

Assessment Practices in CLT Classrooms at a Private University in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The successful implementation of any curriculum largely depends on its assessment policies and practices as assessments have a marked washback effect on classroom teaching and learning. Therefore, the objectives of the CLT curriculum will never be achieved if there are discrepancies between theory and practice. This paper presents assessment practices of Bangladeshi EFL teachers in CLT classrooms at the university level. This research employed the case study approach to explore the issues related to assessing communicative competence at the undergraduate level. The study adopted purposeful sampling to investigate the research problem. The data were collected from three EFL teachers of a renowned private university in Dhaka through semi-structured interviews, multiple nonparticipant observations and documents. The study identifies some incongruities in different types of assessment, namely diagnostic, formative, and summative. Although CLT advocates assessing all the four basic language skills, existing assessment practices mainly focus on writing and reading skills, whereas in fact listening and speaking skills are ignored or occasionally assessed. More importantly, diagnostic tests are infrequent and formative tests are inadequate. Therefore, the study suggests that diagnostic and formative assessment should take place on a regular basis so that teachers can explore students' actual language proficiency and help them in overcoming the language difficulties. Moreover, written exam questions should be prepared creatively keeping in mind that mere memorization may not help students in answering the questions. Regarding speaking skills, teachers should assess students in unrehearsed situations so that students' natural ability of using the language is assessed. Thus, teachers may help students develop a reasonable level of written and oral proficiency. Additionally, teachers should ensure a communicative environment in the classroom and devise effective assessment policies and procedures to develop students' communicative competence.

Keywords: Communicative Language Teaching, communicative competence, assessment practices, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment, summative assessment

Introduction

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was introduced in 1970s replacing the traditional language teaching methods (Mitchell, 1988). The main goal of CLT is to achieve communicative competence (Savignon, 2002). CLT urges teachers to be facilitators of communication and emphasizes achieving both

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fluency and accuracy in language learning. Consequently, CLT achieved a dominant position in many parts of the world so fast (Brown, 2001). Thus, “CLT is seen to be not a British, European, or U.S. phenomenon, but rather an international effort to respond to the needs of present-day language learners in many different contexts of learning” (Savignon, 1991, p. 261).

Bangladesh, like many other countries in the world, adopted CLT as a language teaching approach in 1996 substituting the traditional grammar-translation method (GTM) to achieve communicative competence. However, students could not gain the required level of competence in English (Ahmed, 2013; Chowdhury & Mustaque, 2014; Das et al., 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Shurovi, 2014). One of the main reasons behind students’ poor English language proficiency is the inappropriate assessment policies and practices (Fang & Garland, 2014; Lee 2014; Mohd-Asraf et al., 2019; Thompson & Yanagita, 2017; Zheng & Borg, 2014) because assessment policies and practices have profound impact on classroom teaching and learning. A number of studies (Ahmad, 2014; Ahmed, 2013; Ahmed, 2016; Chowdhury & Mustaque, 2014; Das et al., 2014) observed the same washback effects in secondary schools in Bangladesh.

To follow the Communicative Approach, teachers should make EFL classes more interactive and communicative. Although the major textbooks are designed with a variety of communicative activities, teachers need to develop their skills in making proper use of the resources to develop students’ communicative competence. Moreover, a variety of assessment techniques should be used to gather information about what students know and are able to do. Therefore, diagnostic assessment, formative assessment and summative assessment are essential to evaluate students’ ability and learning. Accordingly, teachers should give positive, constructive and supportive feedback to students so that they can evaluate their performance critically and may reflect on what they need to do to improve their performance in future.

Assessment takes place at various stages during students’ learning to evaluate their ability in terms of learning the target language. However, the effectiveness of assessment system depends on its policies and practices. Similarly, the successful implementation of the CLT curriculum largely depends on its assessment policies and practices as tests have a marked washback effect on classroom teaching and learning. The objectives of the CLT curriculum will never be achieved if there are discrepancies between theory and practice, especially in assessment policies and practices. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the assessment policies and practices at the university level and to expose the predominant reasons behind the university students’ low level of competence in English. In this article, we seek to present the assessment practices of Bangladeshi EFL teachers in CLT classrooms at the university level with a view to exploring the key reasons behind the poor English language proficiency of our students.

Literature Review

Assessment is an integral part of any curriculum as it determines students' learning. In fact, the success of any curriculum is evaluated by means of different forms of assessment. If assessments policies and practices are inappropriate and ineffective, the success will never be determined properly. Similarly, the CLT curriculum will never attain its objectives without adopting proper assessment policies and practices. Therefore, teachers should arrange a wide variety of assessments: diagnostic, formative and summative. Diagnostic assessment should take place on a regular basis so that teachers can explore students' language proficiency and help them in overcoming the language difficulties and achieving communicative competence.

According to Dewy, Nurkamto and Drajadi (2019), formative assessment should take place in every class to know the outcome of every lesson. Stiggins and DuFour (2009) stated that formative assessment can serve as one of the most powerful tools for both a teacher and a student for promoting their achievements. Similarly, Black and Wiliam (1998) said that formative assessment provides students with the opportunity of receiving frequent feedback on their learning that aids them in substantial learning. On the other hand, Brown and Knight (2012) stated that summative assessment, which is conducted as end-of-course assessment, essentially measures a student's performance and it has no other real use except a description of what has been achieved.

Assessing the regular progress of the learners is a critical aspect of teaching because it is closely linked to the verdict making on the choices for teaching processes and procedures that simplify students' learning. "The central purpose of classroom assessment is to empower both teachers and their students to improve the quality of learning in the classroom through an approach that is learner-centered, teacher-directed, mutually beneficial, formative, context-specific and firmly rooted in good practice" (Angelo & Cross, 1993, p. 4). Thus, classroom assessment plays a vital role in fostering students' learning. Actually, classroom assessment is a systematic approach to formative evaluation that teachers use to determine how much and how well students are learning. According to Putri, Pratolo and Setiani (2019), assessment is a momentous factor in the process of education. Coombe et al. (2007) said that classroom assessment assists teachers in identifying whether the students have studied the specific content of a course or understood any linguistic items that teachers intend the students to learn. On the other hand, Lizasoain (2014) stated that traditional testing usually assesses performance rather than competence. Therefore, EFL teachers should assess their students in many ways in the classroom so that they are able to know about the improvement of the students' learning in CLT classrooms. EFL teachers may be successful in developing communicative competence of the learners by employing effective classroom assessment.

It is also noteworthy that the Bangladeshi curriculum assigns a greater portion of marks for developing written competence only, whereas listening and speaking competence should be focused more with the aim that learners can develop their communicative competence successfully. Pratolo (2019) said that

speaking skills must be assessed to determine the level of foreign language proficiency. It is true that students are mainly interested in achieving good marks in examinations, not learning the language. Ybarra and Green (2003) said that teaching students is one of the greatest priorities as well as one of the greatest challenges. Teaching becomes more difficult if assessment practices do not motivate students to learn the objects intended by the teachers. Therefore, assessment practices should be aligned with the objectives of the curriculum. In the context of Bangladesh, assessment practices do not corroborate the principles of CLT (Chowdhury & Mustaque, 2014; Das et al., 2014; Haider, 2008) and therefore teachers do not properly put the CLT principles into practice (Ahmad, 2014; Hossain, 2018). As a result, students cannot gain the required level of competence in English (Ahmed, 2013; Chowdhury & Mustaque, 2014; Das et al., 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Shurovi, 2014).

Method

This research employed the case study approach to examine the issues related to assessing communicative competence in a communicative language teaching classroom at the undergraduate level in Bangladesh since a case study is a research approach that pays attention to one or a few instances of a phenomenon to study in depth with empirical completeness and natural wholeness or conceptual richness and theoretical consistency (Given, 2008, pp. 68-69). According to Yin (2009), “a case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Yin (2009) also said that case study “allows investigators to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events” (p. 4). Thus, case study contributes “to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena” (Yin, 2009, p. 4). Moreover, case studies provide the opportunities to generalize from a single case that may be full of subtlety and complexity, or from an instance to a class (Adelman et al., 1976).

For the current study three EFL teachers who teach at undergraduate level at a renowned private university in Dhaka were selected to obtain inclusive data. The selected teachers mainly teach English language courses, namely ENG101: Basic English Skills, ENG102: Intermediate English Skills and ENG103: Advanced English Skills to first-year undergraduate students with a view to developing their communicative competence. The study adopted purposeful sampling to investigate the research problem and the central phenomenon in this study because purposeful sampling is “a strategy in which particular settings, persons, or events are selected deliberately in order to provide important information that can’t be gotten as well from other choices” (Maxwell, 1996, p. 70). According to Creswell (2012), “in purposeful sampling, researchers intentionally select individuals and sites to learn or understand the central phenomenon” (p. 206). Moreover, “the logic and power of purposeful sampling lie in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth” (Patton, 2002, p. 230).

Three English language teachers were selected as informants for interviews to get a comprehensive picture of assessment practices at undergraduate level in Bangladesh. The pseudonyms of the interviewees are Ms. Rumana (I1), Ms. Arisha (I2) and Mr. Masum (I3) who take EFL courses coded ENG101, ENG102 and ENG103 respectively. The interviewees were selected mostly based on their teaching experience, training, and on the recommendations of the Head of the department. Priority was given to the teachers who used to teach English language courses throughout the university. The courses are designed as per the principles of the communicative approach to help students attain competency in all four basic language skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading and writing. Moreover, it is mentioned in the course outlines of the language courses that classes will be participatory, interactive and student-centered. Teachers will play the role of a facilitator. Language skills will be practiced in an integrated way. Inductive approaches will be used for the reinforcement of grammatical rules. Classroom exercise, pair work, group work, group discussions and role play will be the part of classroom activities. Authentic and appropriate audio-visual materials will be incorporated to enhance learning. Furthermore, it is stated in the course outlines that students will be assessed continuously through written class tests, class presentations, listening tests along with midterm and final exams. Thus, the courses will help students in developing communicative competence.

The researcher observed the assessment practices of the selected teachers and collected the documents which include course outlines and question papers of class tests, midterm and final examinations of the current and previous semesters to examine the issues related to the theory and practice.

Although the participants were small in number, they were carefully chosen to meet the purpose of the intended study as Patton (2002) stated that “qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on relatively small samples, even single cases (N=1), selected purposefully” (p. 230). According to Patton (2002), “in-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information rich” (p. 244). Similarly, Creswell (2012) also stated that a researcher may “study a single individual or a single site” and the number may vary from 1 to 40 (p. 209).

The data were collected through semi-structured interviews, multiple nonparticipant observations and documents. Semi-structured open-ended interview questions were used to investigate EFL teachers’ assessment practices in the CLT classes at the undergraduate level. The interview sessions took about 30 to 35 minutes and were scheduled according to the convenience of both the participants and the researcher. The researcher asked one informant at a time to answer some open-ended questions and audiotaped the questions and the answers. The researcher also took necessary notes during interviews to record the additional remarks before and after an interview session. The researcher obtained a written consent of the informants by completing an informed consent form during the interview session. Before starting the interview, the researcher conveyed the purpose of the study to the informants. Multiple classes of the selected EFL teachers were observed to obtain the data, particularly regarding

EFL teachers' classroom activities and assessment practices in developing students' communicative competence. As a nonparticipant observer, the researcher visited the site and took field notes of the participants and activities while staying at the back of the classroom. The researcher gathered descriptive and reflective field notes by recording the information. Thus, the researcher got the opportunity to explore the gaps between theory and practice of CLT. Moreover, the classroom observations provided the opportunity to compare the data gathered from the questionnaire and interviews. The documents that consist of course outlines and question papers of class tests, midterm and final examinations of the current and previous semesters were collected from the course teachers and the program office of the department of English.

Data collected by means of interviews, observations and documents were organized and analyzed thematically. The data obtained from different sources were compared, contrasted and synthesized to identify the similarities, differences and relations in the data sets and finally, the results were summarized and interpreted to produce a more complete understanding.

The researcher built up the trustworthiness of the study by ensuring credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability as proposed by Lincoln and Guba (1985). To do so, the researcher undertook a set of activities, namely prolonged engagement in the field, persistent observation, triangulation and member-checking, thick description, external audits technique, audit trail and reflexivity technique.

Findings and Discussions

This part presents the findings of the study, along with discussions. The data and discussions mainly include assessment practices in EFL classrooms, the impact of assessment practices on learning, and the challenges faced by teachers. In addition, it presents teachers' views on developing effective assessment system in the context of Bangladesh.

Assessment Practices in EFL Classrooms

The data collected from interviews, classroom observations and documents demonstrate the assessment practices of the EFL teachers. The teachers claimed that the existing assessment practices are not appropriate for the EFL students. However, the policy makers of the university and the EFL teachers are working closely on developing effective assessment policies that may pave the way for EFL learners to achieve communicative competence.

EFL teachers arrange formative or continuous assessment and summative assessment for the learners. However, these assessment practices mainly focus on students' written competence. The marks distribution shows that a large portion of marks is allocated for the writing skill, whereas a small portion is for listening and speaking skills. Nevertheless, the focus should be more on listening and speaking skills. As Mr. Masum, one of the participants of this study, stated the facts of assessment practices as follows:

The total marks are distributed with several tests like listening, speaking, reading, and writing, i.e. the four basic skills. 50 marks are allotted to summative tests and the other 50 marks for formative tests. From summative and formative assessment, 60 marks are allotted to writing skills, whereas reading, speaking and listening skills contain only 40 marks. From 40 marks, 5 are assigned for learners' classroom participation. In that case, listening and speaking skills contain only 25 marks (Mr. Masum).

Additionally, Mr. Masum said, "Summative assessment mainly focuses on the writing skill. In summative tests, teachers occasionally include listening tests to know how good their students are at listening skill". It is evident that EFL teachers do not follow the required assessment system for having some limitations of the curriculum, specifically the assessment policies that need to be modified for the better performance of EFL learners in the current CLT situations.

Arranging diagnostic tests is very important for EFL teachers to assess students' knowledge and learning ability individually. Unfortunately, it is seen and also reported by the teachers that they usually do not arrange diagnostic tests due to heavy pressure of completing the syllabus. EFL teachers rarely arrange diagnostic tests in their classes as they are not mandatory as per the curriculum. As Ms. Arisha said:

In the context of a private university in Bangladesh, teachers usually are in a rush to complete the syllabus on time and therefore they do not invest plenty of time in assessing the outcomes of teaching. Also, teachers face the real challenge of implementing the policies and objectives of formative assessment due to the lack of required time for those (Ms. Arisha).

Ms. Arisha also said, "Though diagnostic test is not mentioned in the curriculum for EFL courses, teachers should arrange the diagnostic test for their personal understanding, for personal assessment of the students". Another teacher said, "There is no mandatory system of arranging diagnostic tests, however teachers sometimes arrange diagnostic tests to know how much the EFL learners are capable of learning" (Ms. Rumana). She puts emphasis on motivating students to develop communicative skills. "The students should remember that only knowing English for the examinations is not enough for them, but rather they need to achieve communicative competence and be capable of utilizing English in their real life" (Ms. Rumana). Therefore, continuous assessment is really important to evaluate students' learning and accordingly students should be given necessary support so that they can develop communicative competence.

CLT focuses on developing learners' attitudes towards communication with the purpose that they are able to develop their communicative skills. However, it is reported by the teachers that learners want to get good grades in examinations, but they need to develop their language skills. It is clear from multiple classroom observations that some students have the problem with pronunciation and some other students do not have fluency at all. It is a major problem that most of the teachers give emphasis on accuracy than fluency. Even it is noticed that some of the students usually do not speak in English during the class because of shyness and anxiety for using a foreign language. In this case, teachers need to make their classes more interactive in such a way that students can recover from their anxiety. Actually, every EFL classroom should be student-centric classroom rather than teacher-centric.

Teachers sometimes give students written assignments and ask them to give presentations on different topics with a view to assessing their competence in written and spoken English. They also arrange written class tests, quizzes, listening and speaking tests in the classroom as part of formative assessment but these are not satisfactory. It should occur with a high frequency to know the regular progress of the students. Based on the findings of the continuous assessment, teachers may be able to change their lessons, instructional policies and motivate students to improve their language skills.

In the context of CLT, an effective assessment should always try to motivate learners in learning by engaging them in interaction and communication. However, it is seen that CLT classrooms are still teacher-centric whereas Communicative Approach requires student-centric classroom. So, students are not able to learn English properly. In the context of Bangladesh, the curriculum needs some modifications with the purpose that all forms of assessment become effective and EFL learners can develop their competence in all four basic skills. In fact, the proper implementation of the CLT is a crying need for Bangladeshi educational institutions.

The Impact of Assessment Practices on Learning

Assessment has always a profound impact on the quality of learning outcomes. In the context of CLT, the appropriateness of assessment practices is vital for developing learners' communicative competence. Graddol (2006) emphasizes that English teachers must prepare their students for the global employment context where education or employment is dependent on actual English skills rather than token certification. Memorizing grammatical rules or structures does not have much impact on the learners in developing communicative skills if they do not use the language in their spoken and written communication. Therefore, assessment practices should focus on determining learners' ability to use the target language.

Teachers have different opinions about the impact of the assessment practices. One of the teachers said:

The EFL teachers have already modified the assessment system for EFL learners. In their new assessment process, there is continuous assessment for the students so that teachers can continually assess their communicative competence. Assessing students regularly by arranging formative tests is very helpful for the learners and they become more conscious about their learning. Thus, students are motivated instrumentally to be quite eligible for using English (Ms. Arisha).

Another teacher opined:

No form of assessment is perfect. The existing assessment policy is a little bit radical but still appropriate. The existing assessment practices focus on learners' communicative competence in four skills, however listening and speaking skills should be focused more to develop learners' oral proficiency in English (Ms. Rumana).

The other one stated, "We assess our students by formative and summative assessment throughout a semester which give emphasis mostly on written competence. This is why students are not developing their oral proficiency in English" (Mr. Masum). He also added:

There is something lacking in the curriculum of EFL undergraduates in Bangladesh. Although this curriculum focuses on developing students' communicative skills in English, students mainly get prepared for their examinations and do well too in language courses. However, they are not able to speak fluently or face any interviews successfully. Though students are getting good marks, they do not get good jobs because of their low level of proficiency in spoken English. The main reason behind this problem is the exam system (Mr. Masum).

It was observed from the class of Ms. Rumana that most of the students do not know how to give a talk. During presentations, students were found inaccurate and jerky, even their body languages were not appropriate to the situations. This happens due to lack of practices. In most circumstances, teachers finish their lessons in a short period of time by focusing on the potential items for the exams and therefore they do not emphasize practicing speaking in the classroom or testing speaking skills. As a result, students do not develop a high level of oral proficiency. As a matter of fact, it is absolutely necessary to emphasize the assessment of speaking skills to such an extent that students may develop both fluency and accuracy. As Ryan (2001) says, "Communicative methodology is learner-centered and emphasizes fluency over accuracy". Therefore, the existing assessment practices need some modifications with the

aim that students may develop both fluency and accuracy. For this reason, including listening and speaking skills considerably in the exams and assessing those skills regularly in the classroom are crucial to build up fluency in spoken English.

Sometimes it is seen in the classroom that few students do not want to participate in cooperative learning activities. This actually happens due to the lack of motivation for learning the target language as they think that they may do well in the exams even without taking part in those classroom activities. Therefore, teachers should not lay great stress on getting high marks in examinations, but rather developing students' communicative competence for the practical purposes of life. If a student becomes aware of their future goals of developing their language proficiency, only then they could be motivated to learn the language properly. According to Thomas and Rohwer (1986), the most important aspects that influence on becoming active learners are students' prior knowledge, meta-cognitive abilities, motivational levels, and interest in what they are reading or studying.

It is found from multiple observations of language classes that students suffer from a sense of fear, frustration and anxiety about assessment. Therefore, the current assessment practices need considerable modification to make the entire assessment system appropriate for learners.

Language learning greatly depends on prescribed texts, teaching-learning process and the assessment system. In fact, language teachers find assessment as a method of understanding students' progress in learning the target language. Therefore, curriculum designers should be well aware of the complicated process of assessment in a CLT classroom and should prescribe suitable coursebooks for EFL courses with appropriate classroom activities and assessments so that students can develop their communicative competence.

Challenges Faced by Teachers

In Bangladesh, CLT classrooms are still teacher-centric and lecture-based. Lectures basically focus on potential items for the exams, explicit teaching of grammatical items, rules and regulations of writing, etc. Students usually listen to teachers' lectures in the class, do various written tasks, e.g. writing paragraphs, essays, letters, and applications. As a matter of fact, assessment practices still encourage rote learning, not active learning. In the interview, Ms. Rumana said:

The main challenge of developing assessment system is changing the mindset of students. Actually, the EFL students are not conscious of learning the language. They just learn for getting good marks in the examinations. Therefore, teachers should change the mentality of students at first because students are only concerned about the marks and they do not want to learn the language. The mentality of teachers and higher authority should also be changed as they are here to help students in learning something new (Ms. Rumana).

Another EFL teacher stated:

Class duration is not enough for assessing students in a proper way in the context of CLT. In fact, within the short semester (in three months actually) teachers finish their lessons. Therefore, they do not get enough time for assessing their students effectively and individually as per the requirements of continuous assessment. This is why, writing skill is mainly focused in the summative and formative exams. It is true that a CLT class should be more interactive than any other classes. So, if teachers do not get enough time for assessing their students in the class then it would not be possible to develop effective assessment system in the private universities of Bangladesh (Mr. Masum).

In fact, in a country like Bangladesh, students have a limited opportunity to speak in English. As Ms. Arisha reported:

It is true that students do not have enough scope to practice speaking in the classroom. Speaking activities are avoided as they require much time. Even listening materials are not generally used in the classroom as they are not essential for summative assessment. Teachers sometimes want to assess students by arranging several tests in the classrooms. They also try to arrange group work and pair work for the students to assess their knowledge regularly but due to shortage of time they cannot give more time to assess them properly. Therefore, I feel that EFL class size should be as small as 20 and class duration should be 90 minutes at least so that teachers may involve students in communicative activities and assess them regularly in the classroom (Ms. Arisha).

She described a typical CLT classroom as follows:

The Bangladeshi EFL classes are still teacher-centric whereas CLT approach requires students-centric classroom. Teachers always dominate the classroom and they seldom engage their students in interaction. Actually, the EFL learners in Bangladesh are not that much comfortable in their classroom because the classroom is teacher centric. The authority and the teachers at the university should ensure a CLT friendly environment for the EFL learners to practice English more in the classroom for developing their communicative competence (Ms. Arisha).

The above-mentioned issues pose serious challenges that teachers need to take up with a view to implementing the CLT syllabus successfully at tertiary level in Bangladesh. Otherwise, the CLT curriculum will never achieve its objectives.

Teachers' Views on Developing Effective Assessment System

Developing effective assessment system is essential for bringing changes into the time-honored teaching practices, however the task is really challenging. In this context, EFL teachers shared their opinions on developing effective assessment system.

Ms. Rumana said, "The assessment system should be developed in such a way that all the four basic language skills can individually be assessed in the classroom" (Ms. Rumana). Mr. Masum stressed on assessing EFL students' speaking skills in unrehearsed situations. Moreover, for assessing writing skills, questions should be prepared in such way so that mere memorization may not help students in answering the questions. Therefore, teachers should be really creative in CLT classes with a view to developing a high level of written and oral proficiency. He stated:

Teachers should assess students in unrehearsed situations so that students' natural ability of using the language is assessed. If a student finds a situation that encourages memorization of some special items or topics and which assures success in the exam, they will not develop their freehand writing skills. Thus, students will not be able to develop their writing skills too (Mr. Masum).

He also said, "Students cannot write anything without memorizing, however by implementing CLT we expect that our students will be proficient in reading, writing, listening and speaking. Therefore, all the four skills should be assessed" (Mr. Masum). Another EFL teacher named Ms. Arisha said, "The assessment system actually encourages students to use the language and to enhance language capability. Moreover, the assessment practices motivate them to practice the target language." She also said:

Teachers should put emphasis on developing students' fluency first rather than accuracy. It does not matter whether they are right or wrong. At first, they have to achieve fluency and after that the focus may be on achieving accuracy gradually. Teachers should focus on their listening and speaking skills more than the other skills because most of the EFL students in this country remain silent during the class. This is why proper interaction in a classroom is rarely seen. Therefore, the classroom assessment system should be implemented strictly so that every student may be encouraged to interact in the classroom. Moreover, teachers should ensure a congenial environment for the students so that

they may take part in discussions and cooperative learning activities in the classroom (Ms. Arisha).

A congenial learning environment should be created in a CLT classroom so that learners can be engaged in cooperative learning activities and develop oral proficiency. Thus, teachers will get an opportunity to assess students' individual performance too.

It is very clear from the teachers' opinions that assessment practices are not effective at all because the principles of CLT have not been properly implemented in the current assessment practices. As the current assessment practices do not focus on all the four skills, classroom activities also do not include all the basic language skills. As a result, students cannot develop their communicative competence. So, classroom-based assessment (CBA) should be carried out to involve students in effective communication and thus EFL teachers can assess their students properly and students can develop a high level of oral proficiency in English. CLT does not mean that students will memorize well patterned structures as well as grammatical rules. In a CLT classroom, students can develop their language proficiency by using the target language more and more. EFL students cannot be interactive and communicative in a teacher-centric classroom where a teacher is to complete his/her specific day to day syllabus or where teachers only deliver lectures and students do not take part in any classroom activities. This is absolutely wrong in the context of CLT. If students make communication inside and outside the classroom, they will obviously develop their communicative skills. So, EFL teachers should also work on developing students' learning attitudes in the classroom. In fact, students' learning attitudes and teachers' classroom practices will be changed if assessment practices are changed. Therefore, developing effective assessment system is crucial to the success of the CLT syllabus.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Despite getting good grades in the exams, graduates in most cases fail to apply their English language skills in their day-to-day work due to inappropriate assessment practices. Although CLT advocates assessing all the four basic language skills, existing assessment practices mainly focus on writing and reading skills, whereas in fact listening and speaking skills are ignored or occasionally assessed.

The findings show that EFL teachers arrange different forms of assessment, namely diagnostic, formative and summative assessment for the learners. Among these, diagnostic tests are unofficial and infrequent. Furthermore, the frequency of formative or continuous assessment is also inadequate. To be honest, the assessment practices are primarily concerned with students' writing competence. The distribution of marks shows that a large portion of marks is allocated for the writing skills, whereas a small portion is for listening and speaking skills. As a result, students cannot develop a high level of oral proficiency in English. Therefore, diagnostic and formative assessment should take place on a regular

basis so that teachers can explore students' actual language proficiency and help them in overcoming the language difficulties as well as achieving communicative competence. For assessing writing skills, exam questions should be prepared creatively so that mere memorization may not help students in answering to the questions. If students find a situation that encourages memorization of some special items or topics and there is also an assurance of success in the exam through the memorization, they will not develop their freehand writing skills. Regarding speaking skills, teachers should assess students in unrehearsed situations so that students' natural ability of using the language is assessed. Thus, teachers may help students develop a reasonable level of written and oral proficiency.

Undoubtedly, assessment practices play a major role in motivating students to learn the target language and enhance language proficiency. However, in the context of Bangladesh, the existing assessment practices generally do not motivate them to practice the target language and therefore do not help them develop the communicative competence. Krashen (1985) says that learners with high motivation, self-confidence, a good self-image, and a low level of anxiety are better equipped for success in second language acquisition. This is why classroom activities should engage learners in cooperative learning activities to such an extent that they gain self-confidence and overcome anxiety. Moreover, teachers should always encourage students to get involved in communication and interaction with other students and the teachers in the classroom. In fact, EFL teachers' classroom practices should focus on the objectives of the CLT curriculum to achieve the goals of the National Educational Policy 2010 of Bangladesh. It is certain that teachers' classroom practices will not change, and students will also not be motivated to learn the English language for communicative purposes if the exam system remains the same. The fact is that both teachers and students usually focus on covering the potential items of exams. Introducing listening and speaking tests at all levels of education embracing early childhood education, primary education, secondary education, and tertiary education is essential to develop listening and speaking skills of the students of Bangladesh. Accordingly, designing an effective and appropriate assessment system is the most important task for the EFL teachers to achieve the main goal of the CLT curriculum. Additionally, the Government, educational institution authorities, experts and EFL teachers should work together to create a suitable teaching-learning environment for CLT classes. Otherwise, EFL students will never achieve communicative competence.

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