



# SPEAKING AND LISTENING SKILLS AT SECONDARY LEVEL IN UNDERDEVELOPED COUNTRY-BANGLADESH: DRAWBACKS OF SYLLABUS DESIGN AND EVALUATION SYSTEM

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## ABSTRACT

*This research focuses on the current condition of teaching and learning speaking and listening skills at secondary level of education in Dhaka City of Bangladesh and find out the reasons behind their extreme weakness in those skills. Since CLT has introduced a long time earlier in Bangladesh, special emphasis is given only in writing skill in the curriculum as well as teaching method. As a result, most of the students cannot utter a single sentence after knowing almost all grammar of English language. Even they hardly have the practice of listening. To find out the exact reasons behind the problem and give probable solutions the researcher will collect data from the students, teachers through questionnaire and interview and observe the class by both qualitative and quantitative methods.*

**KEY WORDS:** *Speaking, Listening, Secondary level, English Language, CLT.*

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## INTRODUCTION

It almost 14 years of introducing CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) in Bangladesh. And 40 years of teaching English language as a second language from the primary level as a major subject. But still now most of the students and teachers are not comfortable in speaking and listening skills in the classrooms in the context of Bangladesh. The situation in Dhaka is a little bit different. Here teachers are more qualified, and students also belong to educated family. Their classrooms are also well-furnished and digitalized. Even they have number of language club and extracurricular activities to improve their skills in English. Still then they have lacking in speaking and listening skills. Because their syllabus and evaluation system only emphasized in writing and reading skills.

English has progressively become the medium in each space of correspondence, both in nearby and worldwide settings. Thus, the interest for using English successfully is vital in each nation. Teaching and learning English, aside from mother tongue, is hence urgent for communicative purposes to adapt to the

developing neighbourhood, national and worldwide demands for English abilities. English is a foreign language in Bangladesh, and is utilized in academic purpose, development of career, higher study and more. To cope with the advanced world, English has been taught as a second language from the primary level.[1]

The process of acquiring and learning English takes time as it involves some challenges and certain set of skills. These are divided into productive and receptive according to the common framework. Receptive abilities include listening and reading. They play a vital role in understanding the content, textbooks, works or documents. Productive skills include oral presentation, written studies and reports these are important skills for a student because it encourages them to be more participative. Therefore, focus should be given to these skills so that they are properly trained.

Most of the difficulties are found in the process of learning and teaching speaking and listening skills, according to the experiences of many teachers as well as foreign language learners. On the other hand,



different methods, strategies and techniques were developed to promote both educators and students the teaching and learning process of these skills. Thus, the main purpose of this study is to find out the obstacles both for the students and teachers and to identify the techniques of teaching these skills as practiced in the modern world as well as in our country. [2]

There are four basic language learning skills in communicative method, such as: listening, speaking, reading and writing. When speaking about using English at any educational level, whether it is primary, secondary, intermediate or tertiary, it involves teaching the four language skills which give equal value to each of these skills. Secondary education in Bangladesh is one of the most important educational fields. English is taught at this stage, but there is no appropriate focus on the ability to speak and listen to the learner. Although speaking and listening are the two-common means of communication, primary, secondary and higher secondary education planners put less emphasis on these skills. As a result, students were unable to use English effectively in their practical life. This present study explores approaches in secondary education system to the teaching of speaking and listening skills.

### Research questions

- a) How is the syllabus designed to improve speaking skill and listening skill?
- b) How are the speaking and the listening skills tested in the examination?
- c) Is English for Today appropriately designed to improve four skills simultaneously?
- d) What obstacles do the teachers face while teaching speaking and listening skills?
- e) What obstacles do the students face while learning speaking and listening skills?

### BACKGROUND

Sinha and Alam (2009) also worked in listening skills in tertiary level. They investigated that in Bangladesh ELT (English Language Teaching) is followed by CLT (Communicative Language Teaching), but the listening skill is less emphasized. Still students having problem with phonetics. They can speak but they cannot understand the lecture when it is more furnished. They pointed out that the reason behind this weakness is less focus on listening. So, they suggested to add some materials with the designed course to enrich students listening skill.

Shurovi (2014) worked in the lack of speaking and listening skill in higher secondary level in Bangladesh. She pointed that after 14 years of introducing CLT in Bangladesh, the practice of speaking and listening English in the class is hardly found. Most of the students cannot utter a sentence correctly not because of grammatical mistakes rather they are so shy to speak in front of other people. Besides after visiting four colleges in Dhaka city she found that in most of the college even 50% teachers did not speak in English in the class.

Rahman (2014) conducted a research on difficulties students and teacher face in listening skill at secondary level. He found in the CLT based classroom only focus is given in reading, writing and speaking skills. He visited some well renowned schools in Dhaka and found that though examination system only care for writing and reading skills but most of the teachers are comfortable in speaking English in the classes but most of the students cannot understand the complete lecture.

Brunfaut and Green (2014) conducted a research on English Listening and Speaking Assessment in higher secondary level. They found out that the teaching methods of teachers and assessment process of students are still have some loop hops. And the education ministry should change the system. In Bangladesh a student started learning English from the primary level of education. So, they ought to be as comfortable as their mother tongue but because of the learning method they are still lagging. Most of the students can write and have good command in grammar but still they cannot utter a sentence correctly.



Figure : 1 Conceptual Framework[3]

### PROBLEM STATEMENT

According to Secondary Examination's result in Dhaka Board, the defense administrated schools are in the topmost ranks. Even after getting highest GPA in English they face a great problem in speaking and listening skills. So, the researcher will find out the loop hops the syllabus and evaluation system in the examination. So that in future after getting A+ in English, a student can confidently deal with the four skills simultaneously.

### RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The research aims at exploring the current status of speaking and listening skills in English of the secondary level students. So, the paper denotes the following objectives;

- To investigate how the curriculum and syllabus are designed to develop these two skills
- To find out the barriers students' face in dealing with English speaking and listening tasks in the classroom

- To know about the perspective by the teachers while teaching English speaking and listening skills.

### METHODOLOGY

The researcher has followed a mixed methodology to do the research, and she has also used some data from secondary sources, like, articles or theoretical book etc. As she has worked on the secondary level in Bangladesh, so she has chosen students of class 9 and 10, because they are matured enough to do response towards the research question from the schools of Cantonment.

### Research design

The Both qualitative as well as quantitative method is being used in this paper to get an overall idea. John Cresswell once said, "Mixed methods research is a research design (or methodology) in which the researcher collects, analyzes and mixes (integrates or connects) both quantitative and qualitative data in a single study or a multiphase program of inquiry". To get an overall idea and complete idea of a research

mixed method is by far believed to be one of the best. Apart from qualitative and quantitative approach, mixed method is becoming increasing popular among researcher due to its efficiency and research friendliness (Jonson, Onwuegbuzie, & Turner, 2007, p.119).

### Research sample

Firstly, the researcher chose 2 schools based on the performance in Public examination situated at Cantonment area. She selected 20 students of class 9 (because the students of class 10 were busy with their test examinations) from the selected school Based on the group of science and business studies. She selected 20 students from each schools from every group based on their performance by the help of their class teacher. She also conducted her questionnaires on 4 English teachers from the selected schools. (2 from each school).

### Research instruments

The research used questionnaire both for students and teachers regarding their teaching process focusing on the development speaking and listening skills. A research question may be a clear, focused, concise, complicated and controversial question around that you center your analysis. You should raise an issue

regarding a problem that you simply are genuinely interested in. And checklist while observing the class. A checklist is a list of all the things that researcher needs to do, information that she wants to find out, or things that she needs to take somewhere, which she makes in order to ensure that she does not forget anything. She observed two classes of the selected schools, while the English class was going on.

### Research procedure

The researcher went through the direct field work using survey and observation method. She included 13 questions in the questionnaire and 14 questions for the teachers. She also included 4 sectors in the checklist regarding the teaching method, physical facilities, congenial atmosphere, and invisible problem

### RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To get an acceptable result both quantitative and qualitative measures have been taken. Appropriate questionnaires were of which some were open ended and some were close ended. Open ended questions were mainly designed to get qualitative data. On the contrary close ended question were prepared to get quantitative data. The questionnaires are attached in appendix-1, appendix-2, appendix-3, and appendix-4.

### FIGURES



Figure: 1(Source: Survey November 2019)

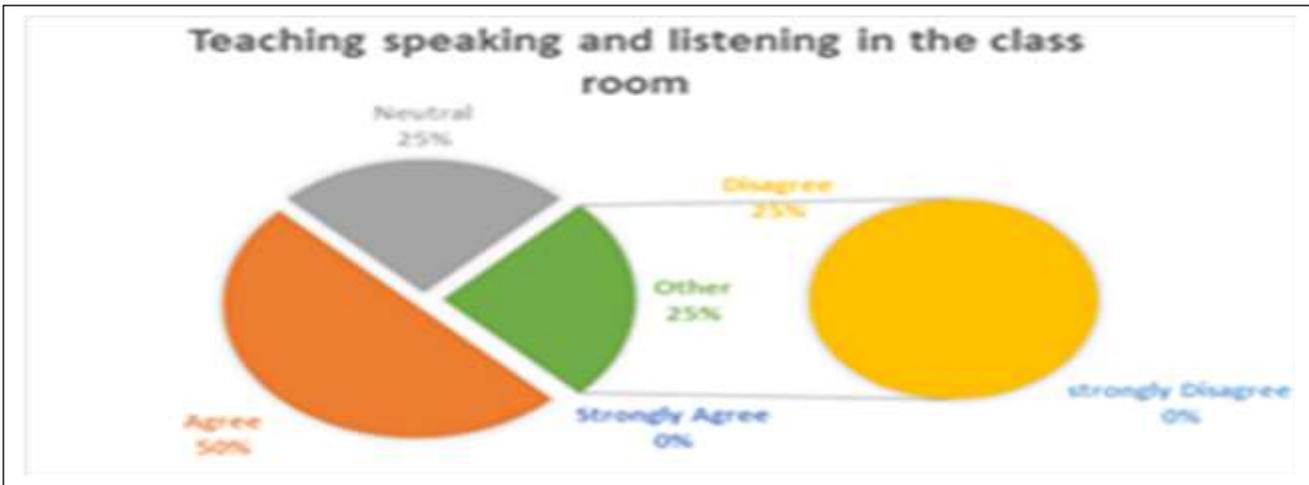


Figure : (Source: Survey November 2019)

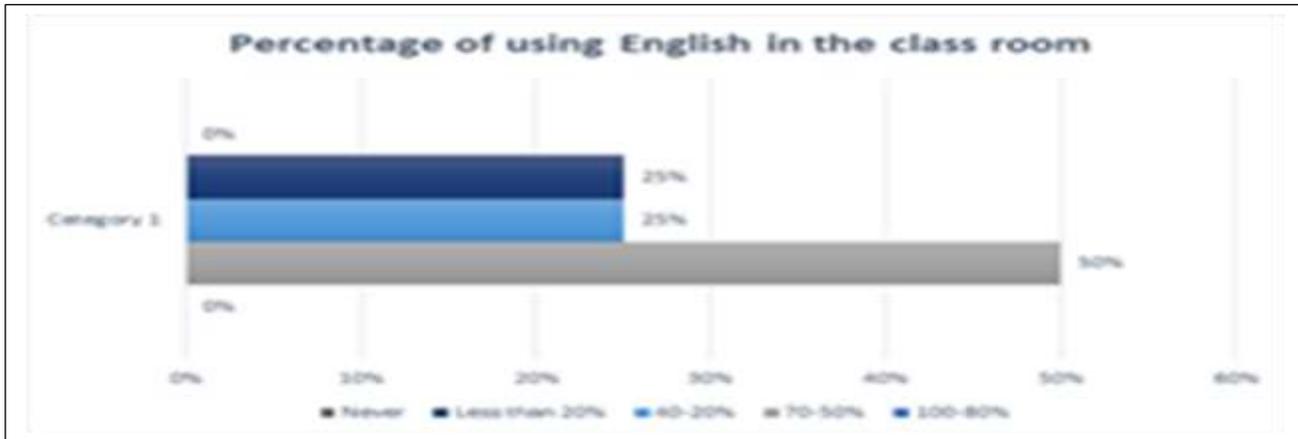


Figure :3 (Source: Survey November 2019)

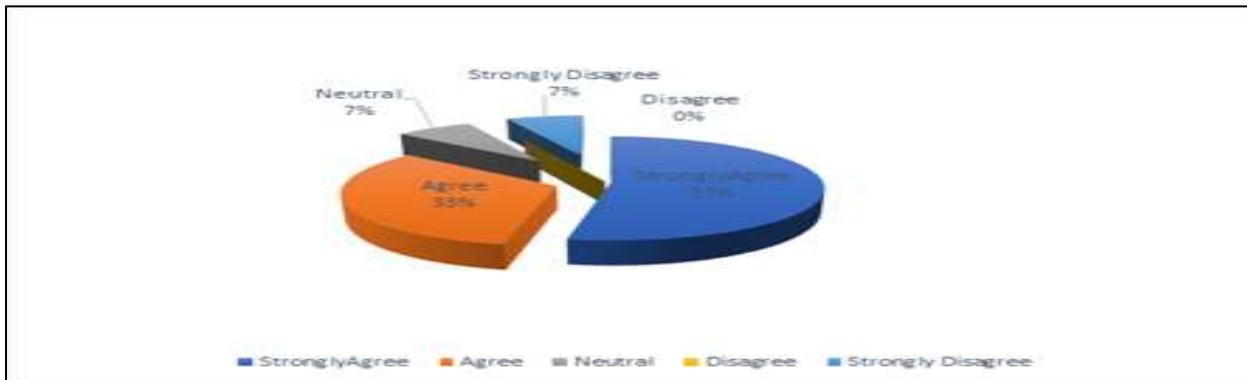


Figure : 4(Source: Survey November 2019)

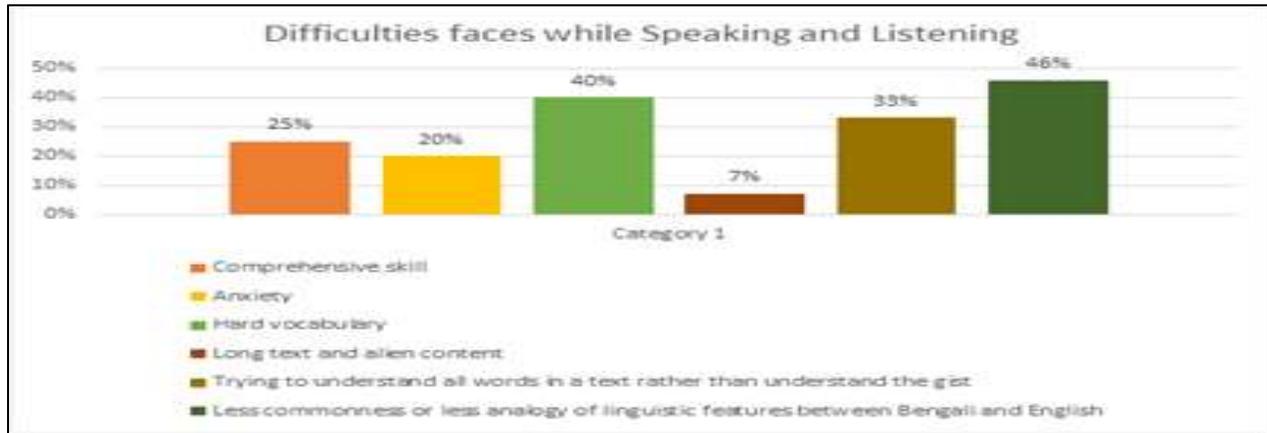


Figure :5 (Source: Survey November 2019)

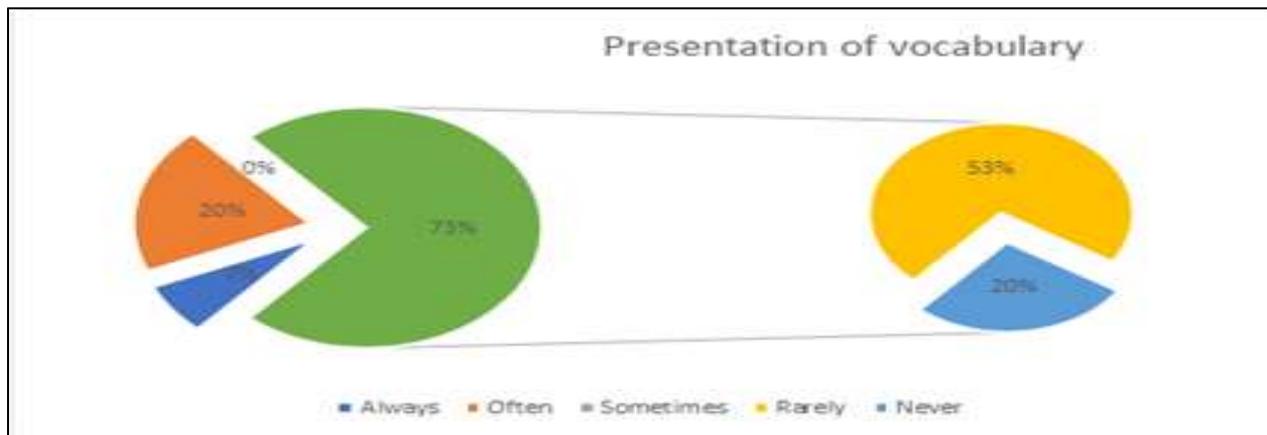


Figure : 6 (Source: Survey November 2019)



**TABLES**  
**Table1: Survey result**

SN	Statement	Percentage
1	Speaking and Listening English are important skills in learning English Language.	75%
2	Teacher teach students Speaking and listening skills in classroom by following EFT books	50 %
3	Teacher takes his/her class in English and interacts with students in English.	50 %
4	Proficiency test on basic Speaking and Listening skills are tested in the examination.	25%
5	Our exam system is not authentic to test four skills.	25%
6	Use Teachers' Guide to teach speaking and listening passage to the students.	50%
7	Percentage of using English as a media of communication in the classroom.	25%
8	Conduct pair and group work to engage students in different tasks and activities from EFT.	50%
9	Use techniques like visual aids, miming/acting/reciting, and explanation in English etc. to teach vocabulary and pronunciation.	25%
10	Percentage of code switching and code mixing in the classroom?	25%
11	Teacher motivates students to watch English Movie, TED Talk, Interview, English Speech, and BBC News and provides materials to improve their skills.	25%
12	Students are keen to learn speaking and listening skills.	25%
13	Teacher arranges English debate, Olympiad, Conversation, Impromptu speech, Storytelling and others in the classroom.	25%

**Table 2: Survey result**

SN	Statement	Percentage
1	Speaking and Listening English are important skills in learning English Language.	75%
2	Teacher teach students Speaking and listening skills in classroom by following EFT books	50 %
3	Teacher takes his/her class in English and interacts with students in English.	50 %
4	Proficiency test on basic Speaking and Listening skills are tested in the examination.	25%
5	Our exam system is not authentic to test four skills.	25%
6	Use Teachers' Guide to teach speaking and listening passage to the students.	50%
7	Percentage of using English as a media of communication in the classroom.	25%
8	Conduct pair and group work to engage students in different tasks and activities from EFT.	50%
9	Use techniques like visual aids, miming/acting/reciting, and explanation in English etc. to teach vocabulary and pronunciation.	25%
10	Percentage of code switching and code mixing in the classroom?	25%
11	Teacher motivates students to watch English Movie, TED Talk, Interview, English Speech, BBC News and provides materials to improve their skills.	25%
12	Students are keen to learn speaking and listening skills.	25%
13	Teacher arranges English debate, Olympiad, Conversation, Impromptu speech, Story telling	25%



Result from Teachers' questionnaire survey are shown in the above table. All the parameters are shown in terms of percentage.

1. Speaking and Listening English are important skills in learning English Language.[4]

Figure 1 shows 75% of teachers strongly agreed and 25% were agreed with the view that Speaking and Listening English are important skills in learning English Language.

2. Teacher teach students Speaking and listening skills in classroom by following EFT books.

According to the Figure 2, 50% of teachers were positive and 25% were negative and 25% didn't have an opinion regarding the view that Teacher teach students following EFT books.

3. Percentage of using English as a media of communication in the classroom.

Figure 3 shows 50% teachers use English always, 25% teachers sometimes and 25% rarely.

4. Speaking and Listening English part should be included in exam

Figure 4 shows 53% had a strong positive view, 33% had an affirmative view, 7% didn't comment, 7% totally disagreed.

5. Difficulties face in the class room

Figure 5 shows 86% were practicing through listening different programs, 53% were through practicing with people, 40% were through speaking in front of mirror.

6. Teacher present vocabularies before reading passage/playing CD in the class

Figure 6 shows 46% strongly agree, 40% agree, 7% neutral, 7% disagree.

Group and task based activity plays a vital role in learning. But in spite of acknowledging that there is very little room for doing so due to limited class time and other constraints. Most of classes include rigorous grammar and text book based learning. After completing those sessions, there are very few minutes left to move to group and other peer based activities.

Speaking related activities plays an important role in developing student's English ability. But there seems to be a shortage of speaking based activities such as drills, games, watching movies together and reviewing it. Apart from these students may also be introduced to practical spoken such as dining out at a restaurant or to order tickets. Teacher also agree that drilling activities plays an important role in developing student's speaking ability. On top of that they also agree that group based activity helps a student to rectify his pronunciation.

Listening is also another important attribute but few teachers seem to have implemented innovative teaching methods. Listening requires innovative

teaching skills. Otherwise it may become mundane and boring for the students. Students have allegedly reported that they were not given a chance to proper utilize their listening skills. Moreover, there is not enough scope for them to practice in the class. To implement proper listening environment it is required for a student to actively participate in question answer session in the classroom independently rather than going with the flow with the rest of the student groups.

Creativity plays an important role in students learning process. Teachers also agree to the point that creative learning is essential for a student's development. But when enquired about this students reported that they didn't get proper access to innovative and creative props. Moreover, most of lack proper training on creative studies. It is suggested that they should undergo proper creative training so that they can teach their students better.

Acquisition is often believed to be better than learning. Same goes for language acquisition as well. Acquiring a language requires communication. So, it is far better to acquire English language rather than learning it. But it is very unfortunate to see that students are memorizing the language rather than learning it. Parents also play an important in the learning process. Parents are often seen encouraging their children to do better in the exam rather than becoming a fluent speaker or writer in English. Concerned authorities should also come forward and approve the usage of new and innovative tools for the teachers so that students get a chance to learn better [5]

## CONCLUSION

In the era of globalization, English is the only way of communication around the world. As it is needed for every sphere of life, in Bangladesh, English is taught as a major subject from primary to higher secondary level. But unfortunately students are still lag behind to communicate in English especially in speaking and listening skills. Communicative method is following at secondary level to develop reading, writing, listening and speaking since a long period of time. But those skills are not acquired due to proper planning, implementation and monitoring.

Undoubtedly, speaking English needs more emphasis as oral communication is the utmost priority for any kind of communication. But in the perspective of Bangladesh, no emphasis is given in speaking and listening skills, moreover the curriculum is designed based on reading and writing. As a result students feel



embarrassed while speaking and most of the time they cannot make any complex sentence. If the curriculum is designed in that way so that the lesson will be interesting, interactive and unique then students will be motivated and their participation will increase drastically. To remove their shyness and fear on English, student's participation in the class should be increased, lesson should be entertaining and up to date. Teachers should modify and update the method and techniques to make the lesson effective to the students. Based on the findings it can be said that to improve students' skills in speaking and listening class room should be furnished with digital equipment, students' participation in the class room should be encouraged, teachers' role should be turned to a helper rather than instructor. Most of the class time should be given for practice or interactive discussion. Students can speak courageously only when they will win the fear of speaking and get enough time for practicing. Teachers can make lesson plan based on internet sources so that student can listen the correct pronunciation again and again. Besides teacher can suggest them many sources so that they can practice while they were in the home.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

To Based on the findings some recommendations are given below so that our education system and curriculum design can be modified and updated.

### a) Implementation of CLT method in the English Learning Classroom

Teachers should conduct their class through CLT method and techniques. Class room activities like group discussion, pair works, role play, debate, impromptu speech, and storytelling should be encouraged.

### b) Learners' active participation and motivation

Teachers should encourage and ensure all the students participation in the class room. Teacher should use warm language to motivate

the students and share their stories when they were students so that students can take their mistake easily and get motivation to participate in the classroom activities.

### c) Students' centered classroom

Most of the time in the class should be allocated for the students. According to the researchers 80% time should be given for practice while 20% time will be allocated for teachers' instruction. But in Bangladesh most of the classrooms are teachers' centered where teachers give instruction most of the time and students are bound to listen to the instruction whether they understood or not.

### d) Teachers' role turns to a motivator and helper rather than an instructor

According to CLT method teachers should act like a motivator or a helper rather than an instructor. Students will practice in the class room individually or in a group and teachers will guide them or assist them if they ask for any assistance. As a result students will get the chance to correct themselves.

### e) Assessments and Evaluation

Unfortunately in Bangladesh one's ability in language learning is assessed and evaluated through writing test while speaking and listening skills should be the prime concern. All the four skills; Listening, Reading, Writing and Speaking should be evaluated equally in the examination.

### f) Technologically enriched classroom

Classroom should be furnished with necessary technological equipment, such as; audio visual class room, internet connectivity, microphone and speakers and so on so that teachers can access any materials needed for their lesson.

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