# Impact of Studying Abroad on English Language Teachers at University Level in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

*The study addresses an issue regarding the English language teachers who have studied abroad and are teaching at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh. The idea of this study comes out of my professional experience and my encounter with fellow ELT practitioners. I have been in the field of language teaching for the past fourteen years and at Jahangirnagar University, Dhaka, Bangladesh for the last seven years where I watch my students turning into my colleagues. I noticed that the increasing demand for competent users of English in this era of globalization has also made my colleagues interested in getting education from Western developed countries like their predecessors. Equally has grown the demand for English Language Teaching (ELT) and related studies like Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL). Much investigation has been carried out on the experiences of the teachers while they were studying abroad but no studies have been carried out on the returning teachers and the episode after. This study, thus, is an attempt to explore what prompted these teachers to study abroad, whether these Western trained teachers on their return have made changes to their teaching approaches, how or in what ways have they done it, what sort of obstacles did they face or are they facing and what measures can be taken to overcome these barriers. These issues are central in connection to the future of English language teaching at the university level and based on the opinions of the teachers, the study provides recommendations to bridge the gap between the existing language teaching policy and practice.*

### Introduction

Bangladesh is a developing country belonging to the outer circle of English users (Kachru, 1992). Though English holds the position of being somewhere between a foreign language and second language here, it is a *de facto* second language in this country. Following the language movement in 1952, Bengali has since been the native language and also the primary medium of instruction and communication in almost all spheres of life. Bangladesh gained its independence in 1971 and English, being the language of international correspondence, became a compulsory subject from primary to the tertiary level of education in most academic institutions. The country follows the traditional British system for education and ever since, there has always been a drift towards studying in Britain,especially by university teachers. In the years following independence, academics studied mainly English literature. In 1990, the Government of Bangladesh passed the Private University Act that prompted the growth of universities in the private sector. These universities offered subjects in demand like

Information Technology and Business Administration but the demand for English was strong as the medium of instruction in these universities is English. Thus, all these universities have English departments to cater to the English language needs of the students (Chowdhury & Ha, 2014). This created fulltime employment opportunities for the outgoing students of English and part time offers for teachers teaching at various public universities. Though most of these teachers and students had majored in English literature, they had to teach English language courses at the university.

Moreover, the teachers who had studied abroad mainly in North America or UK got preference in employment and received higher salaries. Some top ranking public universities made a North American (preferably) postgraduate degree mandatory for teachers interested in joining their universities. Thus, more students and teachers started to look for opportunities to study abroad and till now many have come back and joined different institutions teaching English language and linguistics. As a third world country, every year a number of foreign language teachers from different universities receive scholarships or funding to study abroad from different government as well as UK, USA and Australia government-funded sources like Hornby, Chevening, Commonwealth, Erasmus, Fulbright, ALA, Endeavour and other scholarship programs. Some people also study by self-funding and also because it is imperative for university teachers to update and upgrade. When these teachers receive scholarships, they sign a bond to return and serve their institutions but there are no guidelines or directives about what exactly they should be doing on their return.

**Teaching Approaches**

Despite the introduction of CLTA (Communicative Language Teaching Approach) back in the 1990s, the gap between policy-level expectations and actual practice is still felt by the practitioners, reports Chowdhury and Ha (2008). For instance, classes at the primary level still follow the traditional way of teaching like giving one-sided instructions though CLTA is the prescribed teaching methodology. At the university level, most of the public universities still follow teacher-directed lecture-based methods of instruction where theories are taught without any sense of application. Huge class size and ill-equipped classrooms especially in the public sector are the reasons behind this setback. The private sectors offer better facilities in this regard with technology enhanced classrooms and smaller class sizes. Yet, my own observations suggest that teacher-directed approach instead of a learner-centered one is still the norm in classrooms.

**Literature Review**

The following is an attempt to discuss relevant background literature in order to place this research within the current theoretical framework. An attempt has been made to include theories and research works carried out on the issues of teachers studying abroad, appropriate methodology, and other related issues both globally and in the context of Bangladesh.

**Study Abroad**

Chowdhury and Ha (2014) report that Western education is chosen by university teachers because they want to visualize themselves as competent users (possessing "power" and

"prestige") of English. Other reasons to choose Western education, known as "foreign degree" locally, included the passing of 1990 Private Universities Act by the Government of Bangladesh, which, by and large, promoted a sudden growth of private universities where the medium of instruction is English. Thus, there was an increasing demand for English, and recruited teachers needed to provide English language support to other departments. Moreover, some of these universities made it mandatory for teachers to have "Western" exposure, preferably a PhD, or an MA at least. So when teachers return home on completion of their study it becomes a general assumption that they would disseminate their acquired knowledge and bring changes to their previous teaching, learning, and research approaches.

In this regard, Wong (2013) in her study acknowledges that teachers who have taken up an overseas professional development course reiterated that the overseas course and exposure brought considerable amount of change in the teachers' own culture, beliefs, and practices as these are constantly being challenged over there. In fact, the prime objective of taking up overseas courses remain "a shift of perspective of a primary teaching philosophy, a change of focus on bridging the gap between theory and practice, or provide a focus on the cultivation and the refinement of teaching practice and pedagogy" (Wong, p. 153). Vall and Tennison (1991) affirm that international teaching and learning nurtures critical thinking, which enable teachers to ponder on issues of teaching and learning in their relevant contexts. Also student-centered instruction where learners are placed at the center of the learning process is a well-established and effective norm in Western educational discourse (Michael, 2006). Mahan and Stachowski (1990) add a positive note from their study that teachers do try to apply their new teaching techniques (e.g., "communicative" or "interactive") learnt from studying abroad in their home countries.

**Appropriate Methodology and Barriers in Implementation**

Breen (1986) argues classroom methodology of a community should be decided based on their distinct culture surrounding classroom interaction. The learning process is a situation-specific matter and cannot be based on "learning group ideal." Phillipson's (1992, p. 47) highly debated position of "English Linguistic Imperialism" claims that "the dominance of English is asserted and maintained" by the native speaking countries, particularly UK and USA and was exported to the periphery or the nonnative speaker countries. Following this trend, Holliday (1994) refers to the Western countries as "BANA" (for Britain, Australia, and North America) and questions the feasibility of applying their developed methodology, designed for ideal classroom situations in the ill-resourced developing countries where attitudes towards learning English is "different." Moreover, these methodologies were developed for adult learners who seek to learn English for a specific purpose, which is quite dissimilar from the need of the different levels of state education in developing countries. He addresses the developing countries as "TESEP" derived from "tertiary, secondary, primary." Since this TESEP sector failed to develop any "high-status methodologies" they became receivers of the BANA developed methodology and were forced to make adaptations, which were not appropriate for their situations (Holliday, 1994, pp. 12-13). Bangladesh belongs to these TESEP countries.

Canagarajah (1999, p. 122) adds that the "imported methods" from native speaker countries are at times so different from the methods in the periphery countries "that local teachers have to negotiate the influences they would permit into their classrooms in a highly reflective and informed manner." Teachers bring their own beliefs and practices to their everyday teaching and to introduce something new these beliefs need to be changed gradually informs Kumaravedivelu (2014).

Schweisfurth (2011) also questions the feasibility of engaging learner-centered education (LCE), a Western concept, to all societies and classrooms. In his study, he breaks down the findings of 72 articles published by the *International Journal of Educational Development* (IJED) on how LCE has been perceived in developing country contexts. He identifies the different barriers brought out by the researchers in their contexts where LCE has been proposed as teaching methodology. The problems include teachers' professional learning and beliefs, change in teacher-learner power relations, and practical and material constraints which are expected in LCE. Unrealistic expectation regarding implementation and the unsupportive local policy also act as major barriers in successfully implementing LCE. Schweisfurth (2011) further adds a cause of persistent failure in educational innovation: the system is driven by people who are not responsible for implementing it. This situation is identical to Bangladesh where policies are developed without active participation of institutional heads, teachers, parents and learners.

Chinese classrooms also follow a teacher-centered pedagogical approach to teaching and teacher-student relationship informs Hu (2005). A teacher is held as an authority and should act as the source of knowledge to the students. The students should be respecting this knowledge provider and expect only him/her to initiate interaction in class. The same is echoed in Shamim's (1996) study of learner resistance to innovative classroom teaching methodology in Pakistan. Shamim conducted an experiment on her students trying to introduce interaction, discussion, and groupwork in her classes. But the learners, unaccustomed to the radical changes in behavior and style of teaching, showed resistance towards this innovation. "Teachers teach as they were taught," remarks Shamim, and "in the process they socialize learners into well-established patterns of classroom behavior" (1996, p. 114). With this cultural orientation of teacher as an authoritative figure and "repository of knowledge" (Shamim, p. 117), learners witnessed a "value conflict" (Shamim, p. 119) with the introduction of innovative teaching. Bangladesh, also a South Asian and neighboring country, might be a witness to the same situation.

Turning a traditional classroom into a learner-centered one is not free of challenges. Thompson (2013) identifies a range of material constraints like limited resources, poor teacher training and the "backwash" effect as prime difficulties in implementing learner-centered education in developing countries. Yet another challenge for the returning teachers from abroad which might contribute to failure, according to Schweisfurth (2011), is these teachers may encounter resistance from other teachers who feel that new pedagogical behavior does not fit with locally accepted classroom norms. Hayes (1996) illustrates this kind of impact with the example of a Thai teacher who was keen to put into practice the CLT approach she had learnt on training

courses, but whose classes were criticized by her colleagues for being too noisy, contrary to the local cultural norm of passive, obedient students listening intently as the teacher transmitted knowledge which might be the case of Bangladesh as well.

The implications mentioned by Schweisfurth (2011) regarding the implementation of LCE greatly matches with the condition in Bangladesh. Though CLTA is the methodology to be followed in class but there is no monitoring on the part of the policymakers which makes it difficult for interactive classes to be sustainedespecially at the university level. Since there is no directive, the returning teachers from abroad find themselves in an awkward situation as their classroom and learners are not ready for the modern teaching approaches. This, in course of time, might turn into a demotivating factor for the teachers.

## Research Questions

This study is unique because several research studies have been carried out on beliefs and motivation while teachers were studying abroad, but very few attempts have been made to investigate what use these learners/teachers made of their acquired knowledge after they returned to their home country on completion of their studies (Edwards & Li, 2013).

For this purpose, the current study attempts to address the following questions:

- What was the motivating factor for the teachers to study abroad?
- What difference did the teachers find regarding the teaching approach at home and abroad?
- What sort of obstacles have they faced or are they facing while implementing modern/innovative teaching techniques?
- What measures can be taken to overcome these barriers (if any)?

## Data Collection Instruments

A qualitative approach and a case study methodology with interviews have been adopted for this study because an in-depth enquiry into the existing teaching-learning situation at the university level was required. I wanted the teachers to speak about their experience in detail and gather as much information as possible about the existing teaching-learning situation and also how these teachers feel regarding the barriers to employ modern teaching techniques in this country and related suggestions.

## Participants

The study involves ELT professionals from 4 universities from Bangladesh who have studied in Western universities. Since it was evident that private institutions provided more facilities than public universities, participants were selected at random from one public and three different private institutions from different parts of the country. Because of the geographical distance, as I was in Leeds at the time and the participants were in Bangladesh, it was difficult to contact teachers from different universities who have studied abroad. Hence, the snowball technique has been applied to select participants for this case study.

The interviews have been taken through Skype software and recorded so that I could get back to them for further information or reflection. I took consent from the participants beforehand,

informing them of the ethical issues and that the interviews would be recorded. Depending on the participants' preferences, the interviews have been mostly conducted in Bengali, sample parts of which have been translated and transcribed into English and included in Appendix B. Although all the language teachers have had training abroad and are proficient users of English, they felt more comfortable using their mother tongue. In addition, the use of native language for the interviews helped in developing trust and rapport and to establish relationships with the participants.

### Planning the Interview

The interview schedule was designed according to the research questions. Since the whole study is about the teachers' experience of studying abroad, making changes to teaching methodology, barriers in implementing teaching techniques learnt from abroad, and possible solutions to remove these barriers, all sixteen questions in the schedule were introduced to clarify these issues (Appendix A).

### Justification of the Plan

I began the data collection procedure with a pilot study by interviewing a colleague who has studied abroad. The conversation with him through Skype pointed towards issues that I had not thought of while designing my research questions. Taking the pilot study into account, I made changes to my interview schedule, which indicates that the pilot study has served its purpose in pointing out "some of the inevitable problems in converting the design into reality" (Robson, 2011, p. 405). Risks were quite negligible for this study. The only risk is that, despite pseudonyms being used, there remains a chance to be identified as all the teachers in an institution have not received education from abroad.

### Limitations of the Study

The limitation of this study, of course, included the need to compromise on some aspects of the original research design, and the limited time available for reflection and follow-up, reduced still further by the unavailability of the participants at the set time. Intermittent internet connection at times became a source of distraction as well.

### Findings

This section will present an account of the responses of the four teachers interviewed. The findings are arranged under five main themes related to the research questions.

### Motivating Factor for the Teachers to Study Abroad

### Hasan:

Hasan, a public university teacher of Bangladesh, has done an MA TESOL from the Institute of Education, University of London and is currently teaching different language courses to students of both undergraduate and graduate level. Hasan received a Centenary Scholarship for pursuing his MA at UK. Earlier, he participated in a cultural exchange program under the FLTA (Fulbright Foreign Teaching Assistant Program) from USA. He wanted to be a teacher from his university days and, like the rest of the teachers who join the University, had hopes

of studying abroad. In his words,

> My motivation to study abroad, like many, was primarily instrumental: rise in salary, quick promotion, and so on. I felt very lucky when I got the chance to go to USA for this FLTA program for 9 months at the University of North Carolina which ultimately changed my world.

At the end of the program Hasan knew that he was coming back—for further studies. Also to his surprise, Hasan found that non-degree programs were not recognized in Bangladesh. He was not getting any facility or recognition for his training in USA. So, I found that Hasan's intention to do an MA from the Western countries was influenced by three factors: professional attainment, thirst of knowledge, and recognition of his achievement.

**Jahan:**

My second participant, Jahan, is a teacher from a private university who has also studied MA TESOL from the University of Lancaster, UK. Jahan had years of language teaching experience at two private universities and also worked with the British Council English Team for four years before she received the Hornby Scholarship to study at UK. While speaking about her motivation to study abroad, Jahan informs,

> I studied Linguistics and ELT for MA at a public university and then joined as an English language teacher at a private university where I realized that I didn't have the experience of research at all as we didn't work on a dissertation at the MA level. Moreover, I always had a mind to study in a native-speaker country to witness their educational system and update myself.

> After joining the profession, I felt that it is absolutely necessary to update and upgrade myself as I was working as a materials developer and a teacher trainer. I also wanted to study further and do a PhD without which I cannot rise professionally.

Based on her narrative, it appears that Jahan's motivation was mainly intrinsic.

**Mohsin:**

Participant three, Mohsin, is the youngest of the four teachers interviewed. Mohsin is a teacher of the same leading private university in Chittagong, Bangladesh from where he graduated in English literature and language in 2010. His second MA was from the University of Essex, UK. Now he teaches different English language courses at both graduate and undergraduate level.

"What was your motivation to study abroad?" was my question to Mohsin to which he replied,

> My MA degree was on an integrated syllabus of English language and literature. But to my amazement, some of the courses that I had to study for MA were repetitions of the same courses studied at the Undergraduate level.

> After I entered my profession I found that in real life there were no practical applications of the subjects that I had studied. Out of curiosity I started looking for syllabuses of different countries and saw they were very practical, updated, and professionally useful. I chose Essex among them to update myself.

To me, Mohsin's motivation to study abroad also stands in line with Jahan's motivation, which is intrinsic.

**Rahman:**

Rahman, the last and the most experienced of the participants, is the chair of the Department of English at a leading private university in Dhaka. He graduated from a public university in English literature and joined a college (sixth form). After working in two colleges he got the chance to go to Australia for a Postgraduate Diploma in Education. In Rahman's words,

> I began my teaching career as a lecturer at a rural college and later shifted to another college which was in a better condition than the first. But while working there, I felt I couldn't survive by working in those poor institutions. What I had studied at my university was coming of no use to improve the conditions of the students studying in those institutions. So, when I got the chance to do a Postgraduate Diploma in Australia, I jumped for it though it cost me a fortune. I was frustrated and did not want to teach at a college anymore. So the thought of this Diploma served a dual purpose for me: To upgrade and learn about some practical knowledge and secondly, upon completion, I might start working in a university.

Rahman was proved wrong when he got back because a postgraduate diploma is not recognized as an academic qualification in Bangladesh and despite spending months and a large amount of money he received no benefits in terms of financial or professional achievements. So he started searching again for an MA program to study and finally received a scholarship from the University of Canterbury, New Zealand to study MA TESOL. This time, on completion of his degree, he joined a leading private university in Dhaka where he worked for sixteen years and then joined his current university.

I find that Rahman's motivation is similar to Hasan's where the reasons were related to financial and professional successes.

**How do They Feel about their Studies/Teaching Approach Earlier at Home and Abroad?**

In this section I have included my four participants' experiences regarding their classroom situation at the tertiary level and how they found their classroom at a Western country.

**1st Degree Classroom Situation**

Hasan's study background is from a public university of Bangladesh where he studied Applied Linguistics and ELT at both undergraduate and graduate levels. While talking to him, I found that he had graduated in the year 2005 which was a year CLTA was supposed to be the dominantly used language teaching method. Hasan's words presented a very traditional scenario of his classroom situation. His first degree classroom is the emblem of a traditional and typical Bangladeshi public university classroom.

A large class size of 120 students crammed in a classroom where the sitting arrangement is hardly for 80-90 students. Hasan says, "We used to squeeze ourselves on the benches to accommodate all the students in the class." The sitting arrangement was long fixed benches and thus students had to attend classes in a rather uncomfortable situation. The classes were mostly in the form of lectures and, most of the time, the learners were clueless about what

they were going to learn that day. Though there were multimedia facilities at the department but they were used in only 1% classes. The classes were based on traditional textbooks prescribed every year. Hasan commented, "We were mere passive receivers of instructions" as these teacher-dominated classrooms promoted very little or no teacher-student interaction, let alone student-student interaction. Though many of these teachers were knowledgeable and good orators, and the topic interesting, the provided knowledge often proved to be futile because of the one way transmission process. It is a well-known fact that interaction paves ways to better understanding of a topic, but most of his teachers were reluctant to employ any innovation or communicative techniques in class. On the contrary, many of the teachers were not even quite prepared for the class most of the time; some even came without any preparation at all.

Following the tradition of rote-learning, theories were introduced to the learners which they were expected to memorize and write answers based on them in their exams without any sense of practical application, informed Hasan. Since the learners were not getting any updated information or knowledge from either the teachers or from any other source, just like students of previous years, Hasan and his friends collected notes or ready answers prepared by former good students, made some changes and regurgitated the same answers in the exams. So, group study was basically result-oriented without any scope of critical thinking on the part of the learners.

The experience of the other three participants bears similar evidences of a traditional classroom. Jahan's experience was the same as Hasan's as she studied at the same institution a year later. She added that there were no presentation sessions and they had no idea of a dissertation let alone a research proposal.

In comparison to Hasan and Jahan, Mohsin was more fortunate to have a class size of forty students as he studied in a private university. Yet I was surprised to learn that his classes were also teacher-dominated and lacked updated knowledge and information because the same sources (i.e., textbooks prescribed several years back) were being used. Multimedia was rarely used in class. He even had teachers who came to the class and made the students read out from the books throughout the class. There were some classes where he had to do presentations, but the teacher-student interaction and the student-student interaction was limited to that. Thus, what is obvious in a modern (2010) classroom like Mohsin's is that the same traditional classroom teaching methodology was being used. Result-oriented study, theory based learning without practical application, and so on, were still the features of a twenty-first century university classroom.

The difference between Mohsin's, and Hasan and Jahan's assessment system was that Mohsin's university followed the semester system. There were two summative exams: a mid-term and a semester final. Within semester 2, more class tests were taken and for the semester final exam, they had to do a presentation of 5 marks, which at times turned out to be a reading of a prepared script. Like Jahan, Mohsin never received feedback on the tutorials (class tests) taken. However, if the teacher did return the scripts, in place of comments or remarks, there

was only a number or a figure like 14/20 or an A/B/C. The silent learners under the dominance of an authoritative teacher remained silent about not receiving feedback.

By now I had enough reasons to believe that Rahman's class could not be an exception because his first degree was in the year 1986 that was before CLTA was introduced in Bangladesh. As mentioned earlier, it was only after Rahman joined his profession that he realized he had learned nothing practical about language teaching at the university with which he could help out his students in the rural areas.

### Classroom Situation Abroad

My first participant Hasan's expression regarding his experience of studying abroad was,

> A completely new world: teaching-learning pedagogy, resource, updated knowledge, teachers who are writing the books are teaching you: very inspiring and motivating.

Just in line with his first experience of observing classes at the University of North Carolina, his classes at IOE was tremendously different from the traditional classes that Hasan attended for his first degree. An optimal class size of 20, interactive and intensive seminar-based classroom, task-based learning, materials/articles given in advance to study and then discussed in class, and a critical approach towards reading and thinking were some of the salient features of his Western classroom. Moreover, the classes were all based on application of theories whereas he had only studied the theories in his first degree classes. Alongside, a vast resource, a 24-hour library facility with availability of any book on demand, was the most precious attraction for him. Unlike his classes in Bangladesh, there was no residue of the former grammar-translation methodology in these classes.

Unfortunately, among all these positives, Hasan did not realize that he belonged to a very different academic culture. Students in Bangladesh usually continued to write the same way at the tertiary level as they used to write at the SSC/HSC (GCSE/Sixth Form) level. He had very little knowledge of the format of academic writing in Western countries. For instance, literature review, summarizing, paraphrasing, referencing, and handling plagiarism were quite new to him. He had to take non-credit courses at the beginning of his first semester to learn these academic writing features.

Both Jahan and Mohsin speak of similar interactive classes as both studied in different institutions in the UK. Jahan informs that she found classroom task-based learning to be the best method because it required successful completion of a given work done through participation of the entire class. Cooperation or collaboration was highly encouraged in her classes abroad. The assignments too were like small research projects and to assist in their learning, research workshops or skill-based workshops were arranged for the learners from time to time.

> Classes at my university in UK were very technologically advanced. We needed to adapt to everything. We needed to know about the program/courses there. Another fresh addition was we received feedback for all the assignments provided.

Like Jahan, Mohsin mentions Turnitin to be a totally new concept. He acknowledges that he

also had not any idea of doing literature review, referencing, note taking, and all of these to him was an introduction of a completely new academic culture. Still he was happy that at the beginning of the program all the course outlines were given and everything clearly explained. But he did face difficulty like Hasan and Jahan in adapting to the academic culture. His teacher motivated him and he also worked hard to adapt to the UK style of academic writing.

Rahman expressed similar views like Hasan, Mohsin, and Jahan. To him the classroom situation abroad is very encouraging and sets the backdrop for interaction. "Critical thinking was highly promoted in my classes," informs Rahman.

**Obstacles to Implementation of Modern/Innovative Teaching Techniques**

I asked the participants about the kinds of obstacles they have faced or are facing in their home institutions if and when they tried to implement the modern/innovative teaching techniques they had learned abroad. According to Hasan, the challenges in employing modern teaching techniques/approaches are many: "In our country, students are still under the trance of Grammar Translation Method and expect the teachers to speak. They are not ready for interactive classes or autonomous learning as they are not familiar with the concept." He cites the example of a teacher who makes her students present in class which should be a good thing but students complain that it is a kind of cheating on the part of the teacher by not teaching and making the learners do his/her (the teacher's) part of the work which is to teach them or deliver lectures. Hasan finds the main problem to be lack of resources:

> I am writing a book chapter now, so I need books which I know of but can't get hold of them because they are not available in our library, and ordering online is at times very difficult here because of government policy. So I have to request someone abroad to download an article or supply pages of the book for me. This is extremely difficult and demotivates a teacher to research further.

Poor pay-scale is another big problem, informs Hasan. Many of the teachers are not motivated to travel the extra mile to update or bring changes in their teaching techniques as this requires hard work. They involve themselves in other work like teaching at a private university or consultancy that is more financially rewarding. As it is a well known fact that teachers working in the public sector in Bangladesh have the lowest salary scale in Asia, teachers hanker after extra money to bear the ever-increasing living costs and their attention is diverted work other than their teaching. Teachers do know that they need to update themselves as well as the students, as there is no room for gathering students' feedback and evaluation; teachers get demotivated to work hard or try innovative techniques. But the same teacher, while working in a private university, at least tries to employ some modern techniques as they get a higher salary there.

Apart from the economic factor, teachers also lose their interest and become demotivated because the same course is assigned to them every year, leaving them no room to update informs Hasan. They also do not face any challenges. Nor are they asked or instructed to share their experiences abroad. In line with Hasan's remarks, my experience was rather amusing as I came to know that in my institution two teachers had expressed contradictory feelings

about sharing their experiences after returning from their studies abroad. One felt threatened because he was asked to share his ideas and experience of studying abroad by his department while the other expressed his dissatisfaction that no one wished to learn about his research and experience.

Alongside these obstacles, Hasan points to some other important factors that I think should be valuable to policymakers. According to him, when teachers join the University they are aware of the universal motto of "Publish or Perish," but these words are not emphasized on like in Western countries. A good publication does not carry any value or receive recognition. The quantity of publications is measured in place of quality, and whether the publication is from a reputed, refereed journal or not carries no meaning. So, teachers lose interest or motivation to work hard for a publication in an international or quality journal as they do not reap any benefit of being updated or working hard. Furthermore, there is no academic forum or platform for the teachers to discuss new ideas or to introduce one's work to the community. To add fuel to the fire, a teacher is judged by his political affiliation, link with media or social stance rather than his academic qualities that is quite depressing informs Hasan.

In addition to many of the factors that Hasan mentioned, Jahan talked about the imposition on the part of the institution as a barrier to implementing modern teaching approaches. "In the institution that I worked earlier, there was a constant pressure on the teachers from the part of the authority that all the students have to pass as they are paying heavy fees for their studies. Somehow students smell this and many of them just wanted to pass," informed Jahan. "So, when I wanted to involve them in collaborative activities, they were less interested and were only concerned with the questions they would face in the exams."

Mohsin added, "Our syllabus is designed in a traditional system which does not support interaction. Moreover, there are cultural barriers involved and our students are not ready for the modern teaching approaches." I found this comment of Mohsin's to be the opinion of all four participants as, apart from commenting on classroom methodology developing teachers, all of them spoke of preparing the learners for modern teaching techniques like task-based learning, pairwork, groupwork, presentations, and so on.

This is a cultural barrier I find as learners are used to seeing the teacher as an authoritative figure watching over them while they work. Mohsin added some more information regarding the mindset of the senior faculty members that act as a barrier in innovative teaching. He found that the senior faculty and visiting faculty members were totally against communicative and modern methodology. They tried to resist change and spoke against it in class and in public as they thought modern methodology to be unnecessarily laborious on the part of the teachers. He spoke of an experience of presenting a paper at a local conference where he had a renowned academician as his moderator. He was completely taken aback when this person started addressing modern teaching techniques, ELT, technology in teaching English to be absolutely "rubbish" in the context of Bangladesh.

Rahman also possessed similar views to Mohsin that our learners are not ready for interactive classes. He feels as he is teaching at a well organized private university setting, things are not

often a big problem for him. His logistic support is adequate to make his teaching effective, keeping pace with modern teaching methodologies. However, from his experience, he knows very well that this cannot be generalized. He also points out, regarding recruitment of teachers, that a fresh graduate can hardly develop a sense of how to teach after receiving the first degree. There is absolutely no practical application for him/her to go through first before starting their role as a teacher.This system can be altered by the Education Ministry, but would be a lengthy and time-consuming affair. Before reaching that level, a proposal has to be approved by the relevant Joint Secretary. Before that, it has to be granted by UGC. If all these authorities attest a proposal to be viable or sustainable, only then the Education Ministry would present in favor of it in the parliament. Thus, it has become imperative to develop a faster way to make necessary amendments to education policy involving teachers, learners, researchers, and policy makers.

### Measures to Overcome these Barriers

 "So how do we look for the solutions?" was my last question to Hasan for which he offered a couple of ideas. The first one was that teaching practice has to be contextualized or localized. He feels there is no point in telling the students only about an ideal situation. Rather, they should be informed about what could work best for their situation or context. In order to make the classes interactive, he usually copies and supplies the reading materials to his students prior to his classes and the class starts with a discussion on the same involving pairwork and groupwork followed by a lecture. "The university authority needs to be constantly reminded of the necessity of subscribing to a couple of mainstream journals," said Hasan.

Hasan's next suggestion was to cascade the learning to the community or at least to other teachers of the institution. When a teacher comes back after completing his/her study abroad, there should be some sort of accountability of presenting and sharing their experiences to the teaching community he belongs to. If the Education Ministry promotes this cascade learning in terms of promotion or if student evaluation is introduced and made mandatory, then there can be a positive effect on the teaching-learning situation in the long run. "Otherwise, you go abroad, study, come back, and again merge with the same depressing academic scenario which doesn't seem to work. The scenario needs to be changed through combined effort on the part of the stakeholders as well as teachers," said Hasan.

Speaking of solutions, Jahan suggested that online courses/PhD or even postgraduate diplomas should be professionally recognized and encouraged from the policy level. Split-site courses can also be an option in the case of teachers who cannot go to study abroad for various reasons. Institutional support is a big factor for aspiring teachers.

Mohsin adds, "A teacher needs to be reflective if they want to promote interactive classrooms. He or she must think of his/her lessons after every class to decide what went well and what did not." The infrastructure as well as the teaching-learning situation needs to be developed both for teachers and students. If the classroom is beside the road and the class is being disturbed by its sound all the time this cannot be a desirable teaching-learning situation. Again, in a large classroom, if the teacher needs to project his/her voice throughout the class, the teacher

would be exhausted but the availability of a microphone could have alleviated the problem. Mohsin too emphasizes on the necessity of teacher training both pre-service and in service. While training, the teachers need to be informed properly of the course objectives and also that this training should be followed up on from time to time. In other words, Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has to be ensured for all language teaching professionals. Like Hasan, he too mentions that there should be some kind of monitoring from the part of the policymakers after a teacher returns from his/her studies. At the same time, the teacher needs a proper teaching-learning situation to make use of the training abroad. From his experience, he feels that learners enjoy interactive classes but they need to be informed of these concepts beforehand.

Rahman describes his situation while talking about solutions. He too feels a teacher should be a reflective practitioner.

> I did face problems in many cases in implementing modern teaching approaches but I could overcome them because of my true commitment and conscious effort. Here I should mention my pro-active involvement in an ELT forum called BELTA which helped me a lot. As I feel I need to help other teachers to overcome their problems, I myself need to try it out first.

His suggestions in this regard were: all foreign degree/qualifications in ELT need to be generally tailored for particular candidates of a country or region. Echoing Hasan's words he too suggested that all foreign ELT qualifications, both degree and non-degree, should be professionally recognized by local universities/institutions and there should be a judgment criteria in promotion or increment purposes. Alongside, the authority should ensure that any foreign qualifications include some field work or special course on ELT policy, methodology, assessment, and related issues.

**Recommendations**

My recommendations stand in line with my participants' comments and suggestions as I belong to the same community, and am aware of many of the situations they have faced and are still facing.

At the same time, if the teachers are not given space and encouragement, and are treated as mere puppets to implement the authority's directives, the initiative would produce no result.

- Firstly, since teachers who join the university as lecturers are usually fresh graduates, it is imperative that they receive both pre-service as well as in-service training. The freshman lecturers depend heavily on their perception of classroom teaching, following the style of the teacher they liked during their class. Thus mentoring can be introduced for these teachers to scaffold them into the teaching-learning process with proper mentor training.
- Some major incentives for teachers should be taken, including a better salary structure for the teachers at the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels. These incentives need not be only in terms of promotion or study leave (Appendix C) but in terms of

professional attainment.

- Research publications have to be made mandatory for the teachers and judged equally by their quality and not just in terms of quantity.

- For updated knowledge and research purposes, it is necessary to subscribe to some major journals related to the concerned subjects/areas.

- Teacher forums, professional bodies, and individual institutions can immensely help us to implement better teaching, learning, and research in ELT which is an ongoing process involving all professionally motivated teachers, parents, administrators, students, policy makers, publishers and many more. BELTA (Bangladesh English language Teachers Association) can play a pivotal role in this regard by extending teacher development/training programs to different parts of the country. In the training programs or professional development courses, teachers can be introduced to new trends in English language teaching and they can also share with each other what suits their teaching context better. As Thompson (2013, p. 50) suggests, to increase the chances of success of learner-centered classes, it is imperative that its professional language has first been "culturally translated, from source to target setting."

- Reflective practice should also be promoted as the literature shows. The participants also acknowledged that without the teacher being reflective, it is difficult for any modern teaching approach to sustain. Baffoka (2012) asserts that at the tertiary level, it is imperative to change the teachers' view about teaching-learning and classroom practices which requires rigorous training. If the teachers do not have similar learning experiences it is unlikely that they would be able to create such learning conditions for the students. Baffoka proposes awareness-raising of the weakness of didactic pedagogy, extensive reading, peer observation, reflective practice, and in-service training for the teachers to successfully implement interactive learner-centered instruction.

- Cascade learning/training, especially on the part of the returning teachers from abroad, should be made mandatory to pass on the acquired knowledge to the community or at least to other teachers of the institution (Edward and Li, 2013). When a teacher comes back after completing his/her study abroad there should be some sort of accountability of presenting and sharing their experiences to the teaching community he belongs to. If the Education Ministry promotes this cascade learning in terms of promotion or if student evaluation is introduced, then there can be a positive effect on the teaching-learning situation in the long run.

- For updated knowledge and training purposes, online courses could be an option. There are already E-Teacher Scholarship programs run by the State Department of USA and administered by the University of Oregon and University of Maryland that the teachers can benefit from. There are teacher training courses held by the British Council as well as both free and fee paid but these courses need to be publicized to the teachers.

- These are all directives for the development of the teachers but we need to prepare our learners to take advantage of this modern teaching methodology. But for this,

they need to start early.  If collaborative learning (group work and pairwork) and task-based learning is introduced at the secondary school level and continued through college, then it would be much easier for teachers to involve the learners in an interactive class at the tertiary level.

- Classrooms need a proper learning environment free of noise pollution and other disturbances. Large classrooms should have microphones.

**Conclusion and Directions for Further Research**

The current paper was a small-scale study using a small number of participants, i.e., 4 teachers, who have studied abroad. However, the information received opens the gate to a huge unexplored area regarding teacher development in Bangladesh. There were certain constraints, for instance, unavailability of contacted teachers, time difference between UK and Bangladesh (GMT +6) and poor internet connection in Bangladesh, which, at times, disrupted the interviews. Fortunately, due to the relentless cooperation of the participants, the quality of data was adequate. One glaring limitation was that stakeholders' or policymakers' views could not be gathered due to time constraints. The study highlights the fact that the ongoing classroom practice demands change both on the part of the teachers as well as the learners and it is also crucial to bring changes to the existing policy for the advancement of the education system in Bangladesh.

For further research, ethnographic studies can be conducted as condition of the classes could vary across different parts of the country (i.e., Dhaka and Chittagong). Also separate studies can be carried out on private and public institutions because apparently it seems that private institutions are in a better state than public universities in terms of modern teaching approaches, logistics, and support. Thus, larger-scale research needs to be carried out involving more participants and different levels of study to support teacher development, bridge the gap between policy and practice, and bring potential improvements to the education system in this developing country.

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**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

***Interview Questions:***

1. Where are you teaching now?
2. Where have you taken your first degree from?
3. Which year was that? (To judge introduction of CLTA)
4. Tell me about your classroom situation? How big is the class, facilities you have, etc.
5. Where did you study for your postgraduate?
6. What prompted/motivated you to study abroad?
7. Let's talk about your experience there.
8. Did you feel any difference between the ways you studied for your first degree and for the postgraduate degree?
9. In what ways? Class size and facilities, teachers' way (mode) of teaching, pair work, group work, syllabus, blend of theory and application, etc.
10. How do you feel about the approach at home and abroad?
11. Do you think they are appropriate for our context?
12. Have you tried applying any of these approaches in your own classroom situation after you got back?
13. What approaches have you tried out?
14. Did you get support from your institution in making changes to your classroom practice?
15. Did you face any problems while trying out/applying these techniques?
16. Can you find any solutions for these problems?

**APPENDIX B**

**Sample Service Policy Guide (Translation)**
**Promotion Policies**

Approved/Granted in the 138th Syndicate Meeting on 21-01-1989

1. The following proposals are being suggested after reviewing the policies of promotions for the teachers of Jahangirnagar University through upgrading.

   1) **The Required Qualifications for Promotion to the Position of Assistant Professor from Lecturer**

   a. Minimum 3 (three) years of experience in teaching/research in any university or approved equivalent institutions with at least 2 (two) years as a lecturer in this university.
   Or
   b. For lecturers with higher educational degrees, including MS, MPhil, Honors degree

or MA/ MSc from foreign institutions, minimum 2 (two) years of active service experience in this university will be required.
Or

c. For lecturers with PhD/equivalent degrees, no teaching experience will be required. For lecturers with PhD/equivalent degrees, the apprenticeship should be of at least 1 (one) year. For all applicants within all three divisions, (a), (b), and (c), at least 1 (one) publication will be mandatory.

2) **The Required Qualifications for Promotion to the Position of Associate Professor from Assistant Professor**

**a. For teachers with PhD or equivalent degrees:**
Minimum 4 (four) years of experience as an Assistant Professor with at least 1 (one) year of active service experience in this university and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
A total of 7 years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions with minimum 1 year of active service experience in this university and at least 3 publications as an Assistant Professor.

**b. For teachers with MPhil/MS or Foreign MA or equivalent degrees:**

A total of 5 (five) years of teaching experience with minimum 3 (three) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university, and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
3 (three) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university with a total of 7 (seven) years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions, and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.

**c. For teachers with qualifications other than the ones mentioned in (a) and (b):**

Minimum 8 (eight) years of experience as an Assistant Professor (among which at least 5 years of active service experience should be from this university will be required) and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.
Or
Minimum 5 (five) years of active service experience as an Assistant Professor in this university with a total of 11 (eleven) years of teaching/research experience in any university or approved equivalent institutions and at least 3 (three) publications as an Assistant Professor.