

Challenges for Learning English of Rural Primary Students at Pabna District in Bangladesh

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Abstract

English is the international language. The use and significance of English language in the present context of Bangladesh cannot be denied because of its enormous implication both for academic purposes and for specific purposes. At present English is accepted as an entity of global communication and proficiency. The English language finds itself at the centre of the paradoxes which arise from globalization. However, the study was conducted to find out the present scenario of English teaching methods in rural primary schools and to identify the challenges of implementing English curriculum effectively at the primary schools. The study was conducted at 5 Upazilas (Santhia, Bera, Atgharia, Sujanager and Faridpur Upazila) of Pabna District. The study was survey and case study type. Purposive sampling method was used for the study. 300 respondents were selected for the study. 3 types of respondents were taken: Student-100, Teachers-100 and Education Officers-100. Data were collected from primary and secondary sources. Primary Data were collected through face to face interview with Questionnaire and secondary data were collected from secondary sources. Collected data were computerized, analyzed and interpreted using relevant Computer Program. From the result it was found that the present condition of English learning of Rural Primary is little effective which should be improved. Most of the respondents replied that supplementary reading materials are essential and teaching learning materials helps in English learning. Most of the respondents replied that Teachers' training has vital role to teach English. The result also revealed that 86% respondents replied that Teachers should apply more classroom language in class. Very few teachers conduct English class only in English which should be increased. 83% respondents replied that large class is an obstacle in teaching English, so number of students in the class should be decreased. 81% respondents replied that remedial classes are necessary. Speaking exercise in the classroom is done rarely which should be increased. From the result it was also found that 76% respondents replied that class duration is very short which should be increased.

Key Words: *English, Primary School, Student, Teacher, Speaking, Class, Training*

INTRODUCTION

English is the international language par excellence. The use and significance of English language in the present context of Bangladesh cannot be denied because of its enormous implication both in EAP (English for Academic Purpose) and ESP (English for Specific Purpose). Currently, English is accepted as an entity of global communication and proficiency. The English language finds itself at the centre of the paradoxes which arise from globalization.

Students of primary schools face troubles in listening, speaking, reading and writing English. Concentrating on the magnitude of English language skills for rural primary school students are expected to achieve English language skills (listening, speaking, reading and writing) to make them eligible for their next step of education as well as their prospective fields.

Interactive communication in collaborative learning experiences helps learners to develop their thinking through language and develop their language through thinking. It has also experienced significant changes in the communication dynamics of the world. English as a subject is of paramount importance in equipping the students to take up the challenges of the competitive survival and growing globalization in developing countries like Bangladesh. This is high time we started to see the future development of English as a world language and took proper initiatives to get learners to the global standard level.

The students can speak and converse in simple English according to their age level and can read to comprehend the textbooks set for their age group and level. They also write words, simple sentences, passages, paragraphs, informal letters and numbers according to their age group and level. Although NCTB prepared English curriculum for the students of the primary level schools to consider proper approaches and method, unfortunately the curriculum is not implemented properly. However, most of the students of primary schools are

unable to attain the primary English language competencies due to prevailing challenges in our education system.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study are:

1. To find out the present scenario of English teaching methods in rural primary schools.
2. To identify the challenges of implementing English curriculum effectively at the primary schools.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

Language is a tool for communication and learning a language includes four basic skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing. It is difficult for the Bangladeshi students, especially primary students, to learn a second language without any challenge. Students learning English encounter a lot of difficulties in respect of materials, setting, motivation, contents not being up to their needs. This study attempts to investigate the challenges they face and identify the problems in four skills and simultaneously provide remedial measures to successfully acquire the English language Skills. For this reason, this type of research is needed. For the development of Bangladesh, we need a large number of human capitals. To build the human capital, English is essential in the present age of information and technology of 21st century. Bangladesh sustains one of the largest primary education systems in the world with as many as 80401 primary institutions of 10 different kinds namely, Government Primary School, Registered Non-Government Primary School, Non-Registered Non-Government Primary School, Experimental schools, Community schools, Kindergartens, NGO schools, Eebtedae madrasahs, primary sections of high madrasahs, primary sections of high schools (Rabbi, n. d).

Among these primary schools, most of the schools are in rural areas of Bangladesh. Primary education is called fundamental education to build a child. For this reason primary education is emphasized in all declaration for the development of education of every nation and it is important to create a base of English at primary level. According to Burg (2006), 2-13 years is the proper time for learning language. So, English curriculum implementation is necessary from primary level in Bangladesh.

In the beginning of primary level, necessary steps must be taken to have a good grounding in English for the student through effective teaching. But there are many problems to implement English curriculum at primary level in rural areas. Rural areas students are not able to grasp English Language very well in many cases. Moreover, in acquiring primary level competencies and learning outcomes, the achievement rate is questionable among the rural primary school students, especially in English subject. So the aim of English language teaching at primary level is going to be futile. There are some logical reasons for this lagging behind in rural areas. Since the focus of this study is to find out the challenges of implementing English curriculum at primary level in rural area of Bangladesh, it will help to understand the present situation of English language learning process and illustrate the challenges of implementing English curriculum. The result would be a guideline for the government, school authorities, incumbent education officers and other non-government organizations who work for improving English language skills at primary level.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Study design: The study was survey and case study type.

Study area: The study was conducted at 5 Upazilas (Santhia, Bera, Atgharia, Sujanagar and Faridpur Upazila) of Pabna District.

Sampling method: Purposive sampling method was used for the study.

Sample size: 300 respondents were selected for the study. 3 types of respondents were taken: Student-100, Teachers-100 and Education Officers-100.

Sources of Data: Data were collected from primary and secondary sources.

Sources of primary data: Primary data were collected from the respondents of study area.

Sources of secondary Data: Secondary data were collected from books, Reports of BANBEIS, Research report, journals, internet etc.

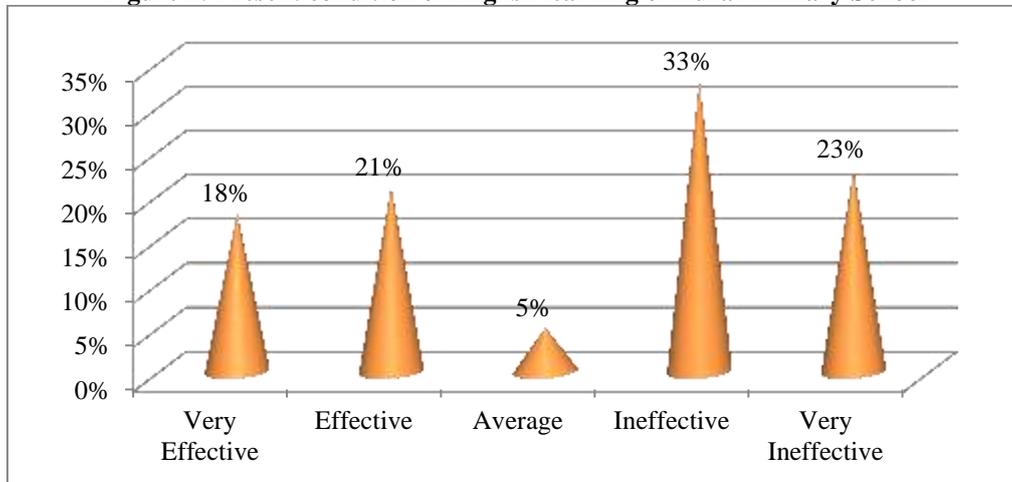
Instruments of Data Collection: Questionnaire was used for data collection.

Methods of Data collection: Primary Data were collected through face to face interview with Questionnaire and secondary data were collected from BANBEIS Report books, research report, journals, internet etc.

Data processing and Analysis: Data were computerized, analyzed and interpreted using Computer Program SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Science).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

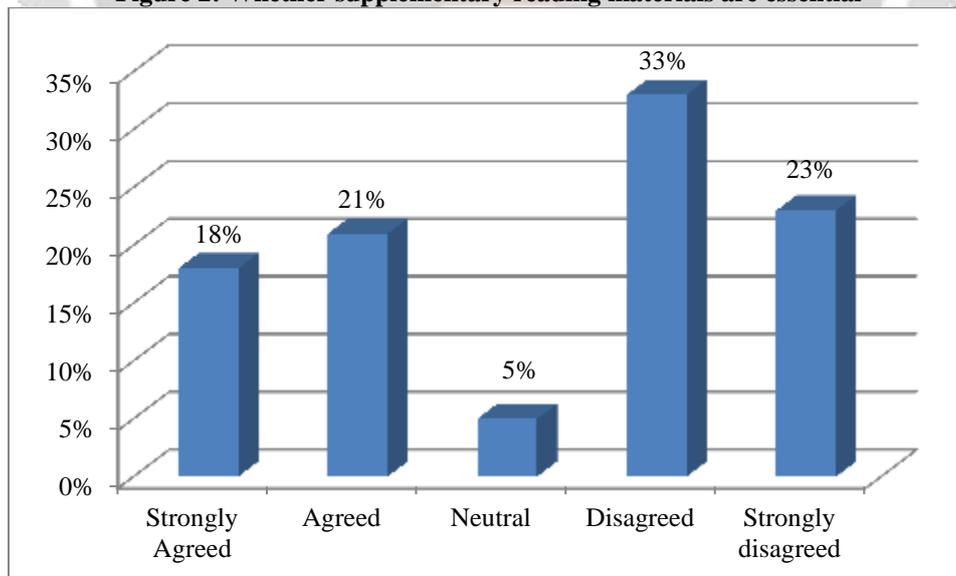
Figure 1: Present condition of English learning of Rural Primary School



Source: Field survey, 2020

The result revealed that 43% respondents replied that present situation of English learning is very bad which was maximum but 5% respondents replied that present situation of English learning is average which was minimum. On the other hand 8% respondents replied that present situation of English learning is very good and 33% respondents replied that present situation of English learning is bad.

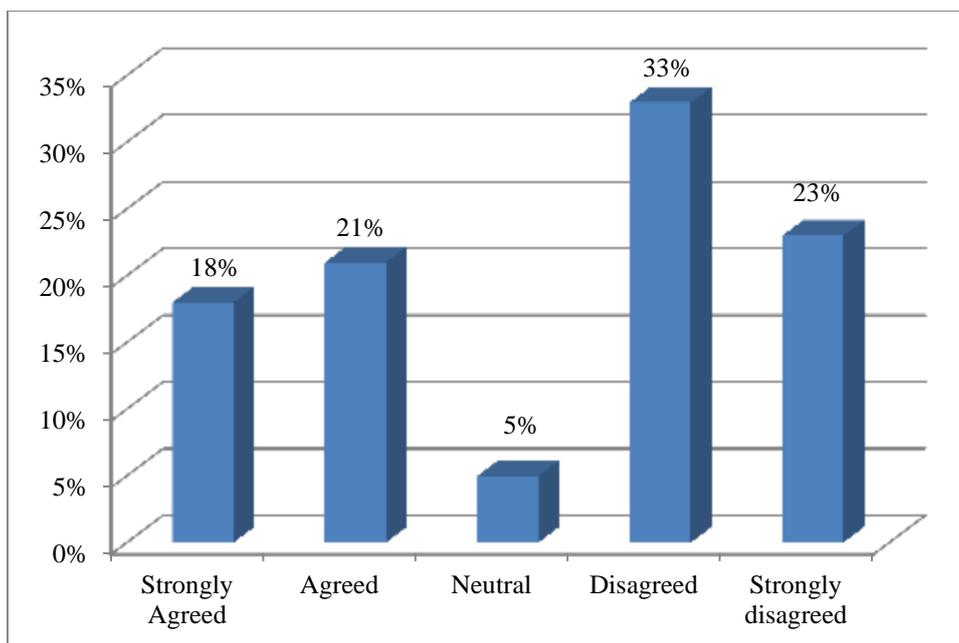
Figure 2: Whether supplementary reading materials are essential



Source: Field survey, 2020

The result revealed that 58% respondents replied that supplementary reading materials are very essential which was maximum but 2% respondents replied that supplementary reading materials are less essential which was minimum.

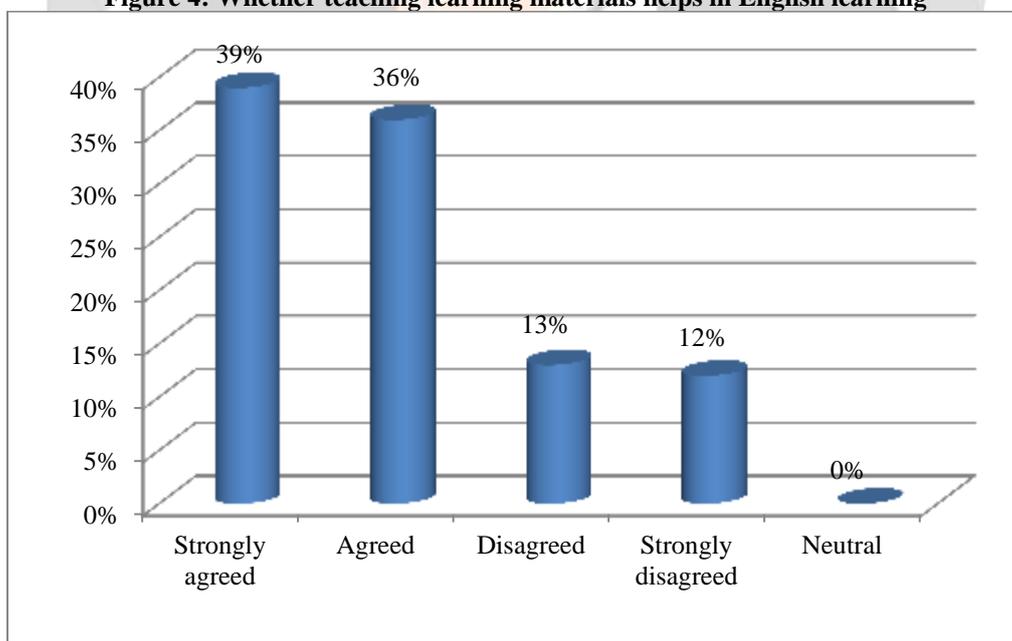
Figure 3: Whether activity based learning method is effective



Source: Field survey, 2020

The result revealed that 33% respondents replied that activity based learning method is ineffective for learning English which was maximum but 5% respondents replied average which was minimum.

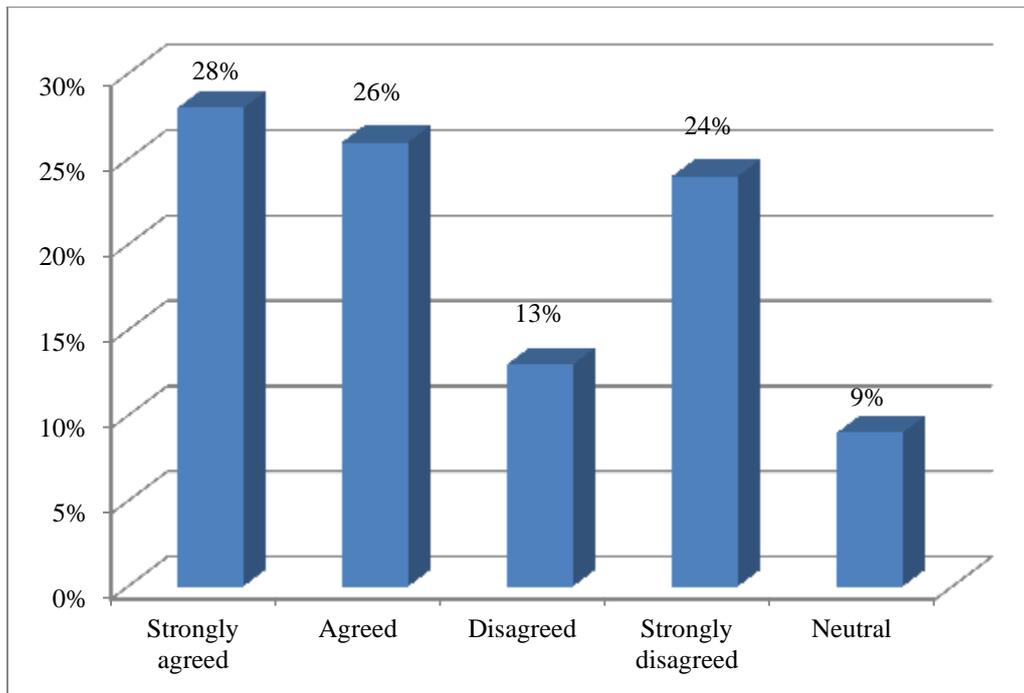
Figure 4: Whether teaching learning materials helps in English learning



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 39% respondents were strongly agreed that teaching learning materials helps in English learning which was maximum.

Figure 5: Whether Teachers' training has vital role to teach English



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 28% respondents strongly agreed that Teachers' training has vital role to teach English which was maximum but only 9% respondents were neutral that Teachers' training has vital role to teach English which was minimum.

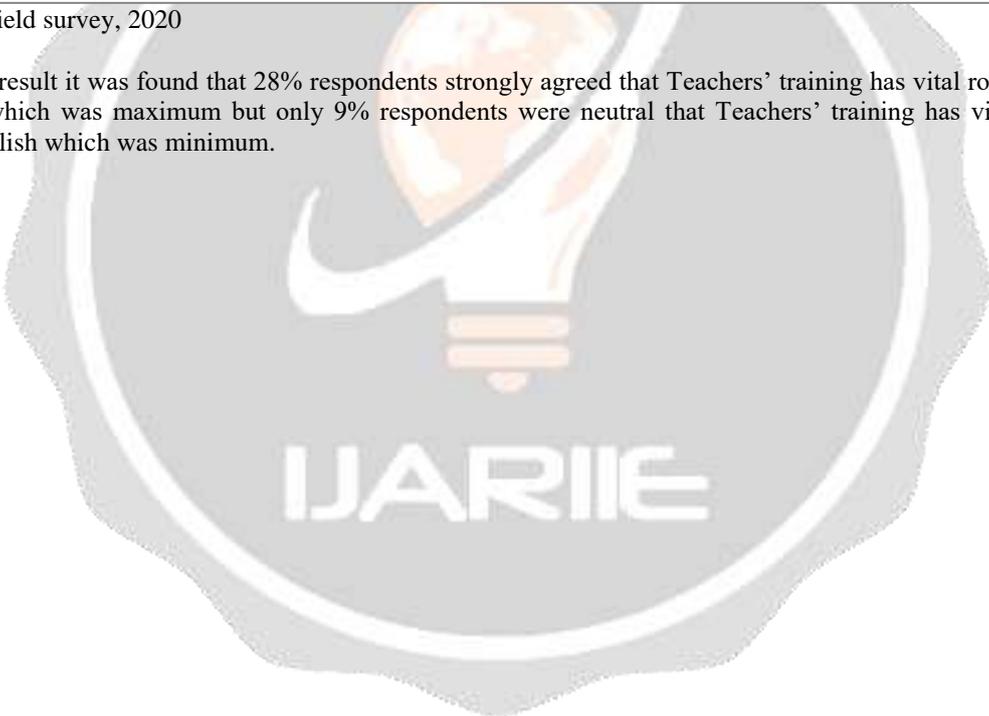
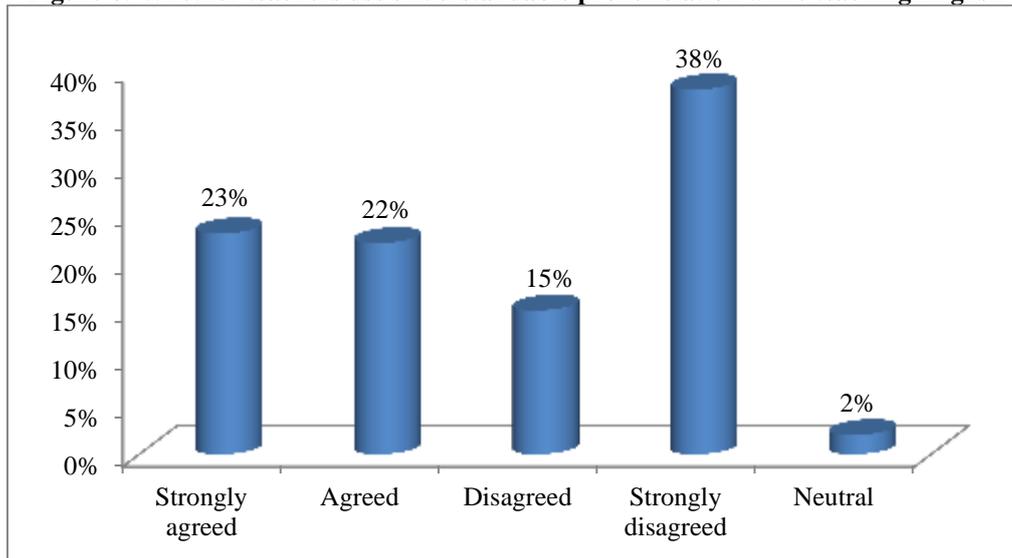


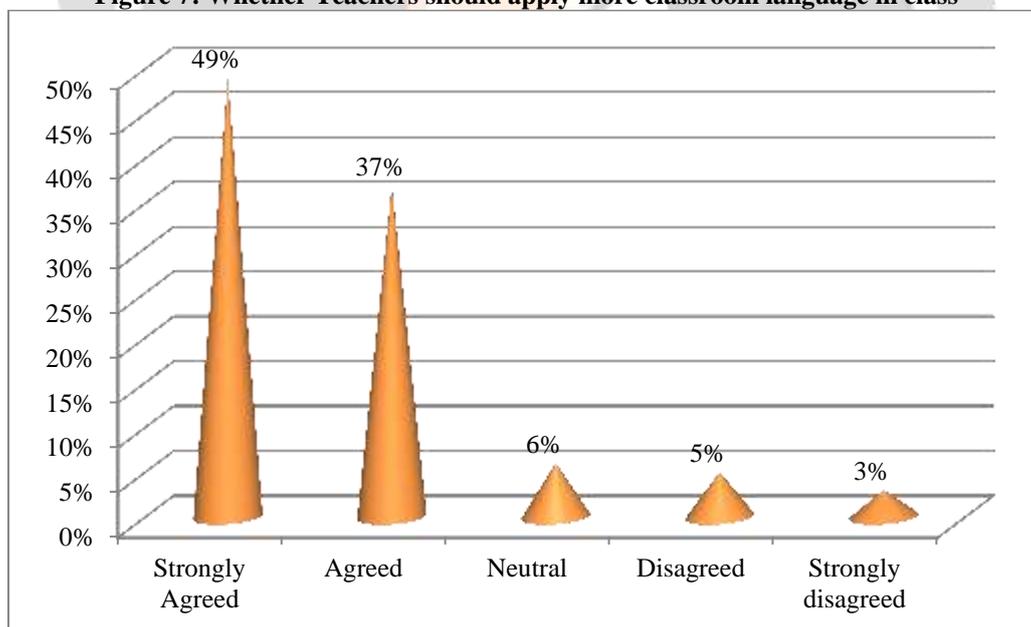
Figure 6: Whether teachers use understandable pronunciation while teaching English



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 38% respondents strongly disagreed that teachers use understandable pronunciation while teaching English which was maximum but only 2% respondents were neutral that teachers use understandable pronunciation while teaching English which was minimum.

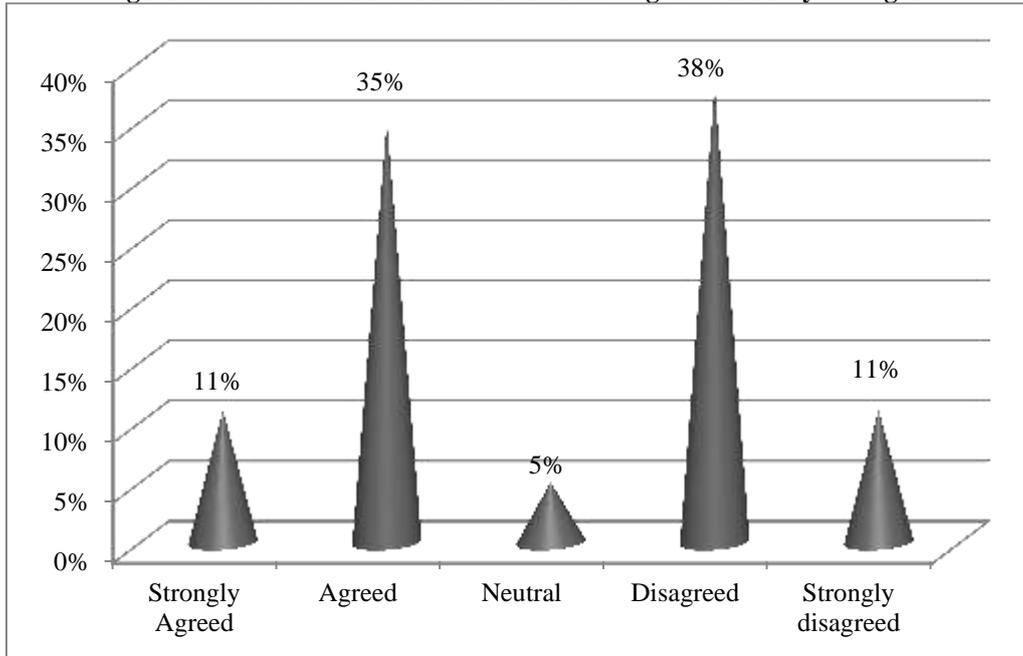
Figure 7: Whether Teachers should apply more classroom language in class



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 49% respondents strongly agreed that Teachers should apply more classroom language in class which was maximum but only 3% respondents were neutral that Teachers should apply more classroom language in class which was minimum.

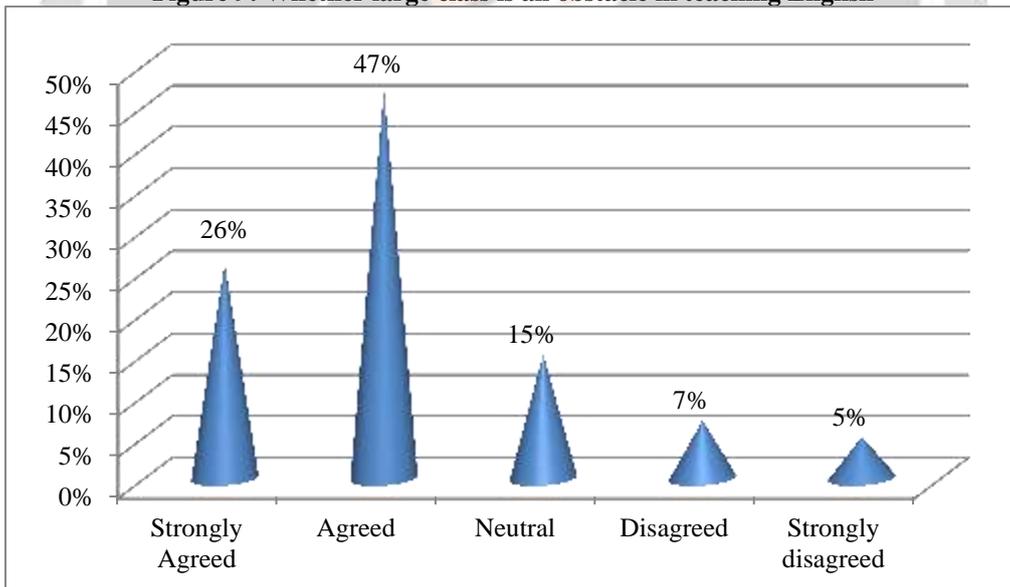
Figure 8: Whether Teachers should conduct English class only in English



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 38% respondents strongly agreed that Teachers should conduct English class only in English which was maximum but only 5% respondents neutral that Teachers should conduct English class only in English which was minimum.

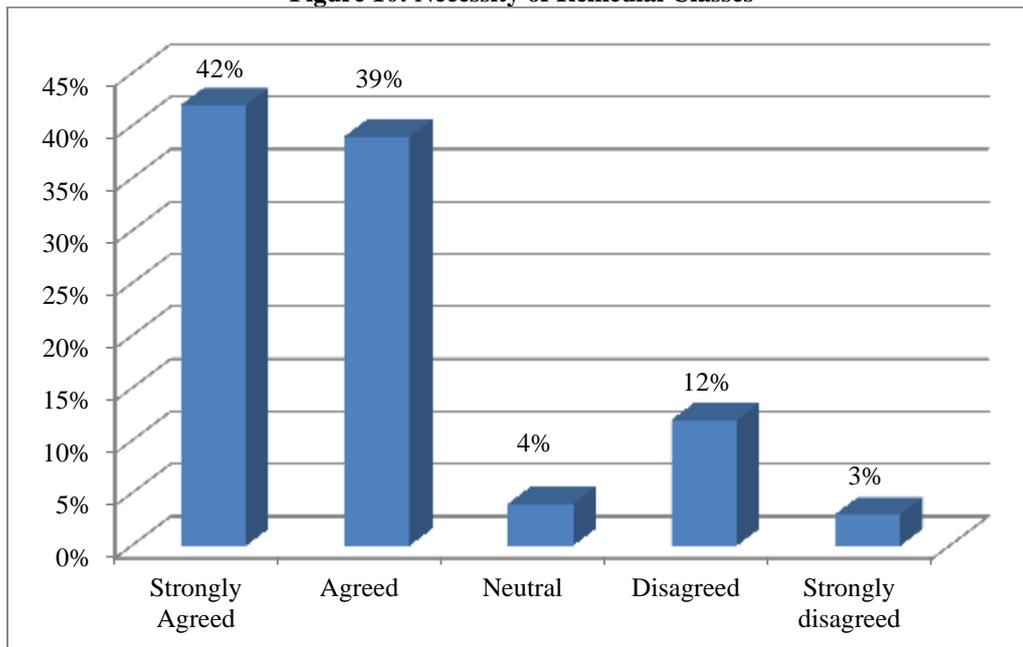
Figure 9: Whether large class is an obstacle in teaching English



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 47% respondents agreed that large class is an obstacle in teaching English which was maximum but only 5% respondents strongly disagreed that large class is an obstacle in teaching English which was minimum.

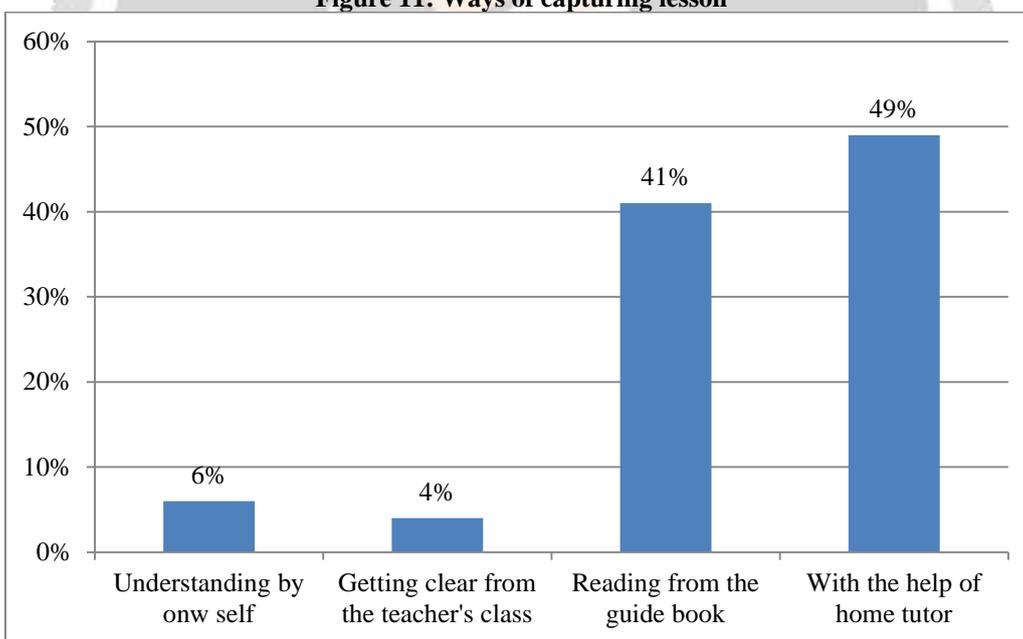
Figure 10: Necessity of Remedial Classes



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 42% respondents strongly agreed that remedial classes was necessary which was maximum but only 3% respondents strongly disagreed that remedial classes was necessary which was minimum.

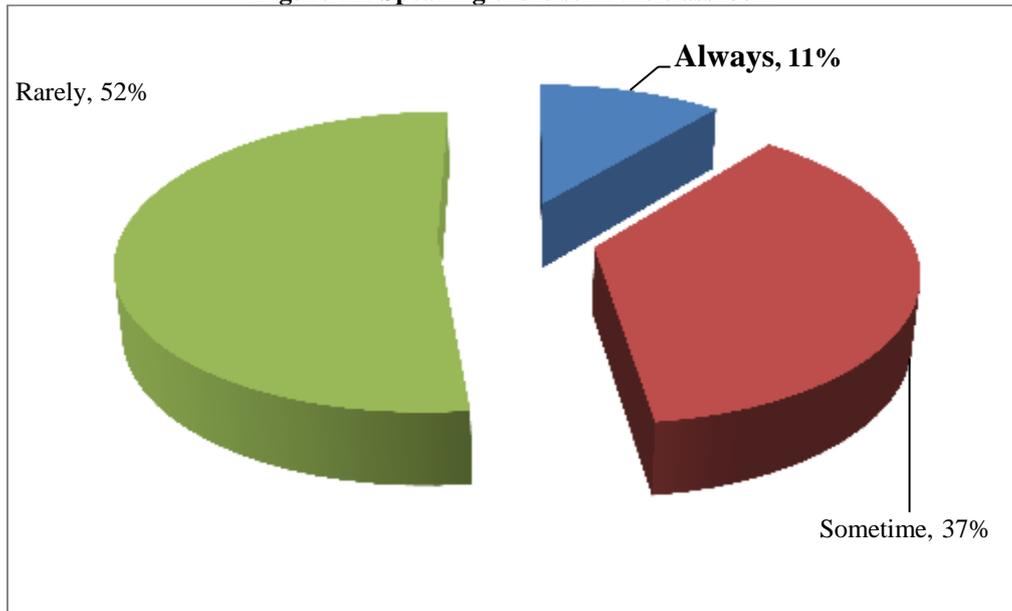
Figure 11: Ways of capturing lesson



Source: Field survey, 2020

Among the all respondents, 6% learn lessons understanding by themselves, 4% learn in teacher’s class, 41% learn by reading guidebooks, 49% learn with the help of private tutors.

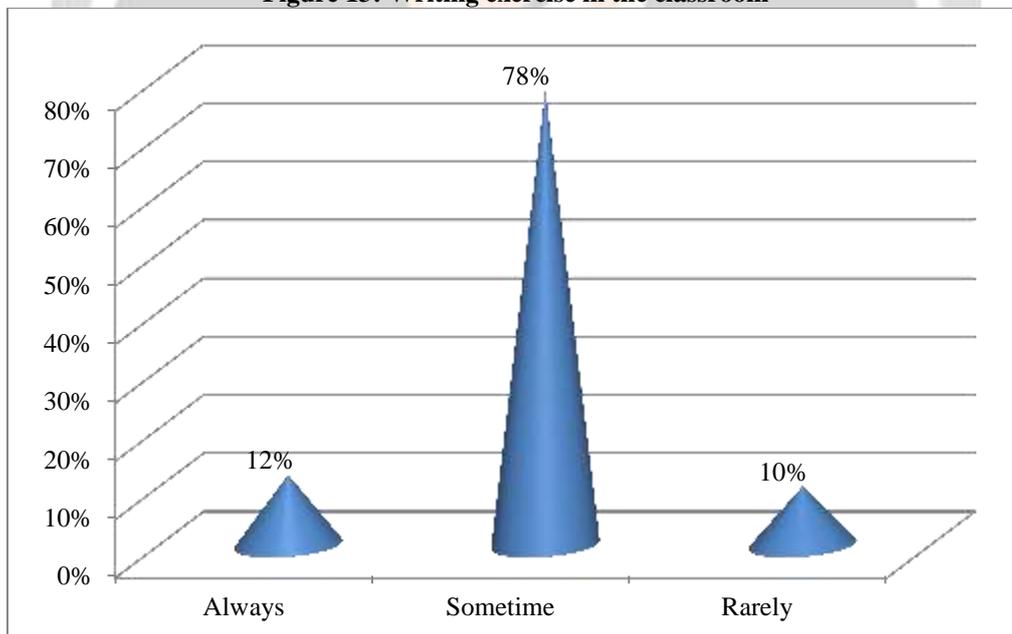
Figure 12: Speaking exercise in the classroom



Source: Field survey, 2020

From all the students, 11% consent that English teachers always make speaking exercise in the class while 37% consent that English teachers sometimes make speaking exercise in the classrooms and 52% admit that English teacher rarely make speaking exercise in the class.

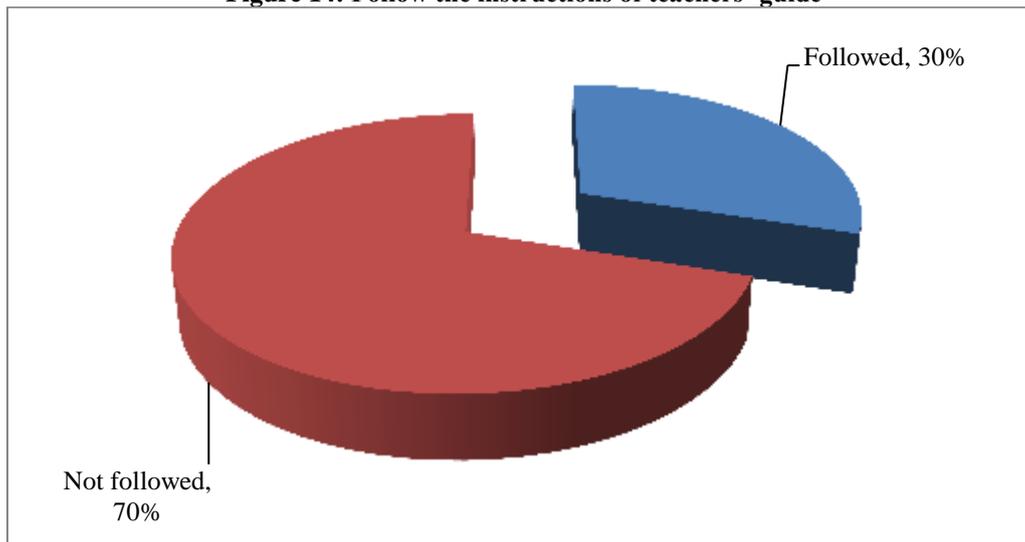
Figure 13: Writing exercise in the classroom



Source: Field survey, 2020

Primary school students at rural areas of Bangladesh claim that teacher don't make regular writing exercise. From all the students, 12% consent that English teacher always make writing exercise regularly while 78 % sometimes make writing exercise in the class whether 10% think that English teacher rarely make writing exercise in the class.

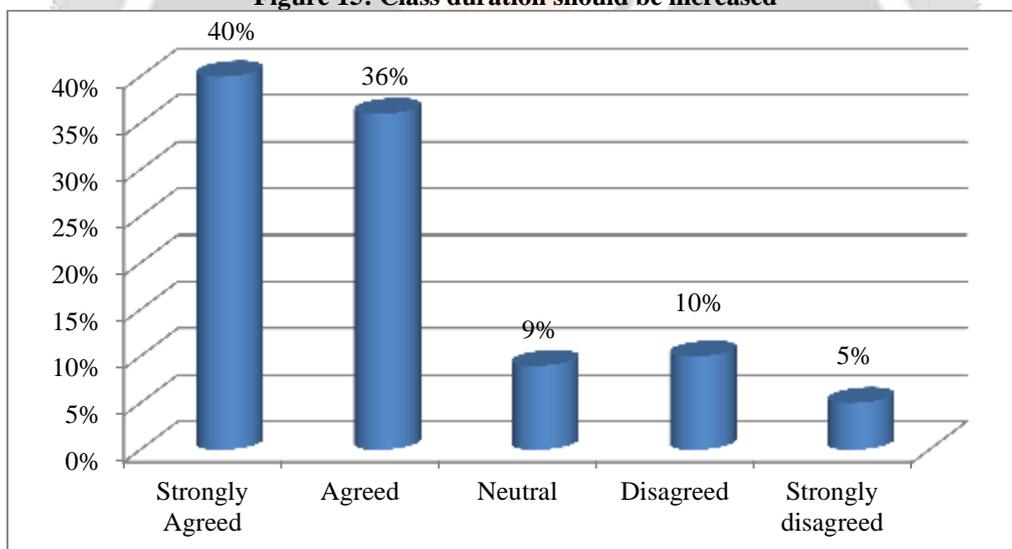
Figure 14: Follow the instructions of teachers' guide



Source: Field survey, 2020

Among all the respondents, 30% teacher consent that they sometimes follow the primary level teacher guide where 70% teacher don't follow teaching process instructed by the teacher guide.

Figure 15: Class duration should be increased



Source: Field survey, 2020

From the result it was found that 40% respondents strongly agreed that Class duration should be increased which was maximum but only 5% respondents strongly disagreed that Class duration should be increased which was minimum.

CONCLUSION

The Bangladesh Government has taken various steps such as Compulsory Primary Education, Zila Prathamik Shiksha etc. for the improvement of the rural people of Bangladesh. To cope up with the needs of the learners, National Education Policy-2010 has been passed. The progress should be noticed by a project and research should be done. This study aimed at identifying some challenges in teaching-learning English at primary level in rural areas of Bangladesh and the study revealed that teachers' inadequate knowledge on pedagogy, higher student-teacher ratio, class size, limited contact hours, lack of proper teachers' training, lack of quality teachers, unavailability of language skills learning tools are the most problematic factors. Measures such as recruiting high qualified and subject specialist teacher, providing adequate training for their professional development, increasing salary level so that they can respect their own jobs, providing sufficient teaching aids for learning language skills, wide-ranging awareness programmes, changes in the learning methods and techniques, making classroom activities more experimental and enjoyable for the children and of course upgrading the school

infrastructure are required for the solution of these problems. Here we would like to encourage other researchers to do a comparative study about urban and rural students' competency in English language and find out the solutions to overcome the thwarts of English language learning. As English is a global language, we cannot expect development by keeping the problems alive. It can be affirmed that the addressed issues will ensure a congenial teaching environment at the rural primary level schools in Bangladesh.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More English teachers should be recruited.
2. Duration of the class should be increased.
3. Large classes should be divided into several sections with less than 30 students.
4. More training on Communicative Language Teaching approach should be arranged for the teachers.
5. More teaching aids especially audio-visual materials should be provided in the classroom.
6. Teachers should be trained under PLTP programme on an urgent basis.
7. Speaking and listening activities should be emphasized more.
8. Test of speaking and listening skill should be included in the exams.
9. The teachers must assess the mood of the pupils. The time of the day influences the mood of the pupils. For example, early in the morning their concentration and interest is high compared to the time before the interval. Most of the students don't take their breakfast before going to school. Early morning period is recommendable for a full force lesson but before interval and before class dismiss it is advisable to have a light lesson not concentrating too much of drilling.
10. Response from the students during the lesson is important and it should be administered professionally.
11. To encourage the students to speak English, the teachers must use translation method. To apply translation method, the teachers have to give the learners a language chart in which the rule of preparing sentence would be given. For example, a chart for basic use as going to the toilet, classroom, meeting a teacher, Greetings such as good morning/ afternoon/ night, may I borrow and so on. These structures must have to drill and hung in the classroom for the learners to remember and use when it is needed.
12. Remedial classes have to make compulsory for the weaker students and they aren't charged for remaining absent in the class.
13. The teachers can encourage the students to recite poem and they can arrange poetry recital competitions at the end of every month. Besides, other English language competition will have to be carried out throughout the year.
14. The teachers have to stimulate the learners by passing an interesting problem.

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