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Teachers' Perceptions of English Textbook Effectiveness at the Dakhil Level in Bangladesh

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Abstract

The English textbook, "English for Today" (EFT), is the foundation of English language teaching and learning at the Dakhil level in Bangladesh, as prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). This study aimed to explore the perceptions of Dakhil-level English teachers regarding the effectiveness of this textbook in achieving its communicative and pedagogical objectives. Using a mixed-methods approach, data were collected through a questionnaire survey from 30 randomly selected English teachers and semi-structured interviews with 10 teachers from Dakhil-level madrassas across several districts in the Dhaka division. The questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, including percentage analysis, and the interview data were examined qualitatively to identify recurring patterns and themes. The findings indicate that most teachers view the existing English textbooks as adequate for developing reading and writing skills, but insufficient for fostering speaking and listening skills. Teachers also noted a lack of cultural relevance, limited interactive activities, and insufficient additional teaching resources. The study concludes that, although EFT functions as an essential standardized resource, its effectiveness is limited by a misalignment with the practical realities of classrooms, local cultures, and students' communicative needs. Recommendations are made for a more balanced, skills-focused, and contextually relevant revision of the textbook and teaching practices.

I.   INTRODUCTION

The English language is also an essential component in the curriculum of Bangladesh in the fields of education, employment, and international communication (Hamid and Baldauf, 2008). At the secondary school level, especially in madrasah schools, English is being taught using textbooks which were prepared by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). Among the Dakhil students, who constitute a considerable percentage of the secondary level learners in Bangladesh, the textbooks are important in developing their communicative competence (Rahman, 2015). Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that the government focuses on communicative language teaching (CLT), many studies revealed that textbooks tend to be grammar-translation focused and insufficient in language skills in terms of listening and speaking (Chowdhury and Haider, 2012; Sultana, 2018). Therefore, the quality and design of such textbooks are crucial to the realization or otherwise of the learning outcomes that the curriculum set out to achieve. Even where English textbooks are a recommended unit to help Dakhil students, their efficacy in helping them to develop communicative competence is doubtful. Teachers are the most effective people to judge the strengths and weaknesses of these textbooks since they are the main mediators between the curriculum and the learners. According to the previous studies, educators often argue that there are no adequate speaking and listening activities, a lack of contextual relevance, and cultural integration in English textbooks at the secondary level (Hasan and Akhand, 2013; Sultana, 2018). However, there is a lack of empirical research on the specifics of Dakhil madrasahs, although these schools serve a significant portion of the student population. Devoid of the perception of the teachers, the policymakers and curriculum developers will jeopardize the infancy of inappropriate laws that negatively affect the communicative competency of the students and their long-term academic and professional opportunities. This research paper is relevant in a number of ways. To begin, it presents empirical data of how teachers view the merits and demerits of the prescribed English textbooks at the Dakhil level, which helps to fill a significant gap in the research. Second, with the introduction of quantitative and qualitative views, the research is sure to give a thorough review of the case, which can be used later to update the textbooks. Third, the results will be used to advise policy makers, curriculum developers, and teacher educators to bring textbooks to be more in line with the communicative requirements of the learners in both the urban and rural madrasah setup. Finally, the research adds to the general discussion of English language teaching in Bangladesh by emphasizing the significance of culturally sensitive and skills-based textbooks in promoting the communicative competence of students and preparing them to engage in the international arena (Hamid, 2010).

II. OBJECTIVE OF THIS STUDY

This research aimed at testing the relevance, adequacy and pedagogical efficiency of the Dakhil English textbooks in facilitating communicative competence based on the perception of the teachers.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

The communicative competence of learners has been used to measure the effectiveness of a textbook. Hamid and Baldauf (2008) state that even though the government has adopted communicative language teaching (CLT), textbooks in Bangladesh are largely grammar-translation based, which restricts the chance of offering authentic communication. They further opine that this discrepancy between the policy of the curriculum and the design of textbooks destroys the possibility of learners acquiring the practical skills of being able to participate in the global scenario. The example of Dakhil textbooks, in its turn, should be examined closely, as the communicative potential of this type of textbook is questionable. The perception of teachers is important in determining the effectiveness of textbooks since teachers are the ones who are in close contact with the textbook material and the learners on a day-to-day basis. As Rahman (2015) argues, teachers can be the first to note the gaps in the textbook design, especially when those gaps can impede the use of the textbooks in the classroom. The voices of teachers, which are usually unhearable during curriculum reforms, should be given more attention as their feedback will give evidence-based guidelines on how Dakhil English textbooks can be improved. Several researchers have found that listening and speaking in English in Bangladeshi textbooks are not properly covered in terms of their statements. According to Sultana (2018), the majority of textbooks are reading and writing-focused and do not include much value in oral communication activities. It is not a minor weakness because it is the opposite of the principles of CLT. The communicative objectives of the national curriculum will not be achieved unless such gaps are addressed in the Dakhil textbooks.

The textbooks should also be sensitive to the sociocultural realities of the learners to enable the text to become engaging and relevant. In her research, Sultana (2018) has discovered that English textbooks in Bangladesh do not tend to contextualize the cultural material, but rather give preference to Western narratives. This isolates learners and does not allow them to relate the information they read in books to their experiences. In the case of Dakhil students, most of whom are either rural or religious, culturally-based learning material is necessary to have meaningful learning. The study notes the differences in the availability and the perception of the relevance of textbooks by urban and rural teachers (Hasan and Akhand, 2013). In rural schools, there is a tendency towards bigger classes, fewer additional materials, and more infrastructure. It is important to investigate the perception of teachers in urban and rural Dakhil madrasahs in order to reveal the influence of structural inequalities on the perceived and actual levels of textbook effectiveness. In Bangladesh, English textbooks have been described as having an organized format despite their weaknesses. According to Rahman (2015), teachers found the systemic structure of grammar and reading parts to be appreciated. This organization assists teachers to adhere to a foreseeable order, but the

structural clarity is unable to counterbalance the lack of balanced development of skills, the listening and speaking skills. The textbooks are not neutral pedagogical tools and contain ideologies of the language and society. According to Sultana (2018), the English textbooks in Bangladesh tend to place learners in such a manner that they reproduce linguistic inequalities and power gaps. The perceptions of the Dakhil teachers may be studied to demonstrate the way in which these ideologies were enacted in the classroom and how they may discriminate against learners in religious institutions.

According to Hasan and Akhand (2013), the teachers in Bangladesh do not have much control because curricula and standard tests are usually strict and restrict their agency. Nevertheless, textbooks are still subject to evaluation by the teachers. It is also important to understand that teachers should be considered as actors of textbook evaluation, their opinions should inform the curriculum revision as well as the textbook development at the Dakhil level. A lot of research has been done on English textbooks in Bangladesh, and this has been on general secondary schools with little emphasis on madrasahs (Hamid, 2010). This is a huge gap considering that madrasahs have millions of students across the country. In the absence of structural research on Dakhil textbooks, education reform stands as one of the areas through which the key segment of the Bangladesh student population will be deprived of meaningful English learning opportunities. Even though textbooks continue to be the main instructional resource, Hasan and Akhand (2013) emphasize that additional resources are usually required to address the gaps in skills. Nevertheless, a lot of Dakhil madrasahs do not have access to digital or audio-visual resources. The attitude of teachers to the adequacy of the resources plays the key role in the assessment of the textbook efficiency; a well-designed textbook will not succeed on its own without the supportive materials.

Other studies support such apprehensions. In their study of English textbooks in tertiary institutions, Chowdhury and Haider (2012) noted that the textbooks continued to have gaps in relation to the communicative needs of learners, which was also witnessed at secondary and Dakhil levels. Ali and Walker (2014) also emphasized the strict control exerted by the policy on the textbooks used in Bangladeshi English, whereby the teacher is barely allowed to tailor a text to communicative practice. In particular, Hossain (2016) remarked that in religious institutions, teachers also face the problem of the fact that textbooks often do not correspond to the contextual realities of learners and, therefore, adapting to them is more challenging. More recently, Karim, Mohamed, and Rahman (2019) pointed out that the quality of textbooks goes hand in hand with teacher professional development, and even well-intentioned textbooks will fail to meet communicative objectives unless teachers are empowered by means of training. This literature review indicated the necessity to research the effectiveness of textbooks used on the Dakhil level through the lens of teachers. It is through the daily classroom experiences and their professional judgment that they can see how textbooks can transcend the structural organization to really contribute to the support of communicative competence.

IV.   RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OF THIS STUDY

A sequential mixed-methods design was employed, prioritizing quantitative data collected via a questionnaire, which was then supplemented and elaborated upon by qualitative data from interviews. The use of the combination of quantitative and qualitative methods guaranteed the comprehensive perception of the opinion of the teachers as well as their experiences regarding the role of the prescribed English textbooks. A total of 30 English teachers (15 male, 15 female) from 30 different Dakhil madrasas across three 5 districts in the Dhaka division in Bangladesh participated in the survey. From this pool, 10 teachers were purposively selected for in-depth interviews to gain richer insights. Participants had teaching experience ranging from 5 to 20 years. A 5-point Likert scale questionnaire (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) was used, with sections on: (a) Layout and Design, (b) Content and Topics, (c) Language Skills, (d) Activities and Exercises, and (e) Cultural Appropriacy. Besides, an interview protocol was developed to explore teachers' opinions on the practicality, challenges, and suggested improvements for the EFT textbook. Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics with SPSS software. Qualitative data from interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed thematically to identify recurring patterns and emergent themes. The ethical considerations were carefully adhered to, through informed consent, confidentiality, and utilization of the collected data only in academic purposes.

V.   FINDINGS OF THIS STUDY

Findings from the Questionnaire

The findings of this study reveal the perceptions of Dakhil English teachers toward the effectiveness of the prescribed English textbooks in promoting communicative competence and supporting pedagogical goals. The results are presented thematically, based on quantitative and qualitative data collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. These findings encompass several dimensions of textbook effectiveness, including content relevance, skill development, cultural representation, organization, supplementary materials, and teachers' overall satisfaction.

Table 1: Teachers' Perceptions about the Development of Language Skills in Dakhil English Textbooks

Language Skill	Teachers' Perception (%)	Strengths Identified	Weaknesses Identified
Reading Skills	80% found textbooks effective for reading comprehension	• Well-organized reading passages • Inclusion of vocabulary and comprehension exercises	• Passages are mostly factual/narrative, not interactive • Limited scope for critical or inferential reading

IJHAB		• Structured format supports understanding	
Writing Skills	65% found writing tasks adequate	• Provides grammar practice and guided writing tasks • Includes paragraph development exercises	• Writing activities are mechanical and repetitive • Lack of creativity and authentic expression • Weak integration with reading passages
Speaking Skills	85% agreed textbooks are ineffective for speaking	—	• Lack of structured speaking activities, dialogues, and discussions • Limited focus on communicative competence • Speaking neglected due to exam-oriented approach
Listening Skills	90% identified as most neglected	—	• No audio materials or listening exercises • Lack of technological facilities in most madrasas • Listening comprehension largely excluded from instruction

The discussion of teacher perception towards the effectiveness of the English textbook at the Dakhil level depicts that there are significant differences in the way various language skills are covered. The strongest aspect seems to be reading skills, where 80 percent of teachers said that textbooks were effective in assisting reading comprehension. The teachers liked the way the reading passages were well managed, with vocabulary support and structured comprehension activities that facilitate understanding. They, however, also indicated that the reading materials are more factual and narrative. This leaves the students with minimal chances of being engaged in inferential or critical reading, which is critical in the process of higher-order thinking. Conversely, the skills in writing were moderately approved, and 65 percent of teachers believed that the writing activities were sufficient. The textbooks contain grammar-based and guided writing exercises, which allow the students to train the sentence structure and paragraph building. Nevertheless, teachers lamented the writing parts as being monotonous and robotic, with the least support of creativity or originality. In addition, the writing tasks are insufficiently combined with reading units, therefore, resulting in less comprehension in skills development. The most neglected areas

were speaking and listening skills. It was interesting to note that an impressive 85 percent of teachers did not think the textbooks could be used to teach speaking skills, and the reason was that the texts did not contain dialogues, interactive activities, and group discussions. In a similar vein, 90% of them found listing the weakest component, and said that they did not have audio materials or listening exercises at all. Instructors stressed that the absence of technological resources or other materials denies them the chance to have an experience of authentic listening. All in all, although the textbooks demonstrate average effectiveness in teaching regarding reading and writing, they do not fulfill communicative curriculum goals. Absence of speaking and listening elements strengthens grammar-translation and exam-centered orientation, which does not allow the development of English language proficiency in Dakhil students comprehensively. The need to have balanced, interactive, and culturally relevant textbooks along with the communicative language teaching (CLT) principles was always emphasized by the teachers.

Table 2: Teachers' Perceptions of Content Relevance and Cultural Representation in Dakhil English Textbooks

Aspects Evaluated	Teachers' Perception (%)	Findings (Strengths)	Findings (Weaknesses / Concerns)
Cultural Context and Relevance	60% reported textbooks overemphasize Western culture	• Some lessons introduce global perspectives and broaden awareness.	• Overuse of Western contexts, names, and lifestyles. • Cultural content not relatable to Dakhil students. • Minimal reference to Bangladeshi and Islamic values.
Representation of Local Culture	55% felt local culture is underrepresented	• A few texts mention Bangladeshi places or traditions.	• Lack of integration of rural and religious settings. • Students struggle to connect with content emotionally and contextually.
Student Engagement and Comprehension	65% agreed relatable content improves understanding	• Contextually familiar materials improve motivation and comprehension.	• Foreign themes reduce learner interest and comprehension.
Identity and Value Integration	70% emphasized inclusion of Islamic and moral values	• Teachers appreciate moral lessons when present.	• Limited moral or ethical integration related to students' faith and environment.

Overall Cultural Balance	58% rated cultural representation as moderately effective	• Some exposure to intercultural awareness.	• Dominance of foreign perspectives; lack of inclusivity for local diversity.

The results of the content relevance and cultural representation of English textbooks in the Dakhil level indicate that there is a definite asymmetry of global exposure and local contextualization. Most teachers (60% noted that the textbooks tend to emphasize Western cultural backgrounds, and thus, there is a lack of connection between the learning resources and experiences that the students go through. Though teachers have recognized that an international outlook can be beneficial in expanding the worldview of students, they said that lessons are hard to identify with whenever Western names, festivals, and ways of life are dominant. Such cultural deafness tends to restrict the understanding and the interest of students, particularly in rural and religiously minded schools. Over fifty-five percent (55%) of teachers said that the Bangladeshi culture and traditions are not adequately represented. Though some lessons mention local places or customs, there are no rural, Islamic, or community-based themes that make students less emotionally attached to the presented information. The educators underlined that learning might be more compelling and engaging when it focuses on the familiar backgrounds, including the rural cultures, religious holidays, and domestic heroes. More so, 7 out of 10 teachers noted that there was a necessity of inculcating Islamic and moral values into the lessons. They suppose that ethical stories that are congruent with the beliefs of the students contribute to the linguistic and moral development. But even this is not very much included in the existing textbooks. In general, cultural representation was rated as being moderately effective by only 58% of teachers, which indicates that the textbooks may present some exposure to intercultural awareness, but it is not balanced and inclusive. Teachers were highly advocating the revision of the materials to be more relevant to the local realities and values, as well as global factors, in order to ensure that the English learning fosters communicative competence and cultural identity.

Findings from the Interviews

The qualitative data that was received from the semi-structured interviews offered more in-depth information about the experiences, views, and issues of the teachers in relation to the effectiveness of the English textbooks in the Dakhil level. Thematic analysis of interviews indicated that there were five major themes: developing skills, cultural representation, organizing textbooks, pedagogical alignment, and availability of resources. The majority of teachers explained that the textbooks are good at teaching reading and writing, but they pay no attention to teaching speaking and listening. One of the teachers said,

> *The textbooks are useful in the development of reading skills due to the well-organized comprehension exercises and the use of vocabulary support. But I think that the students never read critically or inferentially, as the passages are mostly factual and narrative.*

According to the teachers, the books pay much attention to grammar and comprehension, but do not provide students with a chance to practice real communication. Another teacher said,

> *I believe that the textbooks ignore the speaking skills. I think there are no organized speaking activities such as dialogues, group discussions, and role plays. I must say that oral fluency cannot be developed by reading and writing only.*

Some teachers added that a test-based curriculum makes rote learning more dominant and discourages interactive classroom activities. According to one of the teachers, they are able to answer comprehension questions but fail to express their ideas in English. A teacher said,

> *The reading sections are well-structured, but students do not have a variety and analytical tasks, which restricts their higher-order thinking abilities. I must say something about the necessity of more interactive reading materials and contextualized exercises.*

Culturally speaking, most teachers decried the preponderance of the Western setting in the absence of local or Islamic allusions. They said that foreign names, ways of life, and circumstances are usually unknown to students, which preconditions their decreased interest and understanding. The educators stressed the necessity of culturally based material, which could mirror the Bangladeshi values, traditions, and daily life. One of the teachers said,

> *I think that the textbooks give too much emphasis on the Western scenarios, so the lessons were not so close to Dakhil students. I recommend that lessons with a reflection of the Bangladeshi and Islamic values be included to ensure improved engagement.*

Other teachers, however, endorsed the incorporation of globalized views, indicating a moderate blend of both the local and the international setting. Another teacher said,

> *……… although some global topics help to increase learners' awareness, no local heroes, traditions, and religious festivals contribute to the fact that students feel that there is no connection between the texts and themselves.*

One of the teachers said,

> *I need to say something about the necessity of moral and ethical integration, stating that students react well when the lessons correspond to their faith and social background. I feel that the English textbooks should be global and local at the same time.*

Another issue was the organizational and pedagogical constraints that were raised by the teachers. Although they valued the systematic flow of grammar and reading classes, they noted a poor interrelationship between language skills. In addition, the lack of additional resources, audio resources, teaching guides, and visual aids was established by teachers to be one of the greatest barriers to success in teaching. Most of the Dakhil madrasas do not have multimedia facilities, and therefore, it is hard to do the listening or speaking activities. The data of the interview showed that educators would like to have communicative, contextually relevant, resource-supported textbooks. They advised revision of the textbooks to incorporate more interactive exercises, culturally balanced material, and the use of modern teaching materials and tools that are in line with communicative language teaching (CLT) concepts.

VI.   DISCUSSION ON THE FINDINGS

The results of this study offer a deeper insight into the perceptions of Dakhil English teachers about the effectiveness of given English textbooks in the process of shaping the communicative competence of the students and promoting the achievement of pedagogic objectives. Quantitative and qualitative evidence indicate an ambivalent assessment of the textbook's effectiveness in terms of language skills, relevance to the content, and cultural representation. The perception of teachers on this matter clearly indicated that the aspects of reading and writing are more advanced than speaking and listening. Approximately 80 percent of the teachers found the textbooks useful in improving reading comprehension because the readings were properly organized and had vocabulary activities. They, however, added that the majority of reading texts are factual and narrative and not analytical, which restricts the chances of having an inferential reading. On the same note, 65 percent of teachers rated the writing tasks as moderately effective, yet they criticized them as being mechanical, repetitive, and not creative enough. The relationships between reading and writing parts were also seen as a weakness that impedes integrated language learning.

On the contrary, speaking and listening were the least addressed, and 85% and 90% of the teachers, respectively, rated them as ineffective. It lacks dialogues, group discussions, and audio so that students are not enabled to acquire genuine communicative skills. As the teachers pointed out, the communicative language teaching (CLT) approach is still only a theory without proper technological assistance or other additional resources. On content relevance and cultural representation, teachers were concerned about the prevailing Western names, contexts, and lifestyles in the textbooks. Of the 60 percent, there was an observation that such materials drive a student away, particularly with the rural and religiously inclined madrasas, and lessen their drive and understanding. As much as there are teachers who feel that the global perspective is important, the majority of them suggested that there should be more balance between the local and global perspectives. They also emphasized the need to incorporate Islamic and moral values, which can enable students to offer an emotional and ethical response to the material. These perceptions were also reinforced by the findings of the interview. The examination and grammar-translation-based tendencies of the textbooks, dissuading interactive classroom activities, were emphasized by teachers. Organizational

gaps and lack of teacher support materials were also found by them to be major impediments to effective implementation. The research results indicate that the textbooks are moderate in terms of supporting reading and writing, but they do not meet the communicative goals of the curriculum. The teachers always demanded the revision of the textbooks with the focus on balanced skill building, cultural inclusiveness, interactive assignments, and integration of resources to promote the development of communicative competence in Dakhil learners of Bangladesh.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

This study concludes that while "English for Today" serves as a necessary standardized text for the Dakhil level in Bangladesh, its effectiveness in fostering communicative English proficiency is significantly limited. Teachers perceive a critical disconnect between the textbook's communicative objectives and the pedagogical and systemic constraints of the Bangladeshi classroom. To enhance the textbook's effectiveness, the following recommendations are proposed:

a) **Textbook Revision:** The NCTB should undertake a systematic revision of EFT to include more graded, authentic, and engaging reading materials. Besides, a greater variety of genuinely communicative tasks (e.g., role-plays, project work, problem-solving activities) should be included in the textbook. Moreover, integrated and mandatory audio-visual resources should be attached to the textbook for developing learners' listening skills. Furthermore, a simplified teacher's guide with practical, low-resource CLT techniques can be helpful for the EFL teachers at this level.

b) **Examination Reform:** The SSC examination format must be reformed to give equitable weightage to all four skills, especially listening and speaking, to create a positive washback effect.

c) **Teacher Professional Development**: Regular, mandatory training should be provided to teachers on how to effectively implement communicative activities and adapt the textbook creatively to their specific classroom contexts.

VIII. CONCLUSION

This paper proves that textbooks in English by Dakhil are effective in scaffolding grammar and reading, and the system of exercises and alignment with syllabuses is valued by teachers. Writing is fairly good yet needs more communicative tasks, which are more authentic. Listening and speaking are also weaknesses, and there are few exercises and audio support. The cultural relevance is moderate with the western bias, and the resource sufficiency is inadequate, especially in the rural setting. Triangulated results indicate that textbooks are useful in offering solid background skills, but there is a need to upgrade communication activities, local culture topics, and additional resources to maximize a high level of effectiveness and improve the development of communicative competence of students.

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