

## **An Ethnographic Exploration of the Presence of English and Its Roles in the Socio-Economic Development in the Rural Context in Bangladesh**

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### **Abstract**

*It is one of the very few ethnographic studies on the English language in Bangladesh that was carried out to explore the usage of the English language in the rural context of the country. It is hard to design life-oriented and suitable materials and practical-outcome-based English curricula to support an effective national education policy to develop the economic capacity of the rural people without in-depth studies about the usage and necessity of the English language and skills. A remote rural area of Bangladesh was explored through qualitative ethnographic methods and tools, such as ethnographic participant observation, individual and group interviews, open discussions, photography, audio and video recording, etc. The interviews with fifty-seven research participants were transcribed and thematically analysed to explore the major themes regarding the presence and roles of English in the research site. Based on the findings, the major themes and patterns about the necessity and prospect of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) as well as a tool of socio-economic development and the present domains of usage of English have been presented in this paper. The findings have suggested specific directions for modifications of the English textbooks to make English education and learning at the primary and secondary levels more productive in real life in rural settings.*

**Keywords:** *EFL, English language skills, socio-economic development, ethnography*

## 1. Introduction

The long presence of the English language in Bangladesh has made it an integral part of the educational, social and economic scenario of the country. It is currently the only widely used language after the native Bangla (alternatively spelt as Bengali) language, which is used by almost 95% of its total population of one hundred and sixty million (Sareen & Rahman, 2005). On the other hand, Bangladesh is the largest country in respect of population among those countries in which English is the *de facto* official language, but not the primary language. It is widely assumed that English competence is important to get a good job in the country (Hamid, 2016; Rahman, 2017). But it is still not clear how the English competence of the rural people, as a product of the current education system, contributes to the ‘capacity-building’ of the rural community. Because education must play a critical role to build the ‘foundation for strategic thinking and development initiatives’ (Malyan & Jindal, 2014, p. 298).

Most of the research in the fields of English Language Teaching (ELT) and linguistics in Bangladesh has focused basically on the academic contexts. Only a few studies have been done on the significance of the study on the presence of the English language in the non-academic context. Though there is a debate on the issue of whether English can be taken as a Second Language (ESL) or a Foreign Language (EFL) (henceforth, ESL and EFL are used alternatively) in Bangladesh, there is no denial of its importance in the current global context which is not different in the Bangladeshi context either (Erling, Seargeant, & Solly, 2014; Erling, Seargeant, Solly, Chowdhury, & Rahman, 2012; Hamid, 2016; Rahman, 2017).

The current study bears both pragmatic and epistemological significance. Firstly, it tries to explore not only the academic contexts but also the non-academic contexts, and the research on the EFL in the non-academic contexts is not common in the country. The practical outcome of the ELT curriculum and practices at the rural educational institutions in the rural life and livelihood has been critically investigated in the study. The study tries to investigate the immediate practical outcomes of studying the existing English school curriculum in the capacity building of the rural inhabitants, such as use of English knowledge in using Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to collect agriculture-related information, health issues, jobs abroad, etc.

Secondly, this study focuses on the rural context. Two-thirds of the total population of the country live in rural areas and the presence of English in the rural community is different from the urban community. The rural data is crucial to designing the national language and education policy.

Thirdly, it has been carried out in the ethnographic methodology which also is rare in Bangladeshi ELT research. As Erling et al. (2012) emphasised, “Language learning projects in development contexts [like Bangladesh] must be carefully aligned with community needs and aspirations. Ethnographic research approaches can be used to align education programmes with local ideologies and learners’ aspirations” (p. 2). The domains of the usage of English in the rural context have not been studied except few ones in the country. An ethnographic study in EFL or ELT is so rare in Bangladesh that a single and very short ethnographic study of fewer than two weeks, funded by the British Council at the beginning of the 2010s, was used in several publications which were published from 2011 to 2017 by some leading international publishers and top-ranking journals including Springer,

Cambridge University Press, Multilingual Matters, Wiley, British Council, UK, etc. (Erling, 2017; Erling, Seargeant, & Solly, 2014; Erling et al., 2012; Hamid & Erling, 2016; Seargeant & Erling, 2011; Seargeant, & Erling, 2013; Seargeant, Erling, Solly, Chowdhury, & Rahman, 2017). As it is tough to carry out ethnographic research in a rural area due to lack of funding, leave from the job, and expertise; the questionnaire-based and interview-based abundant studies are found in ELT and EFL in Bangladesh. But an ethnographic study is needed to find out the domains of usage of English in the 'lived realities of social and economic life in the rural community. Therefore, this paper aims to explore the presence of the English language in the rural context of Bangladesh, to identify the attitudes of people towards English and perception of the rural people about the linguistic competence in English and its relation to develop their economic conditions. In order to achieve these aims, the following research questions were posed:

### **Research Questions**

1. What are the domains of usage of English in the rural context?
2. What are the attitudes of the common people towards the English language in the non-academic rural context?
3. Do the rural people find their linguistic competence in English useful to develop their economic conditions in real life?

### **1.1 Background**

The language of a speech community is often considered to be related to the culture of that particular community which builds up

over a long period. For this reason, it is related to the historical background of a community or a nation. The English language has a long political and historical background in the South Asian country of Bangladesh also. Before independence, the country experienced the British colonial rule for one hundred and ninety years preceding the Pakistani regime of more than two decades (Ahmad, 2017).

As Bangladesh is a part of the Indian subcontinent, the divisions of the Indian history of English should come before the national history and it has been divided by Kachru (1983) into three parts. The earliest part saw the missionaries and traders as the introducers of this language to the Indians in the 16<sup>th</sup> century which was followed by the second phase in which the local educated Indians, even the best ones who wished to promote the Indian language and literature, took English as the superior language which would lead them to western scientific knowledge (Ahmad, 2017). In the last and most important part, almost two hundred years of the British colonisation infused the English language and some traits of their culture to turn the local educated people into the privileged class which was clearly stated in the Macaulay's education policy of 1835. Macaulay's controversial Minutes (1835) can be quoted in this regard:

We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and in intellect. To that class we may leave to refuse the vernacular dialects and to render them fit vehicles for conveying western knowledge. (Ahmad, 2017, p. 17)

During that British colonial period, English was used as the colonisation tool in the administrative, educational and commercial sectors here.

Since 1947, Bangladesh, as the then East Pakistan, went through another colonisation period under the Pakistani regime till 1971. As Musa (1996) has stated about the status of English in Pakistan in the 1960s: “Only 3.12% of the total population of Pakistan had some command of English according to the 1951 census, and in underprivileged East Pakistan (present Bangladesh) the percentage can be assumed to be lower than that in the other part of Pakistan” (as cited in Ahmad, 2008, p.12). In the education sector, English was one of the media of instruction, especially at the higher education level. By the end of the Pakistani period, a prestige tag was found to be attached to this language in the elite class and the social scenario of this region. The Pakistani regime tried to impose Urdu as the state language, which sparked the language movement of 1952 in the then East Pakistan for the establishment of Bangla in all aspects of the Bengali nation. This attachment to the mother tongue of Bangla, as the new source of unifying identity of the nation, contributed to the naming of the country including the name of the Bangla language at its birth in 1971 as ‘Bangladesh’ (Hamid & Jahan, 2015; Ahmad, 2011).

But the position of the English language was not the same during the five decades after the independence of the country. The emotional attachment to the mother tongue was first established legally by the enactment of the *Bangla Procholon Ain* by the government of independent Bangladesh in 1987. Hamid and Jahan (2015) have analysed it well, “The institutionalisation of Bangla in government and education reduced the role of English, which was conceptualised as being in opposition to Bangla” (p. 78). But the political issue could not reduce the necessity of the EFL in the

ever-growing dominance of English in the global context, especially after the fall of the United States of Soviet Russia (USSR) in the last decade of the twentieth century.

Though it can be assumed that there might be a trace of colonial legacy in the current academic context in Bangladesh, which Bhaskar (2020) argued to be found in India, the impact of the dominance of English as an international language on the economic and intellectual arena of the current world cannot be avoided in Bangladesh as well. Amin and Greenwood (2018, p.19) have put this in a nutshell nicely:

Despite intermittent efforts to discourage English in favour of the national language, Bangla (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007), the imperatives of international trade and the dominance of the English language in academic and economic dealings (Crystal, 2004) have led English to become a compulsory subject from Class I (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***Sociolinguistic and Psycholinguistic Factors Related to the English Language***

Apart from the sociolinguistic factors of the historic context, social and economic conditions and international dominance, the use of any foreign language in a community may depend also on other psycholinguistic factors like attitudes to that particular language.

The importance of English in the economic scenario of the world is beyond question which raises it as the global language (Crystal, 2003). Some recent studies have analysed the relationship between the English language and the socio-economic development in Bangladesh. Erling, Seargeant and Solly (2014,

p.1) have claimed, “Despite the strong associations made between English-language ability and development, there is at present only limited evidence showing a causal relationship between the two [in Bangladesh]”. Similarly, Rahman (2015) has pointed out, “It is yet to be determined what are the exact causes ... [behind the failure and how to]... bring in ‘change’ in terms of enduring impact”. It is similar to the conditions of the countries in this region. Because Kirkpatrick & Sussex (2012, p. 21) have argued that ‘the extent to which the Asian disadvantaged and poor might gain access to English, or benefit from English education, at present remains unclear’ which is similar to the findings by Erling, et al. (2012).

The status of English in the country is neither that of ESL nor of EFL purely. Though few foreign researchers including Kachru (1986) and Jenkins (2009) suggested it as ESL in Bangladesh, many Bangladeshi researchers do not agree with them (Ahmad, 2017; Farooqui, 2007; Shalahuddin, Khan, & Rahman, 2013). Because it is used in limited contexts outside the major cities and does not enjoy the governmental status as a second language in Bangladesh, unlike the other countries which became independent from the British empire and gave it the status of a second language. Though the place of English in the academic context is strong, it is not used in daily social communication. Though English is used in the multinational offices, high-level jobs and the private bank documents in the three major cities, the Bangla language is used as the main language for local business and official purposes all over the country.

Language attitudes also play an important factor in this regard. Though language attitude may simply refer to attitudes towards a particular language, it may also indicate some relevant concepts of language according to sociolinguistics. For example, it may



refer to attitudes of the native speakers of a language to its varieties including styles and accents, or the non-native speakers' attitudes towards another language, its varieties or its native speakers or even their culture. People's attitudes towards language varieties and their behaviour are likely to differ according to the complexity of domains in which language is used (Galloway, 2011, 41; Garrett, Coupland, & Williams, 2006, p. 12).

**Table 1**

<i>Year</i>	<i>Commissions and Recommendations</i>
1974	Qudrat-e-Khuda Commission Law promoted Bangla language everywhere
1975	English Language Teaching Task Force was setup
1986	English to be introduced from primary class 1
1988	Mofiz Uddin Commission - introduce English from class 3 or 6
1992	English as a compulsory subject from class 1
2000	MA Bari Commission - English as extra subject in class 1 & 2, compulsory from class 3
2003	Moniruzzaman Mia Commission - prepare a uniform National Language Policy; re-emphasis on English from the primary level

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2010 Kabir Chowdhury Commission -

Emphasis on English as a skill or an essential tool of social development

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*The Changes of the English Education Policy in Bangladesh*

***English in Current Educational Context at National Level***

Even few recent studies have found the absence of clear language policy for the education sector in Bangladesh (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman et al., 2019; Rahman, 2015). The major reasons behind the unstable and unclear policy about the second or foreign language in education include the lack of funding for research, the futility of inconsistent and fragmented politics, and “the ‘fragile dialogue’ between policymakers and practitioners of English that have always characterised Bangladesh’s education policy” (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014, p. 2). Several education commissions have placed EFL in the national policies in various ways. But none have addressed the rural-urban dichotomy regarding the contextual differences in teaching, learning, and the use of EFL (Ahmad, 2011).

***Economy, Education and Required Work-Skills in the Rural Areas in Bangladesh***

The rural economy is highly agriculture-based. More than half of the rural people work in agricultural professions (Gautam, & Faruqee, 2016). Despite that fact, as Gautam and Faruqee (2016) have observed, “human capital (educational attainment of household members) is demonstrably important for rural households’ poverty dynamics in Bangladesh” and employment in services is another major sector of the rural economy that

requires lower skills (primary education or less) (pp. 24-33). An extensive study was carried out by Asadullah and Rahman (2009) in 114 villages in Bangladesh that reported that education was found to be an important factor for better production efficiency in the agricultural sector in rural areas. Hence, school education is important for the people living in rural areas. Rahman and Hossain (2006) also found a significant contribution of education to the socio-economic development in rural areas of the country.

### ***English Education and Socio-Economic Development in the Bangladeshi Rural Context***

Erling et al. (2012) carried out a study in two rural areas of Bangladesh, which found positive attitude towards the role of English as a tool of economic development. Seargeant et al. (2017) also examined the impact of English-language education on the social, economic and cultural identities and found that “English as a language of global opportunity persists in these rural communities, despite the limited opportunities for using the language or developing proficiency in it” (p. 631).

### ***Incongruity between the Theory and Practice in the English Textbooks and Assessment System***

Kabir (2012) investigated the English textbooks and found ‘a random mixture of CLT and GTM and the structural approach at the level of theories and practices in Bangladesh’ and well analysed that ‘the situation is worsening due to the ill-planned presentation of CLT in the policy documents along with the superficial conceptual orientations of the teachers’ (p. 70). The assessment practices in the ELT do not match the objectives of the curriculum which is to improve the communicative competence of the learners (Sultana, 2018).

### **3. Methodology**

#### ***Research Design, Theoretical Basis, and Framework of the Study***

The current research has been carried out with qualitative ethnographic methodology. Because ethnographic research is ‘flexible and typically evolves contextually in response to the lived realities encountered in the field setting’ (Creswell, 2013, p. 17). It is tough but crucial to carry out field research to explore the ‘lived life’ in rural Bangladesh and the ‘needs analysis on the prospect of fields where the knowledge and skills can be utilised in the rural areas.

The theoretical basis of the study was Social Constructivist Theory and the paradigm of the current study was Interpretivism (Creswell, 2014, p.35). In constructivism, “meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting” and those constructs are socially shared among each other (Creswell (2014, p. 37). It comes from and is often used by educational researchers, sociologists, and psychologists. It is concerned with “schemas, cognitive maps or patterns in the minds of individuals” (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010, p. 63).

That is why, the framework of the study includes the qualitative data collection through ethnographic data collection tools, thematic analysis of the data, and a holistic social constructivist interpretation of the findings.

#### ***Data Collection Methods and Tools***

An ethnographic study deploys mostly the qualitative investigation methods and the data collection often involves

observations and interviews. The researcher also is an important research tool in data collection (Creswell, 2014; LeCompte and Schensul, 2010; Li, 2017).

The researcher lived there for around three months for the study. Two locals assisted him as the ethnographic gatekeepers to build up a good rapport with the participants.

Both informal and semi-structured interviews and open group discussions have been used as the primary tools of data collection. In addition, the tools of photography, memos, and field notes have been used for data saturation.

### ***Data Analysis***

The interviews have been analysed through the steps of data analysis by Creswell (2014) which included a transcription of interviews, translation from Bangla to English, open coding, pattern coding, and searching for major themes.

The data collection and the data analysis procedures were done side-by-side. As Creswell (2014) has argued, “the data analysis in qualitative research will proceed hand-in-hand with other parts of developing the qualitative study, namely, the data collection and the write-up of findings (p. 245).”

In the search for the major themes, the primary data of the individual and group interviews were triangulated with the other data sources, i.e., field notes, memos, and photography to ensure validity. Then those findings were presented through interpretive analyses.

### ***Selection of the Research Site***

The major professions in Bangladesh's three-fourth population, who are living in the rural area, include agriculture-related work such as direct farming, agricultural business, and the temporary job of a day-labour on the farms or business. A large number of people of these professions were found in the selected site of study. That is why a rural area in the eastern part of Bangladesh was chosen as the setting of the ethnographic study. The literacy rate was below 40% there. It was majorly an agricultural setting. Two rice-boilers were also found there. Many agricultural labourers from different parts of the country were found to come and live there during the harvesting season. All these factors made this site an ideal one to address the selected phenomena.

### ***Participants and Sampling***

Fifty-seven participants actively took part in the study. Many other villagers were present in the open group discussions. Purposive sampling was done to find respondents from almost all of the major professions, ages, and strata of the community. There are three common types of methods to determine the social class of people in a society: objective, subjective, and reputational method (Kraus & Park, 2014; "Types of Social Classes of People", n.d.). The current study has applied the subjective method. The basis of social class distinction was the basis of the researcher's self-analysis of economic solvency to meet their fundamental needs.

### ***Ethical Considerations***

The researcher took permission from the local public representatives, institutions, and other quarters to collect data. As it is crucial to building rapport with the community in an

ethnographic study, the researcher ensured mutual trust with the participants and took utmost care of ethical considerations in it.

## **Results and Discussion**

The interpretive thematic analysis is one of the most common ways of data analysis and presentation in the field of modern ethnographic research, which is followed here. The interview extracts are considered the most important findings in most the ethnographic studies. The following interview extracts, selected from the huge amount of collected data, are related to the three research questions. Photos, field notes, memos, and audio and video recordings have been used to triangulate and validate the data analysis.

### **The Most Common Areas of the Usage of English**

The most common areas of the usage of English are presented here thematically. From the huge amount of interview data, only selected interview extracts have been presented here with the basic information and pseudonyms of the research participants.

#### ***Academic Context***

The most important domain of the usage of EFL was the academic context in the selected area, as a primary school teacher observed: *“English is mainly used in the academic activates in this area. There are some other cases like medicines, utility bills and computer and internet in which English is used here.”* (Tamanna, age-50, female, upper-middle economic class). As an important subject in the national school curriculum, teaching and learning English gets priority in the academic context in the rural areas.

#### ***Business and Commerce***

The presence of English was also found on the signboards of the grocery shops, and on the packets of all the products with Bangla side by side. When the researcher asked about its necessity in the rural community, even a day labourer stressed that it increased the beauty of packaging as a part of the marketing strategies: *“It is a foreign language, the rich and educated people use it. That is why the use of English along with Bangla, on the signboards, packaging and marketing increases its standard (market value).”*

**Figure 1**

*The Uses of English in the Rural Context*



(Rana, age-54, male, poor). Moreover, the electricity bills were also printed in English.

### ***Information, Communication, Technology and Medical Domains***

Importantly, the operating system of the computers and smartphones was in English only. The specifications of electrical and electronic equipment were available in English only. The reading and writing skills were required only in some cases outside the school or college. On the medicines, such as tablets or syrup, only English or both English and Bangla languages were found in the rural pharmacies.



### ***English as an Academic Subject not a Skill***

English was mostly taken as an academic subject, not as a skill. That is why the English teachers teach it to make the students pass the compulsory course of English in the schools. Listening and speaking skills are neither practised in the English classes nor assessed regularly at the secondary school level (Class I-X) or higher secondary level (Class XI-XII).

### ***English Speaking and Listening is not Needed in the Rural Context***

Though the above-mentioned examples refer to the fact that English reading and writing skills can be used in the village, the listening and speaking of English were rarely found in the rural setting in Bangladesh. That is why an English teacher said that it was useless to practice English speaking activities as the students forget the everyday English expressions. A secondary school student analysed accordingly: *“We learn only English vocabulary and grammar in the school. We do not have the scopes to practice or use English listening and speaking skills inside or outside the school”* (Jebin, age- 15, female, poor).

### **Attitudes towards the English Language**

#### ***No Conflict between Local Islamic Culture and the English Language***

It is assumed in Bangladesh that the English culture is harmful to maintaining Islamic values. During the British colonial era in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, in this part of South Asia, some Islamic preachers did not welcome the practice of learning the English language. But that negative attitude is not found any more in the rural setting. A young Islamic leader and *Imam* (chief) of a mosque observed, *“English is nothing but a language and there is no conflict*

*between Islamic culture and the English language”* (Habib, age-26, male, lower-middle-class). There was no dislike or negative attitude towards English even in the social psychology among the conservative rural people or the religious leaders of the rural community.

### ***English as a Prestige-Tag***

The EFL had a prestige tag in the rural community. Even code-mixing was frequently applied due to that reason. A businessperson of that area stated it with an example: *“In the social get together like marriage ceremonies, the big shots use some English words because it is a matter of prestige to speak English on this type of occasions”* (Mainuddin, age- 25, male, lower-middle-class).

### **A Mismatch between English School Curricula and ‘the Needs’ of English Competence in Rural Context**

The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is the governmental authority that publishes the textbooks including the English textbook, *English for Today*, from primary to higher secondary levels in Bangladesh. The school English textbooks do not cover the necessary English lexis and skills that are required in different domains of the rural area, such as the agricultural and health tips and guidelines available in online resources, online job search, basic medicines, and financial documents like bank cheques or utility bills. Moreover, as some research participants have argued, they did not have the basic English communicative skills that are needed by the expatriates and that can be taught at the S.S.C. and H.S.C. levels.

## **English-Competence Does not have Direct Economic Value**

### ***Not Necessary to Use English in the Rural Context***

Despite the prospect of English competence as a socio-economic development tool, a few instances were found to prove a direct contribution of English to individual economic development. The following quotations lead to the perception that competence in English was a requirement to get a job in the town or city, but not in the rural context. A young service holder, who worked in a city, justified it, *“I use English to do my office work on the computer in [a city]; but I don’t have to use English in my village.”* (Robij, age-25, male, lower-middle-class).

Another villager, who was an expatriate, also expressed the same opinion: *“English is a very important subject in the school. It is important to know English to get a good job in the country and to go abroad. But it is not used in daily life in this village”* (Alam, age- 40, male, upper-middle class).

### **Other Findings**

#### ***Demotivation to Pursue the Higher Academic Studies***

An engineer, who was a member of one of the most educated families in the village, gave the following statement: *“My school friends, who have not invested so much time and money for higher education and doing business or went abroad, are in better economic condition.”* (Rhidoy, age- 29, male, upper-middle class). His family was taken as the most successful example of a struggle for education. But this young man had been unemployed for about two years after his parents, who were primary school teachers, invested a huge amount of money in his education at a private university in Dhaka. His married elder sister was an economics graduate and also an unemployed person. The

youngest child of the family was a doctor who started earning money a few months before the interview.

Though the unemployment rate is less than six per cent in the country, the unemployment rate of graduates is high here which is found in this village also (Bangladesh Unemployment Rate, 2021). This engineer found the investment in education valueless and the English knowledge and skills that he had earned did not produce enough economic output for his life and his family.

### **Overall Analysis and Recommendations**

There are only a few domains in which English was found to be used frequently. The presence of the English language was found in education, commerce, information and communication technologies, and smartphones. There is a strong attitude towards the superior status of English in social psychology due to the dominance of the rich English-speaking countries in the global context. But there was not so much productive use of the English knowledge and skills earned in the schools in the lived daily lives of the rural participants of the study. Its instrumental value lies in the emphasis on English in the job recruitment process or trends outside the rural context.

But the code-mixing of Bangla and English and transliteration of Bangla words in the English alphabet in the social media and chats were very common incidents among the EFL learners. Surely, the capacity to mix English with Bangla while speaking in social gatherings could increase the social status of any user of English in the area. Another finding of this study is that there is no conflict between the Muslim values and English as a language.

The EFL was seen as an academic subject, not as an important skill in the selected rural setting. Most of the guardians were

influenced by the heavily exam-oriented education system and considered the practice of private tuition of English very useful for good academic results. The poor students could not afford private tuition and found this reason to be crucial for their poor academic performance. In contrast, the families with better economic conditions could provide it for their children's good results in public examinations like Secondary School Certificate (S.S.C.) or Higher Secondary School Certificate (H.S.C.) examinations. This way, many of the poor EFL learners fell into the vicious cycle of poverty. In addition, the participants did not find the current English curriculum at school and college levels to be productive and life-oriented. Only a few students of the village managed to continue higher studies and utilise the English knowledge and skills in their career development in the towns and cities.

With the overall analysis in consideration, the following points can be put forward as recommendations from the study:

- The national education policy and English curricula must contextualise the ELT to make it life-oriented and productive. Both the academic and practical needs should be focused on in a balanced way in designing the textbooks and materials and the examination system at junior school and higher secondary levels.
- To attain the above goal, the lexis of the textbooks has to be enriched with particular English words which are used in the rural area in the fields of medicines, doctor's prescriptions, the specifications of electric and electronic equipment, internet browsing and communication, financial transactions including mobile banking, bank cheques, utility bills, and the basic computer operations in

the village. Many rural people of Bangladesh live abroad and do labour class jobs there where they need basic English communication skills. The particular words, which are very closely relevant to those contexts, should be in the English textbooks of the S.S.C. and H.S.C. levels.

- The presence of English in the rural context demands the government's recognition of English as an official language which cannot be ignored anymore in the present dominance of English as an international language.
- The available resources on different online platforms like YouTube can be beneficial for the villagers to get up-to-date tips about agriculture, health, and the latest business ideas. The ICT skills and English vocabulary knowledge can be juxtaposed to increase the capacity for socio-economic development of the rural people.
- A very useful ELT technique would be to use those items in the English classes that are found in the local shops with English printed words on the boxes, packages, or specifications.
- Monitoring of the English classes should be ensured to make the ELT training more effective.
- Equity, not equality, is a must to reduce the increasing economic disparity in the rural setting. Special focus must be given to the education of the underprivileged people of the rural areas.
- More research in sociology and education should be carried out in rural areas to make school education productive.

- Most of the ELT studies of the country are heavily quantitative in nature relying on the numbers mostly. Hence, more qualitative as well as mixed-method studies are required in Bangladesh for all-inclusive and multidimensional research output. That is why the current ethnographic study strongly recommends more research of this type in the fields of EFL and applied linguistics in the country.

Most importantly, necessary steps should be taken to raise social awareness in rural areas about the necessity of English as an important skill or tool for socio-economic development. Because the English teachers deal with English not as a skill, but as an academic subject only. The ELT training programmes focus primarily on teaching techniques with minimal focus on the theories of language learning. Due to the lack of theoretical knowledge or understanding of foreign language learning, the English teachers cannot connect those theories to the CLT practices. Rather than that, they focus mostly on grammatical lessons and exam-oriented teaching techniques. The training programmes and the class-monitoring systems should ensure that the teachers deal with the English competence as an important capacity-building skill. Overall, a practical, skills-based and objective-based secondary school education can inspire the demotivated poor rural people to invest in the education of their family members who can contribute to the socio-economic development of the underprivileged rural community.

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