining aspects, we should make a balance to impart them among students with justification and precision.

CONCLUSIONS

Implementing an interactive approach inside the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom, particularly within the context of the Bangladeshi education system, is a significant challenge. This endeavour, while not entirely unattainable or unfeasible, presents obstacles in various domains such as educational policy, curriculum development, syllabus design, traditional teacher mindset, and a lack of implementation of contemporary teaching methods. Furthermore, the education system in Bangladesh encounters certain shortcomings, including challenges related to the socio-economic structure, infrastructural facilities, logistical support, and technological assistance provided by the government or state authorities. Initially, it is imperative for educators to broaden their perspective and utilise a psychology-oriented approach that aligns with the academic and personal interests of their students. The primary objective of employing an interactive approach in English Language Teaching (ELT) is to foster student autonomy and self-motivation in the process of language acquisition. In this context, it is imperative for authorities and educators to recognise the practicality, relevance, and significance of employing active learning methods. By adopting such an approach, teachers can transition from being mere conveyors of information to assuming the roles of pedagogical organisers and coordinators of the educational process. This transformation enables them to effectively address the various constraints and challenges, ultimately creating a comprehensive learning experience that maximises the benefits for the learners. In order to address this matter effectively, it is recommended that the government arrange a sequence of instructional sessions. These sessions should be facilitated by proficient local language specialists, as well as foreign trainers who possess commendable qualifications and expertise. Consequently, learners are expected to possess both academic and professional skills in order to effectively address the difficulties that lie ahead. In addition to educators, it is imperative to captivate students' attention by employing several forms of entertainment, such as games, puzzles, movies, and wordplays. By incorporating these instructional strategies, students are likely to be motivated and actively engaged in the learning process. In order to enhance the level of engagement and interactivity inside the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom, it is imperative for course instructors or teachers to employ a range of tactics and strategies. However, it may not be feasible to immediately replace the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), which prioritises traditional or orthodox teaching patterns. Despite encountering obstacles in implementing interactive

learning activities, it is imperative for educators to proactively strive and motivate students to actively engage in the teaching-learning process. Despite the potential benefits and advantages associated with implementing an interactive approach, Bangladeshi teachers generally have negative perceptions towards this method. However, it is worth noting that some teachers do acknowledge the potential for successful implementation of interactive classes. Bangladeshi educators encounter some constraints, such as the issue of high student-to-teacher ratios, which hinder their ability to effectively conduct interactive classes due to the large number of pupils. Additionally, the lack of adequate infrastructure further exacerbates the challenges, making it nearly impossible and disorderly to facilitate a conducive learning environment. The feasibility of using an interactive method in the English Language Teaching (ELT) classroom in Bangladesh is hindered by limitations in the scope of training and a callous attitude exhibited by teachers. These factors need to be addressed in order to facilitate the successful implementation of the interactive approach and ensure its smooth conduct.

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