



## **The Impact of Interactive Learning on EFL Proficiency: A Case Study of ELL and EB Students at IIUC**

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DOI: 10.53103/cjess.v5i5.388

### **Abstract**

In contrast to conventional and teacher-centered approaches, student-led learning places an emphasis on meaningful contact between students and teachers, which has been demonstrated to greatly improve motivation and linguistic proficiency. A deeper comprehension of the language material and more successful language acquisition are fostered by active engagement in the classroom. Students from the English Language and Literature (ELL) and Economics and Banking (EB) departments at International Islamic University Chittagong (IIUC) are the subject of this study. This study examines the effects of student-teacher interaction on language development in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom at a private university in Chattogram, Bangladesh. Eight English language teachers were interviewed, and 80 students were given questionnaires as a part of a mixed-method approach to data collection. The results reveal that students in more interactive classroom environments tend to exhibit higher levels of language proficiency. The study also shows that less interaction greatly reduces second language (L2) learners' confidence and English proficiency. The study concludes with practical recommendations focusing on the importance of teacher-student interaction for educators, academics, and policymakers looking to improve language acquisition in EFL settings.

**Keywords:** Student-Teacher Interaction, L2 Acquisition, EFL Classrooms, ELL, EB, IIUC

### **Introduction**

English is a compulsory subject in Bangladesh from primary through higher secondary levels and remains vital in higher education. Historically, its prominence stems

from the colonial legacy where English served as a language of administration and instruction (Islam & Hashim, 2019). Following independence in 1971, national emphasis shifted toward Bangla, reducing English's role in education and contributing to inconsistencies in English Language Teaching (ELT) and a decline in student proficiency (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014; Hamid, 2010). In recent years, policy shifts have renewed the focus on English as essential for academic and professional advancement (Rahman, 2022). Despite reforms promoting Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), many tertiary classrooms remain teacher-centered (Islam & Paul, 2019), limiting students' communicative competence (Rahman, Pandian, & Kaur, 2018).

Effective student-teacher interaction is crucial for language development in the setting of EFL, or English as a second language (ESL). According to research, interaction techniques including feedback loops, collaborative learning, and open-ended inquiry can greatly increase student motivation and aid in overcoming language barriers (Shawaqfeh et al., 2023; Hasanuddin & Ciptaningrum, 2021). Despite policy-level initiatives to reform ELT practices in Bangladesh, classroom realities frequently deviate from the planned pedagogical goals. This study looks into the nature and impact of student-teacher interaction in EFL classrooms at IIUC, with a comparative focus on two departments: ELL and EB. The research intends to examine student and teacher experiences using a mixed-method approach. Preliminary findings at IIUC indicate a significant interaction gap between students and teachers in EFL classrooms, especially in non-English departments. This disparity raises questions regarding the degree to which instructional approaches are student-centered, the impact of language choice (English vs. Bangla or local dialect), and the efficacy of interaction in building communicative competence. Therefore, using a mixed methods approach, this study aims to:

- to explore the degree and nature of student-teacher interaction in EFL classrooms
- to investigate how student motivation and language acquisition are influenced by the medium of instruction.
- to assess the student-centeredness of classroom environments
- to compare perceptions and experiences of students from ELL and EB departments

These objectives guide the following research questions:

1. What is the nature and extent of student-teacher interaction in EFL classrooms at IIUC?
2. How does the medium of instruction affect student motivation and language learning?
3. To what extent are classrooms student-centered, and how does this vary between students of ELL and EB departments?

### **Literature Review**

Studies reveal that traditional teacher-centered instruction continues to be the dominant approach in Bangladesh, with students frequently participating passively in the learning process (Jony, 2016; Barman, 2013). This approach focuses on lectures and individual work, which limits student interaction and responsibility for learning. As a result, students fail to develop competency in the English language. But the current situation can be improved with student-teacher interactions and learner-centered classrooms. Student-centered learning may reduce the study gap that takes place in the traditional ways of teaching. According to Stern (1992), a language class is meant to be an opportunity where individuals can practice communicating in the foreign language, so it is essential to establish a social and effective environment in which students are not restricted, reluctant, or fearful in engaging in classroom tasks. Rivers (1987) also believes that through interaction students can increase their linguistic proficiency and boost significantly their receptive abilities if they can read authentic linguistic materials, get peer feedback from fellow students, do joint problem-solving tasks, and make dialogues in the classrooms.

Student-centered learning is a method of instruction applicable by teachers where they act as a facilitator or guide in the classroom. It is an instructional approach in which students influence the content, activities, and materials, and keep pace with learning (Jony, 2016). "Interaction and interactive language constitute a major role in EFL teaching, because teachers' interactive language can keep an interaction going on smoothly in an EFL classroom." (Ellis & Barkhuizen, 2005, p. 165-227). Student-centered or learner-centered classrooms mainly depend on student-teacher interaction, peer interaction, group discussions, and debate over subjects and viewpoints. Teachers acting as facilitators guide students to make their personal point of view about the subject they are studying. In fact, the objective of L2 teaching is not only to teach students some grammatical rules and vocabularies but also how to use the knowledge in practice to express or narrate thoughts and ideas (Zhang, 2010).

In a language learning classroom, a student participating in active communication and interaction over a particular matter significantly gains motivation and confidence in speaking the foreign language. So, properly implemented student-centered learning can lead to increased motivation to learn, greater retention of knowledge, deeper understanding, and more positive attitudes towards the subject being taught (Collins & O'Brien, 2003). Moreover, in a learner-centered classroom student are highly encouraged by teachers if the mode of instruction is English. Interaction not only encourages students to learn the language but also teaches cultural awareness of learning a foreign language. Learning and teaching a foreign language through cultural awareness is a very important topic to pay attention to. Through student-teacher interaction it can be achieved to a large extent.

We all know that a learner's achieving proficiency in the English language must have four receptive and productive skills known as listening, reading, speaking, and writing. The four language skills are interlinked and interweaved naturally, as communicative competence in any language means simultaneous and balanced development of all the four skills (Peregoy & Boyle, 2001). One skill cannot be developed or practiced without reciprocating others as one cannot continue conversation without listening properly (Harmer, 2001). Richards (1983) also stated that listening is the active and efficient process of gathering, choosing, and processing information. Also suggested by Bently and Bacon (1996), the listeners create meaning from oral input because listening, as an active process, is a critical part of language learning generally and particularly for the L2 learning process. Along with, reading and writing skills are frequently practiced in the classroom, listening and speaking skills which are hardly practiced in the traditional classroom can be improved through student-teacher interaction. Interacting with peers, groups, and teachers, a student can improve the skill of speaking and listening proficiency in English language. Moreover, interaction between teacher-student is the prerequisite in the age of communication, and it is the essence of communication language instruction (Brown, 2001).

Like many other aspects, motivation is a crucial factor in L2 pedagogy. Many students in Bangladesh are generally shy and introverted. Motivation can uplift their language learning abilities and interest. As (Norris, 2001:2) states, "motivation has been identified as the learners' orientation with regards to the goal of learning L2. This pedagogical implication enables the students to establish their unique learning objectives and match them to their specific learning biases and needs (Jony, 2016). Moiiinvaziri (2002) stated that motivation can be described as the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language. It has also been found from the research that motivation is a powerful contributor to reading achievement as well as to the disposition and commitment to reading for a range of personal and societal benefits (Mazzoni, Gambrell, & Korkeamaki, 1999). Motivating students not only helps them gain language adaptability but also opens up a free space for them to practice without any hesitation. Regarding interaction, Brown (1994) states that it is teachers' job to foster an atmosphere where students can freely express themselves, where spontaneity can thrive, and where it is impossible to predict what they will say or do.

If we look at researchers' opinions and studies about student-centered learning and student-teacher interaction, many researchers have found it effective and meaningful in L2 pedagogy. Littlewood (2018) explored that learners' learning environment and surrounding atmosphere play a significant role in acquiring speaking and listening skills in a foreign or second language. Suchona & Shona (2019) carried out a study on students' problems in speaking English and the solutions of the Thai schools where they found students' unwillingness, anxiety, unfamiliar topics, lack of motivation, and unclear goals as

inhibiting factors in acquiring competence in speaking English. The researchers also explored that cultural variations and diversions play a crucial role in learning to speak English, as learners do not get themselves ready to acclimatize to speaking English beyond their own language.

According to Jony (2016), the result of student-centered learning arguably develops self-confidence and critical thinking. With the use of valuable learning skills, students are capable of achieving lifelong learning goals, which can further enhance student motivation in the classroom. Moreover, learning a language requires practice and an environment to feel motivated to interact in the target language. Arranging social interactions to meet as many of the needs of communication in the target language as possible is essential for efficient language learning (Jia, 2003). According to Rodney (2006), students can expand their language store by reading or listening to real-world language content or even by discussing the work of their peers through interaction. They can also use all of the language they have learned or casually absorbed in everyday conversations. This is how they learn to take advantage of language's flexibility even at the elementary school level.

Researchers provide insights on the necessities of social interactions and environment for learning a language, which shows us the necessity of implementing student-centered classrooms in L2 teaching and learning. The approach is valuable and productive in teaching and learning a foreign language in EFL classrooms. The government has launched a number of programs to improve students' English-speaking skills. However, many students still find it difficult to show proficiency in spoken English even after studying the language for more than 12 years. Across a range of educational contexts, numerous studies, like the ones reviewed in this study, have demonstrated the critical role that student-teacher interaction plays in fostering L2 learners' English language proficiency. The teaching approaches and their effects on enhancing English proficiency between the ELL and EB at IIUC are compared in this paper, which addresses a largely unexplored research topic.

### **Methodology**

To find out the true scenario of L2 practice in the EFL classrooms at IIUC, this study used a questionnaire to collect data from the mentioned departments. The 6 questions were measured on a 'Likert scale.' A total of 80 questionnaires were sent to the randomly selected students for collecting information. (n=60) students from the department of ELL and (n=20) students from the department of EB participated in the study. The (n=8) English teachers who have been teaching for 5-8 years from the respective departments were interviewed. Teachers were interviewed face-to-face regarding the problems and solutions of the implications of student-teacher interaction in EFL classrooms. To analyze qualitative

data, the teachers' names are presented as T1, T2, T3...T8.

### Data Analysis and Findings

The quantitative data received from the questionnaires were presented in tabular form with percentages of total responses. These tables were meticulously prepared, and the data were analyzed to offer important insights. The qualitative data were analyzed using a descriptive method. This involved identifying numerous themes regarding teachers' perceptions of student-centered instruction. Each theme was thoroughly studied to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the qualitative comments gathered from the participants.

### Analysis of Students' Questionnaires

The graphs below show the responses made by the students of the department of ELL.

Statement 1: Teachers allow us to ask questions in English.

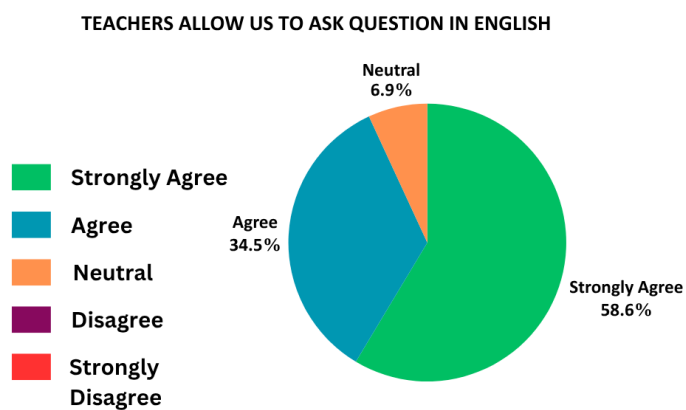


Figure 1: Teachers allow us to ask questions in English

The graph shows that among 60 participants, 58.6% of them strongly agreed with the statement. 34.5% only agreed, and 6.9% remained neutral. No students have given any data of disagree and strongly disagree. The results depict that student-teacher interaction mainly depends on asking and interpreting through questions, and the students of ELL mostly get that opportunity.

Statement 2: Our classes are student-centered.

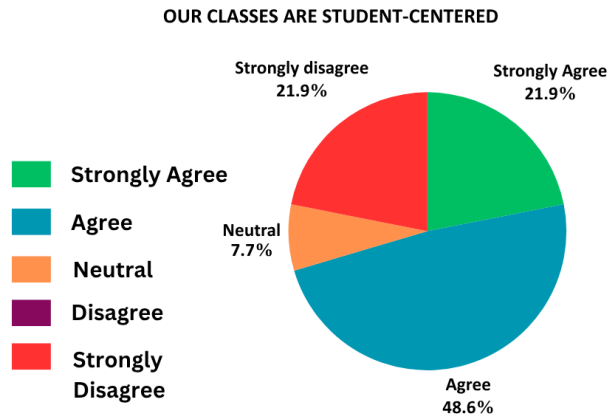


Figure 2: Our classes are student-centered

In the second statement about student-centered classrooms, the statement was strongly agreed by 21.9%, about 48.6% only agreed upon, and 21.9% strongly disagreed, whereas 7.7% remained neutral. No students have given responses on disagree. The results prove that English classrooms in ELL are mostly student-centered.

Statement 3: Conducting classes in the local dialect demotivates me.

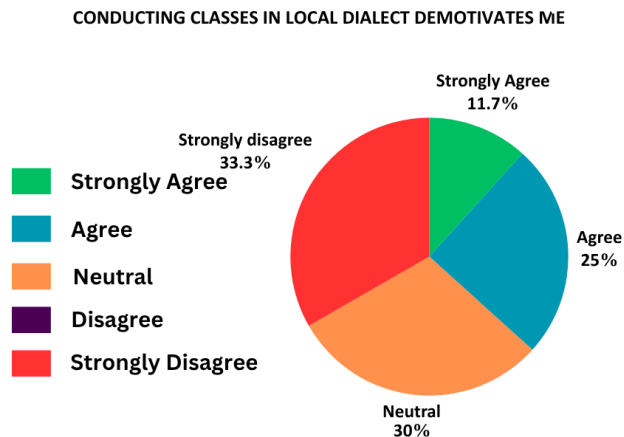


Figure 3: Conducting classes in the local dialect demotivates me

Among 60 participants, 33.3% of students strongly disagreed that they are demotivated when teachers conduct classes in the local dialect, whereas 30% remained neutral, but 25% agreed and 11.7% strongly agreed with the statement. In this statement, there is no data of disagreement from students. Through the third statement we can understand that the English classes are conducted in the local dialect, though not frequently, which demotivates most of the total participants. According to the data, majority students do not like local dialects to be spoken in the formal classroom.

Statement 4: Teachers should always conduct classes in English.

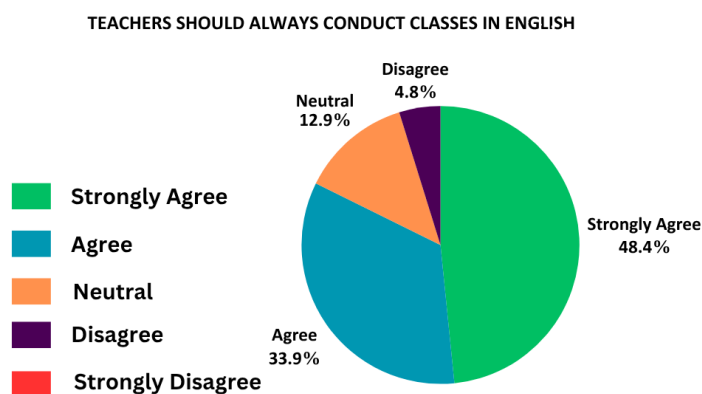


Figure 4: Teachers should always conduct classes in English

Among 60 participants from the department of ELL, 48.4% of the students strongly agreed, 33.9% only agreed, and 12.9% remained neutral, whereas only 4.8% disagreed with the statement that teachers should always conduct classes in English. However, no students have given data of strongly disagree. So, the data show that English as the only medium of instruction should be used in the classes of ELL.

Statement 5: Conducting classes in English improves my listening and speaking skills.



I THINK CONDUCTING CLASSES IN ENGLISH IMPROVES MY LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

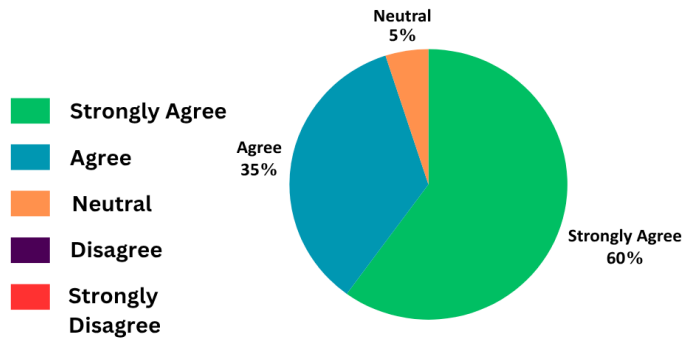


Figure 5: Conducting classes in English improves my listening and speaking skills

60% of the students strongly agreed 35% only agreed, and 5% remained neutral to the statement that speaking and listening skills are nourished when the mode of instruction in the classroom is in English. No students have provided data of disagree and strongly disagree. Participants think that the English mode of instruction in the English classroom significantly helps them to gain language learning skills.

Statement 6: My teachers always conduct classes in English.

MY TEACHERS ALWAYS CONDUCT CLASSES IN ENGLISH

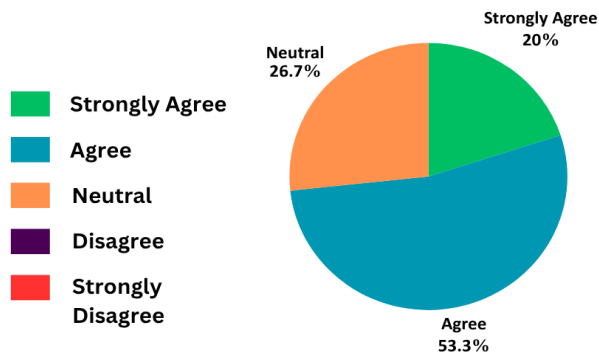


Figure 6: My teachers always conduct classes in English

Among 60 participants, 20% strongly agreed that the mode of instruction in the classroom is always in English, and 53.33% agreed, whereas 26.7% remained neutral to the statements. Surprisingly, there are no responses of “disagree” or “strongly disagree.” Therefore, in the department of ELL, the majority of teachers conduct classes only in English. The graphs below show the responses made by the students of the department of EB.

Statement 1: Teachers allow us to ask questions in English.

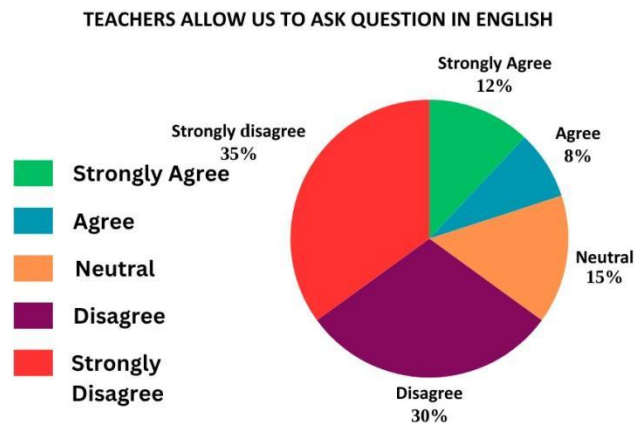


Figure 7: Teachers allow us to ask questions in English

The graph shows that among 20 participants, 12% of them strongly agreed, 8% agreed, and 15% remained neutral, with 30% disagreeing and 35% strongly disagreeing with the statement. The results tell us that student-teacher interaction in the department of EB is minimal.

Statement 2: Our classes are student-centered.

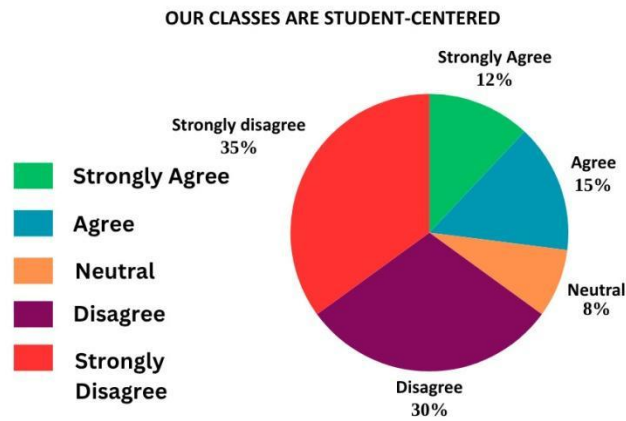


Figure 8: Our classes are student-centered

The second statement about student-centered classrooms was strongly agreed upon by 15%; about 12% agreed, 30% disagreed, and 35% strongly disagreed, whereas 8% remained neutral. The results prove that English classrooms in the EB department are not mostly student-centered.

Statement 3: Conducting classes in the local dialect demotivates me.

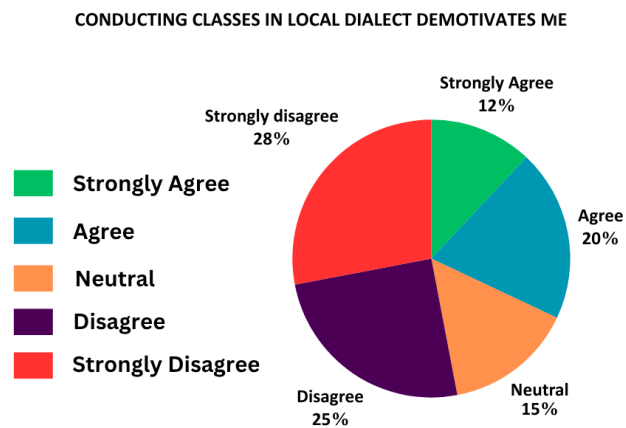


Figure 9: Conducting classes in the local dialect demotivates me

Among 20 participants, 28% strongly disagreed and 25% disagreed that they are demotivated when teachers conduct classes in the local dialect, whereas 15% remained neutral, but 20% agreed and 12% strongly agreed to the statement. Through the statement we can understand that the English classes are conducted in the local dialect, though not frequently, which is supported by 53% of the total participants. So, it is assumed that students of EB think that local dialects even help them understand teachers' lectures.

Statement 4: Teachers should always conduct classes in English.

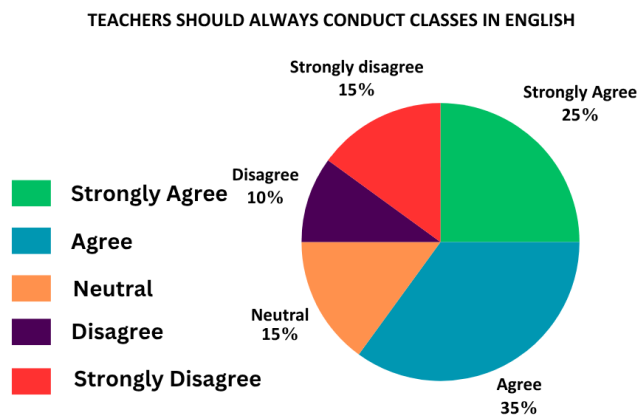


Figure 10: Teachers should always conduct classes in English

Among 20 participants from the department of EB, 25% of the students strongly agreed, 35% only agreed, and 15% remained neutral, whereas only 15% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed with the statement. Therefore, the majority of students of EB think that teachers should always conduct classes only in English.

Statement 5: Conducting classes in English improves my listening and speaking skills.

I THINK CONDUCTING CLASSES IN ENGLISH IMPROVES MY LISTENING AND SPEAKING SKILLS

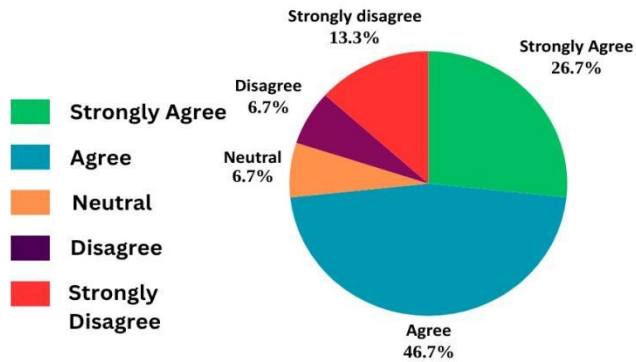


Figure 11: Conducting classes in English improves my listening and speaking skills

26.7% of the students strongly agreed 46.7% only agreed, and 6.7% remained neutral to the statement that speaking and listening skills are nourished when the mode of instruction in the classroom is in English. On the other hand, only 6.7% disagreed and 13.3% strongly disagreed with the statement. Participants think that the English as a mode of instruction in English classroom significantly helps them to gain language learning skills.

Statement 6: My teachers always conduct classes in English.

MY TEACHERS ALWAYS CONDUCT CLASSES IN ENGLISH

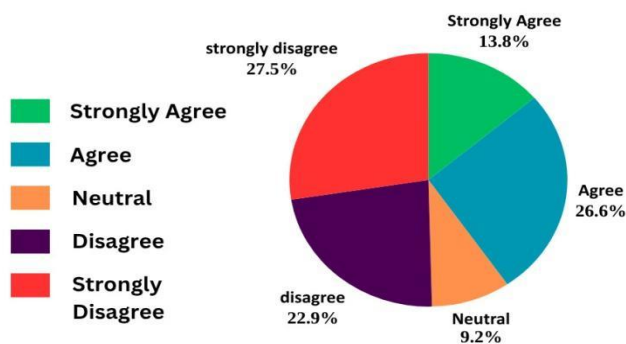


Figure 12: My teachers always conduct classes in English

Among 20 participants, 13.8% strongly agreed that the mode of instruction in the classroom is always English, 26.6% agreed, and 9.2% remained neutral to the statement. On the other hand, 22.9% disagreed and 27.5% agreed with the statement. EFL classes in EB are not frequently conducted in English as per the results.

### **Interview with Teachers: Teacher's Perceptions**

The English teachers were interviewed face-to-face by the researchers. Various assumptions and opinions were found in the interviews. The data are presented below.

- T1 believes that students should get enough opportunities to engage in the classroom activities. T4 also opines that in student-centered classrooms, discussions and interactions actively take place.
- T2 claims that their mode of instruction is in the English language except for some exceptions. T2 firmly thinks that English as a medium of instruction should be followed strictly. T7 gives the same opinion as T2.
- T3 stated that occasionally they use Bangla or L1 to clarify some terms and subject matter to students. T6 also supports T3.
- T4 opines that teachers should not interact with students using local dialect in the classes. In this regard, T2 adds that using local dialect at the graduating level is a great hurdle in teaching pedagogy.
- T5 considers that due to the lack of English proficiency, many English teachers use L1 beside L2 to some extent to make class functionally effective.
- T6 considers that Anglophobia among students is also an obstacle for them to implement only English-based lectures.
- The data given by T7 reflects the same idea as T6 and suggests that L2 teachers should create an environment in the English classroom so that students spontaneously engage in the classroom activities.
- The data of T8 restate the statement of T4, and T8 strongly opines that at the tertiary level English teachers should strictly avoid local dialects and L1. The medium of instruction should be only English.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study clearly indicate that student-teacher interaction plays a vital role in enhancing English language proficiency in EFL classrooms at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. However, the extent and nature of such interaction vary significantly between departments, as evidenced by contrasting responses from students in the ELL and EB departments at IIUC.

### **Student-Teacher Interaction and Classroom Dynamics**

Students from the ELL department reported relatively higher levels of interaction in English, with over 90% agreeing or strongly agreeing that they are allowed to ask questions in English. This suggests that ELL classrooms foster a more interactive environment, encouraging students to practice English actively, which aligns with the principles of student-centered learning. In contrast, responses from EB students reveal limited opportunities for interaction. A significant portion of EB students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they were allowed to ask questions in English, pointing to a more traditional, teacher-centered approach that inhibits language development.

These findings reinforce the argument by Hamid (2020) and Rahman et al. (2019) that inconsistent implementation of communicative and student-centered methods has contributed to poor ELT outcomes. In ELL classrooms, where student-centered approaches are more apparent, students demonstrate higher comfort levels and confidence in engaging with the language.

### **Medium of Instruction: English vs. L1/Local Dialect**

Another key theme that emerged is the impact of the medium of instruction on student motivation and learning outcomes. A substantial number of students from both departments agreed that the use of English in the classroom improves listening and speaking skills. However, the use of Bangla or local dialects by teachers—intended to clarify complex concepts—was seen as demotivating by many students, particularly those from the ELL department. While some level of code-switching may be beneficial for lower-proficiency students (as suggested by teacher interviews), frequent reliance on L1 undermines immersion and reduces opportunities for authentic language use.

Interestingly, EB students were more accepting of instruction in L1, which may reflect their lower proficiency and confidence in English. Teachers themselves acknowledged that while English should ideally be used consistently, they often revert to Bangla to ensure understanding—especially for weaker students. This reflects a tension between pedagogical ideals and classroom realities, where practical challenges like varying student backgrounds and Anglophobia (fear or anxiety of speaking English) hinder the effective implementation of English-only instruction.

### **Classroom Structure: Student-Centered vs. Teacher-Centered**

While both students and teachers generally favor student-centered learning, actual classroom practices appear to be predominantly teacher-led. Many students indicated that classes are lecture-based, offering limited space for interaction or participation. This

mismatch between preferred pedagogy and classroom implementation highlights structural issues in tertiary education, such as lack of training, large class sizes, and examination-oriented curricula, which make participatory learning difficult.

Moreover, even in ELL classrooms, where student-centered learning is more prevalent, nearly a quarter of students felt the classroom was not sufficiently interactive. This indicates that while the department is moving in the right direction, further efforts are needed to fully embrace interactive and communicative methods. Techniques like pair work, group discussion, presentations, and task-based learning remain underutilized, especially in non-major English departments such as EB.

### **Perceptions and Preparedness of Teachers**

Teachers showed awareness of the importance of using English and maintaining interaction but cited several barriers, including students' low proficiency, lack of confidence, and systemic issues like outdated syllabi and insufficient institutional support. Some teachers conduct preliminary surveys to assess students' language backgrounds, suggesting a level of responsiveness to learners' needs. However, reliance on L1—even if unintentional—can set a precedent that weakens the development of L2 competence.

Additionally, the lack of uniform policies across departments results in discrepancies in classroom language use and interaction patterns. While English faculty generally encourage the use of English in communication, non-English departments appear less committed to or capable of doing so. This departmental disparity reinforces the need for standardized training, support, and monitoring mechanisms for all faculty involved in EFL instruction.

### **Implication**

The findings highlight the urgent need for systemic reforms in how English is taught at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Departments like EB, where English is not the core subject, must receive better pedagogical training and support to create interactive, English-rich learning environments. Furthermore, consistent policies should be adopted to reduce reliance on local dialects, let alone L1, and increase student participation across disciplines.

### **Recommendations**

The following recommendations were produced on the basis of problems identified in the research.

- Student-teacher interaction should be focused only on English in EFL classrooms.



Using L1 or local dialects demotivates them from engaging in classroom activities. Students are also deprived of achieving linguistic and communicative skills.

- Students should be equally communicative and extroverted. Through friendly and cooperative interactions, students will get the opportunity to be confident to communicate in English and nurture their extroverted nature.
- EFL classes must be student-centered, reciprocal, and participatory. This is how teacher-student rapports will be increased, and this will facilitate teaching and learning L2.
- Bangla or any other local dialects should strictly be avoided at classroom activities. Using L2 will certainly improve English proficiency and, above all, Anglomania among learners.
- Teachers should conduct surveys about the receptive capacity, such as listening and reading skills, of the students in the course of teaching. In addition, teachers should help to improve productive skills such as writing and speaking skills of the learners in EFL context.
- Students' admission process at universities should be improved. Students having a poor background in English should mandatorily complete an English foundation course before starting undergraduate and graduate programs.
- Students should have ample opportunities to actively participate in academic activities such as pair work, group work, jigsaw, debate, presentation, and symposium as a part of the curriculum and syllabus. Students should be given awards based on their performance beside grading.

### **Research Limitations**

The limitations of the research are that it was conducted only over two departments of the university. The number of respondents was not enough. If the research had been done over a wide range of students, the results could have been more precise.

### **Conclusion**

Students are greatly influenced when they interact in the foreign language in EFL classrooms with their beloved teachers. Motivation is a crucial factor in teaching pedagogy, and student-teacher interaction in the target language has immense influence on gaining language proficiency and confidence in both receptive and productive skills in learning and teaching L2. The environment that students receive while acquiring proficiency in a foreign language like English significantly affects their linguistic competency. The research shows that the classes not only in the department of ELL but also in the department of EB must be student-centered so that learners can improve their linguistic knowledge and skills along

with communicative competence. Student-teacher interaction can greatly elevate a student's language learning skills. The study also shows that EFL classrooms can be highly beneficial and productive if student-teacher interaction and a student-centered learning approach are followed. Above all, L2 as a medium of instruction should be strictly followed at classroom activities, and teachers should ensure active participation at classroom activities.

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