Rural English Teaching Methods and Improvements along with Hurdles in Bangladesh and China

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Abstract

This paper aims to identify the factors that hinder the implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in secondary schools in rural areas of Bangladesh and China. The study adopts a subjective approach and is conducted in four rural schools located in Banskhali, Chittagong, Bangladesh, and Shanghai, China. To gather data regarding the challenges associated with implementing CLT in these institutions, eight secondary English language teachers were interviewed. The findings highlight several obstacles, including a shortage of qualified teachers, excessively large class sizes, and a lack of modern classroom materials, among others. The results of this study may have implications for language policymakers and practitioners seeking ways to enhance CLT practices in rural Bangladesh and China.

Keywords: assessment, phonics, implementation, literature, education system, evaluation

1. Introduction

Lately, there has been a growing recognition of the teacher's central role in the educational process. The greater the importance attached to education, whether for social transmission, social cohesion and equality, or human resource development in modern, technology-based economies, the higher the priority that should be given to the teachers responsible for that education. Teachers are now seen as the ultimate key to educational change and school improvement. The effectiveness of educational policy proposals at the macro level depends on teachers' ability to understand and implement these proposals at the micro level of pedagogical practice (Alam, 2016).

Furthermore, due to demographic trends, there are indications of a continued demand for qualified professionals to staff classrooms well into the future. Therefore, one of the top priorities of educational planning should be the establishment of an efficient program to recruit, develop, and support teachers through a comprehensive educational process. The language policy shift in Bangladesh serves as an example. English was phased out from primary education and removed from tertiary education in 1972, although it remained a mandatory subject in the secondary curriculum. Bengali became the language of instruction in all schools, causing challenges, particularly in scientific, medical, and engineering schools. Nationalist fervor and policy directives elevated English from a second language (ESL) to a foreign language (EFL) due to these challenges. The situation in Bangladesh differs from Moag's assertion that such conditions would lead to the extinction of English (Li et al., 2020).

The Rural English Teaching Method (RETM) emerged as an alternative to the Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in English language instruction. RETM focuses on improving students' communication skills and has been adopted in numerous countries where English is a second language. In the 1990s, RETM was introduced in Bangladesh through the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP), a joint project funded by Bangladesh and the UK (Macaro et al., 2018). The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) produced RETM-focused textbooks for secondary and higher secondary level schools, aiming to enhance learners' communicative competence. RETM places a strong emphasis on practical communication skills over theoretical language knowledge, aligning with the goal of real-world language use (Pansera & Owen, 2015).

One of RETM's primary objectives is to ensure that students use their language skills effectively in practical situations. However, implementing RETM faced challenges due to large class sizes, a lack of resources, English teachers' limited oral English proficiency, and the absence of native English teachers. The Communicative Approach, emphasizing learner-centered and experience-based language teaching, was also introduced but faced resistance in China due to cultural and economic constraints. In China's English shadow education context, the focus on exam skills and grammar translation methods often prevailed over the Communicative Approach. To address these challenges, it is essential to understand China's sociocultural context and adapt teaching strategies accordingly (Alam, 2016).

The paper I have developed for English specialists interested in working in China's English shadow education setting outlines the characteristics of this educational context and the demand patterns within it. It addresses the imbalance between exam-focused education and the development of communication skills. The paper aims to assist English teachers in better understanding China's English shadow education and adapting their teaching strategies to the local sociocultural context (Ahmad, 2015).

Given that English shadow education primarily focuses on exam skills and grammar translation, the teaching methods commonly used in English programs or Western countries may not be suitable. English practitioners must understand China's sociocultural context to adapt and improve teaching programs, considering local needs. Furthermore, English teachers in China face challenges in implementing the Communicative Approach fully due to various regional constraints. The effectiveness of this approach depends on the alignment with local sociocultural requirements (Li, 2021).

The paper also highlights the influence of socioeconomic factors on English language learning in China. Urban and rural students have distinct educational experiences, and the growth of private educational institutions has further diversified English education. In contrast to urban schools with modern facilities, rural institutions struggle with a lack of qualified teachers, resources, and facilities. The existing English curriculum, based on RETM, may not be suitable for the rural context. The paper provides insights into these challenges, emphasizing the need for education reform (Li et al., 2021).

English shadow education is a relatively under-researched area, despite its increasing popularity and significant impact on education systems worldwide. It is crucial for policymakers and researchers to address the social, economic, and educational implications of shadow education. The paper focuses solely on teaching English in shadow education settings in China, shedding light on this essential component of English education (Zhang et al., 2021).

In conclusion, the paper serves to demonstrate the impact of English shadow education on Chinese students' English learning and helps English practitioners better understand the sociocultural context of English shadow education in China. It also provides insights for policymakers and the Ministry of Education, highlighting the need for changes in the assessment system and the development of strategies that consider local sociocultural requirements (Yuan & Song, 2017).

1.1 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) is regarded as an advanced and improved method of teaching English in both Bangladesh and China. It is recognized that students will not be able to effectively communicate in meaningful contexts if they only possess high levels of linguistic proficiency. This perspective emphasizes that language is primarily a means of social communication that occurs within society rather than in isolation. As a result, communicative competence, which emphasizes learners' communication abilities alongside their linguistic knowledge, is prioritized. Consequently, CLT adopts this approach with the aim of enhancing students' communicative competence so that they can use language effectively in authentic communicative situations (Mudra, 2018). Effective communication is more likely to occur in the classroom when the following conditions are met:

(1) Various practices, such as pair and group activities, are employed.

(2) Activities are based on real-life situations.

(3) Students are motivated to use language for meaningful, authentic interaction.

(4) Activities are designed to encourage students to apply language skills in real-world contexts beyond the classroom.

It has been suggested that "facilitating small group and paired activities that provide students with opportunities to communicate is crucial." Students are frequently engaged in communicative activities that involve the use of

authentic materials and information gap exercises. Understanding a language encompasses knowledge of its grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules. Learners' communicative needs serve as a framework for defining program objectives in terms of functional competence. CLT finds various applications in language teaching (Shohel, 2022).

1.2 Research Question

Certainly, here are six research questions that you can consider for your study on Rural English Teaching Methods and Improvements along with Hurdles in Bangladesh and China:

(1) What are the primary English language teaching methods currently employed in rural areas of Bangladesh and China, and what are their strengths and weaknesses?

(2) What are the unique challenges and barriers faced by educators in rural Bangladesh and China when implementing English language teaching methods, and how do these challenges differ between the two countries?

(3) What are the perceptions and preferences of English language teachers in rural regions of Bangladesh and China regarding different teaching methods, and how do these preferences impact their teaching approaches?

(4) How can innovative teaching techniques and technology be integrated into rural English language classrooms in Bangladesh and China to enhance the learning experience for students and overcome geographical constraints?

(5) Are there successful case studies or models of rural English language teaching in these countries that can serve as best practices, and how can these models be replicated or adapted to other rural areas?

(6) What strategies and policies can be developed at the national and regional levels in Bangladesh and China to support the professional development of rural English language teachers and improve the overall quality of English language education in these areas?

These questions cover various aspects of rural English language teaching, challenges, teacher perspectives, innovative approaches, and policy considerations, providing a comprehensive framework for your research.

2. Materials and Methods

This study follows a qualitative, nature-based approach. Schools and educators were chosen randomly for inclusion. Various research techniques were employed, including interviews and questionnaires. Data were collected through face-to-face interviews and written questionnaires, aiming to gain insights into the challenges faced by respondents in implementing CLT. The questionnaire sought recommendations for addressing the challenges associated with CLT implementation in rural secondary schools. The researcher conducted interviews and surveys with educators from the selected schools. To analyze and present the interview data, educators are referred to as G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, and so on. Given the qualitative nature of the study, two interview questions were posed to high school English teachers to generate data, which were later analyzed and discussed.

3. Results

English teachers reported experiencing both success and difficulties with the Eclectic Approach. Using qualitative methods, data were collected from ten rural English teachers teaching at the high school level through face-to-face interviews. For the purpose of data analysis and presentation, the educators were identified as G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, and so forth. G-1 firmly believes that the curriculum design is incompatible with the CLT approach, despite the numerous challenges associated with implementing CLT in rural schools. Additionally, he asserts that the current curriculum places disproportionate emphasis on assessing students' abilities. Writing tests carry more weight than speaking tests, which are given relatively little importance."

Table 1. The important themes presented along with the data of participants

Sr. #	Partcipants	Themes
1	G1	Depending on coaching center and house tutors
2	G2	Lack of supervision
3	G3	Lack of trained teachers
4	G4	Unusually large Class size
5	G5	Insufficient teaching aids
6	G6	Teachers are overburdened
7	G7	Weak background in English
8	G8	Poor socio-economic condition
9	G9	Corrupt administration
10	G10	Lack of follow up training

G -2 makes the observation that rural students enter the higher secondary level with inadequate English proficiency from secondary school. As a result, their abilities in English are not acceptable. G-2 likewise brings up that Training Sheets urge the instructors to give more stamps to the understudies than they really merit in their response scripts. In this way, at times the educators assess answer scripts by understudies' great penmanship and not by the language of the response. According to G -3, students don't pay attention to studying in the current curriculum; rather, they want to easily pass the exam without studying. G-1 also backs up the statements made by G-3.

G-3 also agrees that there are no effective teacher training programs. He suggests that the Eclectic Approach could be helpful for students in rural Bangladesh and China because it evaluates students' abilities in a friendly setting. G -4 agrees with G -1 that the syllabus focuses more on exams than on developing real-world communication skills. He adds that there is no oral testing or analyzing correspondence capacity in this predominant language instructing approach. He goes on to say that for classes and exams, only fixed question samples are set, leaving teachers little room to teach students in ways that go beyond these question patterns. According to G -5, English instruction in rural areas still consists solely of memorizing specific grammar rules and examples for exam success.
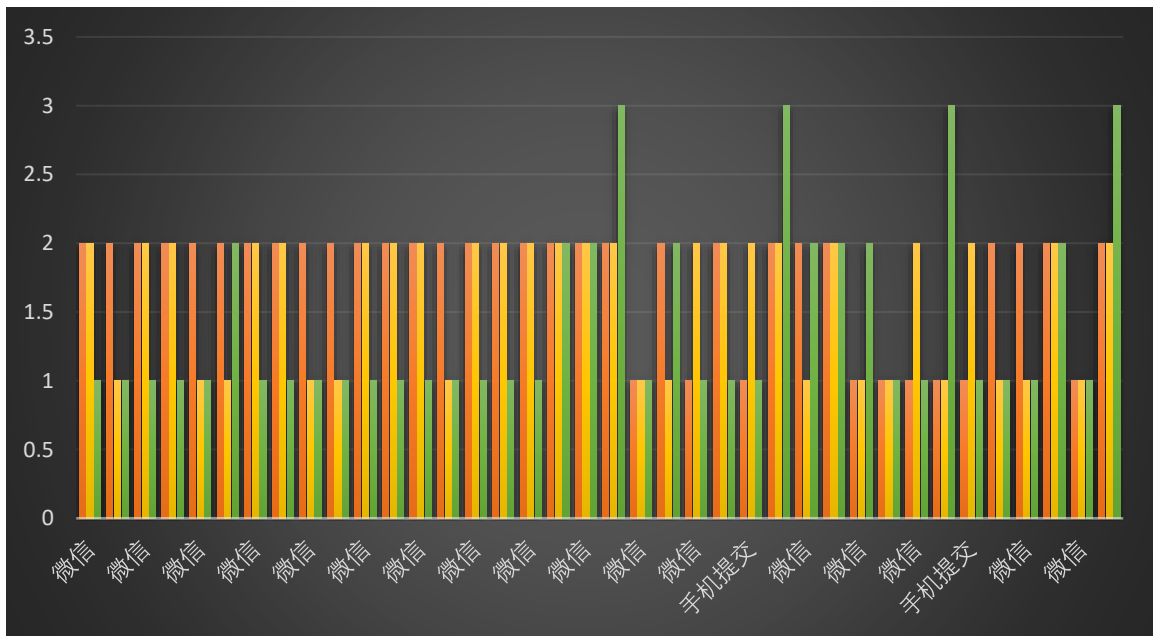

Figure 1. Statitical data of interview's responce of participants

For instance, he asserts that students learn the same article rules from grades 3 to 12 and use the same sentences to complete sentences. For instance, in the utilization of 'so that' rule, from the sixth grade they have been composing similar sentences in something very similar way utilizing no new expressions, or words. They are unable to

communicate in a real-world setting because they are unable to produce various sentences. Like G -1, he additionally says that understudies' talking ability is underneath standard as talking isn't engaged in the assessment like perusing and composing abilities.

G-6 raises a further concern. Rural colleges have a teacher-to-student ratio of: class sizes, absence of institutional backings are liable for the disappointment of the CLT technique in educating. He also asserts that no language method will be as effective as the eclectic method. Although the government supports multi-media classroom instruction, this digital project also fails in rural Bangladesh and China due to a lack of modern technological supports. He concurs with G -1 in stating that CLT cannot guarantee an improvement in communication skills due to the fact that marks are based on theoretical aspects (writing) rather than listening and speaking.
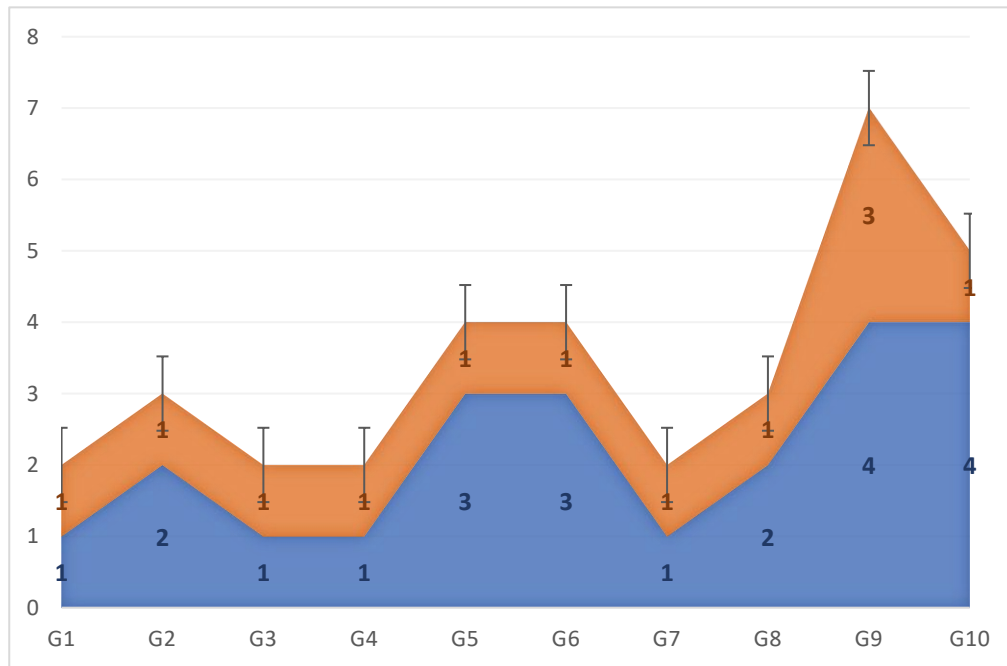

Figure 2. Responce of participants towards different techniques

G -7 is of the firm opinion that the writing abilities of rural high school students are extremely frustrating. He says that the main problem is that teachers aren't willing to try new ways to learn languages. Here, he agrees with G -5 and says that rural students' primary goal is to get a good grade point average without learning English well.

Table 2. Research paradigm and research methods of Chinese and Bangladeshi literature in rural teacher policies

Research Paradigm	Research Methodology	Frequency		Ratio	
Speculative research		7		1.59%	
Empirical research	Qualitative research	235	433	53.41%	98.41%
	Quantitative research	67		15.23%	
	Mixed research	130		29.55%	

As per G -8, the provincial understudies ought to be inspired to observe English movies, discusses, hear melodies, news and television shows in English so that interest in knowing and accomplishing information about English culture and custom is made in them. The educator likewise noticed that when an instructor's strength relies upon showing the understudies really with a decent strategy, he can reinforce it by applying another strategy as per the understudies' necessities.
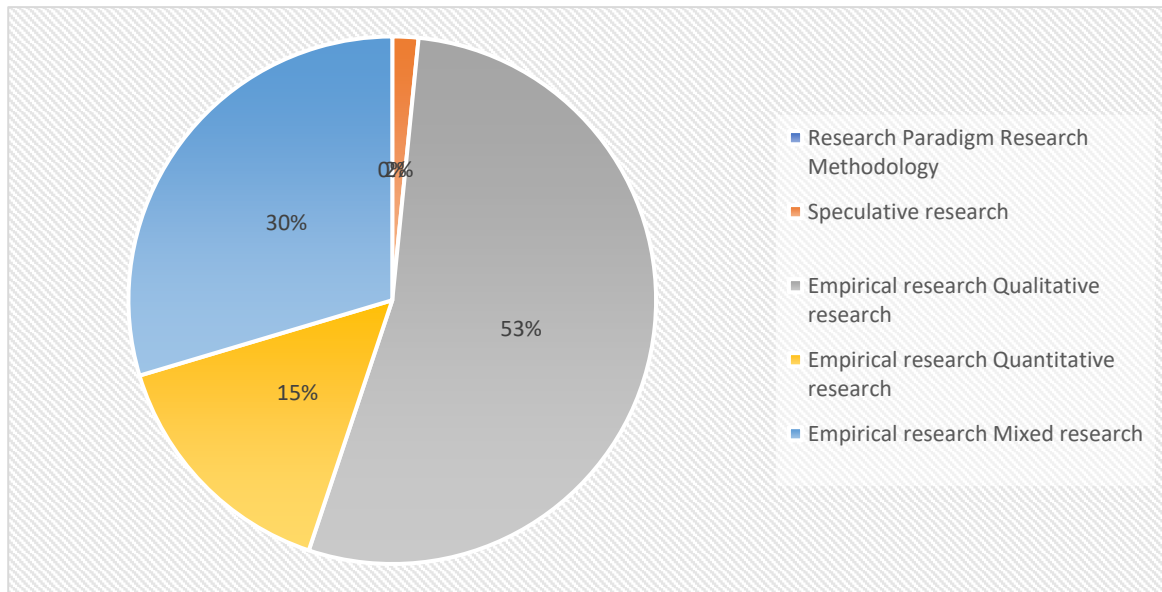
Figure 3. Pi Chart Showing description of research paradigam

In order to help our rural students become more proficient in English, the Eclectic Method is required in this instance. However, he additionally expresses that in the rustic regions, applying the Mixed Methodology is more difficult as the rustic understudies are less gifted than the metropolitan ones. G -9 raises the issue of the short amount of time allotted for class. Even a qualified educator cannot effectively interact with students. He also says that language teachers are too focused on finishing the syllabus and not enough on the students' ability to understand. In this context, he strongly supports T-6 and adds that the current class size must be reduced to a minimum so that teachers can properly interact with students during classroom activities within the allotted time.

3.1 Role of Teacher in CLT

The fundamental tenet of the CLT approach is that teachers should serve as facilitators in order to create learner-centered classrooms and encourage students to engage in substantive and productive communication in order to increase students' ability to provide understandable language input and encourage them to provide a lot of it. As a result, teachers are expected to develop more concepts and learning materials with clear objectives and consider the best learning materials for EFL learners. The teachers facilitate communication in the classroom," the roles of the teachers and students in a communicative classroom are different. In this setting, their primary concern is to create conditions that encourage students of communication to grow in confidence. In homeroom execution they ought to fill in as tutor by offering responses to understudy's inquiries and directing their exercises.

Table 3. Statistical representation of role of teacher

Data Collection Methods		Frequency		Ratio
Secondary data		274		63%
Field survey	Questionnaire	32		
	Interview	11	136	31%
	Mixed research methods	93		
Field survey and Secondary data		22		5%
Unclear data collection methods		1		0%

In order to work on more accuracy-based activities in the future, teachers need to be aware of the students' mistakes. In CLT class in EFL setting, educators ought to assume part as an organizer keeping participated in the exercises connected with open skill along with understudies. Most importantly, understudies ought to be the genuine communicators in language class. Even though they only have a limited understanding of the target language, they are accustomed to actively participating in the effort to understand others and make them understand them. At the

point when educator's job is less prevailing than students in a language class, students are seen as more genuine and energetic accomplishers of their learning.

Commenting on the qualities of understudy cooperation and the educator understudy cooperation, When working on linguistic accuracy, for instance, the instructor may present a portion of the lesson. He facilitates the activities at other times, but he does not always interact with the students. Once in a while he is a co-communicator, however more frequently he lays out circumstances that brief correspondence between and among the understudies. Students frequently interact with one another. They accomplish this in a variety of ways: small groups, whole groups, pairs, and triads.
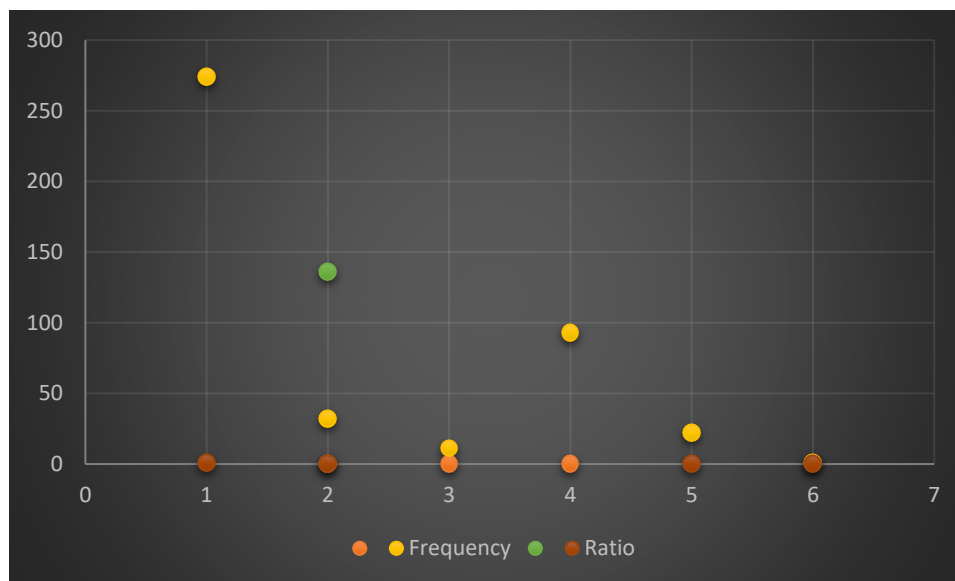

Figure 4. Graphical represtation of role of a teacher

3.2 Problems in Implementing CLT

Recently, there has been a lot of discussion about how CLT can be used to teach English in the Bangladeshi and China context. The English language teachers in CLT at secondary schools 97 in Bangladesh and China still find it difficult to apply the method and maximize learning proficiency, especially in the EFL classroom, despite the CLT method's efforts to include students in more substantive and interactive learning tasks that contribute both to apprehensible input and learners' language input. CLT implementation in the EFL context encounters numerous obstacles, including:

(1) There is a lack of teacher training;

(2) There is a local culture of learning and teaching;

(3) There is a language test;

(4) Teachers do not have access to the policy-making process.

It was identified that four major obstacles to Bangladesh and China's implementation of CLT as they pertain to the country. These obstacles include

(1) A lack of sufficient teacher training;

(2) Inconsistent elt practices;

(3) A lack of cooperation among various stakeholders;

(4) A lack of development projects' impact.

Incorporating an ELT policy into the national ELT curriculum is what they propose. The following essential disclosures ought to be included in the ELT policy:

(1) The country's public benefits (for example, how English can help Bangladesh and China's sociocultural benefits);

(2) The learners' sociolinguistic and psycholinguistic requirements;

(3) Systematical factors, for example the practicability of applying a language

(4) Showing rule all around the country. According to ELT experts, the methodology developed in BANA (Britain, Australia, and North America) countries ought to be contextualized in accordance with the requirements of local students and teachers;

(5) The issues of ongoing teacher training, follow-up training, and addressing teachers' needs and wants are crucial to the successful classroom implementation of ELT;

(6) Assessment of the result (for example what ought to be the technique to assess

(7) The students' result? What ought to be the scale for rating? And what ought to be the evaluation criteria for the program?

(8) Advancement, for example how are things turning out to be Moved along?

4. Discussion

In his research paper, Ananno (2021) identifies several critical issues, including improper language policy and testing, the influence of local culture on foreign language instruction, and inadequately trained teachers, among others. Therefore, in the context of Bangladesh and China, Ananno (2021) concurs that insufficient cooperation and coordination among various stakeholders, as well as inconsistency and incoherence in the language teaching process, hinder the effective application of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in classrooms. As a result, due to perceived deficiencies in CLT's methodology and its inability to meet the requirements of effective language instruction, the Diverse Strategy has emerged as a new approach in Bangladesh and China (Ananno et al., 2021).

This approach has sparked significant interest among researchers. According to Golam (2020), "the implementation of eclectic approaches or combinations of methods may be suitable in the context of Bangladesh and China" when discussing their applicability in the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Additionally, language teachers must redefine their roles, transitioning from being authoritarian classroom administrators to becoming designers and coordinators of English language instruction. Furthermore, students need to actively participate in the classroom rather than adopting passive roles. This outcome-based advancement requires a comprehensive and enhanced teaching approach (Golam & Kusakabe, 2020).

Karim (2018) emphasizes that for developing communication skills, a single teaching approach or method may not be effective or practical, given the diverse needs and demands of students. To address the specific requirements of students and foster their proficiency in communication skills, a flexible and diverse approach is necessary. This approach can thoroughly examine the subject matter and present various theories applicable to different situations (Karim & Qi, 2018).

Additionally, Lei (2021) justifies the adoption of the Diverse Technique over a specific strategy because each specific strategy is rooted in a limited theoretical framework and has a restricted scope for exploration. Lei (2021) further contends that in the classroom, the significance of an idea can be grasped through a combination of song, spoken language, acoustic effects, language, and visuals. According to Martin (2018), the goals of English courses in education reform are to enhance students' creativity, cultivate their interest in learning, and enable them to apply what they have learned in practice. However, teachers and students still face significant challenges influenced by China's examination-oriented evaluation system. Despite the necessity of implementing student-centered teaching methods in the current curriculum reform, particularly in English subject reform, Martin (2018) notes that Chinese students generally prefer traditional teaching methods involving lectures, presentations, and handouts.

This perspective is supported by Nicolaou (2016), whose study found that Chinese students tend to favor passive learning. While this observation aligns with the experiences of many Chinese students, it is essential to recognize that not all Chinese students prefer passive learning. Often, students are accustomed to passive learning due to China's high Power Distance Index (PDI) culture and Confucian cultural values. Consequently, shadow education has emerged as a conventional alternative to educational reform, as students typically engage in shadow education either voluntarily or reluctantly due to the pressure of high-stakes exams and the passive learning system. It is paradoxical to expect mainstream school teachers to assign more tasks to improve students' test scores while simultaneously promoting student interest and creativity through the Communicative Approach (Nicolaou et al., 2016).

Non-written assignments, such as role-plays and other oral tasks that encourage active learning, often go unnoticed because students prioritize completing their homework. According to Nur (2019), effective language teaching faces challenges when the curriculum shifts towards a more communicative approach. Consequently, mainstream teachers

often encourage students who require additional assistance to seek shadow education from them or other educators to meet the requirements of educational reform and address students' needs (Nur & Short, 2019).

Moreover, to provide students with adaptable learning strategies, education reform necessitates that teachers consider each student's learning style. However, in reality, educators and students have only 45 minutes of English class per day, and each English teacher is responsible for around 100 students in two classes. Therefore, private English tutoring or small-group instruction has become a preferred option for teachers, enabling them to tailor their teaching to individual student needs. Mainstream teachers who engage in shadow education not only gain a better reputation and treatment but also increase their earnings since their teaching performance is tied to their students' scores (Ortega & Tschirley, 2017).

The primary driving force behind mainstream teachers participating in shadow education is competition. Lu and Liu conducted interviews with a secondary school teacher who described the situation (Rasheed, 2017): "For instance, a grade has 10 classes with over 600 students. Each English teacher is ranked based on the monthly exam results, and students need to perform well in those exams. In June, we are all evaluated based on students' performance in their School Selection exam report." Mainstream teachers are pressured into participating in shadow education by school principals and colleagues. Additionally, the high student-teacher ratio and an overloaded curriculum leave teachers with insufficient time to assess students' learning processes and adjust their teaching methods to accommodate individual student needs (Rasheed, 2017).

Furthermore, questioning educators in the classroom may be perceived as a deliberate, hostile act challenging the teacher's authority and credibility. Chinese students often refrain from speaking in public or asking questions without careful consideration, leading to a lack of communicative competence. China's context presents numerous challenges to implementing the Communicative Approach, including large class sizes, inadequate teaching resources, and teachers' limited proficiency in English, sociolinguistics, and key skills (Yang et al., 2018).

5. Conclusion

In conclusion, English is often considered a second language (L2) or a foreign language in Bangladesh and China. However, the current state of English education at all levels falls short of expectations. English instruction at the higher secondary level is crucial for students to acquire knowledge and skills, yet it has not kept pace with the demands of the modern world. This study offers valuable recommendations for enhancing the current approach to teaching English to higher secondary school students. The implementation of the Eclectic Approach at this level in rural Bangladesh and China could significantly benefit from this research. To meet students' needs, the current method of teaching English at the higher secondary level requires significant improvement and reform. ELT practitioners will find guidelines for enhancing their teaching methods in this research. The Eclectic Method is expected to greatly benefit students in their English language instruction. Additionally, stakeholders, educators, and policymakers in rural Bangladesh and China may benefit from this study's findings in formulating a national policy for English instruction.

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