

Challenges of Teaching English Listening Skills at the Primary Level in Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

This research attempts to explore the challenges of teaching English listening skills at primary-level schools in Bangladesh. A mixed method was applied to conduct the research. The quantitative data was collected by a survey questionnaire from 30 primary-level English teachers. The qualitative data was collected by interviewing 5 primary level teachers. From the collected data, it is explored that the teachers confront several challenges in teaching listening skills, i.e., independent of teaching listening skills, teachers are bound to follow merely the vast syllabus of the institution, and they do not have any liberty to bring something beyond the stipulated instructions given by the authority. Few teachers have access to required teaching instruments like a computer, the internet, speakers, recorders, and a projector, and due to not having such instruments, the teachers cannot expose their students to cartoons, rhymes, stories, poems, and fables. A common view among the interviewees was that listening to--- and watching-- such types of audio-visual representations is effective in terms of honing students' listening and literacy. Also, teachers' classroom environment is not suitable for the teaching of listening skills. Many teachers are not yet trained to enact the proper pedagogy of listening. However, the time period of the primary level is so pivotal that if learners are not exposed to listening skills at that time, they then remain passive and weak in listening, communication, and literacy. Additionally, this study also provides recommendations for the establishment of and enhancing the teaching of listening skills at the primary level in Bangladesh.

Key words: Listening Skill, Primary Level, Learning, Challenges, Teaching

INTRODUCTION

Listening is such an indispensable activity that verbal communication lacks progression without listening properly. Listening is an active engagement that necessitates the attention and participation of communicators. Listening occurs when a listener attentively listens and decodes the intended message expressed by the speakers. When it comes to active listening, listeners integrate their pragmatic, phonetic, phonological, syntactic, and semantic abilities to decode the meaning of heard sentences (Danh & Quan, 2021). Listening is an instantaneous endeavor as it happens immediately. Listening is a necessity that is required initially when language learners start to learn language from childhood. Listening is the first key to attaining literacy, information, and comprehension of human communication. Children, however, commence listening from an early age which is a pivotal period to develop listening skills. In order for young children to be literate in English, they need to learn to decode the message after listening; for it is a practiced prowess. It is required for learners in a foreign language to spend more than fifty percent of the time of learning a language in listening (Nunan, 1998).

Therefore, it is critical that from childhood students should hone their listening skills to develop oral communication

and literacy (Ahmed, 2017). Unless students have enough exposure from their childhood to listening in English, they are likely to remain passive and weak in listening and speaking. Apparently, the more time students spend listening in English, the better they will become at listening, and as a result, speaking too. Students are required to have strong listening skills as listening is input for effective language learning. Besides, students have to comprehend the intended messages of teachers' talks in order for them to decode the messages. That is to say, if teachers at primary level schools avoid teaching English listening skills, that avoidance then impedes learners' development in speaking. Since listening is a prerequisite input to be able to learn a language, speaking in particular; therefore, the skill should be taught, learned, and developed as early as possible from the primary level.

However, yet, no research has been perhaps conducted to explore the challenges of teaching English listening skills at primary-level schools in Bangladesh. In the literature, no study apparently exists that specifically addresses the challenges of teaching listening skills at the primary level in Bangladesh. This research is therefore imperative and will address the challenges confronted by teachers as they teach—or if they tend to avoid or will enact the teaching

of-- listening skills at the primary level in Bangladesh. This research is therefore conducted to elicit the challenges and negligence that are responsible for hindering the development of teaching English listening skills at the primary level in Bangladesh. For such doing so, the research is carried out based on these two research questions: 1) What are the challenges of teaching English listening skills at primary-level schools in Bangladesh? 2) What challenges do primary-level teachers face in teaching English listening skills?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Listening is an essential endeavor for verbal communication and literacy. Listening skill is substantive to teaching and learning English in that listening is a prerequisite to communication and education (Metruk, n.d.). The communication apparently gets interrupted without the ability to comprehend the message after listening (Ahmed, 2021). Listening is input that leads learners to be able to speak which is output. Students remain impotent in learning and using English if they are not exposed to adequate input in the target language through listening. Nonetheless, the teaching of listening skills is demeaned, as avoided, in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). EFL students are vulnerable to listening skills as they encounter challenges in developing the skill (Ulum, 2015). EFL students do not have enough exposure to listening in English, and they confront challenges in decoding messages while they listen to different accents of the English language. Some primary-level students often do not participate in class in that they do not listen to their teachers' lectures.

Instructing students to teach listening skills is a challenging task for teachers (Vishnupriya & Bharathi, 2022). Listening and speaking are instantaneous, unlike reading and writing. Listening in English or any foreign language is considered a difficult activity because it needs attention that is hard to pay. Students' attention is necessary to improve their listening (Alzamil, 2021). Learners, at the same time, need to hear and concentrate as carefully as possible to listen to any communication for decoding messages to communicate. Hasan (2000) claims that long sentence structures made with complex dictions are an obstacle for students to understand listening and the intended message. Besides, the lack of adequate vocabulary inhibits learners' comprehension of meaning, for that, children are likely to be vulnerable to decoding messages due to their inchoate linguistics capital (that is less exposure to diversified sentences and words). Moreover, due to teachers' inertia to teach the skill (that is an egregious error), young learners cannot enhance their listening capabilities in English, and they remain novices and vulnerable to communication. So is the case in Bangladesh, where teachers at schools do not teach English listening skills in class, as a result, their students are hardly exposed to listening in English. However, in Bangladesh, the listening skills at the primary level are disregarded (Mabin & Roy, 2023). Students, regardless of any educational level, require adequate exposure to listening in English to succeed in language learning (Sarawaty, 2018).

Primary-level students are the worst sufferers of the lack of proper practices and methods of teaching English

in Bangladesh (Khan et al., 2020). They have stated that teaching English at the primary level is still challenging, as institutions lack qualified teachers and digital technologies; many schools even do not have any language learning instruments in class, and the four basic skills are not taught at primary-level schools. For that, students are not familiar with the communicative aspects of language learning. The teachers' and students' foci are to get a decent mark on the exam, but such kind deep desire to merely get good marks leads students to a loss-loss situation as they are not taught speaking and listening, in future which culminates in students' inability to listen (and to decode message) and speak. They have also explored that no primary-level teacher lets their students listen and watch any English cartoons, and the teachers focus too much only on grammar following the traditional technique of teaching.

Exposing students to movies, songs, and poems is needed, productive, and worth doing when it comes to teaching listening skills (Gulec & Durmus, 2015; Mehdiyev, 2020). Enough exposure to various kinds of literature hones learners' capability to listen and decode messages (Demirbaş & Şahin, 2022). Teachers' liability is to get their students to watch and listen to cartoons, rhyme, and fables so that students enjoy and learn the listening simultaneously. In order for that to transpire, a computer, internet projector, recorder, speakers, and other required materials should be set up in each classroom. Teachers should utilize technologies when it comes to teaching listening skills as well as language learning (Khan & Karim, 2014). English teachers should not avoid teaching listening skills to their students; otherwise, students will face difficulties in language learning and gaining literacy, for which their ability to communicate gets hampered. Ahmadi (2016) states that listening skills should be developed from students' childhood in order to have a good ability to speak. Teachers should play an active role in developing learners' listening skills. The skill should be practiced over and over in class on a daily basis. Teachers have to motivate their learners to communicate in English in class. Teachers should include necessary activities to teach and evaluate listening skills. Besides, teachers should be provided required facilities by the authority of the institution so that they can teach listening skills to students (Hossain, 2015; Ngwoke et al., 2022). The classroom environment has an immense impact on language learning. Student-centered classrooms should be sustained in class so that students get engaged in class discussions and communication.

Empirical Studies' Review

Alrawashdeh and Al-zayed (2017) conducted an empirical research by collecting qualitative and quantitative data from 55 teachers from the Karak schools. The research aimed to investigate the pitfalls of teaching listening comprehension faced by teachers. The teachers were provided a survey questionnaire comprising statements as per the Likert scale, and the teachers had to select either of the five options from --- agree, strongly agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree--- the answer/response to the statement. Additionally, 7 teachers were informally interviewed asking

some open-ended questions. It was investigated that the teachers encountered several challenges in teaching listening comprehension; teachers are not yet trained and proficient in teaching listening comprehension. Teachers do not have access to such resources as teaching aids, rich libraries, and audio-visual teaching materials to listening skills. Teachers are conditioned to emphasize teaching other skills; and as a result, teaching listening comprehension is de-emphasized. Teachers also face problems in maintaining an appropriate classroom environment as the students' number in class is so high.

Hasan and Hoon (2012) investigated ESL students' points of view about and attitudes toward employing podcasts to enhance their listening comprehension. A survey questionnaire was employed to collect data from the students about their perceptions and attitudes. It was explored that a preponderance of the students considered the use of podcasts necessary and useful for advancing listening skills.

Hwaider (2017) researched the problems of teaching listening skills to Yemeni EFL learners. He observed 11 schools in five districts of Aden Governorate to collect data on teaching listening skills. Also, he collected data using a survey questionnaire from 50 fifty teachers. He divided the investigated problems into two categories: linguistics and non-linguistics. As per the linguistic problems, students do not practice such skills as pronunciation, identifying sounds, stress, and intonation; 76% of the teachers consider stress and intonation are the most difficult dimension of teaching and learning listening skills. In terms of non-linguistic problems, he explored that the extent of listening was too low, and most of the teachers did not follow their teachers' guide to teach English lessons in class. 84% of the teachers were not trained to teach listening skills, and students were demotivated to improve their listening skills. Also, teachers face problems in teaching listening skills as they do not have the required facilities and materials such as recorders, new books, and tape, 54% of the teachers considered that the lack of teaching materials was the primal problem of teaching listening skills.

Hossain and Haque (2022) observed some classes, of 40- 45 minutes of, four colleges in Bagura District in Bangladesh for one week, and the researchers collected data about listening skills from 85 secondary-level college students from the four colleges through close-ended questions. It was revealed that only 44% of the students were good at listening skills. However, the classrooms were overloaded with many students; the class time duration was short, and the classes did not have a projector. After finding the data, the researchers claimed that the surveyed students, and even the teachers who lacked training and some of them had inertia in implementing learning from teacher education in the classrooms, were incompetent in speaking and listening skills.

As a whole, based on the abovementioned reviewed empirical studies on the teaching and learning of listening, listening pedagogy is disproportionately deteriorated due to the dearth of dynamic and qualified teachers, stress on the skill, and such teaching tools as a computer, speakers, and a projector at institutions. Also, such rampant deterioration of listening pedagogy can be ascribed to the juggernaut of

teachers' unconscionable comfort. As per the abovementioned studies of Alrawashdeh and Al-zayed (2017) and Hossain and Haque (2022), some teachers and authorities of institutions are wrapped in their comfort zones so much so that they hardly heed teaching listening skills to their students. Barely do the teachers research and learn the pedagogy of listening skills, and scarcely are the authorities of the institutions interested in improving the learning and teaching of English listening as they devalue the essentiality of enhancing listening skills to successful language learning; however, despite being trained, some teachers teach as if the teacher education program did — and does — not exist, because, they are obliged to cling to their authorities' decisions and decree which are devoid of the consideration and positive ramification of the implementation of the teaching listening skills. If such teachers and their authorities at all were aware of and serious about proper pedagogy and students' language learning, they would not yet eschew the teaching of listening skills at the primary-level, which is a pivotal period for language learners to learn the language spontaneously by acquisition, in a way, by listening. Moreover, Hwaider (2017) and Hossain and Haque (2022) have delved into in their research that a bulk of teachers are fossilized as they have a deficit in their intellectual motivation to progress their pedagogy. Untrained teachers fall apart to teach listening— since they do not know how to teach listening in a duly manner following the teacher's guide, as well as, unfortunately, students are not that keen to learn and hone their listening skills and — for the teachers are innocently ignorant as to teaching pronunciation, stress, and intonation. In addition, stringently short and overloaded classrooms cause teachers to confront challenges in teaching listening skills.

METHOD

This research endeavors to explore the challenges of teaching English listening skills faced by primary-level teachers at primary-level schools in Bangladesh. A mixed method was employed to conduct the research. The quantitative data was collected by a survey questionnaire from the primary-level teachers teaching at different primary-level schools in rural, urban, and semi-urban areas of Bangladesh. Additionally, some primary-level teachers were interviewed to collect the qualitative data.

Participants

The participants of this research were 30 primary-level teachers. In order to ensure confidentiality, the identity and institution of the participants are kept hidden. 30 primary-level teachers, from different primary-level schools in rural, semi-urban, and urban areas in Bangladesh, participated in filling up the survey questionnaire, and 5 teachers participated to be interviewed.

Instrument

Two different instruments were used to collect the data from the participants: 1) a survey questionnaire and 2) a

semi-structured interview. The survey questionnaire, which consists of five Likert scale close-ended questions, was distributed among the 30 participants to collect the quantitative data. The first question was asked to know whether the teachers teach listening skills or not. The second question was asked to explore their point of view of whether they find teaching listening skills challenging. The third question gathered information about their use of teaching instruments to teach listening skills. The fourth question was meant to dig out information about students' exposure to audio-visual input (e.g., English simple stories, poems, and rhymes). The last question, the fifth one, accumulated information about the extent to which the teachers teach English using the English language. Moreover, semi-structured interviews, with 5 primary level teachers from semi-urban, rural, and urban areas, were conducted by audio recording for around 20 - 22 minutes to collect the qualitative data.

Data Collection and Analysis Process

To collect the quantitative data, the survey questionnaire was designed on Google Forms. In order to collect the responses, the link to the Google Form was distributed— via Gmail, Facebook Messenger, and WhatsApp— among the 30 teachers. After collecting the data, the researchers analyzed the response to the survey questionnaire— that is the answer to the research questions— to present the result. From the survey, the responses to the close-ended Likert scale questions were critically examined. The semi-structured interviews were conducted both face-to-face and on Google Meet. Furthermore, the findings from the interviews were coded, categorized to find themes, and then put in the result part for thematic analysis.

RESULTS

Quantitative Data Analysis

When asked whether the teachers teach listening skills or not, out of 30 teachers, two-thirds of the teachers mentioned that they never teach listening skills, while less than a third of the teachers stated that they sometimes teach listening skills, and less than one-sixth of the teachers said that they often teach listening skills. The evasion of teaching listening is a challenge per se. It is revealed that most of the teachers do not teach listening skills at the primary level. Moreover, regarding teachers' perspectives on whether teaching listening is challenging or not; of the 30 teachers nearly half of the teachers thought that teaching listening skills is always a challenging task. Whilst, below one-sixth of the teachers thought that teaching listening skills is never a challenging task. Less than a third of the teachers thought that teaching listening skills is rarely a challenging task. Almost one-third of the teachers thought that teaching listening skills is sometimes a challenging task. It is disclosed that most of the teachers, despite not teaching, considered the teaching of listening skills to be a challenging task. Such sort of point of view on teaching listening skills can be a hindrance to the implementation of listening pedagogy at the primary level.

Furthermore, as for whether the teachers have any instruments (like: a computer, a projector, a recorder, and a speaker) to teach listening skills, one-third of the teachers out of the 30 teachers have such instruments in class, and almost half of the teachers do not have any instruments; nearly one-sixth of the teachers arrange instruments on their own. Substantially less than a third of the teachers do not use any instrument in class despite having. Nevertheless, it is divulged that a myriad of teachers do not have any instrument to teach listening skills, whereas the effective teaching of listening skills requires the use of the mentioned instrument, which is another pitfall of teaching listening skills. Not having required instruments in class, was and is a chronic challenge of teaching language—listening and speaking, in particular— at primary-level schools in Bangladesh.

In respect to whether the teachers let their students listen to any stories, fables, poems, etc., out of 30 teachers, nearly half of the teachers answered that they sometimes let their students listen to English cartoons, fables, poems, and stories. More than one-third of the teachers often let their students listen. Four teachers answered that they never let them listen. One teacher rarely lets students listen to such sorts of literature. One teacher does not want to let students listen to them. The question was asked because exposure to such kinds of literature is critical to the development of students' listening ability and the teaching of listening skills, and if avoided, students are then deprived of the fun of learning listening skills. Students' exposure to English poems, stories, rhymes, etc. is imperative to enhance their listening capability. The challenge is that many of the teachers, as is disclosed above, do not get their students to listen to English simple short stories, poems, and fables. Only over a third of the teachers often do such and the rest of them do not, which is a mistake made by the teachers, leading to being the cause for the weakness in students' listening ability. Then, when asked if they speak in English—or in a mixture of Bangla and English, as they teach, less than a third of the teachers mentioned that they speak in English to a greater extent. More than half of the teachers stated that they speak in both Bangla and English (L1) depending on the situation. Below one-third of the teachers answered that they try to speak in English, but their students do not understand. Less than three teachers mentioned that they speak in English sometimes. Merely a teacher stated that the teacher rarely speaks in English. The question was asked because it was— and is crucial— to know the extent of students' exposure to teachers' spoken English which is an essential input to learn listening as well as speaking skills. If teachers avoid speaking in English to students in class, students do not tend to speak or answer in English, and as a result, students are not exposed to listening and speaking in English, which is— and should be— a concern for stakeholders (i.e., parents and teachers) for the challenge to get alleviated. The avoidance of speaking in English, therefore, is per se detrimental to the learning of primary-level students' listening skills. However, in such a case, only less than a third of the teachers speak in English to a greater extent.

Qualitative Data Analysis

Based on the semi-structured interviews with 5 primary-level teachers, the researchers have thematically explored the challenges of teaching listening skills in Bangladesh at the primary level; the challenges are: 1) exclusion of listening skills in the academic syllabus 2) lack of instruments for teaching listening skills in classrooms 3) challenges of implementing student-centered classroom, and 4) lack of qualified teachers at schools.

Exclusion of listening skills in the academic syllabus

According to the interviewed teachers, the biggest challenge of teaching listening skills is that the skill is not included in the syllabus of their institutions; hence the teachers are reluctant to teach the skill. The contents of the syllabus are so vast that the teachers are bound to avoid the teaching of listening skills. Also, the teachers do not teach listening skills as the skill is not assessed in the exam. Even if some teachers want to teach, their institutions do not allow them to teach listening skills. In this regard, T1 said that:

I know it is necessary to teach listening skills. I sometimes read poems and short stories so that my students can listen. But, the institution doesn't allow me to teach listening skill separately. My syllabus does not have any separate teaching of listening skill. So I cannot teach listening skill the way it should be taught. I don't have the opportunity to do so. [T1, age 25, male, teaching experience 1 year, M.A. in TESOL]

In addition to this regard, T2 commented:

I do not teach listening skill because the skill is not assessed in the broad exams. In my school writing and reading are emphasized more. But listening skill is not taught and assessed. I would like to let my students listen to poems, easy conversations of native speakers, and stories. But I cannot do that, I am confined to strictly following my syllabus. As per my institution, I need to complete the syllabus first. [T2, age 27, female, experience 3 years, B.A. in English Linguistics]

T4 said that:

I teach them listening skills sometimes by reading a text aloud. After my reading, I ask the students about the lesson. Most of the time I read various passages and poems from English textbooks. By reading various compositions in the classroom, they can listen very carefully. But I do not have the chance to teach listening skills regularly as I have other things to do. [T4, female, age 31, teaching experience 4 years, M.A. in Literature]

Moreover, the finding is consistent with that of Sultana and Ahsan (2013) who have found and stated that the curriculum of primary-level schools in Bangladesh is only devised, but the implementation of the curriculum is yet to occur; they have further explored and stated in the same study that the authority instructs their teachers to complete the academic syllabus— in one year— independent of teaching listening skill, hence, teachers are bound not to teach the listening in particular. Therefore, listening skill is not emphasized at the

primary level at many institutions. The assessment of listening skills is not included in the board exams, and because of that, neither do the teachers hold separate listening classes nor do they have any proclivity to enact the teaching of listening skills (Shurovi, 2014). Ruman (2021) has stated that the majority of the teachers in Bangladesh avoid teaching listening skills in class as the skill is not included in the syllabus, and audio-visual material is rarely used to teach listening skills in rural areas.

Lack of instruments for teaching listening skills in classrooms

The interviewed teachers have stated that their classrooms lack the physical infrastructure (i.e., internet, projector, recorder, speaker, and computer). They want the provision of modern types of equipment in class to establish an environment that leads to the learning of listening skills and the language. T3 said that:

I do not have facilities. I need a computer setup in my classroom with a Wi-Fi connection. I do not have any recorder in my class. I would let them listen to some audio-visual interesting stories if I had a recorder and projector in class. [T3, age 25, male, experience 8 months, B.A. in English]

In this regard, T2 mentioned,

We have 10 classrooms. Currently, we have only one class where I have instruments to teach. Only that classroom has a projector and speaker. But I have strict time schedule and syllabus to follow. I am having to follow the syllabus. My syllabus does not include teaching of listening skills. For that reason, I do not have access to those instruments of that class.

T4 mentioned that,

The problem is that I do not have the required materials. There is no projector and recorder in my class. But I read text loudly and they listen. I think it helps them to learn listening skill.

Likewise, Wulandari and Sya'ya (2021) have stated that many teachers disregard the actual teaching of listening skills in class that comes from using materials. While classrooms in rural areas in Bangladesh— even in semi-urban and urban areas— lack language learning instruments. Teachers cannot teach listening skills because of not having the required instruments. Primary-level students must listen to cartoons, stories, rhymes, fables, etc. to improve their listening skills, using technologies— such as television, the internet, projector, recorder, and radio to listen in English— which is beneficial for acquiring listening skills. Shrestha (2013) has explored that listening to songs, poems, and stories is an interesting activity among primary-level students in Bangladesh (Shrestha, 2013).

Patwary and Rumman (2019) clarify that listening is an essential skill to communicate in society, and listening is a prerequisite to communicating with others. They again mention that English listening skill is avoided by teachers and students to a greater extent in Bangladesh. Many

teachers lack training to improve listening and do not have any realization of the necessities of the skill; that avoidance causes hindrances in learners' listening and speaking skill. It is considered in our country that if students can write, read, and know grammar, they have a good ability to communicate. However, listening properly and understanding the heard messages both are required to communicate verbally.

Lack of suitable environment in classroom

Teachers play a vital role in the successful learning of their students. It has been found that the interviewed teachers encourage their students to listen in English, for it is the teacher's role to encourage and engage students to listen in English so that the students can pick up the language. But they cannot enact a student-centered classroom. They also have mentioned that a teacher-centered environment exists in the class due to academic pressure. They do not have that much flexibility to make the class environment student-centered to carry out something beyond the prescribed syllabus of the institution. T2 said that,

It is not possible for me to make my classroom environment student-centered. I have many students in my class. The class time is short, and within this short time, it is tough to maintain children.

In this respect, T5 said that,

I get 40 minutes to teach the students. I have 30 students in each class. Primary-level students are too agile and naughty. Within 40 minutes, teaching listening skill and managing time is too difficult. If I let them to read or write, they start to talk. I do not have any option left other than keeping the classroom teacher-centered. The class time is also limited, though I try sometimes to expose them to group and pair work. [T5, age 25, female, experience 1 year 4 months, B.A. in English]

From the findings, it is explored that as primary-level students are too young, many of them are uninterested in learning listening skills; besides, the classroom environment remains teachers-centered where students remain inactive. The problem is the large classroom size; one class contains many students which makes it difficult to be managed by teachers, let alone provide feedback on listening skills (Hossain, 2019; Hosan & Weiyang, 2022).

Congested classrooms with many students are problematic for teachers as teachers cannot mentor every student. Classrooms become noisy for many students. Many primary schools of rural areas do not have technologies to teach the skill. Besides, teachers do not have required materials to teach the language (Milon, 2016).

Many teachers also avoid teaching listening skills following traditional teaching methods as the teachers are not ready enough to establish a student-centered classroom in institutions, and thereby, students remain passive in class. Hardly do students enhance their listening skills in the traditional approach to teaching. These results corroborate the research of Rahman (2021), who reported that in rural areas of Bangladesh, speaking and listening practices are rarely conducted in primary-level classes, and students at schools

confront challenges to learn listening skills. He further found that primary level teachers possess inadequate insight into proper pedagogy in teaching listening and speaking skills. Students in rural areas do not have the scope to learn and practice the skill, as the teachers do not sustain the environment of teaching and learning the skill at institutions.

Lack of qualified teachers at schools

The interviewed teachers have mentioned that many primary-level teachers are not trained to teach the language. They have further claimed that many teachers in rural areas do not possess the required degree to teach English in primary schools, and yet, primary-level teachers in rural areas do not even know how to utilize technology to teach the language. T1 remarked that,

In my school, every teacher isn't TESOL based. Most of them are senior and literature-based. They're using the same techniques to teach for many years. They're not trained for how to conduct a listening session." "Also I've seen teachers in rural areas who don't have any honors degree in English, but they are teaching English in primary school. They don't even know how to use technology to teach language.

T4 said that,

Some of my colleagues lack the training to teach listening skill the way it should be taught. They do not want to be trained also. They stick to the traditional method, and they focus on grammar too much. I believe the learners should be exposed to different kind of accent or pronunciations. Then they can pick the language and pronunciation. Students should be exposed to IPA charts. As a result, they will understand the differences in pronunciation.

T3 said in this regard,

Many primary-level students lack motivation when it comes to teaching listening skill. Teachers also think that teaching and learning listening skills at the primary level isn't necessary. So their mindset is the biggest challenge. They tend to avoid training. Lazy teachers don't want to come out of their comfort zone. Some teachers are not trained to teach speaking and listening. We need to be knowing how to effectively teach listening. But teachers teach grammar only as they find it too easy to do.

The same sort of challenge has been researched in the context of education in Bangladesh where many teachers lack competency in using English, pedagogical knowledge, and long-term pre-service and in-service training (Ambia & Rahman, 2021; Nur, 2018). Many teachers in rural areas also lack phonetics and phonological awareness to teach listening skills (Rani, 2018). Many teachers' teaching strategies are not up to the mark. Primary-level teachers' low teaching quality is a serious challenge to the linguistic development of their students (Siddik & Kawai, 2020). Hunter and Zaman (2022) have found that teachers' English language competency remains poor in rural areas in Bangladesh because of the content and short duration of teacher training.

DISCUSSION

The finding, from the survey and the interviews, indicates that the teaching of listening skills is yet to be enacted and developed at primary-level schools in Bangladesh. Primary-level teachers consider the teaching of listening skills a challenging task due to the challenges revealed in the results. At institutions the authority still does not include the teaching of listening skills in the syllabus, let alone the assessment, for which many teachers are reluctant to teach the skill. The authorities do not have any tendency to implement the teaching of listening skills at the institution. In this research, moreover, it has been found that due to academic restraints, the interviewed teachers are bound not to teach listening skills. The authority of the institution does not allow the teachers to do so, and thereby, primary-level students' literacy is weakened. The survey results show that most of the teachers never teach listening skills to their students.

The NCTB curriculum of the primary level has advocated for the teaching of listening, but that cannot be implemented unless schools' authority includes the teaching of the skill in the syllabus and until teachers enact the teaching of listening skills at the school (National Curriculum and Textbook Board, 2012). In terms of listening skills, the NCTB curriculum stipulates what to teach, and what the teachers' roles and students' activities are. The institutions' authority should mobilize their teachers to teach listening skills along with other skills; it requires primary-level teachers who should take the initiative to enact the teaching of listening skills at school. Students of the primary level should be exposed to listening in English through their teachers. The teachers have to expose primary-level students to IPA chart for teaching English pronunciation and different accents. Listening should be taught and developed in the classroom in order to enhance the quality of students' speaking skills, as listening and speaking are reciprocal processes. Furthermore, according to students' age and class level, the avenue of teaching listening skills should be developed. Teachers have to strategize their way of teaching listening skills in a way that will bring effective results for their students. Teachers should develop their students' listening skills by getting them engaged in class activities, such as listening tests or drills. Teachers need to motivate their students to get involved in regular communication (Hwaider, 2017). Students also need to be made enthusiastic to learn listening skills by teachers (Hashim et al., 2020).

Teachers also cannot expose students to English poems, stories, and fables as--- they have to complete the academic syllabus within a short time and--- their classrooms do not possess the required instruments. Teachers should let their students listen to stories, songs, and poems in class, as such has been prescribed in the NCTB curriculum. Primary-level students, however, are apparently prone to visuals--- i.e., cartoons, stories, poems, fables--- which will maximize their attention and lead them to get exposed to the language by listening; it is an efficient way to teach listening skills. Therefore, classrooms should be well equipped with a computer, internet, speaker, projector, recorder, etc. In such a case as that, institutions should provide facilities to teachers

so that the teachers can teach the skill. In addition to this regard, English teachers should--- be able to--- utilize the provided instruments to enhance the teaching and learning of listening skills.

However, the teachers lack a suitable classroom environment to teach listening skills. The classroom environment plays a pivotal role in making more effective learning of listening skills. The institutions should focus on the classroom environment. The environment of the classroom should be student-centered instead of teacher-centered (Gilakjani & Ahmadi, 2011). The students' numbers in a class should be--- not more, not less but--- ideal. The interviewed teachers have mentioned that the primary-level students do not remain attentive in class. In order to listen and comprehend the message of teachers, the attention of students is essential. Unless students remain attentive while listening, they will not be able to comprehend what their teacher says.

Moreover, from the survey it has been explored that, most of the teachers speak in both English and Bangla depending on the situation. Hossain et al., (2015), likewise, have explored that 64 % of their surveyed primary-level teachers teach English by speaking the Bangla language in class, and only 8% of the teachers teach English by speaking English. The study by Rouf and Mohamed (2022) reported a similar finding that teachers did not use L2 substantially as their classroom language, though they were teaching English, but used L1 mostly and the teachers were not competent in speaking English. Thus, teachers fall apart to furnish students with language input. Regular practice of communication in English in the classrooms enhances the listening and speaking skills of students; students thereby become competent and confident in language learning (Bozorgian, 2012). Nevertheless, primary-level students are not likely to acquire the language--- that are: listening and speaking--- unless students listen to English on a daily basis. Students have to listen to simple instructions in English from their teachers, and they need to respond and act accordingly to the instructions. Teachers should, therefore, create an English-speaking environment inside and outside class. Teachers have to provide adequate input (i.e., language) to their students by speaking in English so that their students can acquire the language to speak. Primary-level students, however, apparently pick up teachers' mispronounced words; therefore, teachers have to pronounce words correctly while speaking, and they should speak in such a way that is easy to understand for their primary-level students. The teaching of listening skills at the primary level is vulnerable because of unqualified teachers. In the interviews, the teachers have mentioned that their schools have unqualified teachers who do not know how to teach listening skills. Unqualified teachers, who stick to the traditional method of teaching, excessively emphasize grammar avoiding speaking and listening skills. Teachers should be trained, qualified, and technologically equipped to teach listening skills. In this respect, the teachers' education program is critical to the implementation of listening pedagogy, therefore. Teachers need to know how listening skills best be taught in an effectual manner, and they should implement their learning in the teaching of listening skills.

CONCLUSION

This mixed methods study has explored the challenges of teaching listening skills at primary-level schools in Bangladesh. Through a survey questionnaire, the quantitative data have been collected from 30 primary-level teachers from different schools in rural, urban, and semi-urban areas. In order to collect the qualitative data, 5 primary level teachers have been interviewed. It is obvious from the findings that teachers confront some challenges in teaching listening skills: Most of the primary level teachers avoid teaching listening skills as the skill is not included in the syllabus and assessed in the board exam. They consider teaching the skill to be a challenging task and do not have the instrument to expose their students to audio-visual literature. Teachers cannot sustain a student-centered environment for they have to complete the syllabus first, avoiding the teaching of listening skills. Teachers are not yet trained to teach listening skills the way they should be taught, and untrained teachers exceedingly focus on grammar keeping the teaching of listening skills aside. The explored challenges, which are revealed in the results section delay the development of teaching listening skills at primary-level institutions in Bangladesh, should be dealt with and resolved as promptly as possible to enhance students' English listening capability.

Listening is one of the crucial skills of any target language that should be regularly taught and learned from childhood, i.e., primary level. Listening is an essential skill to pick up a language. Listening is an inevitable input when it comes to learning to speak; literacy, which is the ability to read and write, is linked to listening skills as the four linguistic skills are related to each other. If, for example, a learner is good at listening in English, then, the learner will apparently be able to pick the language, which helps the learner to learn reading and writing. Listening skills, therefore, should be taught and emphasized at primary schools so that students engage in efficacious language learning and communication development. In order to tackle the challenges, effective methods of teaching listening skills should be implemented at primary-level schools. Educational training for teachers is critical to the implementation of teaching listening skills in Bangladesh. The teachers at primary-level institutions immediately should commence the teaching of listening skills; in order for that to occur, institutions need to have qualified teachers and required instruments (computer, projector, recorder, speaker, etc.); the teachers have to utilize the instruments, too. In a student-centered classroom, teachers have to engage their students in audio-visual input, i.e., cartoons, poems, stories, fables, etc., and listening activities and assessments. Regular communication in English inside and outside the classroom hone the listening skills of students; thereby, students become competent as well as confident in language learning and use. This is one of the ways of gaining literacy. As well as teachers should be mentoring their students in the process of teaching and learning listening skills effectively.

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