

Teaching and Learning of English Proficiency Courses: A Study at Selected Language Centres in Bangladesh

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Abstract

There are scores of English language teaching centres in Bangladesh. They have mushroomed in Dhaka as well as other cities. They offer English proficiency courses with varied objectives. The popularity and usefulness of these courses are undeniable. But the quality of these courses is uncertain. No intensive research has yet been done to show the exact nature and quality of teaching in those centres. Moreover, the courses involve a number of problems: problem for teacher, problem for learners, problem of teaching methodology and teaching materials, problem of assessment and testing, problem of syllabus and curriculum. The current study has been undertaken to identify and observe the exact nature and quality of teaching in these language centres.

The whole research has been undertaken in a qualitative method. Data was collected on the basis of materials study, class observation, interviews and questionnaires. Emphasis was given to direct interview of the Director of the Centre, teacher, and students to know the situation in the institutes/centres. The current study shows that although the courses involve a number of problems, in some way these language centres/institutes also have positive sides.

Key words: English, language proficiency, evaluation of language centres, Bangladesh situation

Introduction

English is taught for fourteen years as compulsory subjects in the schools and colleges in Bangladesh. It is now a compulsory course of study for the Bachelor of Arts degree in our universities. At present it is an elective subject at B.A level in some of the universities. In post-graduate education English is one of the most prestigious subjects. Although it has ceased to be the medium of education in our universities, teachers and students have to use English textbooks and journals for study and research in nearly all the disciplines of knowledge. It is a required subject for all competitive examinations for recruitment in government service and non-government organization.

Moreover, socially, English continues to enjoy immense prestige. “English is used extensively in civil and military administration, in courts including the High Court and the Supreme Court, in trade and commerce with foreign countries, in foreign banks and tourism. The ability to use the English language effectively is regarded as a necessary qualification for many jobs. It is the only medium of our communication with foreigners and foreign countries. A person with a good command of the language tends to be respected more than others even by the general public of Bangladesh. Thus, both educationally and socially, English has a very important role to play” (Mannan, A. et. al., 1997).

The following is a list of the groups of the people who are learning English in Bangladesh.

- Primary school students; Secondary school students; Higher Secondary school students; B.A and M.A students; Adult beginners; Business professionals; Doctors and Engineers; Students planning to study at foreign universities; People who want to go abroad; Hotel staff etc.

There are many English language teaching and learning centres in Bangladesh. They have mushroomed in Dhaka as well as other cities. The courses offered by different centres in Dhaka are as follows:

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- English for General Purposes; English for Specific Purposes; Courses in Spoken English
- Preparation courses in IELTS; English for Secondary School Students; English for Higher Secondary School Students; English for B.A; English for M.B.A and B.B.A; Business English; English for Professionals etc.

These centres offer courses with different objectives. The main objectives of those courses are as follows:

- To enable the participants to speak English fluently and correctly;
- To sharpen their listening ability so that they can build themselves into responsible communicators
- To help them master vocabulary that may facilitate undergoing training or higher education abroad;
- To develop their skill of creative writing, e.g. drafting letters, recording resolutions, preparing reports/messages so that they can establish rapport with their clients or organization.

At present the teaching centres attempt to convince the people of the advantages of learning in their particular instructions. They use the media of newspaper, poster and banners offer attractive courses with 100% guarantee of success. Sometimes the course organizer even declares that they will return the course fees if the participants fail to learn English by the end of the course. There are a huge variety of centres in almost every area in Dhaka city. Students choose a particular centre for many different reasons, but their choice often has no sound basis. The young people select the centres according to the popular nomenclature, the nature of the courses offered, time schedule and course fees as well as course materials. The young students rarely consider the teaching personnel behind the courses. The centre should be chosen for its success (which they do with not many options) but the students have no way of knowing or testing that.

Generally, the students are interested in taking English courses in the teaching centres to improve their proficiency in English. In order to give some extra care and attention to English the parents also send their children to these centres. On the other hand, the intellectual and educator of our country are deeply concerned about the English learning and teaching in these centres. Are they really helping the students of our country by giving them a clear understanding of the subject or are these only a sheer ploy to squeeze money out of their pockets? Many questions are raised about these centres by different section of our society.

The popularity of those courses is undeniable. The need for them is also equally inarguable. But the quality of these courses is uncertain. No intensive research has yet been done to show the exact nature and quality of the teaching in those centres. Moreover, the courses involve a number of problems: problem for teachers, problem for learners, problem of teaching methodology and teaching materials, problem of assessment and testing, the problems of syllabus and curriculum. These problems can be solved but not until extensive research has been done. The present study has been undertaken so as to identify and observe the exact nature and quality of teaching in these centres/institutes.

Although studies have been made on different aspects of English teaching and learning at different levels, no comprehensive study has so far been attempted on the real condition of English teaching and learning in these centres. The main objectives of this research have been to find answers to these questions:

1. Do these proficiency courses benefit these adult learners?
2. If so, what are the factors that are responsible for this?

The research is based on the hypothesis that these types of proficiency courses do benefit the learners.

The whole research has been undertaken in a qualitative method. Data was collected on the basis of materials study, class observation, interviews and questionnaires. Emphasis was

given to direct interview of the Director of the centre, teacher, and students to know the situation in the institutes/centres. Special care was taken to avoid any misunderstanding relating to this research. Interviews and questionnaires were designed carefully to access appropriate data.

The possible target students are the adult beginners, professionals, students planning to study at foreign universities, people who want to go abroad and business executives. These students want to enhance their English as a foreign/second language from these centres for the above reasons.

The following centres have been selected in Dhaka city to monitor the nature and quality of these types of English proficiency courses:

- Bhuiyan Computers; Gateway; Saifur's; Pundits; Democracy watch Education; British American Language Institute; Global; Zenith; Grand English Academy; Need Limited; FM Institute

Methods of Data Collection

This case study was conducted in order to investigate the existing situations in language teaching centres so as to obtain data that would help to get a picture of condition of teaching and learning of English in centres in Dhaka city.

Nunan (1992:75) define a case study as “the investigation of a single instance in the context in which it occurs.”

McDonough & McDonough (1997:207) points out with respect to methodology employed in case study:

Cases ... are objects to be studied and are not synonymous with any particular techniques. They are for this reason methodologically eclectic, with a number of different

permutations and possibilities of choice. In addition, they suggest that the typical technique for interpretative research include:

- naturalistic and descriptive observation
- narrative diaries
- unstructured and ethnographic interviews
- verbal reports
- collection of existing information

Of these methods, it was decided to implement three of them for this particular case study, namely face-to-face interviews, classroom observation and collection of existing data. The interview is crucial for this project, since it will allow the researcher to obtain the director's, teacher's, students' opinions on their particular centres, teaching and learning needs as well as their experience as owner, teacher and members of the institutes. In addition, the study needs to be complemented with the actual observations of both the teacher and the students' performance, in order to show, suggest and find out which aspect of teaching they would need to improve.

Interviews

There are many different permutations in the methods. Hence, an interview might be classified into three different types, structures, semi-structured or unstructured. This represents “a spectrum ... from formal and controlled one at one end to more open and less predictable at the other” (McDonough & McDonough, 1997:182). It is generally argued, however, that these modes can be used in combination.

For this project, a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews was employed, since it is necessary to allow the interviewees to express their views and feelings. In this sense, the advantages of these types of interviews are commonly acknowledged. In fact, this approach can be very effective in encouraging the interviewees to respond freely and does not restrict or constraint their responses. Nunan (1992:150) states that the semi-structured interview,

mainly, "... gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of the interview" and "the interviewer a great deal of flexibility".

The interview for this included closed and open questions (see Appendices: Table A, B & C), which leave room for follow-up questions. The questions were mainly about the centres, teachers and students regarding their qualifications, experience and expectations. It was designed in order to obtain richer data and personalized responses. Certainly, even though all the interviews conducted had the same questions and topics, an effort was made to provide an informal and relaxed atmosphere and to personalize each interview.

Classroom Observation

It was needed to observe teachers in action using their knowledge in the real sitting of the classroom. Classroom observation gives the opportunity to see teachers putting theory into practice; it shows what teachers do rather than what they know.

Different authors divide the observations into a number of categories or approaches. For example, McDonough & McDonough write about systematic and naturalistic observation; Wallace distinguishes system-based/ethnographic and ad hoc procedures. There is also a marked contrast between structured or un-structured or open observation.

There is a distinction between qualitative approaches and quantitative approaches to observation, which determine the techniques and instruments to be used. The purpose of a qualitative approach is to obtain data about all that happens in the classroom. On the other hand, the aim of the quantitative approach is to examine particular aspects or behaviours in the class, namely teacher behaviour, student behaviour or the interaction between the teacher and students or among students. For quantitative approaches, common instruments employed are checklists or forms to be completed.

In this case study, a quantitative approach was used to observing classroom, since the purpose was to examine teacher and students behaviour. The instrument used was:

- A *checklist* of different aspects involved in teaching a lesson, including teaching skills and personal skills. (See Appendices: Table D & E).
- A *form* to be completed, by both the teacher and students mainly describing different aspects of teaching, learning concerning the respective centre. (See Appendices: Table A, B & C).

Administration of the Methods

The first step of the process was to ask the directors for permission to conduct the research in the institution, informing them of the purposes and stages of the research. Then the same information was given to a teacher and a group of students.

Secondly, the **interviews** were conducted. The language employed was English, although in many cases it was natural to switch to the mother tongue, Bengali. This might have happened because people may feel more comfortable expressing their inner thoughts and feelings in their mother tongue and also (especially with the directors) due to a lack of fluency in English. Each interview took approximately 10-15 minutes. They were held before and after classes, in different rooms. The subjects interviewed were the nine teachers and ten directors.

With respect to recording what is being said, the main options are *note-taking* and *questionnaire filling* with some advantages and disadvantages. Note-taking is problematic as it requires that everything is written down quickly. As a solution, it was decided to take notes, using abbreviations and key words. Filling in of questionnaires by directors and teachers at times also helped a lot to collect necessary and relevant data in this regard.

Thirdly, the **classroom observations** were carried out, visiting one class of some of the teachers at certain teaching centres. The whole process involved three stages:

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- The planning conference: This took place immediately after the interview with the teacher. The class to be observed was agreed on, and the visit was scheduled. Besides, I showed and explained to the teachers the instruments that were going to be used.
- The observation: This was conducted on the scheduled date and with the instruments presented.
- The feedback conference: This involved an analysis of the data obtained during the observation, agreeing on what had happened in the classroom with respect to the areas of concern. As the feedback session is the ideal place for a teacher to express him/her about teaching and to put his/her thoughts together.

Methods of Data Analysis

The choice of a particular method for analyzing the data collected will depend on the type of methods employed. For the interviews, it was mentioned that a combination of semi-structured and unstructured interviews was used. As Nunan acknowledges, pen questions result in richer data but are much difficult to quantify. He suggests, however, to conduct “key word analysis”. This consists in grouping the responses according to categories that can be noted through all the interviews. According to McDonough & McDonough (1997:186),

The more open ended, exploratory and ethnographic interviews referred to above may be analysed qualitatively by searching for themes, by looking for patterns, by looking for interpretations which are consistent with all the information revealed in the interview.

For the classroom observation data, on the other hand, it should be noted that the data was recorded in a checklist of categories or issues and in a questionnaire form designed for this purpose. In this case, the analysis consists of counting the frequency of occurrence of the categories, that is to say in which class or centre each issue was present.

Findings of the Study

Interviews and Classroom Observation Findings

A number of eleven (11) English teaching centres located around Dhaka city have been visited for collection of data and information for this research. Among them are: Bhuiyan Computers (BC), British American Language Institute (BALI), Democracy watch Education (DW), Pundits (P), Grand English Academy (GEA), FM Institute (FMI), Need Limited (NL), Global (G), Zenith (Z), Gateway (GW), Saifur's (S). Henceforth, the above abbreviations will be used to refer to these language centres for convenience.

One of the stumbling block to conduct this study was inaccessibility of data. This proved to be the case quite more than that. It was very difficult to interview to collect information, observe any class of some so-called successful centres in the sake of secrecy and anti-management decision. Only after much cajoling and convincing, did Centres like G, GW, Z, GEA, S gave some chance to get some opportunity to observe classes and talk to the teachers. They were also very secretive about accessibility to data for some unexplained reasons.

The main objectives of the study were to find out the situations of English proficiency courses in language centres in Dhaka city. The research objectives were to find out different problems and issues surrounding them as well as to get a picture of how these courses were beneficial to the learners and what made them so. This current study was conducted on the following specific areas:

- Curriculum and syllabus; Methodology; Teaching aids and course materials; Teachers' and students' attitudes; Motivation; Students' comprehensibility; Rapport between teachers and students; Testing system; Teachers' qualifications & training; Physical facilities

Curriculum and Syllabus

Most of the centres generally do not follow any curriculum and syllabus. It is a common phenomenon with centres like FMI, G, GW, GEA, S, and NL. But centres like BC, BALI, DW, and P do have a specific curriculum and syllabus of their own for a step-by-step development of students' progress in their English proficiency level. Whereas teachers and directors of the first category do not think syllabus is necessary for this type of courses, centres like BC, BALI, DW, and P find the necessity of it for the spoken and written courses. They have their own programmes and their own teaching methods, testing system and examination methods. It is necessary to find out the basic difference between the success of the centres with or without syllabi. Moreover, some of the centres provide different levels of courses, such as elementary, beginners, intermediate and advanced level of courses.

Furthermore, there is a great scope to analyze the effectiveness of these different levels of courses. But there is no denying the fact that students at centres like BC, BALI, and DW want to enroll into a further advance course in English immediately after completing the beginner's course. Quite interestingly, centres like FMI, GEA, G, GW, and S offer only courses that they term somewhat like Foundation or the Basic English course. Especially, FMI and GEA is almost monomaniacal about it as they claim to have invented their own unique style of teaching and learning English for the weaker students in Bangladesh.

Methodology

One of the subtle yet effective ploys to attract students to these language centres is the highlighting of their teaching methodologies adopted for the course. The most interesting thing is that some of the centres advertise courses being taught by different methods, such as FM method, American easy method, Scientific HM method, scientific method, easy method, world's most popular course, communicative method, participate teaching method etc. It has been found that those methods are nothing but a self-styled version of the Audio-lingual, grammar-translation, and the drilling methods. In most cases, the class is taught as whole and pair and

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group work are unknown to many of the teachers since they don't have any ELT degree in this field. Unfortunately, the more useful and challenging methods such as Communicative Language Teaching, Total Physical Response, The Silent way, Community Language Teaching, The Natural Approach, Suggestopedia, The Oral Approach and Situational Language Teaching are unknown and unfamiliar in teaching and learning English to them. But teachers of BC, BALI, and DW do follow some aspect of communicative teaching method and encourage pair and group work in the classroom.

Teaching Aids and Course Materials

Course books, cassette player, TV, VCR, and black-white board, chalk and markers are the main teaching aids of the language classes. Unfortunately, most of the teachers do not feel at ease with using electronic and audio-visual equipments in the classroom. Occasionally, students have been given course materials. However, those materials can not fulfill the needs of the students because the materials have not been chosen on the basis of the students' needs. Many writers claim that authentic materials motivate learners because they are intrinsically more interesting or stimulating than artificial or non-authentic materials. In that case, most of the teachers are pitifully lacking in this area.

Centres such as FMI, Z, G, GW, GEA, S, and NL use their own developed course materials and don't have let alone sufficient not even the minimum practice books, audio-visual practice materials available for the students. Teachers propagating methods such as FM method, Grand English Academy, Saifur's use their own developed and marketed books as the exclusive source for the learners as course materials. They do not use any audio-visual materials in the classrooms. Whereas at centres like BC, BALI, and DW, teachers use latest and most popular course books available in the market and extensively use audio-visual materials in the classroom. Those three centres have a good collection of books, newspapers and magazines, audio-visual practice materials available to the students. They also constantly update and revise the course content and materials through latest resources available from the markets, and internet etc.

Teacher's and Students' Attitudes

There is a growing discomfort among teachers and students with courses. Teachers of many of these centres seemed to have a lack of interest and seemed unconvinced about what they are doing and students also have a similar attitude. The language teachers blame the students for not practicing the lesson at home. In the teachers' opinion the students do not take courses seriously and the students thought that the course would be easy but when they found it was not so easy, they often left the course. Therefore, number of drop-outs is quite a few in most of the aforementioned language centres. From the class observation it has been found that few teachers' is not so flexible to teach language. In addition the teacher is not all the time very sympathetic with the weaker students.

From face to face interview with the teacher, it is exposed that the teacher does not think the importance of making lesson plan. But in real classroom situation it has been found that the teacher frequently wastes their time to select the materials.

According to the student, English is tough subject. Some of the students feel that they are improving a lot and others think that they have been trying hard but much improvement they could not felt. The students think that in schools, colleges, and universities, they had no opportunities to speak in English, so by taking the course they are trying to get an environment in which to speak English.

Motivation

The people involved in language teaching often say that students who really want to learn will succeed whatever the circumstances in which they study. The teachers who are lively and friendly can easily motivate the students. It is found from this study that the majority of the students of these language centres are self-motivated. The real driving force behind learning the English proficiency courses is that this will ensure learn English, feel dignified, influence friends and relatives, colleagues and others, get a good job, shine in life, broaden horizon, know the world and win the world intellectually.

What de-motivates them at times is the manner and attitudes of the course teacher who lacks flexibility, course content, methodology, lack of practice and peer pressure etc. This often is the case with (as has been assessed through class observation) centres like FMI, Z, G, GW, GEA, S, and NL. Teachers of some of these centres most probably are not so aware of the fact that motivation can play such an important part in learner's acquisition of a foreign/second language. Teachers from BC, BALI, and DW seemed to have become aware of this factor and they seemed quite friendly, flexible, sympathetic and accommodating in the classroom. It should be mentioned here that average female students are strong in motivation than male students in these centres.

Students' Comprehensibility

“Students have been learning English for 14 years but they are unable to use it for real purposes. The language learners in our country are just like a learner driver. For example, a learner driver who has knowledge of the different controls of the car and can drive on safe road under the supervision of the instructor. But is it enough? Can he drive, alone, on a busy road in the city before getting used to the actual driving condition? The answer can easily is, No! The same thing happens to a language learner.” (Hoque, 1997:220).

The students are weak in average learning English as a foreign language. From the class observation and questionnaire it has been discovered that the students do not practice their lessons at home as well as they can not follow the class effectively. According to one of the participants, “I understand but cannot express my feelings”. In asking teachers reply that most of the students are not able to give the correct answer. It suggests that the students do not feel confident enough.

Rapport between Teachers and Students

The positive side of the English language teaching and learning in these centres is that most of the teachers are in a rapport with the students. Both teachers and students behave with each other friendly. The students are not frightened to ask their teachers any questions, as they might be afraid of their college or university teachers.

Testing System

Not all of the above eleven centres have a proper placement or diagnostic tests while collecting or selecting students for the English proficiency courses. One main reason might be the increasing number of centres of similar kind mushrooming in the city nowadays. Even though majority of the directors and teachers of the centres claimed to have a proper placement tests for students selection, the particular picture is exactly the opposite as myself have noticed and have experienced it with one of the most prominent language centres in Dhaka. It has also been found that in some cases the achievement tests are also not given. As one of the course teacher thinks, “The participants have exam phobia so if I will give them exam, they will drop out from this centre.” Another teacher also opined that he only takes oral and written exam at the very end of the course so that these professionals do not feel overburdened with the course. He even skips any home work for students of the same batch (Business Executives) for that matter.

Apart from this, it has been found in the study that most of the centres do have a systematic and constant testing and evaluating systems for the students throughout the course. The most common pattern is a three tests system: one after the end of one-third of the classes, a mid-term and the final certificate awarding test. Some of these centres, such as, BALI, BC, DW, S, P have a through and meticulous students evaluation and testing systems.

Teachers’ Qualifications and Training

Most of the centre claims highly qualified teaching staff, for example, in the words of one prospectus, “Conducted entirely by university teachers and English Language specialist”. Are they really providing university teachers to teach English? From the interview with teachers, a

very bleak and harrowing picture emerges as far as qualified teachers in teaching English language are concerned. Out of the eleven centres studied, a great majority of their teachers are not properly qualified and have not got any ELT degree or training. Centres such as FMI, Z, G, GW, GEA, S, and NL have teachers coming from totally different disciplines and have no training and many are still students. Centre like FM Institute recruit teachers only from the students who have completed a three semester (as they have a three semester basic English proficiency course) programme from any of their institutes. Another centre called Grand English Academy (they have three branches in Dhaka) boasts to have got only one teacher (also the founder of the academy, a former student of Dhaka University with degrees in English) for the last 19 years! On the other hand, centres like BALI, BC, and DW have got some experienced teachers with ELT qualifications and training working in public and private universities. But the ratio of full-time teachers to part-time teachers working at these centres is very low indeed!

Physical Facilities

Physical facilities are inadequate in many of these centres. A good number of centres are situated beside the main road or beside the very busy shopping centres but the classrooms are not soundproof so the heavy traffic is a nuisance to the class lesson. The classrooms sometimes are not well ventilated and lights are insufficient. Even though many of these centres have got air conditioned rooms and some breathing space for the students, but few have got adequate opportunity or facility for students to nurture the language in a language centre of this kind (facilities such as library, reading room, practice and resource centre etc.). From the study, it is also revealed that some of these centres, such as BALI, BC, and DW have got some laudable facilities of the above kind to create an environment among its students.

Discussion of the Findings

In spite of the limitations, some of the disadvantages of quantifying accumulated data of this kind of research, some very interesting facts and picture have come out of this study. A category slowly yet firmly emerges out of these eleven centres studied: a few centres with real

motive, goal and vision behind them and also have a plan to expand in the future as an English language teaching and learning centre (for example, centres like BALI, BC, P, and DW), there are some whose prime objectives is to earn money out of such courses as they have no specific goal and vision behind them (centres such as FMI, Z, G, GW, GEA, S, and NL) etc.

What makes the students come to such centres for learning English is that they don't have too many options left for them. These centres also give them the opportunity to go for a course at their own pace and convenient time. There are also quite a good number of students who enroll into this type of courses solely to get an environment to practice some form or level of English which is totally absent in their home or working place. It is not that these same students are learning too many things and are successful in gaining their goals and achieving their target after completing a two or three months English proficiency course at these centres. But there is no denying the fact that these centres (irrespective of their rate of success or failure) instilling some enthusiasm, interest, motivation and eagerness into these learners with their idiosyncratic methodology, self-developed course materials, untrained teachers, inadequate facilities for practice etc.

A quick look at some of the centres will also give an idea about their idiosyncrasies, strengths and weaknesses worth studying. *

Name	Enrollment	Facilities	Teachers	Materials	Courses	Specialty
British American Language Institute. Founded in 1997; No. of branches: 2	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, good will, leaflet etc. Learners from different walks of life; 15-20 students in each batch;	Library with 1000 books, 100+ audio-visual items, language lab and practice facilities, English speaking club, AC classrooms	Experienced Teachers from public and private universities, Native Speakers, in total 18 teachers involved as part and full-time basis; teachers	Translated version of BBC English course books; Special course materials by Bali; Audio-video, CD, printed & duplicated materials.	3-6-9 months courses; 36 class (90 min. each); 1 yr diploma in English from next June 2005; classes in the morning, afternoon,	Every Friday: day long workshop in presentation, debate, discussion, public speech, ELT jokes, grammar jokes etc; 1 to 1 audio labs (30), 1 to1

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	Age: 18-50+		evaluated constantly		evening sessions	video (6)
Bhuiyan Computers Founded in 1992; No. of branches: 11 (Dhaka- 5; others- 6)	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, good will, leaflet, banner etc.; Learners from different walks of life; 12-15 students in each batch; Age: 15-70	Library facilities, audio-visual items, English speaking club, free magazine, course handbooks	Teachers of English and from other disciplines, not many with ELT qualification; in total 40 teachers involved as part and full-time basis; teachers evaluated constantly	New Headway, Breakthrough, Changes, Spectrum used as course materials; Audio-video, CD, printed & duplicated materials.	2-4-6 months General & Spoken English courses; 12 class each month (120 min. each); classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions; Kids & Professional English	Easy and convenient enrollment for students (12 batches run at the same time); Installment and Membership facilities, Free workshop and seminars
Democracy watch Education Founded in 1994; No. of branches: 2 (Dhaka- 1; others- 1)	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, good will, leaflet, banner etc.; Learners from different walks of life; 12-15 students in each batch; Age: 15-60	Library with excellent reading room facilities, magazines, audio-visual items, CD, Conversation club, course handbooks	Teachers especially with English and ELT qualification; in total 8 teachers involved as part and full-time basis; teachers evaluated constantly	New Headway, Changes, Look Ahead, Cambridge, BBC English, Spectrum used as course materials; Audio-video, CD, printed & duplicated materials.	2 months General courses; 12 class each month (120 min. each); classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions; Kids, Business & Professional English	English Conversation Club, ; 1 to 1 audio labs (6); excellent library facilities with ample scope for practice; regular movie, seminar and workshop, internship facilities available
Pundits Founded in	Newspaper advertisement,	Books, audio-visual	Young teachers with English and	New Headway,	2 months Basic English	Individual attention;

1995; No. of branches: 3	reference through ex-students, good will, leaflet, posters etc.; 12-15 students in each batch; Age: 22-45	items, CD, Conversation practice, course handbooks	other disciplines; No ELT qualification; in total 6 teachers involved as part and full-time basis; teachers evaluated	used as course materials; Audio-video, CD, printed & duplicated materials in grammar and vocabulary	course; 54 hours duration; classes on weekdays and Fridays	special emphasis on spoken and written English
FM Institute Founded in 1986; No. of branches: 18 (Dhaka- 9; others- 9)	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, seminars, poster, leaflet, banner, private TV channels etc.; Learners from different walks of life; 15-20 students in each batch; Age: 15-50+	No library and practice facilities available, Conversation practice, course handbooks following FM method	Young teachers who have completed a 3 months course from the institute, No ELT qualification; 10 teachers involved as part and full-time basis at the main branch; teachers not evaluated	Exclusively FM method handbooks; the self-proclaimed FM method as the only and exclusively researched scientific and easier method in learning English without grammar	3 months Basic English course; 36 classes; classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken and written English
Grand English Academy Founded in 1986; No. of branches: 3	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, poster, leaflet, banner etc.; Learners from	Some library and practice facilities available, Conversation practice, course handbooks	Only one teacher (the founder of the academy, a graduate in English from DU); takes classes in all	Exclusively handbooks prepared by the teacher	3 months Basic English course; 36 classes; classes in the morning, afternoon, evening	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken and written English; books written by the teacher available both in

	different walks of life; 15-20 students in each batch; Age: 18-60		three branches in Dhaka to ensure quality and standard		sessions	the country and abroad
Gateway Founded in 1990; No. of branches: 7	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, poster, leaflet, banner etc.; 15-20 students in each batch; Age: 20-45	Some library and practice facilities available, audio-visual items, CD, course handbooks	Teachers with fluency in English from any disciplines; 10 teachers involved as part and full-time basis	Handbooks prepared by the teacher, lecture sheets on grammar, vocabulary, social English etc.	4 months Spoken English course; 50 hours, classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken English and fluency practice
Global Founded in 1998; No. of branches: 4	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, poster, leaflet, banner, etc.; Learners from different walks of life; 10-12 students in each batch; Age: 15-45+	No library and practice facilities available, Audio-visual, CD materials available for practice	Young teachers from different disciplines, No ELT qualification; 12 teachers involved as part and full-time basis at the main branch; teachers not evaluated	Handbooks prepared by the teacher, lecture sheets on grammar, vocabulary, spoken English etc.	2-3 months Spoken English course; 39classes, 50/57 hours class; classes in the morning, evening sessions	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken and written English; free course materials; debating

Zenith Founded in 1993; No. of branches: 3	Newspaper advertisement, reference through ex-students, poster, leaflet, banner etc.; Learners from different walks of life; 15-20 students in each batch; Age: 15-40+	Some library and practice facilities available, Conversation practice, course handbooks	Young teachers from different disciplines, No ELT qualification; 10 teachers involved as part and full-time basis at the main branch; teachers not evaluated	Exclusively handbooks prepared by the teacher	3- 1 and half months Spoken English course; 36 classes; classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken and written English; free course materials; debating
Saifur's Founded in 1995; No. of branches: 10 (Dhaka- 5, others- 5)	Newspaper advertisement, ex-students, poster, leaflet, banner etc.; 15-20 students in each batch; Age: 15-40+	Some library and practice facilities available, Conversation practice, course handbooks	Teachers from other t disciplines, No ELT qualification; 25 teachers work as part and full-time basis, teachers not evaluated	Handbooks prepared by the teacher, lecture sheets on grammar, vocabulary, spoken English etc.	2 and half months Spoken English course; 30 classes; classes in the morning, afternoon, evening sessions	Individual attention; special emphasis on spoken and written English; debating and intense fluency practice

* All the data and information were gathered in 2012.

Conclusion

This present study has examined the English teaching and learning situation at the language centres in Dhaka city. Although the courses involve a number of problems, in some way these language centres/institutes also have positive sides. They provide a service for students who cannot go to the schools, colleges and universities for learning English according to their needs and demands. Therefore, the only avenue open to them is the private academy or language learning

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centres. Moreover, there are some definite points for students going to these private sectors because the students have been provided comparatively modern materials than the government institutions. Another positive element of these centres is to provide job opportunity to the unemployed. In this connection, English Language department can provide related courses and training to the students so in future those students can be appointed as ELT teachers of these centers. On the other hand, the ELT programmes may develop or continue with better changes. Furthermore, to fill up the gap advice, inspection and training can be provided through government or semi government organization in order to run these centres in an established way with proper curriculum and syllabus. Although studies have been made on different aspects of English teaching and learning at different levels, no comprehensive study has so far been attempted on the real condition of English teaching and learning in these centres. So, in the light of these findings, it is recommended that intensive research work must be done to improve and evaluate the ELT situations in these centres in Bangladesh.

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Appendices

Table – A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for the DIRECTOR

Institute:

Director:

Date:

When did you start this Institute/Centre?

How do you enroll students?

Is there any placement test for student's selection?

What types of learners enroll into the course?

Do you have any library and practice facilities for the students?

How many branches do you have?

Do you have any plan to expand in the future?

If you have any comment on teaching of English in Bangladesh please write briefly.

Table - B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS for the TEACHER

Institute:

Teacher:

Date:

How long have you been teaching here?

What is your qualification?

Do you have any training or degree in ELT?

Do you think that the proficiency course is helpful for the students and how?

What are the books and materials do you use for this course?

Do you prepare any lesson plan for the class?

How do you evaluate your students?

How do you motivate and help the weaker students?

If you have any comments on teaching and learning of English, please write briefly here.

Table - C

QUESTIONNAIRE: STUDENTS

Dear Students,

You are being asked to complete this questionnaire as a part of a research to investigate the teaching and learning of English in the Institutes/Centres. Remember that this questionnaire will not be seen by any of your teachers. So answer all the questions as freely and as openly as possible.

If you have any problems while you are answering the questions, please raise your hand.

Thank you very much indeed for your cooperation.

Institute/Centre ----- Age ----- Male/Female ----- Batch # -----

Why did you enroll into this course?

Do you think this course will benefit you and how?

Are the course materials interesting and helpful?

Is the teacher helpful and supportive?

Do you like the teaching environment here?

Do you have scope for enough practice?

If you have any comment on this English course, please write briefly.

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Table - D

CHECKLIST: CLASS OBSERVATION*

Institute:

Observed:

Date:

TEACHER'S ACTIVITY	COMMENTS
TEACHER'S SKILLS	
1. The teacher is well-prepared for the class.	
2. The teacher introduces the aim of the lesson/stage clearly/makes links to the last lesson	
3. The teacher uses the white board well.	
4. The teacher displays good 'class management' skills (e.g. voice, movement).	
5. The teacher's instructions are clear.	
6. The teacher sets up tasks efficiently.	
7. The teacher monitors well and gives help where necessary.	
8. The teacher displays a good command of the material.	
9. The lesson involves all of the four skills.	
10. The lesson allows plenty of opportunity for participation and interaction.	
11. The teacher elicits feedback well (e.g. summarizing on white board, listening carefully to responses, dealing with answers etc.).	
12. The teacher is concise and keeps to agreed times.	
13. The teacher concludes stages neatly.	
PERSONAL QUALITIES	
14. The teacher displays good interpersonal skills.	

15. The teacher displays enthusiasm for the subject.	
16. The teacher is able to motivate the students.	
OVERALL	
THINKING POINTS	

*Adapted from BRAC TOT English Trainer's Guide Dec/2004

Table - E

CHECKLIST: OVERALL CLASS-OBSERVATION*

PLACE:	DATE:	TIME:		
LEVEL:	NUMBER OF LEARNERS:			
WERE THE LEARNERS:				
paying attention?	always	usually	sometimes	never
participating?	always	usually	sometimes	never
showing enthusiasm?	always	usually	sometimes	never

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confused?	never	seldom	sometimes	often	
practising English?	continually	a lot	occasionally	very little	
communicating in English?	continually	a lot	occasionally	very little	
WAS THE LESSON:					
well planned and structured?	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
varied in activities?	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
varied in interactions?	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
balanced in	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
accuracy/fluency?					
appropriate for the group?	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
enjoyable to watch?	very	moderately	not very	not at all	
WAS THE TEACHER:					
organized and confident?	totally	very	moderately	not very	never
communicating in English?	always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
showing enthusiasm?	always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
dominating the class?	never	occasionally	frequently	continually	never
clear and effective?	always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
encouraging the students?	always	usually	sometimes	seldom	never
OTHER OBSERVATIONS AND COMMENTS:					



* Adapted from Davies & Pearse, 2000

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