

# **THT Journal:**

## **The Journal of Teachers**

### **Helping Teachers**

Volume 7, 2019



Patrick Dougherty, Editor



**THT Journal: The Journal of Teachers Helping  
Teachers**

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*Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) is dedicated to the aid  
and assistance of fellow educators in the Asia Pacific  
region.*

The THT Journal is a publication of the Teachers Helping Teachers (THT) Special Interest Group of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). It is devoted to exploring and promoting best practices in language education. All submissions are peer reviewed.

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## **Dedication**



The *THT Journal* is dedicated to the memory of William “Bill” Balsamo (1943 – 2008) the founder of Teachers Helping Teachers.

“We are more than an organization, we are an idea, a concept.” – Bill Balsamo

## **Foreword**

Steve Cornwell

Coordinator, Teachers Helping Teachers

I am very pleased to write the foreword to this issue of the Teachers Helping Teachers Journal, a very important aspect of Teachers Helping Teachers. As a peer-reviewed journal it gives our members (and others) an opportunity to share research, lesson plans, activity ideas, etc. to our community.

As many readers know, Teachers Helping Teachers is a group whose purpose is “to aid and assist fellow educators and students in and around Asia.” We do this by providing practical teacher-training workshops of student and teacher-friendly approaches to language education that are informed by current research in the field (some of which is published here).

Teachers Helping Teachers is a Special Interest Group of the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT). It was officially recognized by JALT in 2008 but has been active since 2004. It was the brainchild of the late Bill Balsamo, who at the time was president of Himeji JALT. Bill never visited a country he didn’t like. And for Bill, “like” meant thinking about “how can we collaborate together to help teachers?”

Teachers Helping Teachers does just that. We bring teachers together to share and to learn. All too often teachers, with their busy schedules and myriad of demands on their time, do not have time to meet other like-minded people much less engage with them. At a THT workshop, teachers from all walks of life and contexts meet to learn, to share, and just to be with others who value the importance of working with learners, and of learning themselves. It is a magical

experience that stays with participants (both presenters and attendees) for a long, long time. The first THT trip was to Bangladesh in 2005 and since then THT trips have been made to: Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Myanmar, Nepal, the Philippines, and Vietnam.

A typical THT trip involves volunteers traveling to the country and making two or three presentations usually on teaching techniques that appropriate for the audiences, which range from elementary teachers to university teachers with various levels of training and expertise. The one thing they all have in common is a desire to learn more about teaching. Traditionally, our teacher-training conferences, seminars, and workshops exhibit practical, student and teacher-friendly approaches to language education that are informed by current research in the field. Occasionally there are opportunities to observe classes and even teach a class or two. Volunteers normally pay for their travel and lodging to the countries.

This is the last foreword I will write as coordinator. A new Coordinator, Catriona Takeuchi, was elected at the THT Annual General Meeting at the JALT conference in November. Along with other officers and country coordinators, she will shepherd the organization for the next year. I will still be involved but want to take this opportunity to thank THT for allowing me to serve as coordinator for the last two years.



## **Preface**

Patrick Dougherty  
Editor, the *THT Journal*

It is with pleasure that I welcome our community to this, the 7<sup>th</sup> volume of the *THT Journal*. The *THT Journal* was begun as a proceedings publication to feature authors who had presented their research and teaching ideas at THT programs in Bangladesh, Laos, Vietnam, the Philippines, Kyrgyzstan, and, later, Nepal. Subsequently, the *THT Journal* expanded its scope and developed into an energetic experiment in collaboration and explication where researchers and teachers from the countries, institutions, organizations, and communities that help sponsor THT programs might also find a venue for their research, reports, explorations, and teaching strategies. Let me introduce you to the authors of the articles in this volume and issue:

**Imogen Custance** is a teacher at Kwansei Gakuin University in the Department of Science and Technology. She holds an M.S. Ed. in TESOL from Temple University Japan and has been teaching in Japan for nearly eleven years. She has experience at both the secondary and tertiary level, and her research interests lie in learner self-awareness.

**Jeffrey Morrow** is an Associate Professor at the Prefectural University of Kumamoto in Kumamoto, Japan, where he researches the role of English communication ability in employment and income in developing country tourism, English ability in ecotourism, ecotourism development in Aso, Japan, and motivation in non-English majors in the Japanese University.

**Adiba Murtaza** teaches ELT and English Language courses at Southeast University, Bangladesh. She obtained her MA

in Linguistics from North South University. She has already published four articles in peer-reviewed journals and presented papers in conferences at home and abroad. Her research interests include teaching methodology, materials development and use of technology in ELT. She is the Joint Secretary of BELTA and member of IATEFL and TESOL. Currently she is doing her doctoral study at Bangladesh University of Professionals.

**Patrick McCoy** is originally from Seattle, Washington in the US. He has a BA degree in English Literature from the University of Washington and a MA in Secondary Education from Western Washington University. He has been teaching at the university level in Japan for 17 years. Currently he is teaching at Tokyo Woman's Christian University in Tokyo where he teaches literature, writing, linguistics, and communication courses. His research interests include methodology, authentic materials, and Japanese cinema.

**Moriam Quadir** is currently Associate Professor in the Department of English at East West University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. She completed her Doctorate Degree in Applied Linguistics from Hiroshima University, Japan. Her research interests include EFL learner individual differences, group-dynamics, and innovative teaching approaches.

**Jason Byrne** is an Associate Professor at INIAD, Toyo University, Tokyo, Japan. Jason has previously taught in Italy, Japan, Korea, Thailand and the United Kingdom. Byrne's research area is broadly computer assisted language learning (CALL) and more specifically mobile assisted language learning (MALL). Jason has co-authored multiple 1 million download English self-study apps and was the co-founder and lead developer of Eltsoft LLC. Recently, he has become interested in the future EFL potential of the Internet of Things (IoT) and blockchain technologies. In the coming

years, Jason anticipates rolling out new apps that meet the needs of teachers and students with regards to English four skills development and language testing.

**Marian Wang** is Associate Professor at the Institute for Language and Culture at Konan University in Japan. She has taught at Kobe University, Kwansei Gakuin University, and the International Trade Institute (Taiwan). She has experience working for international organizations such as Catholic Relief Services, Oxfam America, Partners for Democratic Change, the World Trade Organization, and UNICEF. She holds an Ed.D. from the University of Liverpool, an M.A. in TESOL from the Monterey Institute of International Studies, an M.A. in Law and Diplomacy from the Fletcher School at Tufts University, and a Certificate in International Studies in Economics and Politics from the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva, Switzerland. Her research focuses on fostering global citizens and World Englishes.

**Shahnaz Akhter** is a Lecturer in the Department of English at Presidency University in Bangladesh. She obtained her MA in Applied Linguistics and ELT from the Department of English, University of Dhaka. She has ten years of teaching experience at tertiary level including two years of teaching experience at King Khalid University, Saudi Arabia. She is currently teaching ELT courses in the Undergraduate and Master's Programs at Presidency University. She has attended a number of national and international conferences and also presented papers at two international conferences. Her areas of interest include Teaching Methodology, and Materials Development, and Individual Learner Differences in SLA.

## **Sentence Tennis: Pushing Complexity in Production**

Imogen Custance  
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### **Abstract**

Teaching is a nuanced art that requires instructors to adapt to various situations and the individual needs of their students. Practical and easily adaptable activities that can be used in any classroom are fundamental tools in an instructor's arsenal. It is not only important that these activities are based on theory and research but also that at least some of them are fun and engaging to help maintain motivation and create enthusiasm for learning. Further, activities that do not require special materials or equipment are important to develop and share as they can be used in almost any teaching situation. *Sentence Tennis* is one such activity. In this language-focused game, learners compete to make the most complex sentence they can whilst maintaining accuracy. In this article, I describe the theoretical and pedagogical basis of this activity and provide the basic outline of how to play the game. It was originally presented as part of the BELTA-THT Developing Dynamism in the Language Classroom conference in 2018.

### **Introduction**

Teachers everywhere plan lessons that they hope will provide their students with the best possible learning conditions. However, plans are apt to go awry and building flexibility into lessons is essential to cope with this, for example when explanations take longer than expected or activities are over in half the time allotted for them. Supplementary class activities that can be implemented with little preparation or minimal materials are excellent ways to

introduce this kind of flexibility into lesson plans. However, though an activity might be included in a class on an ad-hoc basis, it should still be based on research and relevant theories of learning.

*Sentence Tennis* is a highly adaptable activity that can be used with learners of various levels and requires very little preparation on the part of the instructor. The time spent playing is easy to adjust and the competitive element of the activity helps to make a very language-focused activity (developing complexity) seem fun. It can also be used to review language, identify areas of weakness, and promote deeper consideration of how meaning is constructed in the target language.

### **Literature Review**

An important consideration in any classroom, irrespective of access to materials and technology, is how to provide the best conditions under which learning can take place. Vygotsky (1978) suggested that learning occurs within the so-called zone of proximal development (ZPD). This is the term used to describe the metaphorical realm that encompasses what a learner is currently able to achieve independently, and what can be achieved with the assistance of a more capable other, whether an instructor or peer. Through completion of a task or activity within the ZPD, an individual can reduce the distance between what they can do on their own and what they can only achieve with help. Over time, the distance is reduced until something is considered learned. The challenge for instructors is to find and incorporate activities that can target all learners' individual ZPDs into their teaching.

For language learning, it has been proposed that noticing plays a fundamental role in acquisition (Schmidt, 1990). For an individual to be able to learn something, they must notice

it within the language they are exposed to. Equally, learners can notice that they are unable to communicate an idea in the target language, or recognize a difference between their output and accurate language use. This is the noticing/triggering function of output described by Swain (2005). Both these situations can result in interlanguage development as learners' understanding of language use is modified, or they seek to add information to overcome the gap in their productive ability.

It has further been suggested that production results in deeper processing of language than comprehension as it requires a greater focus on syntax (Swain, 1985). Pushing learners to produce language that is more complex is therefore an important way to increase learning opportunities. When a learner is pushed to use more complex language, it encourages them to experiment with language that they are close to being able to use. Without this push to use more complex language, a learner's interlanguage is also unlikely to develop as they continue to use what it already known. Such a push can be accomplished by providing feedback about the accuracy of production. Feedback is a very clear way in which an instructor or peer can help the learner to develop their interlanguage towards target-like proficiency. In this way language that is within a learner's ZPD can be targeted and opportunities for learning increase.

How learners' fluency can be developed is also an important consideration for instructors. Learners might have extensive declarative knowledge, but struggle to use this knowledge fluently. Skill acquisition theory (DeKeyser, 2015) suggests that language must be practiced using tasks and activities that facilitate review in order to develop procedural knowledge. It also suggests that for learners to improve their productive language abilities, they need to engage in output practice; input practice is not sufficient. Giving learners

opportunities to use what they have learned in a productive setting is therefore a necessary part of language education. When these activities are conducted under time constraints, there is an additional benefit to fluency as learners are pushed to process language faster.

Language learning involves developing the ability to use increasingly complex language accurately and fluently. Pushing learners to use more complex language is central to developing an individual's linguistic knowledge; providing feedback on the accuracy of production helps make this knowledge more target-like. Using the target language fluently is something that most learners want to achieve. However, finding a balance between these different aspects of language acquisition is not always easy. Indeed, Skehan (2009) suggested that there is a trade-off between complexity, accuracy and fluency. The trade-off hypothesis predicts that when a learner chooses to focus on a particular factor, the others may suffer. For example, a learner might use language fluently and with high accuracy, but the language produced will be less complex.

Activities that push learners to use language at the limit of their capabilities but still within their ZPDs are of key importance in the classroom. However, this can be a challenge given the differences in strengths and weaknesses of an individual group of students. One way in which this can be overcome is if an activity can target different aspects of language development concurrently, or move organically between them depending on the individual. One activity that works in this way is Sentence Tennis.

### **The Activity**

The basic premise of Sentence Tennis is very simple. Students take a sentence and try to change it in some way whilst maintaining accuracy. This can be done in relatively

simple ways, for example by changing tense or adding an adjective, or in a more complex manner, for example by adding a subordinate clause. A student is successful if the modified sentence they produce is error-free. When the sentence is successfully modified, another student tries to do the same thing to the new, longer sentence. In this way, a longer and/or more complex sentence is built amongst the students playing the game. Figure 1 shows an example of how a sentence might develop over the course of a point. Placing time-limits on how long students have to create the new sentence pushes them to produce language faster while making the activity more competitive.

The growing sentence can be thought of as a rally that gets longer each time a student completes a successful shot, that is, they are able to modify the sentence without making a mistake. If a student does make a mistake, it equates to a tennis ball being hit out of the court or into the net; if a student is unable to think of a way to modify the sentence, it is the equivalent of missing the ball. The tennis metaphor can be extended by using tennis scoring to determine who is winning the game, which also helps to give a more distinct end-point to the activity. If students create the sentence starters, it is even possible to get an “ace.” By explicitly connecting the activity to tennis, the game-like nature of the activity is highlighted, and can help encourage greater engagement in what is at its core a very explicitly language-rather than meaning-focused task.

Sentence Tennis actively requires students to try and use language in increasingly complex ways if they are to win. They are pushed to produce language that is at the limits of what they know, forcing them to start experimenting with new ideas. Yet the focus on accuracy also necessitates a careful consideration of syntax and word usage. Meanwhile, the limited time that students have to produce a new sentence



encourages learners to produce language faster, which should benefit fluency.

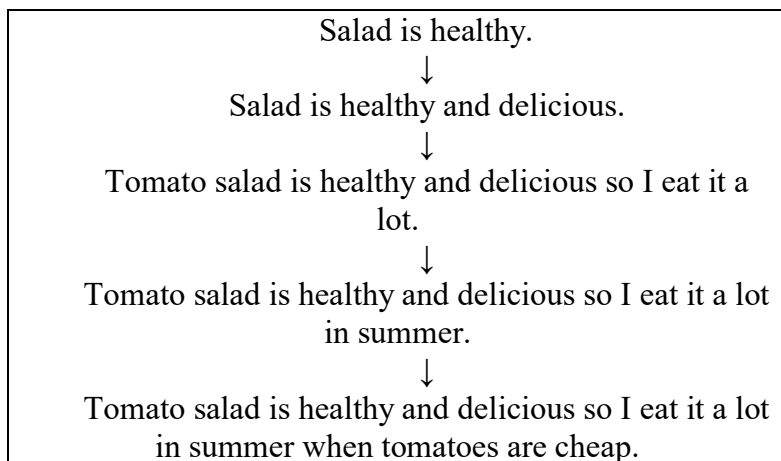


Figure 1. Example sentence development sequence.

### *Whole class*

When conducted as a whole class activity, the instructor divides the class into two teams who compete with each other. Students form two lines, with those at the front charged with modifying the sentence. After deciding which team will try first, a simple sentence is presented which the first student tries to change. Where possible, presenting the sentence using a projector so that it is easy for all students to see it could be advisable. Alternatively, the initial sentence could be written on a board, or only given verbally. The first student modifies the sentence, and if successful, goes to the back of their team's line. If using a projector or writing on a board, the new sentence can be written down and again, shown to the students. The first student in the other team tries to modify the new sentence, and if successful, goes to the back of their team, and the sentence is "returned" to the first team. This process is continued until a mistake is made or a student cannot think of a way to change the sentence. When

this happens, a point is awarded to the appropriate team, and a new sentence starter is given.

There are many advantages to doing the activity as a whole class. Firstly, both instructor and students can get an overview of the general language level of the class. The extent to which recently studied vocabulary or grammatical forms can be utilized can be observed, as can any patterns of mistakes that might need to be addressed or reviewed in later classes or individually. It also gives students the opportunity to experiment with language and receive immediate feedback. When mistakes are made, the instructor can ask other students if they can identify what the mistake was. They can also be asked to correct the sentence. This again gives the instructor an insight into students' metalinguistic awareness, while also encouraging the students to recognize they can correct each other's language. Even students who are not directly producing a sentence receive feedback about the linguistic accuracy of the sentence produced. Throughout the activity every student in the classroom is able to make cognitive comparisons that can facilitate language learning.

The ability of the instructor to adjust the time available for students to modify a sentence is also useful in the whole-class activity. As sentences increase in length, the time taken just to say a given sentence, let alone think of how to modify it, is likely to need adjusting. It is easier for the instructor to make these adjustments if they are aware of how long the sentence is.

### *Small group*

An alternative to the whole-class activity is to conduct the activity in groups. Students work in groups of three, with two students acting as players, and one as the umpire for the game. The umpire listens to the sentences that the players create and writes them down. They then determine if they

think the sentence is correct. The opposing student can question the umpire if they think a mistake has been made that has not been noticed. If agreement cannot be reached, the instructor can be asked to make a final decision about the accuracy of a sentence. The umpire can also check that sentences are produced within any given time-limits. The students continue the activity until a game is won, at which point they switch roles.

The small group version of the activity places a great deal of pressure on the student in the umpire role. They have to listen carefully to the language their peers produce in order to dictate it accurately. In addition, they have to then think carefully about whether the sentence is correct. It is possible that lower level students would struggle in this position. However, the small group version gives individual students more opportunities to produce and think about a wider variety of language than would be the case in the whole-class version. It also gives students more autonomy; they work together, but can call on the instructor if they remain unsure of something. A post-task activity in which the most interesting or impressive sentence from each game is shared with the class could be used to encourage students to push output further.

One issue with the small group version of the activity is determining the extent to which learners are able to accurately identify mistakes in each other's production. While the instructor can be called upon if students are unsure of something, if no-one notices a mistake has been made, this will not happen. It is also possible that a student will say an accurate sentence, but that this will be dictated incorrectly. In this situation, an instructor checking the sentence record might suggest that a player has lost a point when the original utterance was, in fact, correct.

### *Hybrid*

Combining aspects of the small group and whole class versions of the activity is a way to balance the advantages of individuals producing more language and receiving feedback. If students are unsure about the accuracy of a sentence, rather than asking the instructor about it, the whole class could be asked. This involves briefly stopping the ongoing games, and focusing the whole class' attention on the sentence in question. The students vote on whether they believe the sentence is accurate. As with the whole class activity, if a sentence is incorrect, they can be asked to explain why and/or to correct the sentence, or the instructor could provide this information.

### **Conclusion**

Sentence Tennis is a relatively simple way in which increasing complexity in language production can be made fun. The repetition of and addition to sentences as the game continues should encourage development in fluency and complexity, while a focus on accuracy is also maintained. Time pressure also pushes learners to produce more complex language under conditions that encourage fluency development. Further, the game requires little preparation on the part of an instructor and naturally adjusts to students' language abilities. It gives students an opportunity to play with and explore language in an engaging manner, and instructors a chance to gauge their students' current linguistic level. It is hoped practitioners in a variety of instructional situations will be able to adapt and utilize the basic structure of the activity to enhance their lessons.

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## **Elevating Student Motivation of Non-English Majors in the Japanese University**

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### **Abstract**

Student motivation is important in any subject classroom. However, motivation is perhaps more important in language classes, because unlike math or science subjects, students of language have to participate actively in written, spoken, shared, presentation, and discussion activities in order to be appropriately assessed by the teacher. Low proficiency in these areas creates lower confidence and therefore active participation becomes an extra burden, which in turn leads to low motivation, especially in non-English majors. This paper examines a study based on the administration of useful, practical techniques that can be implemented by the English teacher to increase confidence in the classroom, thereby leading to higher motivation in students of departments other than English.

### **Introduction**

Motivation is the underlying element present in all humans from which determinant action takes place. In fact, without it, even people with exceptional talents have problems following through on goals over the long term. Many facets have been associated with motivation and these have usually been located in the *social* realm of behavior by the general psychologist in the past. More recently, motivational psychologists focus on motivation on the individual level, i.e., those aspects like instinct, drive, arousal, need, the need for achievement, and other cognitive relational aspects such as success, failure, self-esteem, and ability (Weiner, 1992).

Cognitive researchers, however, feel that motivation has more to do with thoughts that eventually turn to beliefs, rather than instinct. However, in order for belief to become action, interest must be present as well; if it is not, then motivation has a tendency to lack or it is hard-pressed to occur in the first place. This problem may show up not only in the English-based L2 classroom, but also specifically in the non-English L2 classroom, where interest is sometimes not fully engaged. Motivation may take shape in two facets: *intrinsic*, which is motivation that occurs from the impetus to better oneself and therefore starts from within, and *extrinsic*, or motivation that occurs from external factors such as obtaining a better job or higher salary. Consequently, Gardner (1985) stated that *instrumental* and *integrative* facets also play a major role in motivation, where instrumental are those facets that entail studying or learning for a purpose, and integrative are those facets that entail studying to become part of a community or society.

Weiner has depicted three areas of motivational concepts which may have further implications in the L2 classroom: *attribution theory*, where failed past attempts negatively affect future attempts and goals setting; *learned helplessness*, which encompasses a resigned and pessimistic feeling; and *self-efficacy*, referring to the individual to judge him or herself on past accomplishments which may or may not develop into self-confidence and motivation in the future. Other research has found that self-confidence (first introduced by Clement, 1980 and later reinforced by Dornyei, 1994), which is the believe in the process that allows students to accomplish tasks competently, has strong implications for the L2 non-English classroom because self-confidence entails both language anxiety and the self-evaluation of proficiency in the second language. In fact, all students, but particularly students in the L2 classroom, have long been known to have motivational difficulties, perhaps

because they probably lack self-confidence and also may lack self-determination, or the intrinsic drive within oneself to learn an L2 adequately (Deci & Ryan, in Dornyei, 1994). Students in the L2 classroom, whether they are English majors or not, are usually evaluated by outward spoken, shared, presented, or discussed activities that require active and outward projection, rather than book, experimental, computer-based, or paper-work related skills, such as those found in math, science, or computer-based curricula, and this, obviously, has drawbacks for those students who must study English as an L2 regardless of their actual interest in it.

Jin (2014) describes a study in 2012 that focused on 300 freshmen non-English majors' motivations to study English in eight classes in a Chinese university. The students were studying EFL for around ten years before being tested, and the researchers examined integrative and instrumental motivation. Results found that the majority of students were extrinsically motivated to study English, found in Likert answers of strongly agree in the items: "to travel and get more information about the world," or "to get a satisfying job." This illustrates that, at least in China, students have a strong desire to learn English to strive outwardly and basically move ahead with their lives.

Chairat (2015) investigated all first year undergraduate students with public health majors in the Faculty of Health and Sports Science at a Thai university. The total sample was 92 total persons including 8 males and 84 females from two sections. The questionnaire was from Gardner's attitude and motivation test battery AMTB (1985). The study contained Likert style ratings on five point scales: in each of four areas: 1) Interest in learning a foreign language, 2) desire to learn a foreign language, 3) attitudes toward learning English, and 4) motivation towards learning English as a foreign



language. Results will show only the top mean score in the Likert questions for each area. *Interest in learning a foreign language*: I want to read the literature foreign language in the original language. Mean = 4.40, I often wish I could read newspapers and magazines in English. Mean = 4.28. *Desire to learn a foreign language*: I want to learn English so that it will become natural to me. Mean = 4.54. I would like to learn as much English as possible. Mean = 4.50. *Attitudes toward learning English*: English is an important part of the school program. Mean = 4.31. I plan to learn as much English as possible. Mean = 4.17. *Motivation towards learning a foreign language*: Studying English is important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting good jobs. Mean = 4.48. Studying English can be important for me because I'll be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups. Mean = 4.21. These results show that even students who are non-English majors have interest in learning, a desire to learn, a positive attitude towards learning, and motivation to learn a foreign language for their own participation in the world as well as for future employment.

Taguchi et al. (in Dornyei, 2009) compared motivation in Japan, China, and Iran, and report that in Japan, English proficiency is not tied to obtaining a job as strongly as it is in China or Iran. For this reason, English proficiency is less valuable to learners in Japan than in China or other countries, where English is paramount to receiving better jobs and higher salaries. The fact that this is so also shows that learners of English in Japan perhaps do not feel the strong need to elevate their English proficiency, especially among non-English majors.

The author currently teaches in an environmental science, non-English language-based department in a midsize public university in Western Japan, and has found the above

problems characterized by Weiner in attribution, learned helplessness, and self-efficacy to be evident in the non-English L2 classroom in this university. In addition, the author has found that non-English major students value English proficiency less strongly than their English-major counterparts may. All students of the author's university have opportunities to take a variety of elective English classes such as presentation English, English for global business, and integrated skills, among others. Students in the science department are required to take two years of English classes that focus on elevating basic-level English communicative competence. However, the majority of required major-specific coursework for students in the science department range from physics, to biology, to waste management to environmental economics and the like, which are very different from English communication.

The author has found that students non-English majors can lose motivation in even the most basic of tasks when self-confidence in the language itself is challenged, due to the fact that these students are less familiar with the necessities of language on a deep basis, and as a result, they shut down, refrain from acting and taking part in class, and stop doing homework. This, of course, leads to lower motivation overall, which in turn leads to even lower confidence resulting in even poorer performance and lower scores. To focus on the reason for this, and to discover methods to improve and elevate L2 non-English major students' motivation, the author created several motivational techniques aimed at emphasizing positivity in the classroom (and detracting from negativity), thereby alleviating feelings of lower confidence. After administering these techniques for one full year of classroom activity, the author conducted a survey study to gather students' opinions of the motivational techniques provided by the author. Section two reviews the instruments and method used in the study.

Section three explains the results, and section four offers a discussion of results. Section five concludes.

### **Instruments and Method**

In order to more fully investigate the question of motivation in the non-English L2 classroom, the author created a study on students' opinions of useful motivational techniques for use in primarily all English classes in the first year at the university. The study comprised a total of 111 non-English majors. Freshmen must take English for two years in order to graduate; the study also included a class of junior students studying Science English. Because the study focused on motivation and had no subject-specific goals, students from three divisions in the science department took part as participants. The three divisions from which students took part were: environmental resources, food and health science, and green architecture.

#### *Instruments*

This study utilized two instruments: 1) Simple motivational techniques created by the author, and 2) a questionnaire containing Likert style questions in a five-point format: Strongly agree, agree, neither agree nor disagree, disagree, strongly disagree. The motivational techniques created by the author are shown in Table 1, containing the motivational item, the attribute that the item is intended to provide, and the rationale for choosing the particular item to include in a viable technique.

Table 1. Motivational Techniques with Attributes

<b>Item</b>	<b>Attribute</b>	<b>Rationale</b>
<b>Volunteer list</b>	Students volunteer freely to answer questions and sign a volunteer	To help students feel positive about volunteering. Even if their

	list from which they will receive extra points at the semester end.	answers are wrong, they will not feel so.
<b>Mistake board</b>	Mistakes found are written on the board by the teacher and discussed openly not mentioning any student by name	To help students realize that everyone makes similar mistakes and they are not singled out.
<b>Checking answers with no names</b>	Students can volunteer to write names in a random fashion so answers are not connected with names.	Students can freely write answers and are told that even if they are wrong, they still receive points.
<b>Thinking time during creative activities</b>	Students can tap into creativity which helps them in all aspects, and are given time to complete creative tasks such as drawing, designing.	The students are given ample to time to think which may include drawing, designing, and writing time with the aim of future presentations.
<b>Positive classroom atmosphere</b>	Students need to feel that they are part of a whole and that their motivation can be part of a whole	Students who are pressured raise their affective filters and this causes them to share less and tune out more.

*Source: Created by author, 2018.*

The study also contained a questionnaire with a five-point Likert scale on which to gather participants' responses. Both the techniques and the follow-up questions were arrived at after asking students informally face to face what their needs were as per confidence and motivation. Some questions included such things as: what they didn't like about traditional language classrooms, what they thought might work better for them, and what problems they have had in the past.

The scale was: 5) strongly agree, 4) agree, 3) neither agree nor disagree, 2) disagree, and 1) strongly disagree, with six questions relating to the motivational techniques. The questions follow. 1) I felt that I could volunteer freely and wasn't reprimanded while using these techniques; 2) I felt that even if I made mistakes, they weren't problematic because I wasn't singled out; 3) I felt like I could learn from my mistakes because my mistakes weren't aimed directly at me; 4) I felt that my confidence increased while using these techniques because I had more freedom; 5) I felt that my motivation increased while using these techniques because I could use English; and 6) I felt that other teachers should use similar techniques or focus on students more.

### *Method*

The techniques were used every day in all of the author's English classes during the school year, 2018. The classes were all comprised of first, second, and third year undergraduate students at a mid-size public university in western Japan. The classes ranged from Basic English for freshmen, Basic English for sophomores, and Science English for juniors. The author used the techniques as much as possible when the situation called for it; for example, when it was necessary to obtain volunteers, the author used the volunteer list; when the students made mistakes, the

author used the common mistake board to display errors, when the material required checking the teacher employed a random volunteer approach, and when the students needed extra thinking time, the teacher provided that. In addition, the author always approached the students in a one to one fashion. After one year of using these techniques, the author administered the Likert-style questionnaire in each of the classes using the motivational techniques.

## Results

Results will be displayed by total number of participants responding on each question as found in Table 2. The top contains the six questions regarding the students' outcome responses after receiving the techniques for one year. The results in the table are given by total number of respondents answering each item. Percentages of respondents' answers to items are offered in the explanation following the table.

**Table 2. Results of Questionnaire on Motivational Techniques (in numbers)**

<b>Item</b>	1. I could volunteer freely	2. My mistakes weren't a problem	3. I could learn from any mistake	4. My confidence increased	5. My motivation increased	6. Others should use similar techniques
<b>Likert Scale</b>						
<b>Strongly agree</b>	37	33	36	22	35	29
<b>Agree</b>	44	35	56	56	48	48
<b>Neither agree nor disagree</b>	28	33	17	32	24	24
<b>Disagree</b>	1	6	1	1	2	10
<b>Strongly disagree</b>	3	4	1	0	2	0
<b>Total</b>	111	111	111	111	111	111

*Source: Compiled from survey data, 2019.*

Upon examining Table 1, it is evident that 33% of total respondents strongly agreed when asked if they felt they could volunteer freely, while 40% agreed, 23% neither agreed nor disagreed, 1% disagreed, and 3% strongly disagreed. As for feeling that their mistakes were not problematic, 30% strongly agreed, 31% agreed, 30% neither agreed nor disagreed, 5% disagreed, and 1% strongly disagreed. When asked if they felt that they could learn from their mistakes, 32% strongly agreed, 51% agreed, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed, 1% disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed. As for whether or not their confidence increased using these techniques, 20% strongly agreed, 51% agreed, 28% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 1% disagreed; where 31% strongly agreed that their motivation increased using these techniques, 43% agreed, 22% neither agreed nor disagree, 2% disagreed, and 2% strongly disagreed. The final question asked if other teachers should employ similar techniques and get to know the students individually on a more personal level, and 26% strongly agreed that they should, 43% agreed, 22% neither agreed nor disagreed, and 9% disagreed.

## **Discussion**

The paper will now discuss the results. The results showed that the majority of students agreed with the Likert questions; however, some students neither agreed nor disagreed and some even disagreed. This was surprising due to the fact that the students were asked beforehand what certain attributes they needed and what they themselves thought might help their motivation, so the questions were geared directly towards those. However, this did not always make for receiving the intended results. The author realized, however, that not all students can be reached, and what works for several students may not work for every student. In the question, “my mistakes weren’t problematic,” around one third (30%) of respondents stated, “Neither agreed nor

disagreed.” This was troublesome as the techniques were crafted to steer the students away from such feelings, although many thought their mistake were indeed problematic. Of course, mistakes are a problem, and if not corrected can be fossilized, leading to more problems in the future.

However, the students were told at all times to learn from their mistakes, and that it’s acceptable to make mistakes in learning, but one must learn from the mistake in order to grow. Results show that this point may not have been communicated concretely enough on the teacher’s part. However, for the same question, 30% responded that they strongly agree with this item. One interesting to be noticed is that the answers varied across the board from the various majors in the department, and it can be seen that some similar answers were given by different students, but this shows that the techniques work equally well over class/subject major boundaries.

An encouraging result was found in the question, “I could learn from my mistakes,” where 56 people (51%) agreed. In the same question, 36 (32%) strongly agreed; both results show that students are interested in learning from previous mistakes. As for “my confidence increased,” 51% agreed with this statement, while 43% (48 respondents) agreed that their motivation increased using these techniques, and this displays that with techniques that teach students not to feel they are wrong, that they can learn from their mistakes, and that their mistakes weren’t problematic can only raise not only confidence, but also motivation. As for the final item finding if other teachers should employ similar techniques, 48 respondents (43%) agreed that they should, where 26% strongly agreed. Interestingly, 9% or 10 responded disagreed. This could be perhaps because teachers themselves have varying techniques geared towards



elevating motivation and that these techniques may not work for every teacher.

### **Conclusion**

This study has shown that students definitely respond to activities that are aimed at helping them become ingrained into the fabric of the classroom, where they can strive to overcome limitations and expand boundaries in order to gain confidence. Even though students may have wrong answers at times, have strange usage, or make grammatical mistakes, the fact that they can learn through sharing anonymously can help them continue to share confidently, and the more they do so, the more they will act even when the chance of erring is present. Continued trying leads to higher confidence, which ultimately leads to heightened motivation. Although some of the Likert responses were not as the author intended, results still showed that students felt that they weren't singled out as being wrong and they gained both confidence and motivation. The author further assumes that students will respond to other techniques that are focused on helping they themselves achieve higher levels of motivation, which can help with every aspect of students' lives long into the future.

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## **Part-time Job Experience of Three Students from a Bangladeshi Private University: A Case Study**

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### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the issue of tertiary level students' part-time employment and its impact on English learning and personal development. Many students come for higher study from villages and small towns with middle and lower middle class family backgrounds. Some of them do part-time jobs during their academic period in order to meet their educational expenses. Students coming from these backgrounds not only face some adjustment problems in big cities like Dhaka but also face communication problems as their university maintains English as medium of instruction. So, it appears to be worth investigating how part-time jobs can help improve students' communication skills and other various aspects of personal development. This research, being basically a case study by nature, investigated the impact of the part-time work of three tertiary level students through semi-structured interviews. Findings revealed that despite some negative aspects, part time job experience impacts positively on communication skills in English as well as personal attributes such as a sense of responsibility, team work and time management, confidence, self-dependence, etc.

### **Introduction**

Studying in a private university in the Bangladeshi context is usually more expensive compared to the tuition fees of a public university. The majority of the students prefer studying in public universities because of their low cost and presumably good reputation. Failing to get a seat there, many

students choose to study in private universities though it is very expensive, and sometimes beyond many parents' financial ability to afford. It is not always true that parents of private university students are all very well off; specifically, parents from rural and semi-urban areas often find it difficult to pay their children's tuition fees and living expenses. Those students failing to get admission in a public university usually opt for mid-range tuition fee paying universities with a hope to do some part-time work to pay their tuition fees and living expenses. Therefore, right after their admission, they look for a part-time job to support themselves. Among the part-time jobs available, working as a home, or private, tutor is a common option although though other types of jobs, like working in a call center, or a restaurant, or a shop, are also increasingly available in big cities like Dhaka. There is no information regarding how many students are currently doing part-time jobs and studying but it can be assumed that the demand for part-time jobs among full time students is increasing especially among those studying at private universities in Bangladesh. However, two studies reported that 50-60% students were engaged in part-time job while studying. (Curtis, 2007 and Hakkinen 2006).

It is a matter of great concern about how these students balance their study and part-time jobs in their academic lives which is also worth investigating. Despite their hardships in holding part-time jobs while studying, what they gain and learn could also be an area to explore. Against this backdrop, this study aims to focus on the part-time job experience of three students. Through three interview sessions the study enquires about their backgrounds, conditions and experiences. Therefore, this study delves into the following research objectives to find out more insightful information:

1. Under what circumstances students take up part-time jobs?

2. What are the advantages, challenges, and aspects of learning in those jobs?

### **Literature review**

Holding a part-time job and studying has been a common scenario for students in many western universities for many years and it is also common in some public university contexts in Bangladesh. However, the same situation is not very typical in a private university context. Lately, doing a part-time job has been a growing trend among some students studying in private universities. There have already been some studies carried out by Gridd, et al. (2015), Darolia (2014), Develin (2008), Broadbridge, et al. (2005), Curtis & Shani (2002) and Harvey (2000) in various parts of the world mainly looking into the nature of part-time jobs, frequency of availability, work-study balance, amount of income etc. In one study, Faizuddin (2018) explored students' perceptions, negative and positive experiences, and challenges faced and overcome while studying and doing a part-time job in Malaysia. However, this researcher did not find any relevant study carried out in local, Bangladeshi, context.

The relevant studies carried out over the last two decades can be divided broadly into two categories. One category of studies such as, Faizuddin (2018), Tomlinson (2007), Curtis (2007) and Yorke (2004) in which all of them looked at the issues of student attitude, perceptions and perspectives on part-time jobs that are available in and outside campus. On the other hand, in the second category of studies such as, Creed et al. (2015), Hovdhaugen (2015), Hall (2010), Wang, et al. (2010), Nonis & Hudson (2006), Richardson & et al. (2014), Jogaratnam & Buchanam (2004), Watts and Pickering (2000), the authors investigated the impacts of part-time jobs on study and balancing study while working. The current study attempts to explore how work experience

impacts on students' English communication skills and personal attributes such as team work, patience, time management, responsibility and cooperation, along with balancing work and study.

### **Methodology**

The current study is qualitative by nature following a long interview structure for data collection (Cresswell 2012). This approach mainly uses information from anecdotes and experiences. For this study, interview sessions were conducted in which participants told their views and experiences by responding to semi-structured questions. The whole study is based on the experiences of three students and is not directly associated with any theoretical underpinnings. However, the study in the end is expected to imply a meaning of grounded theory which emerges as a bottom up approach based on the grounded reality experienced by the subjects.

### **Sampling and interview**

This is basically a case study involving three students who were doing part-time jobs and studying simultaneously at the same university. A long interview approach was used to elicit in-depth responses. Three students, one female and two males, were purposefully chosen who were engaged, respectively, as a gym assistant, home tutor, and a call center worker. Relevant background information for these three students was collected and will be presented later in this paper via a table.

All three interviewees gave their formal consent to take part in the interviews. Semi-structured questions were prepared, keeping relevance with the topic and research objectives, and were developed for each interview session, with each participant, separately. Each interview session took place at a separate time and was conducted in an informal manner so

that interviewees could share their experiences more candidly and, eventually, the researcher could gather more insightful data. Questions were asked in an indirect manner. Each interview took about 20-25 minutes of time. All the interview sessions were conducted on different days by the researcher.

### **Interview questions**

As the interview was semi-structured, a list of questions was prepared to elicit insightful information regarding various facets of part-time jobs and their impacts on students' work and study. The questions (see appendix A) were checked by a senior colleague and piloted by a volunteer participant in order to gauge their appropriateness.

### **Selection of cases**

The names used in this study are all pseudonyms. The researcher, first came to know about one student called "Shirin" who was working as gym assistant and studying at the undergraduate level in the English Department. Through a snowballing strategy two students were selected named "Abid" and "Nikhil" who were also in their undergraduate level in the English Department. They work as a home tutor and a call center assistant, respectively. All these students study in a private university where the researcher teaches as a lecturer. All three participants moved from rural and semi-urban areas after having finished their higher secondary level of education. Their parental socio-economic background is lower middle class. After being unable to take admission in several public universities, all of them at one stage, decided to study at this private university. The fact behind choosing this university was that this institution has a reasonable rate of tuition fees, performance based tuition waivers and, more importantly, it has an instalment system of payment. Despite all these, the reality is that their parents cannot afford high tuition fees and pay their living expenses.



### **Data collection and transcription**

Data were collected from each interview session. The interviews were audio-recorded and then transcribed by a volunteer student. Later, transcripts were shown to the three interviewees just to check if all responses were properly recorded. At this stage, two of them added a few more important responses which were not shared during the interview sessions.

### **Student profiles**

*Shirin* was born in a village and raised there until she was fourteen. Her father is an insolvent farmer and she is the youngest of four children. She had her primary and early secondary education in her own village. She was an excellent swimmer from her childhood and won many prizes in local competitions. She then took admission in a specialized school where students study with their sports talents. During her five years there, she did her SSC and HSC and more importantly she gained many important accolades as one of the best swimmers in the country. As she could not take admission in a public university, she chose to study in the English Department of a private university. In order to support her tuition fees she obtained a part-time job in a five star hotel in the city as a gym assistant for women. She has been doing this job for more than a year and at the same time, maintaining her studies and life and staying in a private hostel.

*Abid* was born in a semi-urban area of a southern district in the country where he finished his school and college education. His father is a primary school teacher and he has three siblings. He came to this university after failing in an admission test in one of the most famous public universities of the country. Right after taking admission at this university, he realized, it would be very difficult to continue his study here as his parents cannot afford high tuition fees.

However, he, with the help of a senior student, managed to get a job as a home tutor. Later, he got another home tutoring job. Home tutoring in two places involved him teaching students from grade 6-8 in the evening. But his earning from tutoring job was not adequate to fully support his tuition fees. His parents manage to cover his living costs.

*Nikhil* was born in a suburban town of a small district located in north Bengal. His father runs a small grocery shop and his family and has three children. Nikhil's mother passed away when he was twelve years old. Nikhil went to a good school and college in his local area for his SSC and HSC. After coming to this big city for higher education, he too, tried for admission in two public universities. Without getting admission to either of these two; finally, he decided to take admission at this university with the financial help of his aunt. He tried hard to get a part-time job and, at one stage, with the help of a cousin, he managed to get a job in a call center where he has to work 35 hours per week. Now Nikhil can support his tuition fees and partial living cost with the money he gets from his job. Although attending all the classes for him appears to be difficult every week, he tries his best to keep in touch with teachers and classmates to stay updated academically.

Among all three participants there are quite a few identical attributes justifying as to why they took up part-time job. The table below shows those attributes that characterize all the participants.

Name	Back-ground	Economic level	Nature of part-time job	Time spent at the job	Category of job
Shirin	Rural	Lower middle class	Giving instructions	5 hours everyday	Temporary and regular
Abid	Rural	Lower middle class	Home tutoring	4 hours every day in two places	Temporary and irregular

Nikhil	Semi-urban	Lower middle class	Giving support & problem-solving	6 hours everyday	Temporary and regular
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### **Discussion and analysis of data**

The data collected from all interview sessions with the three participants were checked, highlighting important points so that a system could be developed for analysis. As initially the volume of data seemed to be huge, only the salient features and excerpts were identified in order to address the questions set out for the research. For this analysis, a descriptive approach was used focusing on a particular chunk of data for this investigation. It is also important to note that there were some data, minor in size but deserving of a separate analysis. So, there is a small description based on the minor data. For the convenience of the analysis, responses were categorized based on a thematic analysis network (Braun & Clarke 2006). In this regard, particular chunks from transcripts were marked with colored pen to make a link with the research questions as well as general areas in order to discover broad based themes.

The following descriptions and analysis were sequentially developed based on the interview questions. Some excerpts are pointed out which were extracted from the transcripts. Students' interview data were translated verbatim except places where slight linguistic repairs were done without altering the meaning.

#### *1. What circumstances compelled you to look for a part time job?*

In a response to the first question, all three participants mentioned about their parents' economic conditions which were not enough to support their high tuition fees. So they faced difficulties in paying admission and semester fees at the beginning of their university study. Nikhil and Abid had

to borrow money from their relatives. But all of them started looking for a part-time job in their first semester. Dhaka city, being very expensive, they had problems in getting shared accommodations as they are not generally offered by the university. Although the university has rented a few buildings for female student accommodations, most girls do not choose them because of their high charges. Shirin's comments reflect almost the same:

*My mom helped me from her savings to pay the tuition fees. My uncle helped me a lot finding a shared accommodation within the university vicinity. At the beginning, I did not know how I would get a part time job. I requested one of my close acquaintances who was working as gym assistant in a big hotel. She took me there one day and soon I joined there as a substitute for another worker. Initially I received an orientation training. Few weeks later, the authority being satisfied with my previous sports background and current performance, offered me the part time job. It was a kind of god sent job which I have been still doing very sincerely.*

For Shirin, this job was a kind of relevant opportunity and more importantly, her connection with a close acquaintance worked as an instrumental support, otherwise she would not have been able to get this job. This incident shows the overall difficulty of getting a part-time job.

An almost similar voice echoes in Nikhil's excerpt:

*I wanted to study in Dhaka though I was confused about the university. I knew about the high tuition fees of private university, I could not decide. Then my cousin convinced me and helped me taking admission at this university. Initially I shared accommodation with him. Then he helped me to move in a nearby private hostel. As it was far from the university, I changed it two months later. As my cousin praised about*

*my communication skills, he suggested me to look for a job in a call center. I got the job 3 months after I had dropped off my CV. It's a good job with good money for me and I want to continue it throughout my undergraduate study.*

Nikhil too, had a hard time getting a job. The initial few months involved a great deal of struggle with uncertainties. Another interesting feature is that the support and connections students sometimes get are not from their institutions but rather from their relatives or close acquaintances. The above two excerpts reflect a clear message that the problems students usually face initially were mostly solved in an unstructured manner. The fact is that cooperation from relatives, friends and acquaintances played a positive role in this case. However, getting most things available at the beginning has a high level of uncertainty and anxiety. As the students are desperate to solve their problems, they eventually manage to get things done. Many others may not be successful the same way.

2. *What advantages and disadvantages do you find while doing a part-time job and studying?*

Abid found his tutoring job with 6-8 students pretty difficult at the beginning. Initially he used to self-tutor those lessons which he had to teach his students, which was pretty difficult. Now he feels comfortable. This job is flexible which means occasionally he can change his tutoring time if something happens in the way of his study. By doing this job, Abid feels more confident and responsible. Students' parents also consider him very reliable and that is why he was recommended for another tutoring job in a nearby house. In Abid's words ... *in tutoring jobs, parents monitor a lot. Moreover, the feedback students give to their parents matters as well. But the only problem regarding this job, I have to spend a lot time every day due to the bad traffic.*

While talking about the advantages and challenges of a part-time job, Shirin and Nikhil opined that the merits are many compared to the challenges. The way Nikhil finds it,

*Doing it every day is a time consuming matter but the money pays off. I have learnt a lot from my colleagues and clients. I work in a team which needs me to be punctual and committed. When any problem occurs, my colleagues help me solve it. As this job takes a lot of my time at day time, I miss classes often. I try my best to make it up by talking to my teacher and fellow students.*

For Nikhil, teamwork helped him improve his personal qualities like punctuality and commitment. Missing classes was a big problem but he was conscientious to make them up as much as possible. This reality makes him more responsible and hardworking traits that are emerging from his job situation.

Shirin reflects on it in a bit of a different way:

*I find my job most gratifying as the work environment is very encouraging and friendly. Some of the gym users are foreign ladies with whom I have to communicate in English. As I deal with them every day, I can brush up my expressions to some extent. My gym manager is very new here, does not want to excuse me for classes but she is considerate to excuse me during my final exams.*

Shirin is also learning from her job situation, for example she is brushing up her communication skills by making adjustments with her boss. It is also likely that she can improve her confidence level there mainly because of the friendly work atmosphere.

### 3. How do you balance your work and study?

This is the most important concern for all students who do part-time jobs and study. In most cases, these students do not perform excellent as they have to spend more time in doing their jobs. Situations like missing classes, attending make up examinations and submitting late assignment also happen. Abid and Nikhil sometimes can make it up by talking to the teacher or borrowing class notes from friends. While ensuring balance between work and study, they have to sacrifice socialization or university club activities. At times, it becomes very difficult in which Shirin stays more anxious. However, she finds her teachers very supportive.

Nikhil plans things ahead occasionally, but Abid is not used to planning that way. However, they are trying their best to survive and at the same time learn better. From their candid conversations, it is clear that making a good balance between their part-time jobs and full-time study is very difficult. To ensure a reasonable progress in study, they all tend to follow certain strategies; for example, they keep some reliably good friends from the same course, occasional conversation with course teachers, coordinators and class representatives. However, they also admit that ensuring work-study balance amidst hardship has been a part of their routine experience; they are getting used to it. They are also aware that they do not have alternatives for the time being. As time goes by, they feel they are getting more mature in dealing various matters.

*4. Does your part-time job help you develop any aspect of your skills and understanding?*

While talking to them, they all agree one thing is that they have become positively different while doing part time job and study. They feel more confident as they go about it. They have significantly reduced their shyness while communicating with others at work place. They can realize

the changes they have been going through regarding their work and study:

*I love my job as I meet lovely people I work with every day. I learnt so many colloquial expressions in English while communicating with my clients. Listening to real life English has not only enhanced my understanding but also curiosity in my daily use of English. 'Just kidding', 'I am done with it', 'Hang on a moment', 'Can you please give me a hand?', 'Beg your pardon', 'I can speak my mind', 'If I may add....' Let me put it this way', 'I was in two minds', 'Oh goodness me!' and many more colloquial chunks of expressions helped me a lot practically. My job has given me a strength in my ability as well as a sense of identity of an independent person somewhat.–Shirin*

*Being able to teach students is not easy and I learnt it from my experience. I feel good when my students do well or parents appreciate my sincere teaching". I used to prepare myself properly before home tutoring. I think I learnt many things newly as I went about home tutoring". It's not very good pay but I love it – Abid*

*Without this job, it wouldn't have been possible to survive here. I think I feel more confident as I continue it. For example, I have to do presentation occasionally in my work place. I think I feel less tensed while doing it in my classroom. I admit that I am a bit irregular in my class attendance but I always make sure I am pro-active in class activities whenever I attend. One more thing about my English is that I have improved my fluency in English. I also feel good in a sense that I am maintaining my study reasonably well by paying tuition fees from my earning. – Nikhil*



All the expressions do indicate that their experience has added some value to their individual growth. They have learnt to be more patient, confident, accommodating and committed to their respective assignments. It is true that they could not pay more attention to their study as they were supposed to but they are trying their best to stay above average level performance. They have learnt many aspects of real life qualities, more precisely the soft skills that are not often nurtured in the academia.

*5. Do you have any suggestions regarding study and work?*

- i) Due to financial constraint, we have to do part-time jobs. Sometimes, we fail to be particular regarding some of our quizzes, exams and assignments. We expect our teachers to be somewhat empathic with us at least when it is a point under their discretions.
- ii) Many of our parents cannot afford high tuition fees at private universities. The university authority should offer more generous tuition fee waiver policies for needy students. As a result, students would not have to spend more time on part-time jobs.
- iii) Very often I feel depressed or stressed because of part-time job and study pressure. Time management appears to be a big problem. I often feel helpless. If the university had a counsellor, I could get some practical tips to ensure balance between work and study.
- iv) Finding accommodation near the university is not only problematic but also expensive.

The university should create accommodation facilities at reasonable rental rates.

- v) After taking admission many of us do not know how to look for a part-time job. I wish the university had a network where I could get part time job information.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

The part-time job experience of three students shows various aspects of student attitude, advantages, and disadvantages, opportunities of learning and growing up with good attributes. The study also showed that students' problems regarding getting part-time jobs and accommodations were mostly solved in unstructured ways. Universities have not yet develop systems in which students can get more information on how to support themselves. However, this study, despite its few negative findings, reveals some salient facts that students doing part-time jobs and studying are in a situation that helps them to be independent, responsible and supportive, and boosts their communication ability in English and allows them to develop soft skills that eventually contribute better to their academic as well as personal development.

Recommendations from the researcher:

1. Every university should maintain a center for students support services where students will get information regarding part-time jobs, shared accommodations, buying and selling, job advertisements, scholarships/tuition waiver, etc.
2. Some students often stress out due to pressure from study and part-time work but they do not know how to reduce or solve this problem in a practical way. If

universities have trained counsellors, students can consult with him/her for a professional solution.

3. Private universities can create on campus job opportunities for students, for example, in the library, canteen, book shop, etc.
4. There should be effective network between university-industry so that more part-time, full time and internship opportunities can be created.
5. The government can introduce higher study loan facilities through public and private banks. These loans should be at nominal interest rates. A student will return the money on an easy instalment basis after getting a job.

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## **Appendix A**

Semi-structured interview questions:

1. What circumstances compelled you to look for a part-time job?
2. What advantages and disadvantages do you find while doing a part-time job and studying?
3. How do you balance your work and study?
4. How does your part-time job help you improve aspects of your life like your skills, behavior, understanding of life, etc.?
5. Do you have any suggestions regarding study and work?

## **Using Peer Feedback Effectively in EFL Writing Classes**

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### **Abstract**

This paper is focused on using peer feedback effectively in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) writing class. First, there will be a discussion of process writing and the role of peer feedback as well as teacher and student reluctance toward it. This will be followed by an analysis of the reasons for using peer feedback. Then the connection between sociocultural theory (SCT) and peer feedback will be looked at. This includes an examination of the role of cultural situatedness in peer revision as well as pedagogical implications. Some problematic aspects will also be addressed. Then suggestions for pre-training, intervention training, and creating effective peer response groups will be discussed. More suggestions regarding execution of peer feedback and the amount of time spent responding during peer editing will be explored. Finally, some conclusions regarding peer editing will be considered.

### **Introduction**

Over the last 30 years of second language writing a process-based (multiple drafts-feedback-revision) classroom where using the workshop approach has emerged as the standard in EFL classrooms. Furthermore, feedback has been a major component for encouraging and consolidating learning in general (Anderson, 1982; Brophy, 1981; Vygotsy, 1978). So there has also been a drift from summative (evaluative feedback) to formative feedback (development/future) (Hyland, 2006a). Research indicates that effective feedback



should be conveyed in a variety of ways and should allow for response and interaction (Brinko, 1993). Teacher feedback has come to be supplanted by peer feedback. In addition, that with the right amount of pretraining, peer feedback can be an effective tool in the writing process. There are some important insights to consider when discussing feedback: good writing requires revision; writers need to write for a specific audience; writing should involve multiple drafts with intervention response at the various draft stages; peers can provide useful feedback at various levels; training students in peer response leads to better revisions and overall improvements in writing quality; and teacher and peer feedback is best seen as complimentary (see, for example Chaudron 1984; Zamel 1985, Mendoca and Johnson 1994; Berg 1999). Peer assessment can also be seen as a formative developmental process that gives writers the opportunity to discuss their texts and discover others' interpretations of them (Hyland 2000). However, it is important to remember that failure to establish proper procedures or to engage in pre-training, is quite likely to result in ineffective response activities. The focus of this discussion will be on how to prepare and manage students for effective peer feedback.

### **Reasons for Peer Feedback Use in the ESL Classroom**

Despite the fact that a process-based has become the norm in EFL writing classrooms there have been doubts from both teachers and students (better writer or "native speaker" is qualified) about peer revision. Thus, it might be good to evaluate the reasons to use peer feedback in the classroom. For example, Rollinson (1998) found high levels of valid feedback among his college-level students 80% of comments were considered valid, and only 7% were potentially damaging. Peer feedback tends to be a different type of feedback. Caulk (1994) found that teacher feedback was rather general, whereas student responses tended to be

more specific. And by becoming critical readers of other's writing may make students more critical readers and revisers of their own writing. Peer audiences are potentially more sympathetic and less judgmental than a teacher. Peer feedback also 'fosters a myriad of communicative behaviors' (Villamil and de Guerro 1996:69) and highly complex socio-cognitive interactions that involving arguing, explaining, clarifying, and justifying. Furthermore, peer response operates on a more informal level than teacher response (a change and compliment to the more one-way interaction with a teacher), peers can spend much more time providing feedback than an individual teacher. Students find the experience "beneficial" (Mendonca and Johnson 1994: 765) and see "numerous advantages" of working in groups (Nelson and Murphy 1992: 188) but can also enhance participants' attitudes toward writing (Cahudron 1984).

### **Sociocultural Theory (SCT) and Peer Feedback**

SCT has traditionally been associated with Vygotsky (178, 1986; see also Wertsch, 1979a) and is a system of ideas on the origin and development of the mind. Mind and consciousness are predominately social in nature. As a result, SCT concepts are useful in analyzing peer feedback: mediation, internalization, developmental change, and cultural embeddedness (Villamil & de Guerror 2006).

#### *The Role of Cultural Situatedness in Peer Revision*

Vilamil and Guerror (2006) point out that all learning situations are unique and highly variable. Furthermore, interaction during per revision can be multifaceted and unpredictable. As Grabe (2001) and Grabe and Kaplan (1996) stated, the diversity of student populations, their L2 Proficiency, their distinct cultural dispositions and instructional socialization, as well as their own beliefs about writing may lead to different results. In addition, non-collaborative interactions, which may make feedback

ineffective, have been documented. In 1992, Carson expressed difficulties that peers of various language backgrounds could experience because of different cultural orientations and educational systems-when Japanese and Chinese students come to the US. They may be confused about the purpose and effectiveness of methods used in the classroom. These students “may say what the writer wants to hear or may not speak at all rather than say what might be helpful to the writer but might hurt the writer’s feelings or damage cohesiveness of the group” (Carson & Nelson, 1994, p.23). Nelson and Carson (1998) also contended that students from these countries would depend on group consensus to guide decisions about changes. If they perceived different opinions about a particular trouble source, changes to the text would not be performed. Lantolf and Pavelenko (2001) stated that sociocultural contexts and activity-theory perspectives offers a “complex view of second language learners as agents, whose actions are situated in the particular contexts and are influenced by their dynamic ethnic, national, gender, class and social identities.” (p.155)

### *Pedagogical Implications*

Some of the conclusions that Villamil and Cuerror (2006) found from their study were related to SCT. For example, to ensure progress within the learner’s Zone of Proximal Development (ZPDs)-interaction with peers to develop skills and strategies (Vygotsky 1978) teachers should provide students with opportunities to interact with a variety of peers so that other-mediation can be effectively extended. In addition, they found that teachers need to be aware of strategic behaviors that add to successful scaffolding or other-mediation during peer revision: maintain a partner’s interest in the task, marking critical differences, and keeping psychological differentiation. And this may need to be modeled. They also felt that it was important to consider

student sociocultural contexts and learning background to determine how peer feedback may be brought into classroom with adjustments for classroom use.

### *Other Problematic Aspects of Peer Feedback*

There are some other concerns that teachers must consider when using peer feedback in the classroom. For one, it is a time consuming process-reading a draft and engaging orally or in writing takes a significant amount of class time. Furthermore, some form of pre-training is necessary for effective peer feedback. In addition, teachers need to be aware of student characteristics-some students (Chinese in Carson and Nelson's (1996) study, but this could be true of Japanese students as well) tend to withhold comments to maintain group harmony or because they were reluctant to enact authority over another student. Other considerations include age or interlanguage level which might limit their ability to give effective feedback and they may find some aspects of peer feedback beyond their ability. The teacher may find it difficult to give a large amount of responsibility to students in the peer feedback process. Teachers might also find it difficult to avoid interfering by giving their feedback in addition to that of the student readers. The teacher's role as trainer is also challenging.

### *Pre-training*

Rollinson (2005) pointed out the necessity of pre-training of students in order to ensure that peer feedback can occur smoothly. He identified three areas to address with students: *awareness raising* (the principles and objectives of peer response), *productive group interaction* (collaboration, supportiveness, tact, and etiquette), *productive response and revision* (basic procedures, effective commenting, reader-writer dialogue, effective revision). The 'propaganda phase' begins with the explanation of the value of peer response versus teacher response. This can include discussions of

student concerns about using students to provide responses and reasons why peers at the same level can give helpful feedback. Students can also be shown examples of professional writers' use of peer review, as well as demonstrations of teachers' own revisions from colleagues' comments. It would also be useful to have a class discussion of the purpose of peer response and the role of the responder. This involves comparing the role of peer reader with that of the teacher reader. Furthermore, a discussion of the role of the reader as collaborator rather than a corrector is useful. This should be followed with nonthreatening practice activities in which there is class modeling and discussion of adequate and inadequate commenting. Then students will collaborate in small group work by writing short texts, and giving group responses (either written or oral) to the writing of other groups. This should be followed with a discussion of effective revision and a discussion of the writer's sense of obligation to revise versus the writer's freedom to reject comments.

### *Intervention Training*

The broad objective of intervention training as defined by Rollinson (1998) is to maximize the benefits of the peer response activity for each group and each student. The teacher deals with specific problems in the feedback or revising strategies of particular groups or individuals, and suggests techniques for improving revision response behaviors or techniques. Furthermore, it is the teacher's responsibility to maintain a very close contact with each group. However, the disadvantage of this kind of intervention is that it requires considerable effort from the teacher to be effective. That being said, even already successful groups will benefit from ad hoc training.

### *Creating Effective Peer Response Groups*

There are some useful suggestions from Rollinson (2005) in terms of creating effective response groups. This involves properly setting up the group and establishing effective procedures and giving adequate training. This means coaching students in the principles and practices of effective peer group interaction and responses. Some of the potential problems of ineffective training include: destructive and tactless comments, overgenerous and uncritical responses that focus on surface matters rather than on meaning and content, prescriptive and authoritative rather than collaborative and supportive.

There are a number of considerations to make when setting up peer response groups. Size is the first issue and 3-4 is thought to be an ideal sized group. Evaluation is another issue to be considered: will feedback be evaluated or graded by the teacher? Will the feedback be oral or written? Written feedback gives readers and writers more time for collaboration, consideration reflection, provides the reader with a written record for later consideration. It also gives students more practice in being explicit, detailed, persuasive, and audience-focused in their writing. There are several questions about organization that need to be addressed: Independent feedback or consensus groups? How much time for oral feedback? Does written feedback need some oral interaction as well? Responding or self-reporting? And there is the question of how this stage is followed up with teacher-group discussions or teacher-student conferences.

### *Engaging In Peer Feedback*

Pre-training should have focused the students on the need to act as collaborators rather than correctors. The teacher might allow groups to develop their own feedback procedures to help the writer make a better second draft. More commonly readers will proceed with the guidance of heuristics appropriate to the essay type and draft reminding the

students to focus on particular aspects of the writing rather than others. Oral feedback may usefully involve the reader discussion preceding the reader-writer conference, to give readers time to formulate their thoughts and how best to convey them. The amount of time spent on responding-rewriting depends on: the level of students, their experience with group work, the length of the essays written, whether feedback is oral or written, the number of drafts required, and on how much time the teacher is willing to make available for the process.

### **Conclusion**

As Bartholomae (1980) points out, it is easier to teach students (as readers) editing procedure than it is to teach students (as writers) to write correctly at the point of transcription. If the class is adequately set-up and trained the benefits of peer feedback activity can be realized. But there are the considerations of age, cultural background, class size, and interlanguage level, which effect overall outcomes. SCT showed the importance of social mediation in learning-it showed how individual development in the second language could be transformed by the social experience of talking about writing as well as writing and revising, with a partner.

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## Exploring English Language Learning Demotivation in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

There is only a few empirical evidence of exploring the sources of learner demotivation in EFL research literature of the third world countries. Basing on a qualitative investigation this paper reports the underlying sources of student demotivation to study English as a school subject at higher secondary (HS) level (grade 11 and 12) in Bangladesh. A total number of 36 freshmen and sophomores of three different universities were interviewed to understand the demotivators they experienced at the last stage of high school. An interview guide was developed following the L2 demotivation factors listed by Dörnyei (1998, reported in Dörnyei, 2001) and learners' accounts collected in the trail runs of this study. From the analysis five dominant factors were identified, in descending order: *EFL Teachers' competence and behavior*, *Learners' previous experiences*, *Private tutoring*, *Attitude of group members*, *Institutional facilities*. Each of these factors comprises further sub-components indicating more specific reasons of demotivation. Two other factors: *Textbooks* and *Attitude towards English study* were found to be weak in this context. Feasible implications are discussed addressing the demotivators identified in this paper for amelioration of the situations.

### Introduction

Demotivation to study English is a constant concern in many EFL (English as a foreign language) contexts. L2

demotivation adversely affects the extent of learners' involvement in learning activities (Dörnyei, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1996), maintenance of L2 skills (Scrcella & Oxford, 1992), attitude towards the subject (Falout & Maruyama, 2004), and results in long-term poor learning outcomes (Falout et al., 2009). Plenty of demotivation factors are prevailing in many English language classrooms in Bangladesh. However, little research has been done to investigate the sources of learner demotivation and to suggest contextually feasible measures to minimize the conditions in learning situations. It is necessary to dig out the sources of learner demotivation, and seek out feasible remedies to ameliorate the situations (Kikuchi, 2009; Kim, 2015; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009).

EFL learner demotivation is a relatively less investigated individual difference compared to motivation. L2 demotivation is perceived when students do not enjoy their learning activities and lose interest towards the subject. Demotivated learners are those who were once motivated, but have lost their interest in L2 learning for specific reasons (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011). Dörnyei (2001: 143) defines demotivation as 'specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioral intention or an ongoing action'. According to the definition, demotivation is a decrease or fall in the degree of motivation, and is not caused by other powerful distractions of a more attractive option, or a gradual loss of interest over a period of time, or an internal process of deliberation without any external reason. Dörnyei (2001) further explains that demotivation starts from external sources and gradually becomes internalized, provided that motivation must exist before experiencing the fall in its level. It is explained there with an example, that reduced self-confidence (an internal process) is a demotivation factor which can be caused by

students' experience of failure or lack of success in achievement tests (an external force).

A number of researchers have marked the term *external forces* used in Dörnyei's explanation (see Falout et al., 2009; Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). They argued that demotivation is subject to both internal (e.g. self-efficacy, attitude towards the L2, attitude towards the L2 community) and external (e.g. teaching methods, teachers' competence, school facilities, textbooks, classroom activities) influences, and in subsequent studies both internal and external sources are addressed (Falout et al., 2009; Kim, 2015; Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). Falout et al. (2009: 405) explains that 'Learners' perceptions of their external environments are processed internally, where further psychological factors contribute to the demotivational process.'

Research literature also suggests that L2 leaning de/motivation is not a stable individual difference. It is a 'dynamically evolving process' (Jung, 2011: 48) affected by learners' social and educational environment and their own psychological trait (Falout et al., 2009; Jung, 2011). Recent research studies identify L2 de/motivation as a complex multidimensional individual difference which is subject to evolution and change influenced by both internal and external factors L2 learners are exposed to (Falout et al., 2009; Jung, 2011).

Whatever the sources of L2 learner demotivation are, internal or external, many of those are prevailing in a large number of high school classrooms in Bangladesh. English is taught as a compulsory school subject in the main stream education system of Bangladesh. Two recent policy initiatives to upgrade English education in the country were:

teaching English from grade 1 at elementary level (since 1991) and applying CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method/approach (since 2001) at high school level (from grade 9 to 12). At high school level two English papers are taught for 5-6 hours per week. These policy initiatives were aimed to develop learners' 'communicative competence' (NCTB, 2003: 38) and to contribute to human resource development efforts of the nation (NCTB, 2003). However, research findings indicate that our students' proficiency level is far below the expectation (Alam, 2018; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008). In spite of learning English for twelve years as a school subject our students are still too weak to use it properly when necessary (Alam, 2018). In Bangladesh, because of economic reasons usually there is little or no research investigation behind any reformation initiatives in promoting English education (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). The top-down policy initiatives to improve English education happen to be ineffective in the education context of Bangladesh (Hamid, 2010).

Although Bangladesh is a monolingual country where English is not commonly used in everyday communication, English dominates students' 'thoughts and consciousness, more than any other school subjects' (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011: 201). High school students and their parents are acutely aware about the practical necessities of studying English for their future. In Bangladesh, English language proficiency is essential to get access to higher education. English paper is a crucial part of university admission tests in all disciplines. In the local job market most of the government and private job openings list English language proficiency as a prioritized requirement (Quadir, 2014). Therefore, English is perceived as a crucial linguistic capital for academic success and employability in Bangladesh.

Despite the perceived instrumental value of English in the current society of Bangladesh, a large number of students are not motivated enough to study English at high school level. It appears that the students are struggling between the necessities of learning English on the one hand, and experience demotivation to study it on the other. Hamid & Baldauf (2011: 202) appropriately commented that ‘English learning embodies both desire and frustration.’ Almost every year the national rate of failure in English papers is the highest among all subjects in HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate) examination. This study aims to bring to light the reasons why in spite of all the utilitarian views toward English in the current society, students are still demotivated to study it at higher secondary (HS) level (grade 11 and 12).

It is necessary to conduct learner-centered research to understand the reasons why high school students lose motivation to study English as a school subject. In the area of L2 research a number of researchers (Benson, 2005) have emphasized the necessity of learner-centered study focusing on students’ learning experiences explained from their own perspectives. In the history of L2 research in Bangladesh students’ learning experiences are rarely addressed. This study emphasizes learner-centeredness in methodology since the first-hand information is an essential component in curricular and pedagogical decision making (Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). Research findings clearly indicate that L2 demotivation factors differ from context to context (Falout & Maruyama, 2004; Kim, 2015). In order to identify the factors of learner demotivation it is necessary to listen to them who learn English sitting in the classrooms. It is important to identify the sources of L2 demotivation in a particular context and to ponder over the contextually feasible remedial measures in order to ameliorate the conditions. Therefore, this article is guided by the following two objectives:

1. To identify learner demotivation factors to study English at HS level in Bangladeshi education context.
2. To discuss contextually feasible remedial measures addressing the identified demotivation factors.

### **Literature review**

Though recently, learner demotivation has received huge research attention in L2 learning across wide contexts. Most of those studies have tried to identify attributions of demotivation to study second or foreign languages. In a number of research investigations conducted in different L2 contexts ‘one consistently top-ranking attribution’ (Falout et al., 2009: 404) appears to be teacher related factors. Dörnyei (1998) conducted a qualitative study holding structured interviews of 50 secondary school students in Budapest and identified *Teachers’ personality, Commitment, Competence, Teaching method* as the most salient set of demotivators. Disagreeable teacher behavior, teaching methods, and personality are identified among the highest attributions of demotivation in a number of studies conducted in Japanese EFL contexts.

In a study on 33 Japanese university students using open response questionnaire, Arai (2004) found that *Teachers’ behavior or personality* was the strongest source of demotivation to study English. Kikuchi (2009) in a qualitative study on 42 college students identified that *Teachers’ behavior* and *Teaching methods* were the major sources of demotivation. In a quantitative research, involving 656 high school students in the same context, Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) detected *teachers’ competence and teaching style* as the second dominant demotivation factor. Trang and Baldauf (2007) conducted a research investigation in Vietnamese EFL context to identify the



external and internal demotivation factors. Analyzing 100 university students' recall essays they found that *Teacher-related demotivating factors* are the strongest external attributions.

Research findings indicate that EFL learners attribute their demotivation to study English to insufficient provision of school facilities. *Inadequate school facilities* was identified as the second and the third prominent demotivation factor respectively in Dörnyei's (1998), and Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) research studies. Kikuchi (2009), however, did not find any significant impact of this factor.

Impact of learners' past experience on their current L2 motivation is a repeatedly identified factor. Trang and Baldauf (2007) identified learners' *Experiences of failure or lack of success* as one of the strongest internal demotivation factors in Vietnamese EFL context. Dörnyei (1998) also found the same demotivation factor in his study and labeled the factor as *Reduced self-confidence due to their experience of failure or success*. Sakai and Kikuchi (2009) detected a similar factor in the form of previous *Test scores*.

Learner attitude is found to be an indicator of learner demotivation in many EFL contexts. Falout and Maruyama (2004) collected data from 164 college students in Japan and found that *Attitude towards L2 itself* is a significant demotivation factor. However, Kikuchi (2009) found this factor to be insignificant in his study in the same EFL context. Dörnyei (1998) in his study identified this demotivator as *Negative attitude towards the L2*. *Attitude of group members* is identified as a demotivator both in Falout and Maruyama's (2004) and Dörnyei's (1998) studies conducted in two different L2 contexts.

Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) identified *Learning contents and materials* as the most powerful source of demotivation of Japanese high school EFL students. Kikuchi (2009) also found *Textbook* as a significant demotivator to study English as a school subject. Dörnyei (1998) labeled this demotivation factor as *Course book* in his study. Private tutoring is the least focused factor in L2 demotivation research literature. However, in a recent research study based on semi-structured interviews of 23 school students of different levels (elementary, junior high school and high school) Kim et al. (2018) reported that junior high school students cited *Private tuition* as a major demotivator.

Turning to the research conducted in Bangladesh, some research works have concentrated on EFL motivation (Haque & Moniruzzaman, 2001; Quadir, 2014), however, investigation addressing demotivation is sparse. From her classroom teaching experience and observation, Haque (2009) detected four different causes of secondary level student demotivation; large class size, lack of interaction between student and teacher, rote learning of grammar, and emphasize on memorization. Ullah and Fatema (2013) combining both qualitative and quantitative research methods in a study identified four different reasons of demotivation in EFL reading classes at tertiary level; learners themselves, teachers, reading materials, and contextual factors.

Research literature clearly indicates that pedagogical initiatives are implemented in different EFL contexts to ameliorate the conditions of learner demotivation and to generate motivation. Gulloteaux and Dörnyei (2008: 55) in a quantitative study on 1300 students in South Korean EFL context found that teachers' 'motivational practice' contributes to motivate learners. In Japanese EFL context, Ueda et al. (2007: 428) designed a course program to

incorporate ‘autonomous activities in a low anxiety classroom’ at university level and claimed that the project succeeded in enhancing student motivation. Dweck (2006) suggested that teachers’ genuine and specific admiration on students’ efforts, struggle and achievements can hugely contribute to enhance student motivation. Gorham and Christophel (1992) asserted in their paper that teachers can play significant role to promote L2 learner motivation simply by resisting demotivation.

### **Methodology**

#### *Participants and context*

For this qualitative study data was collected from a total number of 36 participants. In order to collect data university freshmen and sophomores were selected because they had recently completed their HS level education, and were considered to be articulate to share their previous academic level’s experiences of studying English. Although they were not specifically identified as demotivated learners, they reported that they had experienced decline in their motivation to study English at HS level and were inclined to share their demotivational experiences.

The participants were selected from three different universities in Bangladesh; one private and two public universities. Two universities are located in the city of Dhaka, and the other one is located in Chittagong (the south-east division of Bangladesh). All the participants started learning English from grade 1 as a part of the school curriculum. They were admitted at the universities immediately after completing their high school level. Their age ranged from 19 to 21. Among them 15 were females and 21 were males. The participants were selected from a variety of disciplines (Business Studies, Education, Electrical and Electronics Engineering, English, Pharmacy, Physics). Of

them 65% participants completed their HS education in urban and town areas, and the rest were from rural areas.

### *Data collection and analysis*

To collect data for the study one-to-one interviews were conducted with 36 participants in their L1, *Bangla*. An English translation of the interview protocol is put in the Appendix. The interview protocol was developed basing on some demotivation factors identified by Dörnyei (1998, reported in Dörnyei, 2001) and on learners' accounts collected in the trail runs of the current research. The initial questions of the tool (1 and 2) were asked to put the interviewee at ease. Question number 3 comprised the following items to investigate learner demotivation: (i) *teachers*, (ii) *school facilities*, (iii) *past experiences*, (iv) *attitudes towards English study*, (v) *attitudes of group members* (vi) *textbooks*, and (vii) *private tutoring*. At the end the participants were encouraged to share their experiences which were not included in the interview. The collected data were analyzed following the procedure suggested in Huberman and Miles (1994). They suggest a three-step process for qualitative data analysis: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification.

### **Findings and Discussions**

Basing on the matrices constructed through qualitative analysis of collected data, five major factors are identified as the sources of demotivation to study English at HS level. To construct each of these dominant factors more than 80% participants cited the underlying points. Two other factors received responses from less than 50% participants. All the seven factors are listed here in order of most responded to least; *EFL teachers' competence and behavior*, *Learners' previous experiences*, *Private tutoring*, *Attitude of group members*, *Institutional facilities*, *Textbooks*, *Attitude towards English study*. In the analysis further distinctive

components are constructed within the major factors. Each factor is explained with all the details of further components. The number of participants reporting the same point is put in the parenthesis after the comments.

### **Factor 1: EFL teachers' competence and behavior**

Altogether 34 participants (95%) shared their experiences about the demotivating aspects of classroom teaching. Within this factor two further distinctive components are identified: (i) teachers' instructional style and competence, and (ii) teachers' personality and behavior.

#### *i. Teachers' instructional style and competence*

The participants were critical about their teachers' instructional style and competence which demotivated them to study English. The highest number of respondents reported that there was no guidance about how to improve proficiency (speaking, reading, writing, or grammar) in English (21). A participant stated:

*In classrooms, teachers repeatedly commanded to study English seriously, but never explained how to improve language skills, speaking or writing. I didn't find any helpful guidance to gain competence in English.*

Under the same factor respondents complained about the boring and monotonous nature of teacher-centered instruction (15) and lack of interactions with students (13). They disliked teachers' continuous encouragements to memorize content from books (14), rather than explaining lessons clearly in instruction (13) and nurturing students' abilities, like writing in their own words or speaking in groups or pairs (12). They reported that there were little or no oral communication activities in classrooms (12), and even had to memorize conversational dialogues from

commercial books as suggested by their teachers (12). A respondent commented:

*I asked my instructor whether I can write conversational dialogues in my own way using my words, but I was discouraged for the risk of making mistakes. I was suggested to memorize those dialogues from books, but I did not enjoy that practice.*

The participants reported about incompetent (7) and unorganized (5) instruction in L1 (4) in English classrooms. They also marked that in classroom instructions there were emphasis on grammar, but no interesting grammar practice or demonstration on board (5). They complained about unclear and strange pronunciation (4), and negligence to answer students' questions (4) as signs of incompetent teaching. The final complain under the factor was regarding huge pressure of homework without any useful feedback (4) which reduced their motivation towards English.

#### *ii. Teachers' personality and behavior*

A number of participants regarded their English teachers as 'rude' and 'impatient' (9), whose treatments were humiliating in classrooms (6). Another repeated criticism was marked about teachers' tendency to encourage students for private tutoring (9). A number of respondents complained that teachers kept busy with good students and they felt neglected (8). Their frustration was acute when good performance was expected without guiding the ways to achieve that (6). To note a comment of a participant, "in classroom we were given exercises from the syllabus without any prior instruction on those. But our poor performance was humiliated blaming our abilities."

### **Factor 2: Students' previous experiences**

About 89% of total participants shared their past experiences which negatively affected motivation. This factor comprised two different components: (i) inability to succeed, (ii) negative experiences.

*i. Inability to succeed*

Participants reported that their weaknesses in English, especially in grammar (10) and vocabulary (6), perceived in the previous academic levels reduced their confidence. Some participants identified their difficulty specifically in reading skill because of unfamiliar vocabulary (7) and complex syntactic patterns (5). They reported that their experiences of failure in the past were too frustrating for them to make further efforts (6). One participant's commented, 'I always felt worthless in English classes, and so I gave up'. Some of the participants also expressed their acute disappointment of obtaining poor marks in institutional exams even after working hard (5).

*ii. Negative experiences*

The next component is constructed of negative affective feelings experienced in the previous academic levels. The participants reported that they avoided responding in class because of humiliation experienced in the past (6). Humiliation was attributed to both teachers' and classmates' reactions in previous levels. A number of respondents attributed their demotivation to their perceptions of uselessness of institutional English classes (4).

**Factor 3: Private tutoring**

The practice of private tutoring was regarded as a strong demotivator by 83% of the participants. This factor comprised two further components: (i) affordability, and (ii) private tutor's competence and management.

*i. Affordability*

Under this demotivator the most repeated comment was counted against the payment of private tuitions (15). And the second complain was about inevitability of the need of private tutoring (12) since school English teaching was poor and inadequate. They explained that taking help of private tutors was inevitable, though the amount of payment imposed psychological and financial pressure on them. A participant stated explicitly:

*...it was difficult for my family to earn even a livelihood. We were sometimes tense about the next day's meal. In all these circumstances my parents tried to bear my expenses of HS education. It was more than impossible to pay for any extra tuition. But for the subject English private tutoring was a must. I could not study on my own. I was too frustrated about the subject for long time, and repeatedly obtained very poor marks in English papers...*

*ii. Private tutor's competence and management*

The second theme detected under this factor was pointed to private tutors' competence and management. They reported that even at private sessions the instructors were not skilled enough to guide efficiently (7). The second complain was about mismanagement of a large number of students at private sessions (6).

**Factor 4: Attitude of group members**

Altogether 83% participants shared their frustrating and embarrassing experiences involving their classmates which affected their motivation. This factor was further classified into two parts: (i) classmates' reaction and (ii) classmates' performance.

*i. Classmates' reaction*

This affective concern is already partially indicated in Factor 2. The respondents reported that unbecoming reactions of



other students when they made any mistakes in English classrooms were humiliating (13). A respondent commented, “Even a simple grammatical mistake made the whole class laugh! Looking at the face! It was embarrassing, and I so refrained from responding in classroom.” The participants reported that they were insulted by their classmates when they took any initiative of practicing English in groups outside of classrooms (8).

*ii. Classmates’ performance*

A large number of participants shared their feelings of acute frustration about better proficiency and performance of other students in class (13) which made them pessimistic about their own skill in English.

**Factor 5: Institutional facilities**

Of the participants 81% reported that inadequate institutional facilities negatively affected their motivation to study English. This factor is found to be divided into two distinct components: (i) class size and classroom atmosphere, and (ii) logistic facilities.

*i. Class size and classroom atmosphere*

Under this theme the most cited point was large class size (100 to 250 students in one classroom) (15). They also reported that their classroom atmosphere was noisy (10), hot and suffocating (9). They could not hear the teacher (5) nor could see the board (4).

*ii. Logistic facilities*

The respondents shared that they did not even have the provision of some essential logistic facilities like usable board in classroom (10), electric fans in large English classes even in hot summer (10), technological support for listening practice or to make lessons interesting (8).

### **Factors 6: Textbooks**

Under this relatively weak factor 47% participants reported their negative perceptions regarding the textbooks of national curriculum. They identified inadequacy of guidance and content matter in the textbook for their preparations of HSC Examination (8). They reported that the contents were not up-to-date and interesting (4). They also marked insufficiency of instruction in the textbook to understand the corresponding lessons (4) and to improve language skills (4).

### **Factor 7: Students' and family members' attitude towards English**

44% of total respondents reported that they as well as their family members regarded English as a tough school subject which is too difficult to master (16). This negative attitude reduced their seriousness to study English.

The second objective of this paper was to discuss some contextually feasible implications addressing the demotivation factors identified in this paper. A close analysis of the identified factors of this current study clearly indicates that the sources of demotivation under different factors are not entirely independent, they are rather interconnected. Teachers' instructional competence, behavior and management of classroom atmosphere are the most influential demotivators which are directly or indirectly causing most other dominant factors.

In this study teachers' incompetent instructional style is identified as a strong demotivator which is interrelated with many other sources of demotivation. Students have reported that they desire classroom guidance on how to improve their language skills. Awareness about learners' needs and interests is necessary for effective classroom instructions (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). In order to meet students' demand, a potential initiative can be incorporating EFL learning

strategies in classroom instruction to facilitate students' learning effort. Research literature suggests that language learning strategy use supports to build up learner autonomy and to get conscious control of learning process (Hsiao & Oxford, 2002). Oxford (1990, p. 8) emphasizes that L2 learning strategies 'make learning easier, faster, more enjoyable, more self-directed, more effective and more transferable to new situations'. Some studies conducted in L2 contexts have revealed significant correlations between strategy use and L2 proficiency (Cohen, 1997; Green & Oxford, 1995).

This study identified that the conventional teacher-centered pedagogy is a common source of learning demotivation, and this finding correspond to the demotivators of some other Asian L2 contexts (Arai, 2004; Trang & Baldauf, 2007). This consistent problem necessitates restructuring of conventional teaching methods practiced in EFL classrooms. In contrast, interactive, participatory and interesting classroom activities contribute to promote learner motivation (Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008; Jung, 2011) and support students' communicative competence. EFL teachers also need to be aware of catering to individual student's needs and level of proficiency. Memorization based teaching/learning practice is another consistent source of EFL demotivation (Kim et al., 2018) which hinders the development of learners' linguistic abilities. It is necessary to plan classroom activities which engage learners in using their own L2 repertoire to improve language skills.

The incompetent management of classroom atmosphere affects students' mental health and consequently promotes learner demotivation. The findings of this study indicate that both teachers' and classmates' negative reactions caused learner anxiety in classroom contexts. In an anxiety provoking climate L2 students' performance deteriorates

(Trang & Baldauf, 2007). For effective L2 pedagogy it is important to maintain fearless classroom atmosphere where students are allowed the freedom to make mistakes and to interact spontaneously nurturing their individual L2 repertoire (Nakata, 2006). Instructors need to play a powerful role to culture a supportive classroom environment where weak students do not become subject to humiliation and negligence. Again, pleasant and supportive classroom atmosphere plays significant role to remotivate EFL learners (Jung, 2011). EFL Teachers themselves need to be aware that unbecoming behavior may leave long term inhibition on students' mind causing serious disinterest toward the subject (Trang & Baldauf, 2007). EFL teachers also need to be careful about creating democratic classroom culture where each student with any level of proficiency gets opportunity to participate in classroom activities and doesn't feel neglected. Christophel and Gorham (1995) correctly pointed out that learners' internal conditions can negatively influence their motivation towards learning. Students' frustration caused by chronological experience of failure and classmates' better performance need to be treated seriously by providing counselling in institutional premise.

Private tutoring is perhaps a uniquely found demotivator in Bangladeshi high school context. The wide spread practice of private tuition is an obvious consequence of inadequate classroom instruction (Hamid et al., 2017). Findings of this study indicate that though students are unhappy about paying private tutors, they cannot avoid it since school English teaching is not dependable. In order to prevent the problem of private tutoring, high school teachers' inadequate salary structure deserves attention of policy makers. 'Many teachers also need additional income' (Hamid et al., 2017, p. 872) and these realities enforce the prevailing practice of private tutoring in different forms. It is necessary to restructure the existing provision of job facilities for high

school teachers in order to attract qualified candidates and to make the posts competitive. These associated issues require serious consideration in education reformation initiatives.

In Bangladeshi education context a commonly cited complain about classroom instruction is too large class-size to conduct teaching activities. At HS level in many institutions students of all three divisions (humanities, science, and commerce) gather in the same classroom to attend English classes. This nationwide problem may be minimized by conducting separate English classes for each division. To materialize this plan more number of classrooms and English teachers are needed in some institutions. At the same time the minimum logistic facilities (e.g. electric fan, writable board) need to be assured to support classroom instruction.

The HS level English textbook, *English for Today*, has been criticized by a number of evaluators (Alam, 2018; Ali, 2014). Findings of this study indicate that textbook designing needs to be based on stakeholders' necessities, recommendations and interests. It is also possible to upgrade the current textbook by providing sufficient resources for HSC Examination preparation, incorporating up-to-date content matters and adequate guidance for improving language skills.

The findings of the study necessitate substantial reformation in the existing process of teacher training. Both pre-service and in-service teacher training programs need special emphasis on developing high school teachers' English language competence. They need training on how to cater to individual student's needs and collective interests. EFL teachers need prior training in language learning strategy oriented activities. Many language teachers are unaware of the fact that their instructional style and unbecoming

behavior demotivate their students. The training programs need to stress on those affective factors and their negative effects on L2 learners. EFL teachers also need training on how to provide supportive counselling to frustrated students.

### **Conclusions**

In the history of L2 research in Bangladesh learner demotivation is an under researched issue. This study has tried to listen to learners' stories which collectively offer a picture of EFL classrooms at HS level in Bangladesh. The principle purpose of this paper is to explore the underlying processes involved in EFL demotivation and to inform the policymakers, curriculum developers, material designers, and especially English teachers toward preventing or minimizing its harmful effects on learning.

The predominant factor of this study *EFL Teachers' competence and behaviour* is found to be consistent in many other Asian contexts (Sakai & Kikuchi, 2009; Trang & Baldaugh, 2007). In the Bangladeshi context of English education a scarcity of competent teacher is widely perceived (Alam, 2018). Findings of this study indicate that incompetent teaching at different academic levels is responsible for causing many other demotivation factors. Teachers' competence is to a large extent dependent on both recruitment policy and training process. The existing teachers' training curriculum needs substantial reformation to meet contextual requirements.

The EFL demotivation factors identified in this paper necessitate a feasible, comprehensive and sustainable policy framework for English education in Bangladesh. Each of the identified demotivator of the paper needs to be substantially researched. Despite of its limitation of dependence on self-reported interviews, this study would be informative for future educational reformation.

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## **Appendix**

### **Interview guide**

1. How is your study going on?
2. Do you enjoy learning English?
3. Was there anything which demotivated you from learning English at higher secondary level?

Please share your experience regarding the following points:

- (i) Your higher secondary level English teachers' behavior, skills, teaching style, classroom management, commitment
  - (ii) Your opinion about institutional facilities
  - (iii) Past experiences which negatively affected your English study at HS level
  - (iv) You and your family members' attitudes toward English as a school subject
  - (v) Attitude toward your HS school classmates
  - (vi) Your opinion about your HS level English textbooks
  - (vii) Your opinion about the practice of private tutoring to study English
4. Do you think any important point is missed what you

## **Vietnamese EFL Teachers and IT Enabled Classrooms: Layers of Computer Self-efficacy**

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### **Abstract**

The study used the Vietnamese EFL teachers' own sense of computer self-efficacy to understand the potential for IT enabled classrooms in Vietnam today. The findings were generally very positive in terms of confidence in IT ability, although they did identify areas of potential weakness that might offer opportunities for further training in learner management systems and data manipulation tools. The research builds on Compeau & Higgins (1995) singular notion of computer self-efficacy to create a layered image of teacher computer self-efficacy. The layers are based on the 2019 computing challenges that would be faced by teachers working in modern IT enabled classrooms. The questionnaire survey, field research, was undertaken in Hue and Dong Ha, Vietnam and is based on the responses of 32 Vietnamese teachers. Demographic data was analyzed with respect to nationality, age and gender. The digital lives of the respondents were also reflected upon to make sense of the magnitude and strength of these teachers' computer self-efficacies.

### **Introduction**

This paper hopes to provide insights, to future computer assisted language learning (CALL) environment planners, on what can reasonably be expected of EFL teachers in an IT context. More specifically, this paper will provide insights into the potential of Vietnamese English teachers to work in IT enabled classrooms. The study uses the notion of layered teacher computer self-efficacy to help teachers understand what, in 2019, is a reasonable level of IT challenge for an EFL teacher, and whether

Vietnamese EFL teachers are confident enough to run IT enabled classrooms. The paper also highlights that computer self-efficacy is not a singular skill. Computer efficacy is multi-layered. In fact defined in this paper, are six distinct IT layers of challenge and it was found that the strength and magnitude of teacher efficacy varied with each challenge.

#### *Teacher computer self-efficacy*

Compeau & Higgins' (1995) computer self-efficacy and Mishra and Koehler's (2006) technological pedagogical content knowledge framework (TPACK) have been the subject of much EFL research (e.g. Koçoğlu, 2009; Köse, 2016; Liu & Kleinsasser, 2015). Computer self-efficacy is, according to Compeau & Higgins (1995), a judgment of personal capability to use a computer. In 2019, with the greater use of PC, mobile and on-line systems in daily life, it seems appropriate to think of multiple computer self-efficacies or layers of efficacy. An understanding of this layering of IT skills and functions is required to make a successful CALL IT enabled classroom and CALL IT enabled teacher.

#### *Identified IT challenges*

As opposed to focusing on the simple ability to use a computer, the study looked at the IT skills and challenges that an EFL teacher would need to face in an unsupported IT enabled classroom. The skills required would include the following;

- Internet & Projector
- Technical
- BYOD PC
- BYOD Smart-phone
- Learner Management
- Data Manipulation

Firstly, the teachers would need to be able to use the Internet and projectors. For example, power point presentations would be used to present the class learning points. Secondly, the teachers

might have to overcome technical difficulties, such as broken computers and Wi-Fi issues. Thirdly and fourthly, IT enabled classrooms rely on bring your own device (BYOD) possibly with either, or both, PCs and smart-phones. This is likely a new idea to most teachers and a challenge that would need to be met. Furthermore, a learner management system, such as Google Classroom would be used to provide the students with materials and to allow students to submit work 24/7. Google Classroom can also be used to provide assignment scores and feedback to students on their work. Finally, a simple data manipulation tool, such as Excel, would be required to create the students' final results from the data collected on Google Classroom.

### *CALL labs and communicative English teaching*

The research starts from the premise that IT enabled classrooms are the future and CALL labs belong to the past, but why? Call labs, as noted by Huang & Liu (2004), are not as complementary to communicative English teaching (CLT) as might be expected. CALL labs are not designed as communicative classrooms, at least not as the average EFL teacher with a communicative class would understand it. Hinkleman (2005) refers to them as machine-orientated environments that create solitary student-machine experiences. Historically, according to Warschauer (2004), CALL labs of the 1970s and 1980s were still associated with the Audio-Lingual method. This likely explains the design of CALL labs with isolating cubicles. The labs also require special training to use as both teacher and student. In many respects the design of the CALL lab impacts the flow of individual lessons. It is not simply aiding the class, it is actually to some extent dictating the class. For example, it is very difficult for students to see past their monitors, and it is difficult to interact in-person with other students or the teacher. The blackboard is generally unable to grab the students' attention whilst hidden in-front of several rows of PC monitors. CALL labs are not, in any respects, a normal CLT classroom.

CLT requires classrooms that allow for pair and group interaction, the ability to move, and the ability to focus on the



teacher. Technology should not interfere with the class, rather it should enhance the class when needed. In fact, ideally the technology should naturally fit into the normal classroom environment. Indeed, Bax (2003) makes the point that CALL will only be normalised when the computer's sole purpose is to serve the carefully analyzed needs of the learner as opposed to redefining the need in-line with the technologies capability.

### *BYOD and CLT*

Bring your own device (BYOD) offers an alternative to a CALL lab. It brings technology into normal CLT classrooms. It can be argued that the recent implementation of BYOD approaches and tablet based classes has brought forward a shift in CALL. Even still, according to Hockly (2012), BYOD in the classroom does have several challenges, such as the variety of devices used, Wi-Fi requirements and class management issues. However, that said, BYOD tends to mean that students are using devices that they are familiar, and comfortable, with. The devices tend to have a smaller footprint as the students have to carry them into the room. This means the devices do not impede the normal flow of a communicative EFL class. They can be used when needed and bagged when not. Small devices do not interrupt the line of sight of the students. Small devices do not prevent students from making random groups, moving and interacting with a range of students. However, BYOD is unlikely to be effective alone. A BYOD approach works best within the structure of an IT enabled classroom.

### *Teachers' needs and ability*

There is a lack of clarity as to how the various IT approaches meet the abilities and needs of the teachers. The purpose of the paper is to shine a light on how teacher IT ability, and need, can be matched to an IT enabled EFL classroom environment. The belief is that by matching teacher IT skills to the CALL environment, the environment will be become normalised, as Bax hypothesized in 2003, in a way that a CALL lab has never been able to achieve. Once IT enabled classrooms become the norm, then there is a base from which to launch new and

innovative approaches, but first the average teacher must buy into the need for CALL. This is something it would seem CALL labs have failed to deliver.

### **Methods & Data Collection**

The data was collected at teaching seminars in Hue and Dong Ha, Vietnam in March 2019. The study is based on a quantitative measurement of individual teacher IT confidence and ability. Measurements of the magnitude and strength of computer self-efficacy of 32 Vietnamese EFL teachers were collected.

#### *Instruments*

A simple measuring instrument, see appendix A, of computer self-efficacy, based on Compeau & Higgins (1995), was devised. It represents the identified IT challenges and the broader technical difficulties that could be encountered in an IT classroom environment. It was hoped to provide a more focused quantifiable measurement of the teachers' computer self-efficacy.

The measuring instrument provided two readings of computer self-efficacy; magnitude and strength. Firstly, the magnitude of computer self-efficacy suggests the levels of support needed by a teacher to undertake the outlined challenges. It was calculated, see appendix A, by counting the yes answers to each of the four questions per challenge. The maximum score per challenge per teacher is 4 points with a total combined maximum of 128 points for the 32 teachers. Secondly, the strength of computer self-efficacy reveals the level of confidence and conviction a teacher has in undertaking the outlined tasks. It is calculated by adding up the scores for yes, from one to ten, with no being counted as zero. The maximum score per challenge per teacher is 40 points.

#### *Procedures*

A closed question survey attempted to provide a simple measure of the teachers' computer self-efficacy. The survey was primarily provided online as a Google form. Access to the form was via QR code and URL. Paper copies were handed out to

those unable to access the online version and can be found in appendix A.

### *Participants*

The final cohort included 25 female, and 7 male, Vietnamese teachers aged 15-54. All non-Vietnamese and non-English teacher responses were removed from the study. In addition, all uncompleted questionnaires were also removed from the study.

### *Findings*

The magnitude of computer self-efficacy is a measure of the levels of support needed by a teacher to undertake the outlined challenges. The lower the number of yes responses, the more support required. Looking at the data in table 1, it seems clear the teachers are remarkably willing to try and undertake the outlined challenges and might not need too much support. Based on the teachers own self-appraisal of computer efficacy, it would appear that Vietnam is a country ready and willing to teach in IT enabled classrooms. This may not be too surprising given that all 32 teachers reported having smart-phones and notebook computers. In addition, 17 teachers had a tablet computer and 17 had a desktop computer. Furthermore, 13 teachers had all four of these devices. In fact, seven teachers stated that they already work in an IT enabled classroom and their confidence was very high.

Teacher	Internet & Projector	Technical Difficulties	BYOD PC	BYOD Smart-Phone	Google Classroom	Excel
Yes	124	122	123	127	126	126
No	4	6	5	1	2	2
Total	128	128	128	128	128	128

Table 1: Computer self-efficacy measurement of magnitude

However, the strength of computer self-efficacy suggests the level of confidence and conviction a teacher has in undertaking the outlined tasks. The higher the number from 40, the more

confidence displayed. In this case, see table 2, the data becomes more nuanced. Objectively we can see that the Vietnamese teachers would be able to undertake with confidence an Internet and projector based class (31.19). They would also be somewhat confident in undertaking both a PC (27.25) and smart-phone (28.16) BYOD style class. The areas where the teachers displayed the lowest confidence were the tasks involving Excel, solving actual technical difficulties, and Google Classroom.

Teacher	Internet & Projector	Technical Difficulties	BYOD PC	BYOD Smart-Phone	Google Classroom	Excel
Vietnamese	31.19	26.24	27.25	28.16	25.41	26.35
<b>Total</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40

Table 2: Average computer self-efficacy measurement of strength

Looking at the individual challenge statements which are scored from 10 points, see figure 1, the statement with the lowest score is the initial technical statement (4.81), closely followed by the initial Google classroom and Excel statements both scoring 5.31. In fact, all six initial challenge statements, which offer the least support, are below 7 points. The Internet & projector initial statement, being the highest, starting at 6.81. In all six challenges, the final, fourth statement, which offers the most support, has a score over 7 points ranging from 7.25 for Google classroom to 8.19 for PC projector classes.

I could teach a class using the Internet and projector without any help.	6.81
I could teach a class using the Internet and projector, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	7.97
I could teach a class using the Internet and projector, if someone showed me how.	8.22
I could teach the class using the Internet and projector, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	8.19
I could deal with technical difficulties without any help.	4.81
I could deal with technical difficulties, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	6.59
I could deal with technical difficulties, if someone showed me how.	7.06
I could deal with technical difficulties, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	7.78
I could teach a BYOD PC class without any help.	5.97
I could teach a BYOD PC class, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	6.78
I could teach a BYOD PC class, if someone showed me how.	6.84
I could teach a BYOD PC class, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	7.66
I could teach a BYOD smart phone class without any help.	6.16
I could teach a BYOD smart phone class, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	7
I could teach a BYOD smart phone class, if someone showed me how.	7.19
I could teach a BYOD smart phone class, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	7.81
I could use Google Classroom without any help.	5.31
I could use Google Classroom, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	6.16
I could use Google Classroom, if someone showed me how.	6.69
I could use Google Classroom, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	7.25
I could use Excel without any help.	5.31
I could use Excel, if I could ask for help when I got stuck.	6.69
I could use Excel, if someone showed me how.	6.94
I could use Excel, if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help.	7.41

Figure 1: Average scores for 24 computer self-efficacy statements

When we looked at efficacy in relation to teacher age, see table 3, an interesting pattern emerges. Firstly, the younger teachers have greater confidence in using technology and the older teachers, while still very confident, appear less confident in dealing with technical difficulties. In terms of BYOD, the younger generation of teachers appear to be more comfortable with the idea, although all ages are actually relatively confident. Yet, regardless of age, Google Classroom averages around 25 and appears to be the area of greatest, and equal, concern.

Teacher	Internet & Projector	Technical Difficulties	BYOD PC	BYOD Smart-Phone	Google Classroom	Excel
15-24	34.07	27.92	28.99	29.3	25.08	29.54
25-34	29.29	26.99	28.43	30.29	25.57	23
35-44	28.34	23.32	24.5	26.17	25.83	27.5
45-54	30	24.67	24.84	25.17	25.5	22.16
<b>Total</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40

Table 3: Teacher age and average computer self-efficacy measurement of strength

In terms of gender, see table 4, the males appear to have a very strong sense of computer self-efficacy. Although, once again, Google Classroom is the weakest section for both males and females.

Teacher	Internet & Projector	Technical Difficulties	BYOD PC	BYOD Smart-Phone	Google Classroom	Excel
Female	30.72	25.4	26.96	27.24	25.72	25.2
Male	32.85	29.29	28.29	31.43	24.28	30.42
<b>Total</b>	40	40	40	40	40	40

Table 4: Gender and average teacher computer self-efficacy measurement of strength

## **Discussion**

Overall, the Vietnamese teachers appear very confident in their ability to use IT in the classroom, and it is quite likely that they are well suited to IT enabled classrooms. It was clear, that the Vietnamese have a strong can-do attitude with above average conviction that they could simply make an IT enabled classroom work. When suggested that they would be provided with support, the confidence in successfully managing an IT enabled classroom rose to even higher levels.

The reasons for why the Vietnamese cohort are so confident can probably be found in the demographic data. Interestingly, the data was heavily skewed towards female respondents (78%), with the data suggesting that if there had been more male respondents the confidence levels might even be higher. This suggests the Vietnamese teachers, in general, are very confident with computers. The age of the respondents also appears to have played a role. Younger teachers were generally more confident and 62.5% of the responding teachers were under 35 years of age. In addition, all of the respondents own smart-phones and notebook computers with 66% owning a third device, be that either a desktop or tablet computer. The reason that IT enabled classrooms appear to work is that they normalize CALL, aligning with everyday life, consequently decreasing the environmental learning load on both students and teachers. Evidently, the Vietnamese teachers use technology in their everyday lives and appear confident to use IT in the classroom. However, regardless of which demographic slice we take, Google Classroom is the area where the teachers seemed the least confident. Anecdotally, from talking to students and teachers, it seems that Google Classroom is relatively unknown and, with only a few exceptions, the respondents simply had not used it.

There were also some lower confidence levels among the teachers when they reflected on technical difficulties and Excel usage. In the case of the former, the lower levels of confidence shown by some of the teachers is totally understandable. Indeed,

the confidence in tackling technical difficulties was actually much higher than had been expected. It appears likely that in the real world, in order for an IT enabled classroom to be effective, a school must provide IT support. The confidence displayed by many teachers will help a school provide efficient, lean support that focuses on the central core issues, such as Wi-Fi connectivity and broken PCs.

The lower confidence level with Excel was somewhat surprising. The researcher had expected the younger generation to have less experience with Excel, as they come from the mobile first generation. However, it had equally been anticipated that the older generation would be more proficient with Excel. The results were far more mixed across the age groups, and less clear cut, than had been expected. It is likely that further research is required to clarify Excel ability levels, although once again the youngest teachers appeared very confident in using this data manipulation tool.

## **Conclusion**

Vietnam appears set for IT enabled classrooms. In fact, 22% of the teachers stated they were already using IT enabled classrooms. All 32 of the teachers had smart-phones and notebook computers. The confidence to use projectors was very high. Quite possibly, learner management systems were the weakest link. It was clear that the teachers were unsure about Google Classroom. However, this is one of the easiest and intuitive skills to learn and motivated teachers would easily be able to pick up this skill. Consequently, if the students can afford a BYOD approach and schools can provide IT support, then Vietnamese teachers appear ready to meet the IT enabled classroom challenge.

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## APPENDIX A

**Questionnaire**

**I COULD TEACH A CLASS USING THE INTERNET AND PROJECTOR**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

STOP

**I COULD DEAL WITH TECHNICAL DIFFICULTIES**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

STOP

**I COULD TEACH A PC BYOD CLASS**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

STOP

**I COULD TEACH A BYOD SMART-PHONE CLASS**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

STOP

**I COULD USE GOOGLE CLASSROOM**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

STOP

**I COULD USE EXCEL**

	No	Not at all confident	Moderately confident	Totally confident
Q-1 ... without any help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-2 ... if I could ask someone for help if I got stuck	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-3 ... if someone showed me how	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10
Q-4 ... if someone both showed me how and was there to ask for help	0	1 2 3	4 5 6 7	8 9 10

**Computing Experience**

Do you have a smart-phone? e.g. iPhone or Android phone

- Yes
- No

Do you have a tablet computer? e.g. IPAD

- Yes
- No

Do you have a laptop/notebook computer?

- Yes
- No

Do you have a Desktop PC?

- Yes
- No

How would you describe your computing skills?

- Poor
- below average
- average
- above average
- excellent

How would you describe your main teaching classroom?

- blackboard
- whiteboard
- interactive-board
- CALL Lab
- IT enabled

Do you ever use a CALL Lab?

- daily
- weekly
- monthly

**Demographics**

What is your nationality?

- Vietnamese
- Other

If you are not Vietnamese, what is your nationality? \_\_\_\_\_

Gender

- Female
- Male

Age

- 15-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65+

Are you an English teacher?

- Yes
- No

If yes, what type of institution do you teach in?

- University
- High School
- Junior High School
- Elementary
- Kindergarten
- Private Language School

How did you access this questionnaire? QR Code Reader - the URL - the paper version

## **The Transitional Challenges and Transformational Experiences of an Aspiring Global Human Resource: A Case Study of a Japanese Exchange Student**

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### **Abstract**

Japanese university students choose to study abroad for various reasons. Studying abroad may give them a chance to be immersed in other cultures where linguistic, social, cognitive, and emotional factors impact their willingness to communicate (WTC) (Macintyre & Legatto, 2010). Studying abroad might also encourage them to confront their ingrained beliefs and stereotypes, thereby strengthening their inner core that could transform them into global citizens (Wang, 2017). While abroad, some Japanese students may even transition from being peripheral to legitimate members of global Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2000). This case study investigates the transitional challenges and transformational experiences (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010) of an undergraduate Japanese exchange student in the United States over ten months. The student participated in pre- and post-study abroad interviews and also e-mailed fortnightly or monthly journal entries that examined some of the challenges he faced. The pre-study abroad interview demonstrated how the student's three-year immersion in English learning contexts helped prepare him for his academic year abroad. The journal entries highlighted how he adjusted to social expectations abroad, adopted effective strategies to communicate in English, and raised his awareness of global issues in order to become more politically correct. His study abroad experience confirmed that he wanted to continue along his current path of becoming a global human resource (GHR), who could contribute to Japan and the world.

## **Literature Review**

Raising the quantity and quality of global human resources (GHRs) by sending Japanese youth abroad has become a priority for Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) (Wang, 2017). MEXT defines GHRs as individuals with "rich language and communication skills, independence and assertiveness, and a mindset that can understand other cultures premised on in-depth understanding of Japanese culture and their own identity as Japanese" (MEXT, 2015, para. 1). GHR development and studying abroad can be quantified by aggregating the number of Japanese students who participate in short and long-term study abroad programs. In contrast, qualifying the study abroad experience is complicated as each experience is unique and as such non-generalizable (Gu, 2009; Gu et al., 2010). Accordingly, if students are to truly benefit from MEXT's initiatives of promoting study abroad to Japanese youth for GHR development, in addition to increasing the number of Japanese students who go abroad, MEXT must also raise the quality of the study abroad experience so that Japanese students can manage the transitions that may transform them into GHRs who can contribute to a more cosmopolitan Japan (Wang, 2017). There is thus a need for a richer understanding on the grassroots level of how Japanese students confront, negotiate, and overcome the various challenges they experience abroad to become closer to their idealized GHR (Wang, 2017).

Prior research on studying abroad has shown that due to internal and external factors of the individual involved, qualitative outcomes from studying abroad can vary significantly depending on the individual (Byram, 2003). Gu et al. (2010) analyzed the experiences of international students (n=126) in four universities in the United Kingdom. They showed that some international students were able to manage transitions abroad by negotiating a new identity that was intertwined with the non-linear changes in their intercultural competence and personal maturity. Other studies on second language acquisition and study abroad have analyzed and interpreted student identity

shifts when second language learners encounter new geographical, cultural, personal, and psychological borders (Block, 2007; Dolby, 2004; Ellwood, 2011). When abroad, the students' sense of identity becomes rather destabilized—they often struggle with negotiating a different identity in a context of uncertainty and ambivalence (Block, 2007). Previous research on managing identity shifts while abroad underscore that “the cross-cultural is not only within the intercultural: it is within themselves” (Gu et al., 2010, Conclusions section, para. 3). As students go abroad and suddenly become the “other” in unfamiliar territory, they are forced to examine their own identity for their personal growth and maturity (Dolby, 2004); students themselves play an active role in being the agents responsible for managing the multifaceted changes that might result in a newfound identity (Gu et al., 2010).

The new identity that some students eventually adopt as a result of studying abroad may coincide with the emergence of a GHR. When students experience other cultures, languages, customs, and values, they also begin to strengthen their inner core as a GHR (Wang, 2017). Building a solid inner core requires reflecting on weaknesses within oneself and stereotypes one may have, which may eventually lead to a gradual shift in one's identity as indicated by Gu et al. (2010). Quappe and Cantatore (2005) have categorized four stages of cultural awareness that begin with a parochial stage (my way is the only way), an ethnocentric stage (I know their way, but my way is better), a synergistic stage (my way and their way), and a participatory stage (our shared way). Goldoni's (2013) study revealed that those students who were able to move from a parochial to a participatory stage were resourceful in seeking opportunities to interact with locals, being accepted by locals, and finding ways in which they could have an insider perspective into the target culture. In contrast, those students who were unable or unwilling to integrate with locals were less likely to adopt a more participatory mindset. Students who transitioned towards a participatory stage began to notice gradual changes in their core values and understanding of how the world should operate,

which may situate them as legitimate members in global Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2000). Consequently, the ultimate aim for students who study abroad is to challenge their ethnocentric beliefs and to reflect on the possibility of adopting more ethnorelativist beliefs that embody the essence of intercultural sensitivity and awareness (Isabelli-García, 2006). While studying abroad at a Japanese public university, some international students ( $n=10$ ) in Wang's (2017) study on fostering GHRs in Japanese higher education institutions said that living in Japan allowed them to move closer towards their goal of becoming a cosmopolitan ethnorelativist with a resilient core that would enable them to think about their global and local experiences as world citizens (Delanty, 2000). The international students felt that having another cultural reference made them think more critically about their ingrained values (Wang, 2017). They also believed that their presence in Japan could facilitate cross-cultural understanding—as cultural representatives of their home country to Japan and as informed representatives of Japanese culture to people in their home country (Wang, 2017).

Past studies have concluded that studying abroad leads to mixed results for the individuals involved, and those students who have a greater willingness to engage and adapt to the local culture have more transformational experiences that can contribute to a new identity (Goldoni, 2013). In other words, some students may return as changed individuals with a cosmopolitan identity, whereas others may not have been able to manage the transitional challenges or confront problems that would make them question their core values. As MEXT continues to promote studying abroad for GHR development, it is imperative that researchers delve into the qualitative aspects of studying abroad so that MEXT's policy is not implemented simply as an economic and political tool that relies on human capital abroad returning to their home country to strengthen the country's knowledge economy and global prowess akin to China's brain gain strategies (Pan, 2011; Zhao, 2008). From a top-down policy perspective, the Japanese government's GHR policy is aligned well with human capital theories that tout the merits of an

economy driven by educated citizens returning to their home country with knowledge acquired from abroad. On a more micro level, there needs to be further investigation into what is necessary for Japanese students to be able to manage transitions abroad to emerge as GHRs.

### **Research Design**

This is a qualitative case study of the study abroad experience of a Japanese male undergraduate student majoring in business administration at a public university in Japan. The objective of the study was to analyze the student's transitional challenges and transformational experiences over his 10 months in the United States. The student received a *Tobitate* scholarship from the Japanese government that paid for his living costs and tuition from his public university in Japan. Having living costs, tuition, and other fees subsidized made studying abroad more accessible to him as many Japanese university students in Wang's (2017) indicated that the high costs associated with studying abroad made it less attractive. This Japanese student was selected because he had participated in a study on GHR development (Wang, 2017) and in cross-border debate projects (Wang & Kihara, 2016, 2017, 2018). Prior to the commencement of this research project, he signed a consent form. As he had already reflected on what it means to be a GHR within the context of his own lifeworld (Shinebourne, 2011), the researcher deemed that investigating the challenges he faced while abroad would expand on previous studies of his attitudes towards becoming a GHR (Wang, 2017).

He participated in a face-to-face pre-study abroad interview at the end of May 2018 (see Appendix 1). The interview that lasted approximately an hour was conducted mainly in Japanese and was recorded, transcribed, and translated from Japanese into English. After the interview, the participant confirmed the accuracy of the transcription. The questions asked during the interview were about his values, motivation for learning English, expectations of studying abroad, and future goals. At the end of August 2018, he submitted a follow-up questionnaire in English

about how he was feeling about his imminent academic year abroad (see Appendix 2). The questionnaire was intended to supplement the pre-study abroad interview with any updates on his preparation for studying abroad.

In mid-September, two weeks after arriving in the United States, the student began submitting e-journals in English every two to four weeks in which he reflected on the linguistic, social, environmental, and cognitive challenges (Macintyre & Legatto, 2010) of studying and living abroad. The researcher did not respond to the content in the e-journals unless specifically requested by the student, or if she felt that the student was under emotional distress. She thought that if she shared her opinions, especially as an American citizen, she might color his reflective process. After 12 journal entries had been submitted in early June 2019, the researcher began to analyze and interpret the results by categorizing them into themes using a qualitative interpretative methodology that are often utilized for a case description based on case-based themes (Creswell, Hanson, Plano Clark, & Morales, 2007).

The post-study abroad interview on June 21, 2019 was conducted in English and was recorded using Skype's recording services (see Appendix 3). For the pre- and post-study abroad interviews, the student was allowed to choose the language of the interview. Although he spoke in Japanese in the pre-study abroad interview, in the post-study abroad interview he chose to use English only. The post-study abroad interview was transcribed, and the transcription was later verified by the participant. The primary objective of the post-study abroad interview was to confirm the themes and content that the researcher had identified in his journal entries. Questions about his identity and future were also asked.

The purpose of this case study was to investigate the transitional challenges and transformational experiences of a Japanese exchange student enrolled at a university in the United States for an academic year. The research questions were as follows:



- (1) How did he prepare for his study abroad experience?
- (2) What challenges did he face during his study abroad experience?
- (3) What experiences abroad added to his personal growth?
- (4) How did studying abroad impact his future vision?

## **Findings**

### *Preparation Beforehand: Immersion in English*

The student's motivation to learn English was sparked after he graduated from high school. In high school, he was not interested in English because he was occupied with being the co-captain of a baseball club and playing baseball seven days a week. In university, he spent approximately seven hours a day outside of class learning English because he could, for the first time in his life, devote himself to something other than baseball. In a university English course, he watched movies in English and realized that he needed to study English harder to comprehend the content without Japanese subtitles. Every day after school, he watched movies in English and studied for the Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) because he thought it would be "cool" to get a higher score than his Japanese peers. During his commute to and from university, he listened to podcasts in English, which he would summarize in the form of a presentation. Sometimes, he would use his smartphone to video record himself give 20-25 minute presentations in English on the content discussed in the podcasts.

At the end of his freshman year, he participated in a six-week internship to Vietnam with the Association internationale des étudiants en sciences économiques et commerciales (AIESEC). Although he did not have a chance to learn Vietnamese at the time, he was able to improve his English speaking skills as a result of working closely on projects with AIESEC students from Germany, Malaysia, and Poland. This internship made him realize that English was a lingua franca that connected him with people in the world. When he returned to Japan, he decided to learn English for communicative purposes. Prior to this

experience, he had prioritized English input from online sources and TOEIC books. After the internship, he changed his strategy of learning English to practicing more output by speaking with a global community of English speakers. Consequently, he started to interact with exchange students who were studying at his Japanese university. He even organized sushi parties with about 25 exchange students who lived in the dormitories and studied with them about three times a week at cafes around town.

In his sophomore year, he joined cross-border debate projects run by the researcher and her co-researcher (Wang & Kihara, 2016, 2017, 2018). The debate project connected him with students in Poland, Taiwan, Vietnam, and international students on campus. These debates made him appreciate having a real audience when speaking a foreign language. He realized that his rigorous immersion in English using online and TOEIC resources was insufficient when he had to express and support his opinions in front of an audience. Therefore, he immersed himself in the debate project that required his participation in e-debates with university students abroad as well as live debates on campus with international students. He also went to Taiwan for about a week to participate in debates with Taiwanese graduate students.

During his junior year, the student enrolled in an intensive one-year immersion program in international business. The program had a drop out ratio of 50 percent, with only a handful of Japanese students successfully completing the program so that they could participate in exchange programs that would allow them to continue to pay the relatively inexpensive Japanese public university tuition. All of the business and language courses were taught in English, and students were required to use English only in the classroom. The courses were student centered—the assignments required working in small groups, discussing global topics, and analyzing case studies of international companies. The aim of this one-year immersion program was to prepare Japanese university students for academic settings abroad. Most of the students in this program,

namely those who were able to participate in the official exchange programs with universities abroad, were highly motivated and were his GHR role models. The student recognized that the intensive training in this immersion program had prepared him for the course work when he was an exchange student in the United States.

### *Different Group Work Expectations in the United States*

The student's three-year preparation for studying abroad—by immersing himself in English learning contexts and finding opportunities to interact with native and non-native English speakers—helped him assimilate into the academic culture of the United States. He arrived, already equipped with good study habits for learning English, communicative skills for interacting with English speakers, and experience of learning in environments that simulated academic cultures abroad.

Despite his preparation, the student experienced some transitional challenges when working on group projects with his peers in the United States. First, he found group work expectations in the United States to be different from Japan. He was accustomed to operating in a group-oriented and collectivist Japanese society (Hamamura, 2012) that values relationship building before working together on projects. However, in the United States, his peers prioritized goal setting and individual responsibility over relationship building.

*Japanese people tend to build friendships in the first place or outside the projects by hanging out or going for outings together and then start working on it, whereas people here in general tend to draw a fine line between their personal life and professional life...Whenever we have a meeting, people just put the effort that the project requires into it, show up, and get the thing done...I was startled at first because my classmates did not talk about personal stuff in an online group chat and just disappeared right after any meetings while in*

*Japan, people get to talk about their stuff and sometimes go out together in order to know their teammates in person.*

At first, he was unsure about how to operate in a group devoid of relationship-building exercises and practices to promote group harmony. In Japan, he thought that a student's private and school life had blurred boundaries, which implied that group work was an extension of one's private life. In contrast, university students in the United States focused immediately on the task at hand in order to complete the task as efficiently as possible. The overall attitude toward group work in the United States appeared to weigh individual responsibility and efficiency more heavily than group solidarity and shared responsibility. In the United States, he felt that the time spent to get to know each other was thought to be unnecessary as the boundaries between the private and school life were clearly demarcated and respected by group members.

Over time, the student brought in elements of relationship-building practices into his group projects so that he could work more effectively and comfortably in groups. In his post-study abroad interview he mentioned that after his first quarter in the United States, he began to ask his group members questions and tried to get to know his group members on a more personal level. In this way, he was able to maintain friendships with his group members even after the group project ended. As he started to integrate Japanese relationship-building practices into more individualized expectations of working in groups as in the United States, he transitioned from a synergistic stage to a participatory stage (Quappe & Cantatore, 2005). He confirmed in the post-study abroad interview that the Japanese and American attitude toward group work were equally valuable, particularly when considering the cultural beliefs towards shared versus individual responsibility of group members. However, he found it worked best for him to find a middle ground because when he became familiar with his group members by adopting strategies from Japanese relationship-building contexts, he was

able to determine the capacity that each member could work best in the group. As a result, he increased his awareness of how to utilize the strengths of each group member for the benefit of the entire group. In academic circles in the United States, he felt that the lack of relationship building in groups meant that more time could be spent directly on the project, and time was not wasted on scrutinizing what each person was capable of contributing to the group. Essentially, the responsibility of knowing what one is capable of in America was the onus of the individual, whereas in Japan it was the responsibility of the group.

### *Developing Communicative Skills in English*

Prior to going abroad, this student had spent two years interacting and socializing with exchange students who were studying at his Japanese university. He had access to a global network of friends in Japan with whom he was able to discuss global issues. Thus, he would not be considered the stereotypically shy Japanese English learner represented in Okada, Sawaumi, and Ito's (2018) study. As many of the international students in his Japanese university were interested in Japanese culture and were enjoying their stay in Japan, he did not find communicating with them to be difficult or unpleasant. In fact, he truly enjoyed getting to know and spending time with the international students living in Japan. Nevertheless, once in the United States, he quickly realized that communicating with students and other locals in America required additional communicative skills that he needed to hone.

After residing in the United States for two weeks, the student discovered that he should be more friendly and communicative with people he barely knew, even if this made him feel uneasy. The social rules in the United States and Japan differed in that in public, Americans were expected to adopt a certain level of friendliness that would make others feel comfortable in sharing the same space. Being approachable and friendly by engaging in small talk with strangers in a shared context is considered desirable in America (Gareis, 2012). In contrast, Japanese people tend to be more formal and are less likely to strike up a

conversation with complete strangers. The student admitted that if people in Japan were friendly to him as they were in the United States, he would be suspicious of them and would not talk to them because he did know them well enough. Nonetheless, he understood that in America, he had to learn the art of small talk to ensure that relationships are built from the very beginning. He needed to fill awkward silence with friendly banter as was expected in formal and informal social contexts in the United States. Coupland (2014) argues that although small talk may be commonly equated with marginal and unimportant discourse, it is essential in the field of sociolinguistics because it gives meaning to everyday topics and conversations that help create bonds in various settings such as at the workplace, at home, or at school.

*I would say that I learned to be more friendly [sic] to complete strangers or someone who I meet for the first time since I came here. As opposed to what I perceived in Japan where people tend to be indifferent to others, people here seem to expect others to be friendly when they first meet. For instance, what struck me is even bus drivers greet passengers...and I've observed the people at the front desk of my apartment wave at residents.*

He was surprised that people in the service industry in the United States would greet and chat with customers. The American service mentality contrasts with the Japanese form of hospitality called *omotenashi*, which is intended to put customers on a pedestal of divine status (Al-alsheikh, 2014). In the United States, good customer service is equated with being friendly via small talk rather than creating a formal distance with the customer who is almighty in Japan.

In the United States, he also adopted a sense of humor that helped him befriend others. According to Oshima (2013), jokes in a low context society such as the United States are made to break the ice between strangers, whereas jokes in a high context

society such as Japan are told to create solidarity among close friends and family members (p. 91). Given such differences in the role of humor in American and Japanese society, the student decided to expand his arsenal of jokes and develop a sense of wit that would be welcomed in America. In his free time, he spent many hours watching comedy shows including stand-up comedy. He would analyze the topics that were acceptable for making a mockery of, the way in which jokes were told, and the people comedians targeted their jokes at to make the audience laugh. By studying comedy in the United States, he learned that in order to make people laugh, he should say something unpredictable and with a twist. His research on humor within American contexts may have contributed to his ability to make his group members, friends, and roommates laugh. In the end, he admitted that his sense of humor gave him access to larger Communities of Practice (Wenger, 2000). At the beginning of his stay in the United States, he stayed in his room to study. However, after a few months, he became more friendly, approachable, and funny by overcoming the initial discomfort he felt in the presence of people he hardly knew. When he returned to Japan, he mentioned that English gave him the chance to adopt a more gregarious identity of being more outspoken and upfront.

Another skill he acquired while living overseas was asking questions about what interested people or what was important to people. By asking questions, he could focus on the conversation instead of being overwhelmed by how quickly people in the United States spoke. Moreover, by asking questions during the conversation, he admitted that he could maneuver the conversations in ways that would make him a more active participant in the conversation.

*When I first came here, I struggled to broaden whatever conversations I have because of the speed at which conversations go and lack of common interests I have with people around me...Then I thought of how to get out of this*

*stalemate and the next thing I thought of was the art of asking further questions...I tried to be curious to know anything whatever situations I happened to be in. For example, when I eat homemade pasta with my Italian roommates, when I have a talk about music with one of my friends from France, or when I listen to one of my friends from Seattle talking about his experiences in China. Whatever situation I was in, I tried to just understand what they are excited about.*

In Wang and Kihara's (2017) case study of a Japanese peer who showed a high aptitude in his willingness to communicate (WTC) in the cross-border debate, the student's peer mentioned that his communicative goal was not to push his opinions on others. Instead, he tried to say things that were interesting and also showed interest in what others were saying (Wang & Kihara, 2017). Saying things that were interesting meant that he thought about the background of the people he was talking to and tried to share information that may be new to them or corresponded to their topic of interest. Being interested required asking follow-up questions, confirming, and clarifying what others said, and building on what others have said.

The student in this study mentioned that he was impressed by the WTC of his Japanese peer in Wang & Kihara's (2017) case study because even if his peer's English proficiency was much lower than the other Japanese students who participated in the cross-border debate, he demonstrated a higher WTC by being interesting and interested. This debate made him realize that he also needed to ask good questions for smooth communication in low context cultures that required individuals to be more proactive and direct communicators who could negotiate meaning during conversations. Moreover, asking questions in a low context culture such as the United States did not mean he was losing face for not being properly informed. Rather, asking good questions meant that he could secure credibility and prestige in the United States (Ardichvili, Maurer, Li, Wentling,



& Stuedemann, 2006) for his ability to think critically about what was said to him. Towards the end of his stay, he wrote that asking questions was important because it could minimize the risks of miscommunication and misunderstandings and would ensure his success in international settings.

### *Intercultural Aptitude*

In addition to improving his communicative skills in English while abroad, the student said that he needed to raise his intercultural aptitude. In the United States, he aimed to be politically correct in order to have a public face that would be acceptable, even if the public values may or may not correspond to his true values (Van Boven, 2000). Interestingly, Japanese culture also embraces the concept of a having a public face (*tatemae*) that is sensitive towards others and a private face (*honne*) that is sensitive to oneself (Nishimura, Nevgi, & Tella, 2008). However, in the United States, he developed a public face that was more responsive to multicultural environments. Fortunately, for this student, prior to going overseas, he knew the importance of having “a better cultural understanding of the outside of Japan” as this was indicated as one of his goals prior to going overseas. Therefore, it is not surprising that he was eager to raise his intercultural aptitude as soon as he arrived in the United States.

*I don't think people living in Japan are racist, but they are unfortunately not well informed about how they have to understand the world. What the mainstream media broadcast are no longer corresponding to what's really happening outside the island. For instance, painting comedians' face black and letting them dance around in a TV program is actually a huge red flag. But this can be seen sometimes. Not only in Japan but also in some Asian countries. I was honestly much more ignorant about what's really going on outside Japan than I am right now. Being able to navigate through the*

*culture and not being ignorant about the world seems crucial after all.*

In order to raise his intercultural aptitude, he reflected on controversial issues that might make him question his understanding of world events from a Japanese lens. He tried to be more sensitive to other views of Japan's involvement in wars with the United States because he was aware that people tended to have distorted or biased interpretations of their own country's history (Baumeister & Hastings, 1997). He even conducted his own research in order to understand a different perspective of Japan's involvement in World War II by visiting the Arizona Memorial during his long layover in Hawaii. When Japanese people visit Hawaii, a visit to the Arizona Memorial is a low priority as is evidenced by data that shows that only 10% of Japanese visitors visit the location as an afterthought or because it happened to be part of a package tour (Yaguchi, 2005). The lack of interest of Japanese visitors to Hawaii in understanding the Japan's attacks on Pearl Harbor may be associated with the reality that the incident is hardly mentioned in Japanese textbooks (Yaguchi, 2005).

*Some Japanese tend to think that atomic bombs dropped by US military are only brutal and they were just destroyed. But the truth is Japan at the time also committed the sudden attack on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. Before flying to the US, I did a layover in Hawaii and since I had 12 hours to explore the island, I walked to the Memorial Museum about World War 2. Then I saw a lot of stories on the war and realized how we see the war is a bit different from each other. Japanese do not usually emphasize how brutal the sudden attack was. But what I witnessed was why and how Japan decided to go for it and how dreadful it was. It was not usually in the history textbook in Japan.*

The student felt that raising his awareness of issues from multiple perspectives would help him work effectively in international business contexts. During his stay abroad, he tried his best to be less ignorant and more aware of how people may have different interpretations of an incident or an issue due to their upbringing, background, and way of thinking. When he made friends with people from around the world, he carefully researched what topics he should or should not broach and tried to be more politically correct and considerate of others' diverse backgrounds.

### *Future Goals*

The student was accustomed to setting goals from his freshman year in university. In fact, even in high school, the student had set goals. For instance, as co-captain of his baseball team, he came up with a winning strategy for the team to participate in the prefectural championship games. He also confided in his father about how to address problems in his life. His pre-study abroad goals were “having independence, better cultural understanding of outside of Japan, better proficiency in English, and further knowledge on international business and management.” His journal entries and his post-study abroad interview confirmed that he had achieved his pre-study abroad goals in various ways. For this student though, his study abroad experience gave him something unexpected—the self-confidence of knowing that he could survive in international settings by using an expanded set of communicative skills and having the ability to think more deeply about global issues. In fact, for many students who find their study abroad experience beneficial, intercultural development and personal development with respect to having more self-confidence are the greatest advantages of studying abroad (Dwyer & Peters, 2004). In the post-study abroad interview, he mentioned that he was rewarded for his hard work prior to going abroad and while he was abroad because he felt even more positive about his future of working outside of Japan as a GHR. After graduation, the student hopes to work for a global consulting firm because he could improve his critical thinking, test out hypotheses, and develop his

professionalism. Prior to going abroad, he had not thought much about consulting work, but after going abroad, he realized that working for a consulting firm would capitalize on the skills he had honed when abroad and build on his newfound self-confidence of working in international environments.

## **Conclusion**

The student was able to manage various transitions and negotiate a new identity in the United States. He learned to adapt to more individualized group work expectations while trying to negotiate conditions that had elements of Japanese relationship-building practices. He also overcame communicative obstacles by becoming more outspoken, amusing, interactive, and inquisitive. Finally, he acknowledged that living in multicultural contexts necessitated a higher intercultural aptitude of being politically correct and aware of various interpretations of global issues. The student also stated that being proactive and reflective was helpful when he was in the United States. He realized that it was his responsibility to have the willingness not only to communicate (Macintyre & Legatto, 2010) but also to interact with local people, listen to diverse opinions, and reflect on the experiences he had so that he could face each challenge in front of him. In the end, studying abroad for this student was a journey that contributed to a more outspoken and reflective individual who could thrive in international settings.

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## **Appendix 1: Pre-study abroad interview**

### **The emergence of a global human resource? *The motivations, the process, and the evolution***

**Date:** May 24, 2018 (16:00 ~ 17:00) at a private Japanese university in the Kansai region

**Participant:** Japanese, male, undergraduate, business administration major at a public university in the Kansai region, age 23

#### **Interview questions:**

1. What are the sources of your cultural programming?  
What are the most important rules, norms, and values you learned from that source?  
(Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998, p. 51)
2. What made you interested in learning foreign languages?
3. What made you interested in studying abroad?
4. What do you expect from studying abroad?
5. What are your future goals?

#### **Themes to investigate during the interview:**

- Interest in culture, community, family—the initiation
- English learning in school—the foundation
- Study abroad experience—the immersion
- Life-long learning—dedication, self-regulation

Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe, A. (1998). *Managing diversity: A complete desk reference and planning guide*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

## **Appendix 2: Pre-departure questionnaire**

### **Pre-departure questionnaire, submitted on August 31, 2018**

Your major/faculty: \_\_\_\_\_

Your age: \_\_\_\_\_ years old

Your highest score (TOEIC/TOEFL/other): \_\_\_\_\_

1. How prepared do you feel about going overseas to study?
- a. Very prepared
  - b. Prepared
  - c. Somewhat prepared
  - d. No opinion
  - e. Not very prepared
  - f. Unprepared

2. Why did you answer the way you did for Q1 [Preparation]

3. How are you feeling about going overseas to study?
- a. Very excited
  - b. Excited
  - c. Somewhat excited
  - d. Neutral
  - e. Not that excited
  - f. Not excited at all

4. If you answered a-c for Q3, what is it that makes you excited about going overseas? (positive things)

5. Do you have any concerns (worries) about going overseas? If yes, what are they?

6. What do you expect to gain from going overseas for a year?

### **Appendix 3: Post-study abroad interview**

#### **The emergence of a global human resource?** *The motivations, the process, and the evolution*

**Date:** June 21, 2019 (17:00 ~ 17:50) using Skype and Skype's recoding service

**Participant:** Japanese, male, undergraduate, business administration major at a public university in the Kansai region, age 24

#### **Interview questions:**

1. Could you expand on some of the themes that emerged from your journal entries?
2. What are the sources of your cultural programming? What are the most important rules, norms, and values you learned from that source? (Gardenswartz & Rowe, 1998, p. 51)
3. How would you like to (continue to) develop as an English language learner?
4. What do you imagine your future to look like?

#### **Themes to investigate during the interview:**

- Group work and expectations
- Cross-cultural communication strategies
- Intercultural aptitude

Gardenswartz, L., & Rowe, A. (1998). *Managing diversity: A complete desk reference and planning guide*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.

## **Cultural Barriers to Critical Thinking Skills: A Case of Bangladeshi ESL Classrooms**

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### **Abstract**

Development of critical thinking skills is considered central to successful academic performance. However, in tertiary level classrooms of Bangladesh, where it is expected that learners should demonstrate higher order thinking skills, the data shows that learners in most cases could not go beyond lower order thinking skills. It is found that their ability to think critically is not nurtured in a proper manner. Among many other issues, there are certain cultural factors that are not given due thought and concentration in contemporary research. This paper identified those cultural factors that create hindrance to the development of Bangladeshi L2 learners' critical thinking skills. The study used both qualitative and quantitative methodology to examine how tertiary level L2 learners and teachers from three private universities of Bangladesh perceive critical thinking and therefore investigations were made to identify the cultural factors that affect the implementation of critical thinking skills in tertiary level second language classrooms in Bangladesh. This exploratory study has revealed important pedagogical constraints due to cultural conditioning, and suggestions were made to ensure effective critical thinking practice in second language classrooms.

### **Introduction**

Benjamin Bloom in 1956 identified that after a learning episode, the educational objectives should be to achieve higher order thinking skill starting from a lower one as he thinks goal attainment is more important than student comparison. As the ability to think critically is considered as higher order thinking skill, it has become a crucial attribute expected of university graduates as they are expected to develop the qualities for being

responsible citizens in a global society (Biggs & Tang, 2007; ten Dam & Volman, 2004). Therefore critical thinking has frequently been used by higher educational institutions to describe their educational goals in terms of students' cognitive development (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Phillips & Bond, 2004).

Richard Paul (2008) defines critical thinking as, self-directed, self-disciplined, self-monitored, and self-corrective thinking which attempts to reason at the highest level of quality in a fair-minded way. The purpose of teaching CT is to improve the thinking skill of students and thus better prepare them to succeed in life. But most of our teaching in all educational disciplines focuses on teaching the subject matter or content of the course (what to think) and unfortunately & unconsciously ignores the need for teaching the correct way to understand and evaluate the subject matter (how to think) (Schafersman, 1991). At this age of information as the information content of a discipline is increasing rapidly, it has become even more vital to spend time, not on learning more information, but on learning methods to acquire, understand and evaluate the great amount of new information.

Concerns about Asian students' lack of critical thinking have been raised by teaching professionals. Studies found that cultural-educational contexts have profound influence on how critical thinking is perceived and exercised. A number of studies show that : our culture—the traditions, lifestyle, habits, and so on that we pick up from the people we live and interact with—shapes the way we think, and also shapes the way we talk. Cultural psychologists also have pointed out that individuals living in different societies are likely to have differing experiences and this cultural perspective provides new insights into psychological processes (Triandis, 1996).

Although university students from Asia and New Zealand held similar conceptions of critical thinking, they were reported to have different socialization experiences regarding the practice

of critical thinking in their respective cultures. Specifically, stronger inhibition on students' practice of critical thinking was noted in Asia than in New Zealand. (Lun, Vivian Miu-Chi , 2010). Endorsement of critical thinking in higher education of Bangladesh has also been challenged by the influence of certain cultural factors. Several researches in the area revealed that in the educational institutions of Bangladesh more emphasis is placed on knowledge development rather than skill development.

This study sought to identify how the cultural values of Bangladeshi learners impede the practice of critical thinking in the English language classrooms. It is to be noted that the findings of this study were confronted with several other variables like individual personality factors, differences in linguistic ability, prior knowledge on a topic, family education and environmental circle etc. These factors have significant influences on the findings of this study.

### **Literature Review**

The way in which people seek and process information, make assumptions, and apply the guiding principles to consider and solve problems is shaped by their cognitive schemata that are not necessarily universal models that apply across all ethnic and cultural groups (Kim & Park, 2000; Paul, 1993, as cited in Brenner & Parks, 2001 ). Because our habits of mind are influenced by our cultural and historical circumstances, the decision-making strategies that we seek to promote in students reflect our own culture. As people with different cultural backgrounds have different expectations, norms and values, those in turn have the potential to influence their judgements, decisions and their subsequent behaviour. It is found that while European Americans are generally influenced by the positive consequences of a decision, Asians are more influenced by the negative consequences. Asians are more "prevention" focused and they manifest a greater tendency to compromise, to seek moderation or to postpone decisions if it is possible, (Kim & Park, 2000; Paul, 1993, cited in Brenner & Parks, 2001).

According to the opinion of different academics, Asian students don't overtly participate in classroom discussion and so don't naturally take part in critical thinking (Miu-Chi Lun, Fischer, & Ward, 2010). Moreover Asian students' being less overt or less expressive in classrooms are often misinterpreted as their lack of critical thinking, as they often don't want to take part in overt argumentation and debate, (Durkin, 2008). For example Chinese people regard compliance with norms as a primary value and unique individual beliefs as a secondary one. Therefore, they show more synchrony in their opinions. In case of group discussion they suppress ideas that may go against the group value. (Guo, 2013).

Culture shapes the way we think about ourselves and others. It tells us what 'makes sense'. It influences the way we live, dream and desire. As children we get gender role models from our families, schools and other institutions. We see them and create our own perception about the world. As we grow up, we develop culturally acceptable ways of looking at the world. If anybody violates such cultural expectations, it may even be called unnatural, immoral or mean. Our most dominant cultural ideologies shape the way we perceive the world and their inherent rigidity limit our ability to understand the complexity of the experience and accept alternative viewpoints. Therefore blind acceptance of these cultural assumptions leads to selective perception and in that situation we see only what we want to see.

Our 'perceptions'- the ability to give meaning to our sensory stimuli, develops in accordance with our experience in the world. If we leave our cultural assumptions unexamined and let them dominate our perceptions, we violate a prerequisite of critical thinking, and that is objectivity. Commenting on the cultural influence, Prof Briley (2000) suggested that, the effects of cultural norms and values on the processing of information are not 'hard-wired' into our systems. This influence depends on situational factors that bring the relevant norms and values to mind. So to develop good thinking we have to identify those

situational factors and learn how to act and behave rationally to overcome the cultural biasness.

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

70 students from three private universities of Bangladesh participated in the study. All the students were in their first semester doing foundation course in English. Among them 32 were female and 38 male students. The age of the participants was between 18 to 20 years. 10 teachers from different private universities also took part in the study.

### *Procedures*

A pilot study was conducted to identify necessary intellectual standards needed for critical thinking skill, which included: clarity, accuracy, relevance, logic, fair-mindedness, reasoning, intellectual dependence, intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance. The aim was to identify which intellectual standards are biased mostly because of cultural influence. For this research all the data were collected in two phases. Firstly, all the participants were given some language activities like five open ended questions based on everyday life scenarios. These were used as a tool for exploring the ability of the students to support their opinion with reasons, to recognize alternative view points and to make conclusion of their ideas and at the same time identifying cultural factors that affect the practice of critical thinking. Moreover, the participants were also instructed to complete a set of questionnaire which included 38 close ended questions to collect information about their use of intellectual standards needed for thinking critically and the cultural influence on their thinking process. All data were collected anonymously. 10 Teachers from different universities were also interviewed individually.

### *Data Analysis*

Both qualitative and quantitative measures were taken to analyze the data.



## **Quantitative Findings and Analysis**

The quantitative findings of the research are presented below.

### **A. Knowledge of CT & Myths about Critical Thinking**

1. Have you heard about ‘critical thinking’ skills?
  - a. No (15.71%)
  - b. Yes. (84.29%)
  
2. What is your idea about CT? Check the following statements.

	Agree	Unsure	Disagree
a. Critical thinking is disagreement on others point	60%	15.71%	24.28%
b. Critical thinkers are hard to please	87.14%	2.85%	10%
c. Critical thinking is the way to establish personal viewpoint	54.28%	12.85%	32.85%
d. Critical thinkers always criticize on others’ activities	24.28%	7.14%	68.57%

The findings show that there are considerable myths around the concept of critical thinking. 84.29% students said that they have heard about critical thinking skills from different sources. But, the data collected through the questionnaire reveals that they don’t have a clear idea about those skills and most importantly they are unable to use those skills in truest sense of the term. Majority of the students have agreed on the point that critical thinking is disagreement on other’s point and it is a way to establish personal viewpoint. Though majority don’t think that critical thinkers only criticize on others activity, considerable number couldn’t overexert the negative idea associated with CT.

### **B. Reliance on authority Vs Independent thinking**

3. Check if the following statements are true for you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
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a. In our society it is appreciated if I accept and act upon my elders' opinion without question	68. 57%	21.42%	10%
b. If I confront my elders' opinion, it is considered impoliteness and bad-manner	64. 28%	28.57%	7.14%
c. I always feel that I might be wrong and cannot be sure unless I take others' opinion	17. 14%	60%	22.85%
d. In case of an argument I cannot decide an answer unless I hear from others	24. 28%	54.28%	21.42%

The analysis of quantitative data on learners' reliance on authority and practice of independent thinking displays major agreement on the point that in our society it is appreciated if someone accepts and acts upon elders' opinion without question. Moreover, because of this socially appreciated reliance on authority students fail to develop confidence needed for independent thinking.

### **C. Practice of critical Inquiry**

#### **4. Are the following statements true for you?**

	Always	Sometimes	Never
a. I don't ask repeated questions in the class as others take it negatively and consider it a bad manner	70%	5.71%	24.28%
b. If I ask questions to my teachers or elders, before accepting their viewpoints, they consider it as my lack of trust and respect for them	8.57%	50%	41.42%
c. If I always ask questions to judge the acceptability of any information, others	15.71%	75.71%	8.57%

think that I am showing off my knowledge and consider me fastidious			
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Students' responses in terms of the practice of critical enquiry reveal the fact that people often don't welcome critical inquiry and they consider it as a display of disrespect and distrust. Even majority agreed on the point that if they ask questions before accepting any point, sometimes they are labelled as fastidious and arrogant which is discouraging for them.

#### **D. Practice of critical argumentation**

5. Check if the following statements are true for you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
a. When I hear an argument I find it difficult to take one side	34.28%	17.14%	48.57%
b. I withdraw myself from argumentation and try reconciliation thinking that it may hurt someone and break up relationships	25.71%	65.71%	8.57%
c. I avoid argument with my elders as it is considered impolite	80%	17.14%	2.85%

Though majority of the students opine positively about their ability to take a side in an argument, majority accepted that sometimes they withdraw themselves from argumentation and try reconciliation when it becomes a threat for upholding relationships.

#### **E. Intellectual courage**

6. Check if the following statements are true for you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
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a. I avoid challenging the established norm or behavior of the society because it is taken negatively by the people	14.28%	51.42%	34.28%
b. When two of my friends disagree, I have a hard time deciding whom to support.	22.85%	55.71%	21.42%
c. I prefer to take the middle ground than go to extremes	25.71%	64.28%	10%

A number of students say that they sometimes avoid challenging the established norm of the society because it is taken negatively by the people. Majority of the students have a hard time to decide whom to support if two friends disagree and they often take the middle ground to make a balance.

#### **F. Individualism Vs collectivism**

7. Check if the following statements are true for you.

	Always	Sometimes	Never
a. In terms of taking decisions I give importance to my social beliefs than my personal beliefs	65.71%	25.71%	8.57%
b. My values and beliefs change depending on who I am with	28.57%	37.14%	34.28%
c. I prefer to represent group value, not individual value	55.71%	34.28%	10%

Data shows that majority give importance to the social beliefs than their personal beliefs in terms of taking decisions. They think that sometimes their values and beliefs change depending on who they are with and they prefer to represent group value rather than individual value.

#### **Qualitative Findings and Analysis**

Students' practice of critical thinking skills in English language classroom has been assessed through some language activities (Appendix-1) and the level of their CT skills is measured based on the use of certain intellectual standards commonly acknowledged by the contemporary literature like- clarity, accuracy, relevance, logic, fair-mindedness, reasoning, intellectual dependence, intellectual humility, intellectual courage, intellectual perseverance, etc. The students showed a common tendency to express opinion in a group. Moreover majority preferred to adopt a stance that might be culturally accepted and pleasant. Most of the students failed to support their arguments in an acceptable way. They showed a tendency to find an answer that might please their teacher and their thinking process was guided by culturally acceptable and established ideas. The findings also show that students who were unsure about their opinion majority of them were female. It demonstrates a crucial cultural factor that conditions the female learners to be submissive, overtly polite, indirect in expression and unwilling to give overt opinion.

Teachers' perspectives on the students' practice of CT skills collected through interviews (Appendix-2) are also analyzed. All of them agreed on the point that our culturally prejudiced upbringing is responsible for the considerable difficulties our students face in terms of using CT in the language classrooms. They also identified some other variables in this regard like economic independence, social security, religion, facilities they enjoy in their social set up, educational background of their family all have profound impact on shaping students' thinking process and perception of the world. Some teachers gave their opinion that the students outside the capital city show this cultural biasness more.

## **Discussions**

### *Reliance on Authority Vs Independent Thinking*

Authority is an expert who is accepted as a common source of belief and knowledge. In a typical Bangladeshi family father (senior male member) is the authority in the house. He is the

decision maker of the family and other members are expected to accept all the decisions taken by him without complain. Moreover, Bangladesh is a hierarchical society where people are respected because of their age and position. Older people are naturally viewed as wise and are granted respect. Therefore to follow the decision of elders is culturally appreciated. Children are socialized in a way to accept everything whatever imposed by the adults without any question. Thus our cultural norm is responsible for producing 'instruction followers' instead of independent thinkers.

Moreover our traditional method of teaching in a 'Mother Robin' fashion is also responsible for students' lack of independent thinking skills. The term 'mother robin' is introduced by Richard Paul (1995) to indicate our traditional tendency to mentally chew up everything for our students so that we can put the knowledge into their intellectual beaks to swallow and in this way students tend to become 'Polly parrot' learners, who can't understand anything unless teacher tell them exactly how and what to say and think. They need the teacher to figure out everything for them and they only follow the instructions. Therefore, the more the students become passive learners, the more the teachers amplify mother robin teaching to accommodate it and this way both show a compensating growth on the other. When the students reach mid-school level they demonstrate poor, fragmented, lower order surface knowledge and the teachers at this level feel that they have no choice except thinking for their students.

### *Collectivism Vs Socio-centricity*

In terms of self-concept and relationship with others Bangladeshi people see themselves as connected to others and define themselves in terms of relationships with others. Therefore, the emphasis is on attending to others, fitting in, and harmonious interdependence with them. They avoid such topics and actions that may challenge their relationships and collective identity.

In some cultures conformity to the group is an act of cowardice, whereas in Bangladeshi culture, refusal to conform to the group is an act of selfishness. Individual autonomy at the expense of group harmony is essentially unreasonable. If you belong to a group, it is agreeable to conform to that group without question. But when people confuse their loyalty to a group with always supporting and agreeing, they exercise a socio-centric tendency to deal with any issue which is against the philosophy of critical thinking.

*Culturally imposed ego-centricity*

There is an unseen battle prevail in terms of social dominance between male and female in Bangladeshi culture. Bangladeshi family rears up its male offspring as the future successor of the family. The male children are appreciated for taking risk and for being bold in their opinion more than the female ones. Though economic status, education, political status and social status have a great role in formulating a power relationship in the society and play a significant role in shaping this traditional viewpoints, traditional mind-set has not altered altogether.

This social expectation impose a kind of internal pressure in male children to be right about everything, which is also reinforced by the adult role model from the society. Therefore, they sometimes develop an ego-centric tendency to overlook their own mistake and to justify own view point by any means. They relate their success and failure in an argument with their social image. This attitude retards their practice of critical thinking skills.

Moreover, modern society has become aware about the equal rights of female children which reinforced a growing self-awareness among female children about the limitations of rights and facilities they enjoy in comparison with the male children. Their desperate struggle to outrace their male counterpart sometimes creates an ego-centric tendency in them which also limits their perceptions in many ways.

### *Lack of critical argumentation, critical enquiry and directness*

Sometimes arguments lead to misunderstanding and cause relationships to break. Culturally the people of Bangladesh value the relationship most and often they either compromise very easily or withdraw themselves from arguments just to maintain relationships. They surrender, compromise and give up their own opinion for the sake of relationships. Again asking questions are also not entertained very well in the context of Bangladesh. Questioning is considered as lack of trust and respect. Believing and obeying everything without question is considered a form of respect and courtesy. It happens that children grow up with a tendency to receive everything without question. Due to the lack of critical questioning they fail to develop their sense of critical judgement. Moreover, as politeness and courteousness are desirable behavior among Bangladeshis, they always prefer polite and indirect expressions and avoid directness as it may pose insult.

Moreover, the culture conditions our female to be indirect in their opinion and to seek a middle way in terms of argumentation. A typical mind-set about the female folk is that, they should be submissive, compromising, sacrificing and flexible in their viewpoint so that they can adjust themselves with any social relationship at any social set up. Therefore female learners demonstrate this cultural influence in their thinking process that slows down their practice of critical thinking skills.

### **Recommendations**

#### *Teaching critical thinking through self-awareness*

It is recommended that teachers should first try to figure out all the cultural factors that dominate the thinking process of their learners. Learners in all situations may not show the same propensity. So, before trying to implement any CT skill development technique, it is important to categorize students' present status of thinking which results in varied success rate of L2 learners. Teachers should make students aware of these types of cultural biasness, false assumptions and prejudice in their



thinking and help them overcome the biasness by nurturing in them qualities to be responsible citizen. It is important to have respect for cultural values and beliefs but at the same time we need to decide rationally which beliefs and values we should carry forward and which we should replace with a progressive one.

*Incorporating variety of intellectual standards needed to develop CT*

Moreover, teachers should try to make a balance between all the intellectual standards of CT. There are many other intellectual standards that are not culturally biased. While selecting classroom activities teachers should incorporate variety of techniques so that all types of intellectual standards are practiced and nurtured.

*Activities to introduce culture in the language classroom*

It is also important to arrange supplement activities to integrate language and culture education. They should know about different cultures and develop intercultural perspectives to deal with an issue. This will open for them a gateway way to become a global citizen overcoming own cultural prejudice.

## **Conclusion**

Critical thinking is not an instant knowledge to transfer to students. Children develop critical thinking as a rational behavior as they grow up (Atkinson, 1997). Therefore it is natural that learners from cultures where it is not a social practice to teach critical thinking will show poor performance. John Michael McGuire pointed out that the standard concept of CT and typical justifications for CT pedagogy are partly shaped by, and dependent upon, Western values and practices. This raises the question of whether, or to what extent, CT pedagogy can be justified in cultures in which those values are not widely shared. It also raises the question of whether in promoting CT pedagogy within those non-Western societies we are not simply imposing Western values upon those cultures or, in other words, engaging in cultural imperialism. However, in nurturing self-conscious

and self-directed thinking, CT pedagogy could also be criticized for encouraging an excessive concern for the self at the expense of social concerns. According to Richard Paul and Linda Elder (2008) CT entails effective communication. But non-western culture may lack the opportunity to improve linguistic skills and persuasive power as those skills are culturally relative and may make sense only in a Western context, with Western patterns of communication in mind. Some people claim that critical thinking is individualistic, and thus is bias against cultures in which group thinking is encouraged in making decisions about what to believe or do. Therefore, there is a greater scope for further investigations in this area to decide on the point whether to follow proposed CT pedagogy blindly or with reservations keeping in mind all the diverse cultural values and beliefs.

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## **Appendix-1**

### **Language Activity**

#### **Activity: 1**

Give your opinion about the following statement:

“Internet is responsible for reducing young people’s attention span and it is making them less intelligent.”

#### **Activity: 2**

Your friend shared some information through social media. What are the questions (at least 3) you should ask yourself before accepting the information?

#### **Activity: 3**

Make three complete statements based on the information in the following table.

I think that I agree that I don't agree that I'm not sure that	social media sites waste our time politicians are under-paid our grandparents' lives were easier living in the country is better than living in the city the internet has improved communication the world is a more dangerous place than it was fifty years ago	Because.....
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#### **Activity: 4**

Your younger brother, who is in grade 8, wants to have a smart phone, but your parents are not ready to give him what he wants. Whom should you stand for and how can you convince the other?

#### **Activity: 5**

How can you respond to an established misinterpretation of any idea which is also culturally sensitive?

## **Appendix-2**

### **Interview questions for the Teachers**

1. Have you attended any seminar/workshop/conferences on critical thinking?
2. Do you try to foster critical thinking in your language classroom? How?
3. Do you understand the connection of critical thinking to intellectual standards?
4. Do you think thinking pattern of Bangladeshi students is culturally biased? If yes, what type of cultural influence on thinking pattern do you notice among your learners?











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