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Objectives of NCTB English curriculum and reflections in classrooms: A study of the English Textbook Provided for the Junior Secondary Level

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ABSTRACT

Bangladesh has effectively enhanced educational access; however, there are concerns that the recent implementation of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in the national curriculum may not result in improved English proficiency among students. Curriculum improvements are implemented to enhance learners' communicative competencies; nonetheless, speaking and listening skills are afforded less practice in Bangla-medium schools, whereas reading and writing abilities are prioritized. This study examines the extent to which the objectives of the communicative English curriculum are implemented at the junior secondary level. This study examines the contextual characteristics and educational specifications of English for Today textbooks for Grades 6, 7, and 8, along with the obstacles that impede their effective implementation. This research employed a qualitative design, utilizing textbook content analysis, classroom observations at three Bangla-medium schools in Dhaka, and qualitative interviews and questionnaires with 20 English language educators. The data were analyzed using thematic content analysis to identify patterns in curriculum implementation and teaching strategies. The findings indicate a significant disparity between the communicative objectives of the curriculum and the actual practices in the classroom. These textbooks incorporate communicative exercises; however, constrained classroom time, exam-centric education, insufficient teacher preparation, and minimal emphasis on speaking and listening hinder the complete implementation of this paradigm. As a result, kids have diminished opportunities to cultivate balanced competency across all four language skills. The study identifies enhanced teacher professional development, innovations in evaluating children's learning, and improved alignment between curriculum objectives and classroom practices as essential components for enhancement. The study's findings reveal substantial implications for English language instructors, educators broadly, curriculum implementers, and policymakers about the advancement of language education through communication, particularly within the context of Bangladesh and beyond.

INTRODUCTION

In the context of Bangladesh, English Language Teaching (ELT) is hardly a new thing. It has been regarded as an integral part of education system owing to its now ubiquitous place in international communication and in higher education, advanced career prospects and access to global knowledge. For this reason, during the past few decades, national education policies have stressed the improvement of learner communicative competence in English. To realise this goal, the National Curriculum and Textbook Board has been at the forefront of revising curricula and publishing textbooks to make students proficient in English across various tiers of education. In Bangladesh, English was traditionally taught through the Grammar-Translation Method (GTM), mostly focussing on memorization of grammar rules, translation of texts, and written examinations. Yet, this was inadequate in training learners' use of English for real-life communication. In order to meet this limitation, it was combined with the national curriculum Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in 2001. The primary objective of CLT is to build communicative competence within learners by enabling meaningful, contextualized language

use which integrates the four key skills listening, speaking, reading and writing. The NCTB brought about a sequence of text books for English under the title English for Today at the primary, junior secondary, secondary and higher secondary levels. Research organizations from Class 6–8 are junior secondary textbooks, which focus primarily on learner-centered exam pedagogy that helps learners to practice English within real life. Textbooks contain a variety of communicative activities like pair work, group discussion, role play, dialogue writing, information gap exercise and listening exercises. These activities are designed to get students using English and not just storing the materials for later. The course also highlights the blending of language skills so that students can develop a level balance in all four skills at once. CLT is practised only partially and intermittently in many Bangla medium schools. However, even though the textbooks offers communicative tasks, classroom teaching still is very teacher determined and teach to do traditional explanations in the lesson and student mainly take a shot notes at those lessons so next by hearting from these notes for gaining good marks in exams. Consequently, in the classroom practice, speaking and listening works are often left behind. This gap can be better attributed

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to a few practical challenges. Most of the schools are devoid of basic infrastructure needed for teaching-learning like listening practice audio devices, speakers and language labs. Because of huge class sizes and inflexible, exam-focused syllabi that favor reading and writing over talking, teachers too are pressed for time. Also, the national assessment system does not measure speaking and listening skills well enough to motivate teachers and students alike to practice these skills in the classroom. As a result, students from the Bangla medium background usually struggle to use English in proper ways at +2 and tertiary levels — Steve Jones spoke on speaking and listening pieces of work like presentations/ classroom discussions / lecture input delivered in English. On the other hand, students from English medium backgrounds have relatively higher communicative proficiency because of more exposure to English in classrooms and social settings. It is within this background that the present study attempts to explore the aims of. situated in Bangladesh. It also aims at discovering what problems teachers faced in using communicative activities, in particular referring to the four language skills. Based on the examination of textbooks, classroom observations and teacher questionnaire surveys, this study aims to investigate the disconnection between what is being addressed in curriculum policy and practice (in schools) in relation to English teaching. It offers realistic proposals that could help solve possible problems in English language education at a school level.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Curriculum design and language education

Curriculum design is a systematic process of planning, implementing and evaluating educational programs to achieve specific learning outcomes. Nunan (1988) described curriculum as an interrelated provision of syllabus design, methodology, materials development and assessment. He contends that curriculum development should not be construed as distinct parts but rather an ongoing process in which one area impacts the others. Nation and Macalister (2010) make similar points when they argue that effective teaching has to be based upon the needs of learners, and resources available, teacher competency and contextual realities. Without consideration of these factors, it would be implausible for the curriculum to successfully meet its goals.

Curriculum design is one of the most critical elements in language education because it influences the way communicative competence is achieved by the learner. An adequate language syllabus must provide equal emphasis on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills through legitimate tasks. As such, curriculum design doesn't consist only of what students are studying, but also of how they will do so in actual classrooms as well as the ways in which language is taught and practiced.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

There exists an approach to language pedagogy known as Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), one

that prioritizes communicative competence over mere grammatical knowledge. According to Richards and Rodgers (2001), CLT is an approach based on instruction wherein communication is both the means and the end of language learning. Communicative Competence The notion of communicative competence (Hymes 1971) has conceived the ability to use language in real and appropriate social context.

According to Howatt (1984), the main core of communicative activity in language learning is that learners are involved in meaningful interaction. CLT draws upon many disciplines such as, sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, anthropology and philosophy of language which emphasise the social, functional face of language. Richards and Rodgers (2001) describe three key principles of CLT: the communication principle, the task principle, and the meaningfulness principle. This principle leads to the conclusion that learners have been found to learn better when engaged in authentic communication, meaning-focused tasks and contextualized language use. CLT was introduced in Bangladesh to overcome grammar -translation methods and enhance learners communicative competence of English language. But the success of CLT hang on the actual classroom context, teachers preparation and institutional support.

in Language Learning

Integrated skills: Rooted in the belief that language skills are interconnected and that isolation of language skills is not useful. They also express that in reality, Harmer (2007) states that all four language activities of listening, speaking, reading and writing are combined. For instance, in classroom interaction a teacher simultaneously reads, speaks, listens and writes. Teaching skills in isolation is, therefore, an inaccurate representation of how languages are used.

Oxford (2001) supports this integrated skills approach and further suggests that through the application of these four skills students develop their language learning through engaging with meaningful and authentic contexts. This practice provides learners with real-life communication contexts and enhances overall communicative effectiveness. In line with this view, Nunan (1989) points out that integrated skill activities like role play, group work, information gap tasks, and project work provide authentic contexts for language use and raise learner motivation.

Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Communicative Language Teaching theory and the Integrated Skills Approach. The theoretical basis is primarily founded on the concept of communicative competence as proposed by Hymes (1971), reflecting the capacity to adequately use a language in real contexts. Moreover, Richards and Rodgers (2001) present a theoretical spectrum of CLT from its main concepts of communication, task-based learning and language use with meaning.

The integrated skills model by Oxford (2001), supports

this study as well, due to the need of simultaneous development in listening, speaking, reading and writing. This model states that teaching skills in combination yields better results than teaching them individually. This idea is also supported by Harmer (2007) who states that in real communication, great deal of skills functions together.

These reports employ these perspectives to analyse the extent of reflection of NCTB English curriculum objectives in Pedagogical Practices followed in the classroom at junior secondary level. It forms a framework to take an in-depth look at whether the set of classroom activities and tasks set out in textbooks, or engaged with by teachers is consistent with the principles of communicative language teaching and integrated skills development.

English Language Teaching in Bangladesh

Despite the national curriculum advocating of Communicative Language Teaching, in practice Bangladeshi state classrooms still tend to be traditional and exam-oriented. Kabir (2015) observes that these skills struggle to be developed and practiced because most classes are too large, with no resources and training available for teachers. The approach most teachers take is to teach grammar through textbooks rather than with communicative or experiential activities.

Considering the lack of audio-visual resources and language laboratories, conducting listening activities is hardly practical. Examination systems favouring the skills of reading and writing also pressure teachers. Consequently, in classroom practice speaking and listening skills are rarely developed, meaning that there is often a gap between curriculum objectives around these areas of language, and the academic outcomes.

Research Gap

While a number of studies have looked at English language teaching in Bangladesh, the majority focus on primary or secondary levels. Few studies specifically focused on working at the junior secondary level, particularly around the four language skills approach within English for Today textbooks. Only limited studies provide data via a combination of textbook analysis, classroom observation, and teacher perspectives in one research design. Existing literature identifies some general challenges the junior secondary level but does not explore how curriculum objectives are reflected in practice. Thus, this study tries to bridge this gap by exploring the alignment of NCTB curriculum objectives with classroom practice in Bangla medium schools in Bangladesh.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study employed a qualitative-dominant mixed-methods research methodology to investigate the divergence between the planned curriculum and actual classroom practices in junior secondary English teaching in Bangladesh, using the intended Communicative

Language Teaching (CLT) curriculum as the focal point of analysis. The mixed-method approach was suitable due to the necessity of thoroughly examining pedagogical methods while integrating systematic data on instructors' perspectives and instructional materials to improve methodological rigor via triangulation.

Research Locale and Sampling Methodology

The study was conducted in Dhaka city involving three Bangla-medium secondary schools. Purposive sampling was employed to identify three schools that exemplify typical implementation circumstances of the national English curriculum established by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). Twenty English language teachers were selected as primary participants based on their direct experience teaching English at the junior secondary level. The sample size for this study was determined based on the criteria of data saturation, as extensively outlined in qualitative research, ensuring sufficient theme depth while maintaining contextual relevance.

Instruments for Data Collection

Methodological triangulation was achieved through the collection of data from many instruments. The data sources for this study included a content analysis of EFT textbooks for grades 6, 7, and 8, a semi-structured checklist assessing verbal communication tasks utilized by teachers during classroom observations, semi-structured interview schedules with teachers, and a structured questionnaire examining teachers' perceptions of challenges associated with curriculum implementation. The measures were developed utilizing methodologies from Communicative Language Teaching and literature.

All tools were assessed for content validity by specialists in applied linguistics and English language instruction before utilization. A pilot research was undertaken prior to the main data collection to improve the clarity, relevance, and sequencing of the measurements. Internal consistency metrics (Cronbach's alpha) were employed to evaluate the reliability of the questionnaire, while observational and interview techniques were standardized to ensure uniformity in data recording.

Data Acquisition Protocol

Data was gathered during a duration of one year, from July 2024 to July 2025. This necessitates doing multiple sets of observations at a school to comprehensively elucidate the variability of practice. The interviews were conducted in person and audio-recorded with the teachers' approval, who also participated in the transcribing relevant to data analysis. Supervised completion of the questionnaire in written form.

Data Examination

Thematic analysis was employed to examine the data. We employed a deductive coding methodology to analyze textbook content, observational notes,

interview transcripts, and questionnaire responses for recurring themes related to curriculum implementation, instructional practices, and pedagogical restrictions. Methodological triangulation was employed to enhance the validity of interpretation by integrating data from many sources.

Triangulation and Credibility

Four data sources textbook analysis, classroom observations, teacher interviews, and questionnaire responses were employed to ascertain the triangulation of findings. This approach enhanced the robustness and dependability of the findings by reducing dependence on a singular source of information. We implemented

stringent coding protocols, and a systematic iterative examination of emerging themes enhanced reliability.

Ethical Considerations

Ethics approval was obtained before data collection. All participating teachers provided informed consent and were de-identified in the study. The participants were assured anonymity, and all data were utilized solely for academic purposes. Participants were informed that their involvement was entirely voluntary and that they might withdraw at any time without consequence.

The same questionnaire has been used for all classes. While doing questionnaire survey, the teachers were asked

Table 1: Questionnaire Survey and Analysis:

Item	Comment								
Do you make students practice speaking skill?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	67%	No	33%	Sometimes	0%		
Do you make students practice listening skill?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	22%	No	33%	Sometimes	45%		
Do you make the students interactive?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	44%	No	0%	Sometimes	56%		
How do you make students interactive?									
The students do not need to appear for listening in									
the board exams. Do you evaluate this skill in the classroom?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	55%	No	22%	Sometimes	23%		
How do you evaluate this skill in the classroom?									
The students do not need to appear for speaking in the									
board exams. Do you evaluate this skill in the classroom?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	56%	No	22%	Sometimes	22%		
How do you evaluate this skill in the classroom?									
Do you use audio?	yes/ no	Yes	44%	No	56%				
If yes, how do you use audio in classroom?									
Is there any other way through which you									
practice listening in the classroom? Mention.									
Do you practice the activity on speaking given									
on the English for Today textbook in classroom?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	67%	No	0%	Sometimes	33%		
Do you practice the activity on listening									
given on the English for Today textbook in classroom?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	67%	No	33%				
How do you make students practice writing?									

Did you undergo any training regarding teaching language in the classroom?	yes/ no	Yes	67%	No	33%		
Do you meet the goals of the learning outcomes?	yes/ no						
Do you suggest them memorize from the guidebook?	yes/ no/ sometimes	Yes	44%	No	33%	Sometimes	22%
How do you teach grammar?	a) Through worksheet (b) following a particular text (c) board work (d) All of them	b	11%	d	56%	c	22%
From which background of education you have come?							
Do you think the activities in the textbook are written in communicative English?							

questions orally regarding some issues. The summary of teachers' feedback questionnaire is given below: Teachers were asked whether they make students practice speaking in the classroom or not and 67% (figure: 1)

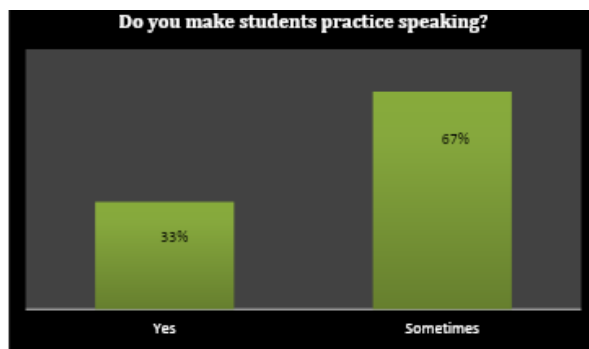


Figure 1

answered that they sometimes made students practice speaking in the classroom. In the next question when they were asked how they made that practice in the classroom, they answered that according to the instructions of the activities of the text and the instructions were basically to do pair work. They were orally asked if there was any limitation they faced while practicing speaking, most of them answered that as they involved students in pair work, it was not possible to involve every student in the activity because of the limitation of class hour.

When they were asked if they evaluate this activity, they answered that though there is no assessment according to the NCTB curriculum, the teachers personally do the assessment

The teachers answered that through questioning the students they made the classes interactive.

At the above picture, (figure:3) it is seen that 45% teachers answered that they did not make students practice listening in the classroom. When they were asked the reason, they answered that according to the instruction of the text, they were supposed to be provided CD, but

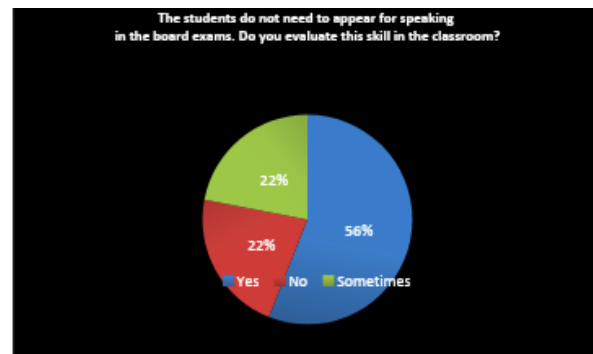


Figure 2

they did not receive anything with which they would conduct the practice. 33% teachers answered that they

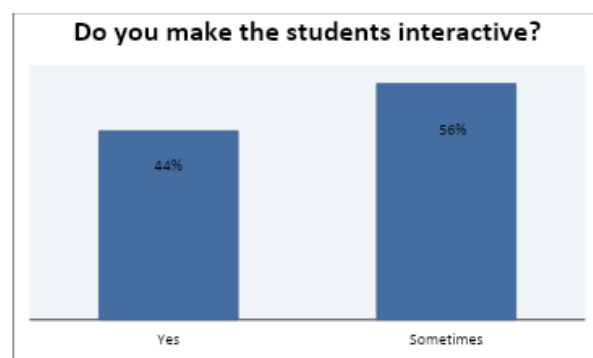


Figure 3

sometimes did listening practice. When they were asked how they conduct the listening practice, they answered that they use their smart phones.

The teachers do listening evaluation by taking a quiz.

Almost all of them answered positively when they were asked whether they make students practice reading and writing in the classroom or not. They orally answered

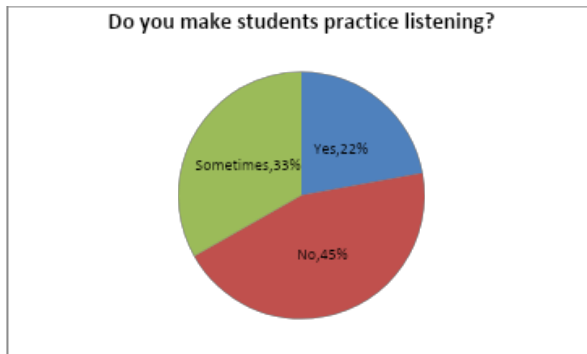


Figure 4

that according to the format of the question paper of exam they make students practice reading and writing. In case of writing they mainly practice composition writing. Creative writing, like project work, story writing, dialogue making are often ignored.

In another question they were asked if they make enough practice on grammar and all of them answered positively. When they were asked how they teach grammar in the classroom, they answered according to figure 5.

When we asked them whether they suggest students to

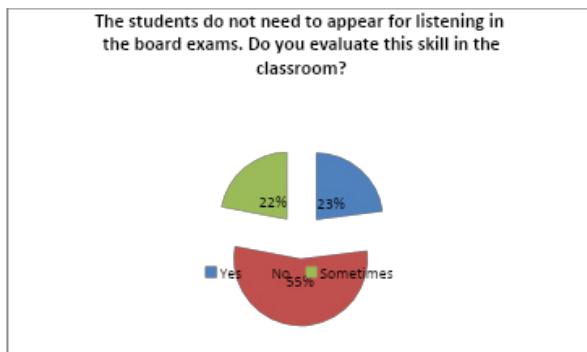


Figure 5

follow guidebook or not most of them answered 'yes'. When they were asked the reason they orally answered that guidebooks would become very helpful to them.

Most of the teachers agreed that they had completed a training course regarding teaching language in the classroom.

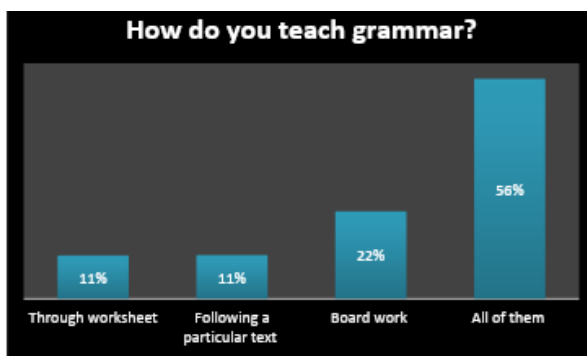


Figure 6

Analysis of Classroom Observation

We have observed 9 classrooms. There we observed teachers' way of teaching, how the language skills were practiced, quality of teachers' lectures and what

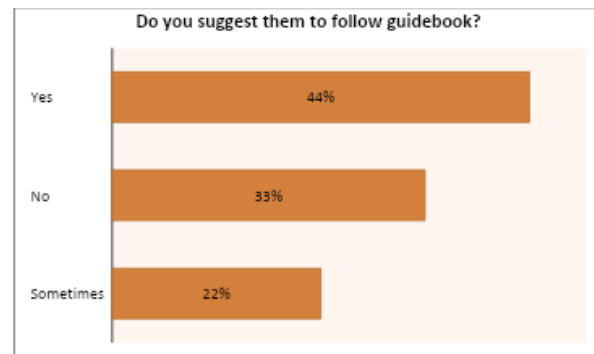


Figure 7

feedback they gave to their students. The summary of the observation is given below:

One teacher among 9 used English throughout the whole class but most of the teachers used English words frequently though they rarely used complete sentences in English.



Figure 8

In most of the classes teachers' pronunciations were below average and the picture is disappointing.

In another observation it has been found that in most of the cases classes are teachers-centered. Very few activities were observed. We did not observe any practice on listening but in 3 classes we observed pair work for speaking practice.

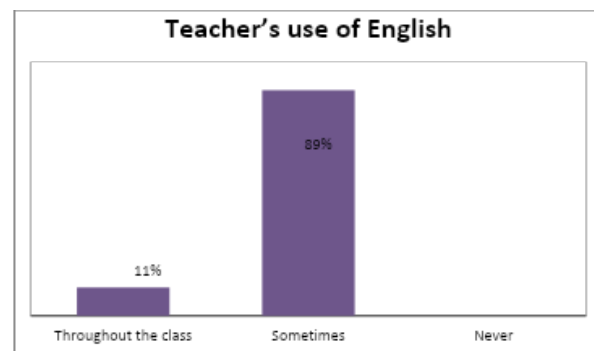


Figure 9

Table 2: Analysis of Classroom Observation:

Points	Observation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9					
Medium of instruction	English/Bangla/Bilingual	bi	bi	bi	bi	bi	bi	bi	bi	bi	100%				
Practice of listening	Yes/No	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	100%				
Practice of speaking	Yes/No	n	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	44%	y	56%	
Practice writing	Yes/No	y	n	y	n	n	y	y	y	y	n	33%	y	67%	
Use of audio materials	Yes/No	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	100%				
Method of teaching	Teacher-centered/interactive/ activity based	ab	i	both	both	both	ab	tc	tc	tc	ab	22%	TC	33%	i
Peer or group activity on speaking	Yes/No	n	y	y	y	y	y	n	n	n	n	44%	y	56%	
Pronunciation of the students	Native like/Non-native but near native/ didn't practice speaking/ not good	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	100%				
Teacher's feedback	Use of rubrics/general comment/ no	n	n	n	n	n	n	n	gc	gc	n	78%	gc	22%	
Ways of writing practice	Freehand writing/task practice/ no	tp	n	tp	n	n	tp	tp	tp	tp	TP	67%	n	33%	
How do they practice writing paragraph or essay	M e m o r i z e d / creative writing	m		m			m	m	m	m					
Teacher's instruction on writing	K e y w o r d s / questions/ no help/ textbook based	nh		tb			tb	tb	tb	tb					
Teaching grammar	Rules/ Practical use	r						r	r	r					
Teacher's pronunciation	Native/non-native but near native/ Average/ not good	a	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	ng	a	ng	a	22%	ng	78%	
Teacher's use of English	Throughout the class/ sometimes/ never	s	s	t	s	s	s	s	s	s	s	89%	T	11%	

CONCLUSION

At the primary level, students basically develop their grammar and sentence skills. Junior Secondary level is the period where students must develop their skills by implementing grammar and sentence skill because at the higher secondary level they need to implement these skills for better communication and at this level they prepare themselves for a competitive assessment and they hardly have time for skill development. The texts, provided by

NCTB are rich enough to develop students' language skills if the instructions are followed properly. To follow the instructions properly schools must provide necessary supports. The traditional way of teaching and assessment should be avoided and a new learning environment must be created. By achieving proficiency in language and communication, our nation will get steps ahead towards the Millennium Development Goal.

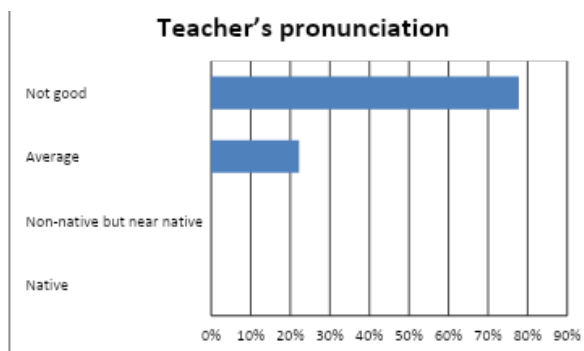


Figure 10

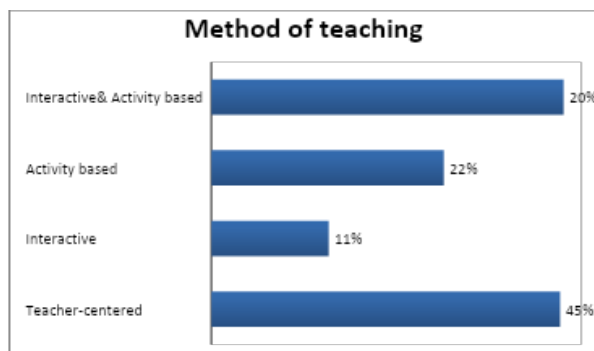


Figure 11

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