

PROBLEMS OF CLT IN BANGLADESH: WAYS TO IMPROVE

Muhammad Safiur Rahman¹ Shah Mohammad Sanaul Karim²

^{1,2} Assistant Professor

*Department of English Language and Literature
International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC),
Chittagong – 4203, Bangladesh*

ABSTRACT: - *The introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to teach English at the secondary and higher secondary levels of education in Bangladesh is a relatively recent phenomenon. Naturally, at this stage, this new approach of language teaching faces different types of problems. The paper aims at studying the problems in effective implementation of CLT here. Experiences of some other countries in this regard are also considered. This research design collects data from ten teachers who are teaching English at secondary and higher secondary levels in Chittagong. The teachers are from different institutions- some from the urban area and some from rural area. The quantitative data come from questionnaire and qualitative data come from interviews. The findings show that teachers experience many difficulties in their classrooms. The sources of the difficulties are various- unwillingness of the teachers to adopt a new system, inadequate training facilities, insufficient teaching aids, conflict with native culture, lack of interest among the learners, etc. However, it is felt that all those difficulties can be overcome, and a favorable condition can be created for EFL teachers to be optimistic for adopting CLT in classrooms.*

KEYWORDS:- *Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), English as Foreign Language (EFL), English as Second Language (ESL), English Language Teaching (ELT), Grammar Translation Method (GTM)*

INTRODUCTION

English is one of the major languages in the world. The exporting of English began in the seventeenth century. Since then, especially in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it continues to spread all over the world because of the wide-spread colonization, and massive immigration of the native speakers. Today, it has become the most widely spoken language in the world. In Bangladesh, as colonial legacy, people are almost forced to use English for a practical purpose – administrative, professional or educational. Although it is a foreign language, English is, indeed, used here as an official language in different government and non-government offices. From the colonial time, in this region, Grammar Translation Method (GTM) was adopted to teach English.

Recently CLT has been introduced in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, the transition from the long practiced teaching method - GMT to a relatively new method CLT, naturally created some noteworthy problems for the teachers and learners. Efforts also continue to find out solutions to these problems in order to make CLT effective up to the satisfactory level.

Background

Over the centuries, a remarkable number of theories have been experimented in quest of finding out an effective approach to teach English. In the course of time, some shortcomings of those theories to develop learners' ability and skill in day to day life communication have been noticed. As an effort to solve this problem, Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has been introduced. CLT approach mainly focuses learners' ability, and recovers shortcomings regarding their expressing capabilities of feelings in the target language in real life scenarios. As a whole, CLT approach concentrates to boost up learners' linguistic, along with pragmatic knowledge in target language.

No matter how much learners are skilled, but interaction with others in the target language will make them competent. According to William Littlewood (1981) Communicative Language Teaching approach is the best method of transforming learners into the environment of target language. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach has been regarded as a harbinger of new era in language teaching. It was initiated in the inner circle countries; therefore, its effects have now reached to the extreme outer circle countries. Its comprehensiveness thus makes it different in scope and status from any of the other approaches or methods known so far.

The underlying principles of the CLT approach is that the teacher should act as a facilitator to create a student centered classroom and engage learners in authentic-like and meaningful communications with the goal to increase comprehensible language input for learners and expect them to generate more output. Teachers, therefore, need to design learning tasks with clear objectives and consider what learning tasks or materials are to benefit students' acquisition of both the target linguistic and pragmatic knowledge. The application of communicative language teaching (CLT) to English as a foreign language (EFL) context has recently been debated extensively. Although the CLT approach attempts to involve learners in more authentic and interactive learning tasks that promote both comprehensible input and learners' language output, teachers still find it difficult and challenging to adopt the approach and maximize the learning; especially in EFL classrooms.

Numerous attempts have been made to introduce CLT to EFL (English as a Foreign Language) contexts, both on the EFL countries' own initiatives and through international aid projects; however, these attempts often turned out not to be as successful as when used in ESL contexts. In EFL classrooms, although teachers now have gradually adopted approaches that focus on meaning and language use, the learning outcome is still not efficient enough. For this reason, the

authors attempted to provide a comprehensive list of difficulties and problems EFL learners and teachers may experience implementing this method in EFL classes.

Objective of the study

The objective of the study is to find out the problems of failure of communicative language teaching in Bangladesh and to provide some possible solutions for such problems.

Research Question

The research questions of the study are

- What are the problems of communicative language teaching in Bangladesh?
- What are the ways to overcome the problems of CLT in Bangladesh?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was developed in the 1970s as reaction to audio-lingual teaching method and its unsatisfactory results. The mechanistic nature of audio-lingual pattern drills is criticized because they fail to prepare learners for a productive use of the target language in the many different communicative situations of everyday life. A number of reports deal with CLT innovations in EFL contexts. Many have proposed that most EFL teachers have found it challenging to use CLT. For instance, Diana Ansary (2012) reported that teachers in Bangladesh found it difficult to implement CLT. The constraints mentioned include the context of the wider curriculum, traditional teaching methods, class size and schedules, resources and equipment, the low status of teachers and English teachers' deficiencies in oral English and sociolinguistic and strategic competence.

In the year 2001, Bangladesh Secondary and higher Secondary English course underwent a reform. The principal goal was to propose a shift away from the long-established grammar-translation curriculum practice towards teaching for communicative competence. The stated goal was to make pre-university English language instruction more communicative. The major justification was that English should be used communicatively by the learners preparing themselves for higher studies and not just learned about.

In Bangladesh context, Barman, Sultana and Basu (2006) propose eight factors which were identified as constraints in implementing CLT in Bangladesh: 1) inefficiency of ELT practitioners, 2) economic constraints, 3) administrative set-up, 4) infrastructural Limitations, 5) cultural Conflicts, 6) seating arrangement in classroom, 7) class size and language teaching and learning and 8) testing. They stated that in Bangladesh, most instructors were able to start the teaching career without previous formal training. Although the government had launched the materials based on CLT, the teachers did not fully comprehend the concepts of communicative competence. Many language teachers were still underpaid which strongly affect their motivation which resulted in the de-motivated environment in the classroom as they had to seek for extra income from teaching as private tutors. They also added that a significant number of institutions

in Bangladesh are still preoccupied with result-oriented teaching, which mainly focuses on reading and writing skills. The classes, in many cases, are too large to manage; sometimes the number may rise to around 200. Barman, Sultana and Basu also mention the limited fund from the government for the public sectors as a drawback for CLT to be implemented properly.

Many other studies and researches have also shown that it is not that much easy for the teachers specially the EFL teachers to utilize CLT as an asset to reach the final goal of language teaching in their context with their students. Based on a study that assessed the attitudes of Bangladesh educators toward using CLT in the local context, Dr M Shahidullah (2012) reported that teachers used CLT only sparingly because it required too much preparation time. A study conducted in the country identified class size, grammar-based examination, and lack of exposure to authentic language as constraints on using CLT.

Li's (2001) article on the cultural constraints in introducing the CLT in South Korea points to a number of Asian EFL countries where CLT has been used with limited success—China, Hong Kong, Japan, Vietnam, Pakistan, Singapore and the Philippines. A research by Gahin and Mayhill (2001) showed two roadblocks in the application of CLT in Egypt. First are extrinsic barriers covering economic factors which include low wages, lack of resources, and large classes without adequate facilities; pressure from parents, students, principals, and supervisors cause teachers to sacrifice an ideal CLT syllabus. Second are intrinsic barriers covering cultural factors which include passive-student traditions, negative-to-group-work attitudes, and influences of colleagues in other, teacher-dominated subjects. Deckert (2004) found that the failure of the application of CLT in the United Arab Emirates was caused by excessive teacher talk and teacher and student perceptions about effective English teaching. Observations showed that excessive teacher talk in explaining to and correcting students causes them to miss opportunities to actively participate using English in communication.

As this brief review reveals, CLT as the most known comprehensive approach in language teaching has proved difficult to be implemented on the part of teachers of English as a Foreign Language. Some of these problems that are considered to be more common in the majority of EFL contexts will be discussed in more detail in this article.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study aims to respond to the research questions of qualitative and quantitative nature, data collection and analysis techniques from both methodologies, thus mixed-method approach was chosen as the methodology of this research. The mixed methodology helped to explain the EFL teachers' perceived difficulties in the implementation of CLT in Bangladesh with the help of the survey questionnaire, and with the help of the follow-up interviews the difficulties and challenges that were not covered by the questionnaire were revealed.

Research design

Both primary and secondary sources of data have been used. In getting primary information, face to face interviews were taken with different primary and high schools teachers. This chapter presents an overview of the research methodology. It contains an account of the procedures used in the study, including research design, selection and description of the participants, setting, instruments used for data collection, data analysis and trustworthiness of the study.

Participants of the study

The participants for this study were 10 teachers of English from secondary and higher secondary levels. These participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, and 4 teachers were asked to participate in the succeeding interview.

Research Instruments

The mixed methodology helped to explain the EFL teachers' perceived difficulties in the implementation of CLT in Bangladesh with the help of the survey questionnaire, and with the help of the follow-up interviews the difficulties and challenges that were not covered by the questionnaire were revealed.

Written Questionnaires

The written survey questionnaire used in this study was designed for teachers who are teaching in public and/or private schools and colleges in rural area of Bangladesh. Questionnaires were given to the ten participants to explore the problems that exist in Bangladesh to implement CLT, as well as to investigate their understanding of the possibilities of overcoming these problems.

Interviews

In addition to the questionnaire, interview with one research participant was conducted as another important mode of data collection for this study. Interview lasted about 15 Minutes and it involved a list of open-ended questions addressing the various problems related to CLT, and the solution of it in EFL contexts, particularly in Bangladesh.

Data collection procedure

The participants for this study were 10 teachers of English teaching at primary and secondary levels. These participants were asked to complete the questionnaire, and four teachers were asked to participate in the succeeding interview. Out of these 10 participants, 5 of them were male, and the rest 5 were female. In case of age range the majority of the respondents were 30 to 55 years old. According to the teaching experience, it varies from 10 to 25 years at different schools and colleges. As far as the schools/colleges information is concerned 10 participants were working at private/Non government schools and colleges. Regarding the academic degrees earned by the participants, few of them hold a Bachelor of Arts (BA) degree under different

university along with B Ed. The other teachers were holders of either Master of Arts (MA) or Master of Education (M.Ed.) degrees. These instruments permitted the participant teachers to identify in their own terms what aspects of their particular context they perceived to be constraining in implementing CLT, whether these be cultural, economic, political or administrative.

Data analysis procedure

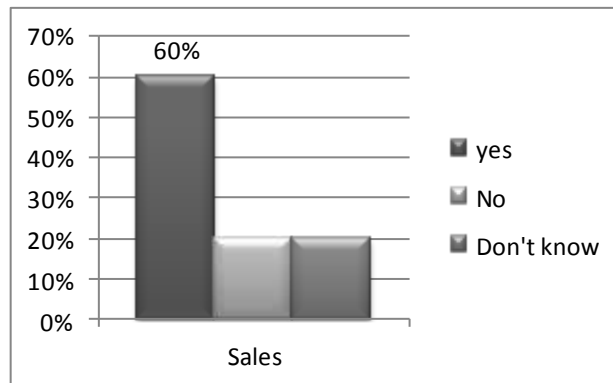
The questionnaire data analysis included the analysis of both closed-ended and open-ended questions. The closed-ended questions were analyzed with the help of the statistical analysis Frequency calculations (i.e. how many teachers selected each answer) were used to produce descriptive central tendency statistics that were used to present an overall picture of the CLT in Bangladesh. They find difficulties and problems that they faced in their attempts to implement CLT in English classrooms. In analyzing the qualitative interview data, we used content analysis technique, which can be described as drawing up a list of coded categories and each segment of transcribed data into one of these categories. However, we took quite something to analyze the data and come to a conclusion.

Data Presentation and Discussion

The survey generated from written questionnaires is discussed in quantitative data collection and ideas generated from interviews are discussed in qualitative data collection under this section namely.

Quantitative Data Collection

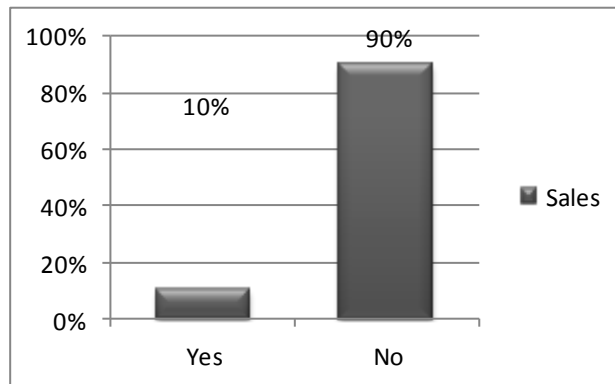
60% of the teachers think that it is very hard to grade the students of CLT, 20 % did not agree with them and 20% are not concern about it.



We also agree with them.

Compatibility of CLT with native customs

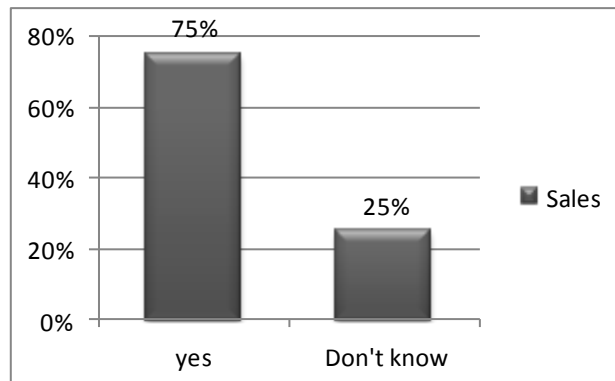
90% of the teachers think that CLT is not always appropriate with the socio cultural context, 10% of them think that it can be minimized.



Nevertheless, every language has its own way of approach and reasonably it will not match with other language.

Grading procedure of students in CLT

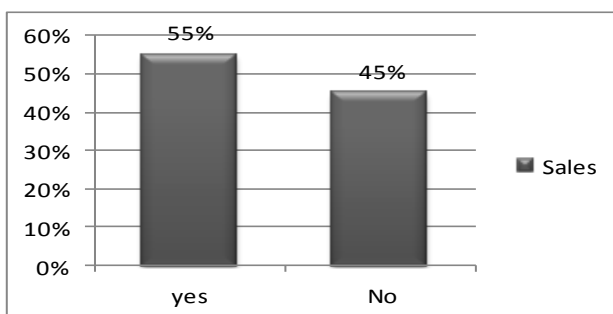
75% of the teachers think that there is no system available to distinguish skilled teacher in CLT, and 25% of them are not concern about the fact.



Different types of teachers have different style of teaching technique. But no system is followed to measure the skill of them

CLT is a challenging method

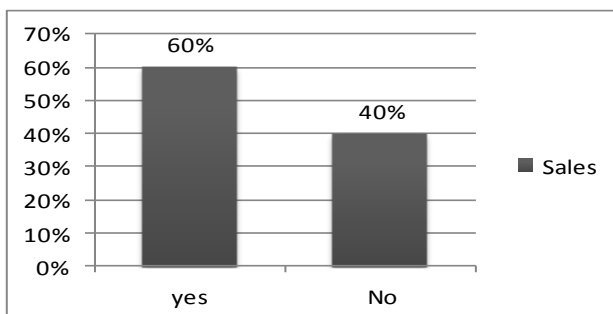
55% of the teachers think that CLT is difficult more than GTM and 45% don't.



In context of socio economic and infrastructural condition of Bangladesh it is quite challenging for teachers to adopt CLT.

Preference of CLT to the teachers

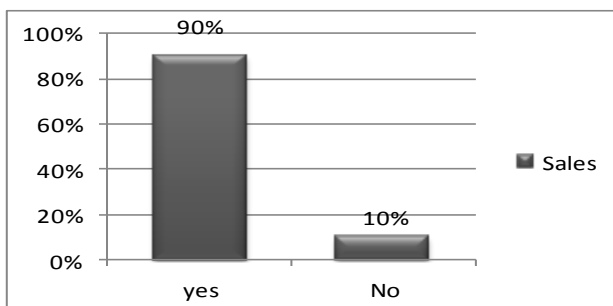
60% of the teachers do not prefer CLT and 40 % of them accept it.



Thus CLT demands extra responsibilities of teacher to the students so generally they do not prefer CLT in context of EFL

Motivation to students speaking in target language

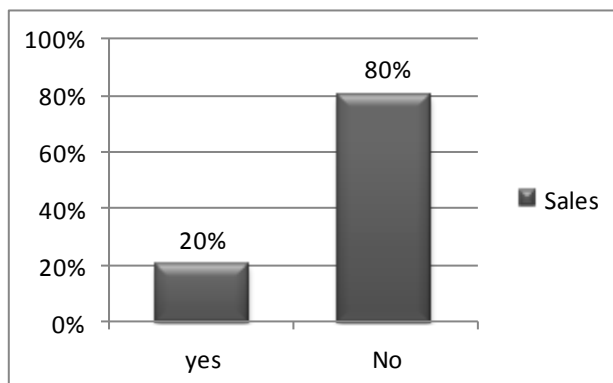
90% of the teachers try to motivate the learners, 10% of them do not.



Teachers at present days, to a great extent, try to motivate the students of CLT to use target language in day to day life.

Is CLT EFL or ESL?

80% of the teachers consider it as EFL method and 20% consider it as ESL .



CLT is potentially practiced to acquire English as foreign language

Qualitative Data Collection

The teachers joined the interview belong to the age group of 35 - 55 years old and have an experience of 10 - 25 years of teaching students in colleges and schools.

Assessment procedure of CLT students

She said that assessment is considered as one of the major challenges of communicative language teaching. A great number of EFL teachers do not have such a skill, so they prefer to adhere to the traditional methods with their standardized, objective tests that mainly measure learners' knowledge about language. She also indicated that major difficulty is the fact that most our standard tests emphasize the objectivity nature of our scoring and evaluation procedures, something that does not seem to be very reasonable in CLT.

Compatibility of CLT with University entrance exams

According to her statement the impact of a test on teaching and learning is commonly referred to as the wash back effect. The structure of University Entrance Exam (UEE) plays a very significant role in determining the teaching methodology and materials used in EFL contexts. EFL teachers are under the pressure of UEE to change the way they teach in the classroom. The structure of University Entrance Exam (UEE) in Bangladesh that values grammatical learning above language knowledge and communication negatively affects the CLT English course. In fact, UEE has a determining role in the whole program. The most important thing in higher secondary education is to help students pass the University Entrance Exam. So, the teachers are

obliged to emphasize grammatical and reading skills, rather than communication. They teach most of the textbooks according to GTM; moreover, they pay more attention to those components of lessons like vocabulary and grammar, which are tested in UEE not other connected parts. UEE has also its influence on the students. Students study English just to pass the Exam. It really dictates learners what to seek for in the text-book and what to expect their teachers.

Problems to apply CLT method

She focused one of the implementation problems of CLT is that the approach is not always appropriate with the socio cultural context in which it is used. Culture is often considered as a barrier in creating a communicative form of English learning in EFL contexts. She adds that the Bangladeshi cultural context assumes the teacher as the central figure that must be honored and that students must passively listen to the teacher. This general Bangladeshi culture prevents genuine communication from happening in class, making it a hindrance in the application of CLT. The formal relationship between teacher and student where the teacher is assumed to be a superior, omniscient figure, while the students are a group of individuals who must obey and receive the teacher's explanations as they are clearly will not create a communicative learning environment. The high-considerateness nature of Bangladeshi communicative patterns where students are not encouraged to interrupt, must respond positively, and speak in a flat intonation, also make it less likely for communicative interactions to occur in language learning.

Training facilities on CLT for teachers

She emphasized on unavailability of in-service training courses in many EFL contexts or the teachers do not have enough opportunity to attend them. Moreover, the theory-transmitting nature of these courses in some EFL contexts prevents teachers to practically experience teaching in the new program: In-service training courses bombard the teachers with theories mostly adopted from western status quo knowledge of the practice. They do not come down to the realities of the particular EFL context. Therefore, it demands the change initiators to mediate the methodologies derived from the western societies and philosophical paradigms according to the realities of the context they aim to create change.

CONCLUSION

Summary of the findings

1. No method has been implemented yet in Bangladesh to rate the students of CLT.
2. One of the greatest hindrances of the CLT approach is that the Bangladeshi culture and values are different from the native speakers of English.
3. There is no system available in Bangladesh to find out efficient teachers of CLT amongst all.

4. Teachers of Bangladesh generally do not like to adopt CLT because it demands more hard work than GTM.

5. Bangladeshi students are inherently shaky in nature to use target language in day to day communication.

6. Different levels of education (primary, secondary etc) in Bangladesh aim different type of linguistic and pragmatic knowledge of target language.

7. Bangladesh is lacking behind of many required training facilities for CLT teachers.

To sum up, we find our answer of research through the sources mentioned in the paper.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. More natural, real needs should be set for learners to acquire EFL.
2. Teaching methods appropriate to the local EFL context should be developed.
3. CLT should be adapted to the realities of the EFL context.
4. Massive CLT training program be provided for English teachers.
5. Teacher must be well prepared before conducting class.
6. Sufficient teaching aids appropriate for CLT should be supplied.
7. Exam system should be communicative.
8. The environment of class room must be favorable according to CLT.
9. All instrumental support from the Government needs to be ensured.
10. Motivations among the students should be created.
11. Extra care for strengthening speaking and listening skills must be taken.
12. Government should take long term policy for the implementation of CLT.

LIMITATIONS

In this research our focus was mainly on the condition of some of the less famous but long established and thickly crowded educational institutions of some rural areas in Chittagong. In Bangladesh, the number of these types of rural schools and colleges is more than that of such institutions situated in the urban areas. Again, the number of students in rural institutions is remarkably more than that of the urban institutions. There is a noteworthy difference between these two types of institutions in the standard of imparting education. So, the conclusion drawn based on the data collected mainly from the institutions of the rural areas is not fairly sufficient to reach to a generalized decision. Our research could have given a more generalized result had we been able to study the condition of more urban institutions along with our study of the condition of rural institutions.

CONCLUSION

The aim of the present paper was to evaluate the problems that could lead to the failure of communicative language teaching in EFL contexts and to provide some possible solutions for such problems. The main problems mentioned were related to the lack of compatibility of this method with university entrance exams, the existing cultural values in EFL contexts and EFL learners' need and motivation. Compared with other methods and approaches, CLT activities are more difficult to design and implement and place greater burden on EFL teachers. Not only the implementation, but also the assessment of this method seems to be difficult for EFL teachers who are usually used to clear-cut assessment procedures. Considering the perceived difficulties in utilizing CLT demands and what the EFL situation in many countries allows, it can be concluded that such problems need to be resolved if CLT is to be successfully implemented in EFL contexts. Awareness of such problems can provide EFL teachers and learners with insightful ideas about how to manage and, if required, to change their teaching and learning activities for the successful implementation of this method.

This study, like almost all studies done in the field of teaching English as a foreign language, is not free from limitations. There exist, of course, some other problems and possible remedies that have not been mentioned in this article. Basically, due to the eluding nature of CLT which is defined differently by different people one cannot claim to come to an absolute conclusion about the problems associated with using CLT in EFL contexts.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. & Rao, C. (2012). *Implementing Communicative Language Teaching Approach in EFL Context*. China : North East Normal University.
- Ansarey, D. (2012). *Communicative Language Teaching in EFL Contexts: Teachers Attitude and Perception in Bangladesh*. Bangladesh: Asa University.
- Barman, B., Sultana, Z. and Basu, B.L. (2006). *ELT: Theory and Practice*. Bangladesh : Daffodil University.
- Chapelle, C. A. & Hegelheimer. (2004). *The Language Teacher in the 21st Century*. USA : IOWA State University.
- Ellis, G. (1996). *How Culturally Appropriate is the Communicative Approach*. USA : University of Washington.
- Gahin & Myhill. (2001). *The Communicative Approach in Egypt: Exploring the Secrets of the Pyramids*. USA : Michigan State University.
- Huang, S.J. & Liu. (2004). *Communicative Language Teaching in a Multimedia Language Lab*. Taiwan : Fooyin Institute of Technology.
- Haider, M.Z. (2012). *Dealing with CLT in Large classroom Situations*. Bangladesh : Director Foreign Language Training Centre (FLTC). Ministry of Education.
- Li, D. (2001). *Teachers' Perceived Difficulties in Introducing the Communicative Approach in South Korea*. South Korea : Kangwon National University.

Littlewood, W. (1981). *Communicative Language Teaching: an Introduction*. UK : Cambridge University.

Shahidullah, M. (2012). Why Communicative, and what is amiss with it in the Bangladesh Classroom. Bangladesh : University of Rajshahi.