

Addressing the Challenges of English Teaching at Secondary Level Bengali Medium Schools

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Abstract

English is becoming an increasingly important communication language. In terms of language learning, children in Indian government schools acquire English as a second language in addition to their mother tongue. The issues teachers encounter when teaching English as a second language are the subject of the research conducted in West Bengal. In this instance, the survey was conducted among West Bengal government school students who speak Bengali. This study's main goal is to pinpoint the issues English language instructors encounter when instructing Bengali-speaking pupils. A questionnaire was used to collect data for this investigation. According to research, the most common barriers to English learning include students' fear of speaking English, overwhelming impact of their mother tongue, a lack of confidence, and curricular constraints. In most situations, students are unable to practise English because their social and cultural backgrounds, as well as their home environment, are unsuitable for utilising the English language, causing them to lose interest in learning English. This study recommends modifying the curriculum to allow kids to read with pleasure and utilising technology to teach English through peer groups and narrative. According to the study, when teachers treat students like friends and help them use the language, students find it more acceptable and their anxiety levels decrease. It also shows that language labs and audio-visual instruction greatly improve students' comprehension in rural schools.

Keywords: English Teaching Challenges, Bengali medium students, secondary education.

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INTRODUCTION

The lower English proficiency of Bengali-medium students is one of the main issues facing language learners in West Bengal. Most of the time, students prioritise their mother tongue, which eventually makes it difficult for them to become proficient in English. The persistent disregard for English language proficiency may cause Bengali-medium students to have limited job opportunities (Selinker, 1972). English enjoys the highest acceptance in the world at present, and thus, Bengali medium students are lagging behind in their education, job, and even acceptance in society because they are not conversant with the language. The aim of the present study is to examine the difficulties faced by the Bengali medium teachers and students in learning English. Although English has been compulsory from a long time in the education system in West Bengal, there is a huge gap in acquiring basic communication skill in the language by a large number of students. This is an important discovery that has a number of questions related to the effectiveness of the existing learning framework to achieve the desired goals (Bhattacharya &

Jha, 2021). The results of the study will help in understanding and analyzing the issues and challenges that may affect the learning of English by Bengali medium students, which ultimately makes the study relevant to language teaching and learning processes using experiential learning as a means. It is important to ensure that students develop all-round communication skills through the medium of English in the language education system, which will help students cope with their school problems and prepare them for life after school (Haidar and Chowdhury, 2012). The history of English in West Bengal is inextricably linked with its colonial past under British rule, where English was the language of governance, higher education, and elite discourse (Macaulay, 1835). Even after independence, English has retained an important place in higher education, governance, judiciary, and professional institutions (Annamalai, 2004). Although Bengali is the main medium of instruction in most government schools, English has been a compulsory subject in the state curriculum for a long time. However, despite decades of formal education, a large number of Bengali-medium

students have been found to lack functional communicative proficiency in English, leading to concerns about teaching-learning processes and curriculum effectiveness (NCERT, 2006; Ramanathan, 2005). Moreover, in the context of a globalized economy, English proficiency is often associated with access to higher education and job opportunities, leading to inequalities between English-medium and Bengali-medium students (Graddol, 2010).

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Rimadhona, Carmelya, and Firdaus (2025)** Rimadhona, Carmelya, and Firdaus investigated the function of information and communication technology (ICT) in ELT in an effort to improve ELT through student participation in Indonesia's digital age. The study used a qualitative descriptive research approach, and information was gathered through classroom observations, interviews, and questionnaires with English teachers in Indonesian vocational schools. The findings demonstrated that the students' motivation, engagement, and comprehension of English language learning were significantly impacted by the usage of ICT tools (Google Classroom, YouTube, Quizizz, and Padlet). However, revealed some challenges such as poor technological infrastructure, digital literacy of teachers, unstable internet connectivity etc. The authors found that the integration of ICT in the English language learning process is influenced by the teacher's ability in training, the support of the teacher's institution, and the technological readiness of the teacher.
- **Chhetri (2023)** A study was conducted to discuss the difficulties faced by teachers and students of high school in learning English language in Rajganj, Jalpaiguri, West Bengal. The research was conducted on the secondary English instructors, and involved challenges in methodology, classroom management, and use of teaching aids. The results showed that educators could not use interactive approach techniques in their classes and learners struggled with reading and comprehension activities.
- **Adhikari, A., & Sen, S. (2023)** explained the current trends in cluster analysis in educational studies. The paper demonstrated the application of clustering procedures in determining performance trends among learners. The paper argued that statistical procedures for clustering are effective in determining academic proficiency and relative levels of achievement among learners in various subjects.
- **Adhikari (2023)** analyzed the application of multidimensional data analysis in educational studies for accumulation and comparison among various variables. The study demonstrated that relative levels of academic performance can be understood by analyzing various factors such as subject performance and background variables.
- **Ansary (2023)** Conducted research on the academic achievement and school adaptation among the Higher Secondary learners. The outcomes of this study showed that students' performance is influenced by various factors and adaptability of the students is key for their success.
- **Bhattacharya and Jha (2021)** examined the difficulties encountered by English as a minority student in learning English through a purposeful questionnaire of 225 students in high schools of Purulia district. The study found out that a significant percentage of students have low acceptance of English because they were not exposed to it at an early age and their culture did not support it.
- **Vijayan and Yunus (2022)** outlines the issues of application of the process, product, and genre-based approach in ESL classrooms. Their results indicated that there were endemic pedagogical gaps that influenced writing instruction.
- **Ahmed (2020)** applied Mahalanobis D² statistics to determine academic achievement among higher secondary students. The study demonstrated that statistical distance measures are effective in determining relative levels of subject performance and comparative achievement levels among learners.
- **Lahuerta and Susí Alabarte (2018)** The study underscored that writing proficiency is made up of a number of closely linked aspects rather than a single grammatical ability. Analyzed the development of secondary Spanish students' EFL writing abilities based on complexity, accuracy and fluency. The girls have given a focus that proficiency in writing must be viewed as a complex of mutually reliant components and not a solitary phenomenon in Grammar.
- **Sharma (2009)** carried out a basic study on the L2 writing proficiency of secondary level students. The study evaluated specific grammatical aspects and found considerable variation across institutions. The results showed that writing proficiency cannot be considered a homogeneous concept and differs according to the teaching context and the background of the learners.

Objectives of the Study:

1. To identify the primary obstacles faced by English teachers during the teaching process.
2. To study the techniques and approaches employed in English language instruction for the development of the four language skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing).

Research Questions:

1. What are the primary issues that English teachers in West Bengal's Bengali-medium secondary schools face?
2. How do English language teachers assist students improve their speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills using various pedagogical approaches and instructional strategies?

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The researcher designed a systematic questionnaire and collected data through face-to-face and on-line data collection methods using a Google form.

Purposive sampling was utilised to choose study participants. A descriptive survey technique was utilised to determine the challenges faced by English teachers in Bengali-medium schools.

Population

The population of the study would include all the English language teachers who are currently working in Bengali medium secondary schools of Nadia, North 24 Pargana, Murshidabad, South 24 Pargana, and Kolkata.

Sample

The sample would consist of 100 English language teachers of the secondary schools of the above-mentioned districts of West Bengal.

Sampling Technique

The researcher adopted purposive sampling technique for the data collection.

A sample of 100 teachers was selected intentionally by the researcher. They were chosen based on their subject specialization and experience in teaching English at the secondary level.

Tools and Techniques

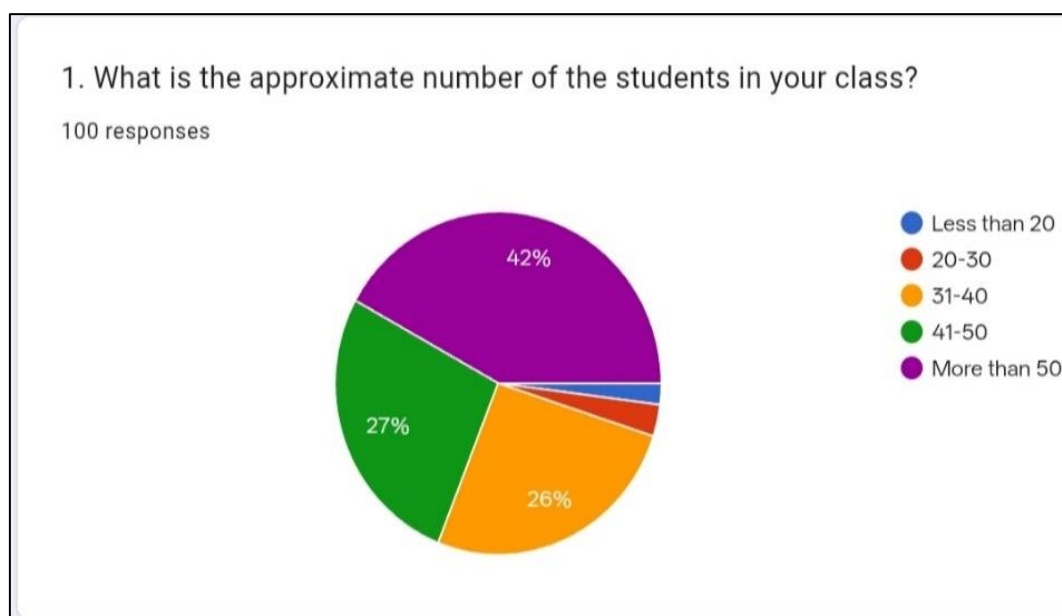
The researcher designed a semi structured questionnaire to collect data from the English teachers. The questionnaire contained closed-ended and opinion-based questions to collect information on the challenges of teaching English in Bengali medium schools.

Procedure of Data Collection

The study adopted the Google Form method to collect data from the English teachers of the targeted districts. The researcher created the questionnaire and shared it with the targeted English teachers.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

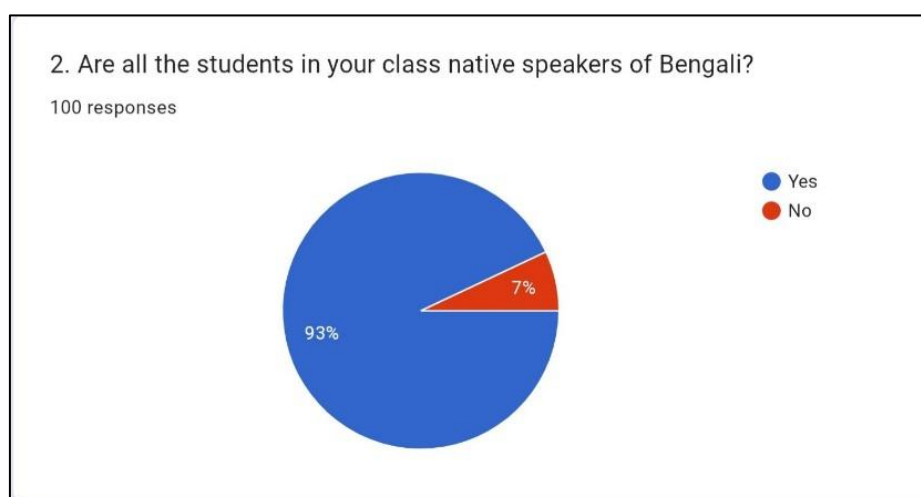
The present study collected responses from 100 participants to explore the challenges faced in developing English language proficiency among students.

1. Class Size Distribution

In The above diagram we saw that, a large number of teachers (42%) had classes with more than 50 students. Also, 27% of teachers had classes with 41–50 students, and 26% had classes with 31–40 students. There weren't many teachers who had classes with fewer than 30 students.

The study revealed that the number of students in each class of Bengali medium schools of West Bengal was quite high. Consequently, in some cases, teachers could not converse with the student one-on-one. Solving the individual problems of each child in a class was impossible and many pupils were left behind.

2. Background of Native Language

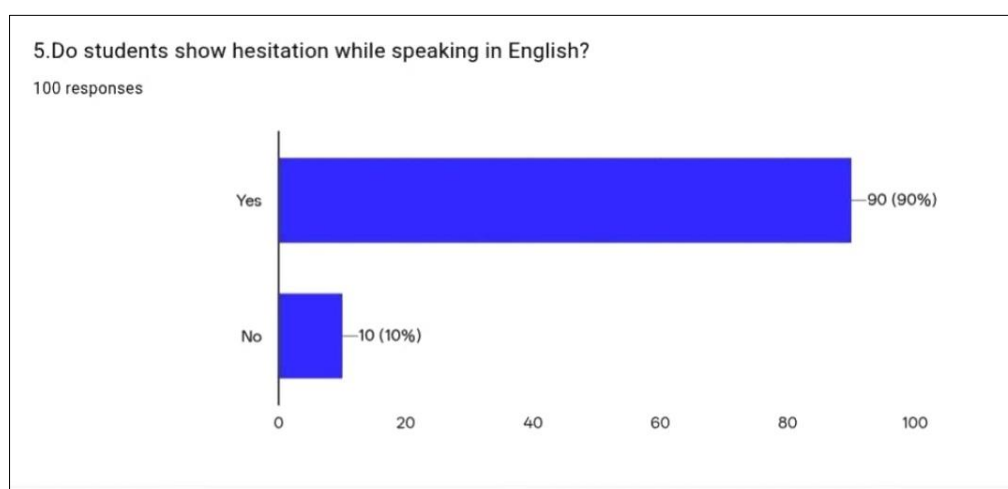


According to the above table, just 7% of the students who were enrolled in the study had a first language other than Bengali, while 93% of the students had Bengali as their first language.

This diagram made it clear that most of the pupils had similar linguistic backgrounds. This gave all

of the students a single main language, but it also meant that the students' surroundings did not use English as a communication medium.

3. Distribution of Teachers' Responses on Students' Hesitation to Speak English



The results showed that 90% of the people who answered agreed that students were hesitant to speak English, while only 10% disagreed.

This demonstrated that psychological concerns rather than school-related variables were the primary cause of the issue. The two key things that made learning

English challenging were fear and anxiety. The effectiveness of the language learning setting was further diminished by the absence of instructional tools and parental assistance.

4. Exposure to English Language outside of the classroom:

Content		Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes 30%	Frequently	3	30%
	Sometimes	15	
	Rare	12	
No		70	70%
Total		100	100%

It could be concluded from the above table that out-of-class exposure to English was reported by 30% of the respondents and the remaining 70% reported that they were not exposed. Of the individuals who had been exposed, 3% said the students were often exposed, 15% of individuals said they were sometimes exposed, and 12% of individuals said they were rarely exposed.

The results revealed that 70% of the respondents found that students had had no exposure to English outside the classroom. This was attributed to the reason that most of the students in the Bengali-medium schools were not using or practising English in their daily

life. In addition, many of these families were economically disadvantaged and the learners were first-generation students. Their parents frequently lacked education, and didn't provide an English-speaking home environment or sufficient academic assistance. This reduced the amount of additional English language development that students were able to gain outside of the classroom, which may have impacted students' confidence, fluency, and English language skills.

5. Difficulties encounter in acquiring English language skills:

Content	Respondents (n) Yes	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n) No	Percentage (%)	Total (N)
Listening Skill	18	18%	82	82%	100
Speaking Skill	90	90%	10	10%	100
Reading Skill	30	30%	70	70%	100
Writing Skill	39	39%	61	61%	100

From the above table, it was found that 90% of the respondents stated Speaking Skill as the greatest difficulty in acquiring English language skills. This was followed by Listening Skill (18%) and Reading Skill (30%). However, 10% of the respondents indicated that Speaking Skill is not a major problem, and 61%, 70%, and 82% were not the same in the sense that Writing, Reading and Listening Skills, respectively, are not major problems.

It can be inferred from the above that the Speaking Skill was the most difficult and complex

domain of the English language for Bengali medium students in learning English. The results indicate that students have a problem in speaking English because they are hesitant and afraid, do not have many opportunities to speak English, and lack of exposure to the English language outside the class. Other areas of difficulty identified were Writing and Reading Skills, while Listening Skill was the least problematic. The following figure showed this result.

6. Difficulties Faced When Teaching English in the Classroom:

Content	Respondents (n) Yes	Percentage (%)	Respondents (n) No	Percentage (%)	Total (N)
Lack of teaching aids	48	48%	52	52%	100
Poor Pronunciation	68	68%	32	32%	100
Lack of parental support	40	40%	60	60%	100
Fear of speaking English	82	82%	18	18%	100

The results showed that teachers faced some problems in teaching English in Bengali medium classroom. The most common problem reported was fear of speaking English with 82% of teachers responding positively and 18% negatively. Likewise, 68% of the teachers indicated that poor pronunciation by the pupils was a big problem while 32% did not. Also, 48% of the teachers said that the teaching aids caused difficulties in teaching English and 52% said that teaching aids were available sufficiently. Furthermore, 40% of the teachers indicated that the parents were not supporting them while 60% felt that it was not a big challenge. The results

indicated that the main obstacle in English language acquisition for students was fear of speaking English and their poor pronunciation. Many of the students in the Bengali-medium schools were first-generation learners and had little academic assistance and English exposure in the home environment, which may have contributed to these difficulties. This consequently posed challenges for teachers in building students' confidence and competence in English communication.

7. Teaching Method's Application in English Language:

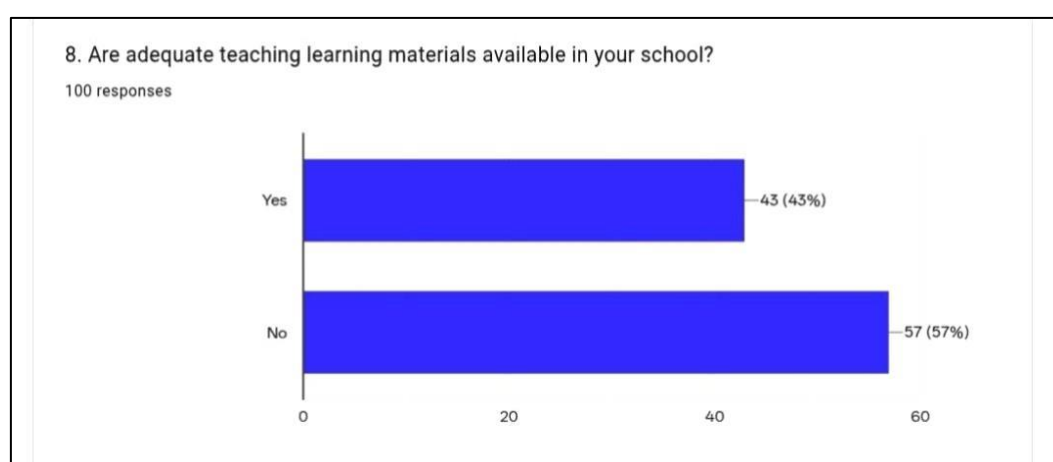
Content	Respondents(n) Yes	Percentage (%)	Respondents(n) No	Percentage (%)	Total (N)
Lecture method	58	58%	42	42%	100
Translation method	64	64%	36	36%	100
Activity waste method	55	55%	45	45%	100

Content	Respondents(n) Yes	Percentage (%)	Respondents(n) No	Percentage (%)	Total (N)
Audio visual Aids	40	40%	60	60%	100
Group Discussion	52	52%	48	48%	100

The results indicated that all of the teaching methods were studied individually and for each one there were 100 respondents (Yes + No = 100%). The results indicated that 64% of the teachers employed the Translation Method with 36% who did not use it, making it the most frequently used teaching method. 58% of the teachers used the Lecture Method while 42% reported that they did not use it. Likewise, 45% of the respondents did not use the Activity Based Method. 52% of teachers used Group Discussion and 48% said that they did not use Group Discussion. The least adopted teaching

method was Audio-Visual Aids (40%) while 60% did not use this. This indicated that teachers used traditional methods more than technology-supported methods in their teaching. The relatively smaller percentage of Audio-Visual Aids used suggested a less integration of digital resources in English language classrooms, which might be attributed to limited technological facilities, less training, or inadequate infrastructure.

8. Availability of Teaching-Learning Materials



The results showed that 57% of the respondents felt that there was inadequate availability of teaching-learning materials in schools, while 43% felt there was adequate availability of teaching-learning materials in their schools.

This data indicated that the lack of teaching-learning material may have interfered with the effective

teaching and learning of English. Teachers may have been hindered in applying the interactive teaching and ICT teaching methods due to the lack of necessary teaching materials, thus impacting students' English language learning and classroom participation.

9. Training for Improving English Teaching Skills



The results indicated that 64% of the respondents were trained for enhancing their English teaching skills, whereas 36% of the respondents were not trained.

Although a majority of the teachers received training, a substantial number of teachers remained untrained. It had a negative impact on the use of up-to-

date teaching approaches and innovative classroom techniques. Ongoing training was needed to improve teaching effectiveness and deal with classroom challenges in the current context.

10. Barriers in developing students' English-speaking skill:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes: 87%	Lack of vocabulary:	24	87%
	Fear of making mistakes:	24	
	Lack of confidence:	17	
	Mother tongue interference:	22	
No		13	13%
Total		100	100%

The results indicated that 87% of the respondents felt there were barriers to the improvement of students' English-speaking skills and 13% did not agree.

The following are a few of the barriers raised:

24% responded lack of vocabulary, 24% responded fear of making mistakes, 17% said that they were not confident, 22% responded mother tongue interference.

Results showed that the psychological and linguistic factors were the dominant obstacles to speaking skill development. The combination of fear, lack of confidence and language incompetence developed a vicious circle of avoidance and inhibition that impacted communication skills.

11. Teaching method used for improvement English language in rural area:

Content	Respondents(n) Yes	Percentage (%)	Respondents(n) No	Percentage (%)	Total (N)
Regular spoken English practice	63	63%	37	37%	100
Activity based and communicative teaching	52	52%	48	48%	100
Use of audio-visual teaching aids	46	46%	54	54%	100
Teacher training and professional development	36	36%	64	64%	100
Use of bilingual teaching method	36	36%	64	64%	100
Smaller class size for better interaction	35	35%	65	65%	100

The responses of the teachers to the above question on what measures may enhance the teaching of English language in the rural school are presented above. The results showed that 63% of the respondents felt that there should be frequent use of spoken English, whereas 37% did not agree. The majority (52%) of the respondents recommended activity based teaching and communicative teaching while the minority (48%) did not recommend activity based and communicative teaching. 46% of the respondents felt that use of audio-visual teaching aids was necessary and 54% indicated otherwise.

The table also revealed that 36% of the respondents stressed the need for teacher training and professional development while 64% did not recommend

for teacher training. Similarly, 36% of the respondents agreed on the use of bilingual teaching methods, 64% disagreed. In addition, 35% of the respondents recommended maintaining a smaller class size for better interaction, whereas 65% did not consider it a priority.

Overall, the results indicated that the most preferred way of improvement of English language instruction was the regular spoken English instruction, followed by the activity-based and communicative English teaching and the use of AV teaching aids. The respondents' findings suggested that interactive and learner-centred teaching approaches were more important for improving the English language learning in rural schools.

12. Specific measures to enhance students' English proficiency:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-98%	Regular spoken English practice	21	21%
	Reading habit development	20	20%
	Remedial class for weak learners	17	17%
	Use of communicative language teaching	15	15%
	Increased exposure to English language	14	14%
	Continuous assessment and feedback	11	11%
No		2	2%
Total		100	100%

According to 98% of respondents, there are steps being taken to help pupils become more proficient in English.

The following were the recommended actions:

21% suggested speaking English on a regular basis, 20% suggested cultivating the habit of reading, 17% suggested giving poor learners additional support, 15% suggested using Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), 14% suggested giving them more

exposure to the English language, and 11% suggested regular evaluation and feedback.

The results of the study showed that improving English proficiency required classroom growth and habit building. The main elements in raising students' English proficiency seemed to be consistent practice, more exposure, and ongoing support techniques.

13. Strategies for Encouraging Students to Speak English

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-98%	Role Play –	19	19%
	Group Discussion –	30	30%
	Question Answer Session –	37	37%
	Debate –	12	12%
No-		2	2%
Total		100	100%

The results revealed that 98% of teachers encouraged students to speak English in class, and 2% of teachers did not encourage students to speak English in class.

Some of the strategies used were: Role Play (19%), Group Discussion (30%), Question–Answer Session (37%), and Debate (12%).

The results suggested that the teachers' goals were to cultivate students' communicative competence via interactive approaches. The most preferred methods were question–answer and group discussions. But, it was found that the activities of higher order communication occurred in less frequency as the debates and role play activities used were relatively low.

14. Students' Reluctance to Take Part in English Language Activities:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes: 85%	Fear of mistakes –	27	27%
	Peer pressure –	7	7%
	Lack of vocabulary –	25	25%
	Lack of confidence –	26	26%
No: 15%		15	15%
Total		100	100%

The majority of the respondents (85%) agreed that students were not interested in English activities, 15% disagreed.

The following were identified as the primary reasons: 27% fear of making mistakes, 26% lack of confidence, 25% lack of vocabulary, and 7% peer

pressure. These findings confirmed the previous research that proposed psychological barriers were the greatest barriers to language participation. Low confidence and fear were both factors which hindered active participation even when encouraged by teachers.

15. Using ICT in English Language Teaching:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes: 48%	Mobile apps	12	12%
	YouTube –	16	16%
	Smart board-	8	8%
	Audio recordings –	12	12%
No:		52	52%
Total		100	100%

The results indicated that 48% of the teachers utilized the use of ICT in English teaching and 52% did not. Of the teachers who utilized the ICT, 16% utilized YouTube videos, 12% mobile applications, 12% audio recordings and 8% utilized smart boards.

The results indicated the level of technology in teaching English was moderate to low. The findings also

showed that there was a lack of infrastructural support and insufficient digital training in rural schools, while the use of the digital technologies, such as YouTube and mobile apps, was growing.

16. Parental Involvement in Students' English Language Acquisition:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-55%	Helping in homework-	18	18%
	English speaking at home-	2	2%
	Buying English book-	23	23%
	Reading English at home-	12	12%
No-		45	45%
Total		100	100%

It was revealed from the survey that 55% of the parents had interest in their children's English learning, and 45% did not.

Parental involvement ranged from 23% purchasing English books, 18% assisting with homework, 12% encouraging English reading at home and 2% encouraging their children to speak English at home.

The results in this study showed that parents' involvement was mostly in the academic aspect and not in the aspect of communicative support. Rarely did parents push their children to speak English at home, and this could have reduced children's exposure to English outside the classroom.

17. Appropriateness of the English Curriculum for Rural Students:

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-56%		56	56%
No-44%	Too difficult syllabus-	11	11%
	Too lengthy syllabus-	7	7%
	Not practical oriented-	26	26%
Total -100		100	100%

The findings revealed that the English syllabus would be suitable for rural students in 56% of the cases, but in 44% it would not be suitable. For those who found it inappropriate, 26% felt that the syllabus was not practically oriented, 11% that was too difficult, and 7% that was too long. The results indicated that a majority felt that the syllabus was appropriate while a considerable number had doubts regarding its relevance and suitability. The absence of practical orientation in the

syllabus pointed out that there was a gap between the curricular aim and the actual communicative requirement of the learners. This was particularly relevant for those learners in rural areas who needed more functional and context based English learning.

18. Importance of Regular Assessment in Improving Students' English Proficiency

Content		Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-95%	Oral Test -	31	31%
	Written Test-	23	23%
	Project Work -	16	16%
	Classroom Observation -	25	25%

Content	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
No-	5	5%
Total	100	100 %

95% of the respondents felt that regular assessment enhanced English proficiency, and 5% disagreed.

The following were stated as being preferred forms of assessment:

31% of teachers thought that oral tests were significant when it comes to students' English language skills.

25% of all respondents reported classroom observation as one of the most important teaching methods for measuring students' proficiency of

English. 23% of the teachers took importance of written tests and 16% of respondents considered project work to be of importance.

Oral tests were more common as this shows an increasing awareness of the importance of assessing speaking skills. Classroom observation and project work indicated a move away from summative assessment, towards formative assessment and continuous assessment.

19. Need for Policy-Level Changes in Rural English Language Teaching

Content	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
Yes-89%	Teacher training-14	14%
	Infrastructure-28	28%
	Curriculum design-30	30%
	Monitoring system-17	17%
No-	11	11%
Total	100	100%

89% of the respondents believed that changes were needed in the policy of English teaching in rural schools and only 11% felt that there was no need for changes.

Thirty percent of the English teachers suggested that changes in curriculum design should be made for rural school students. Twenty-eight percent of the teachers felt that infrastructure improvement was required, 17% of the respondents emphasized the need for a change in monitoring and 14% the need for a change in teacher training for rural school children.

These results clearly indicated that the problems in the education of the rural people in West Bengal were not simply at the level of the classroom, but at the level of the system and the structure as well. The teachers' responses were primarily around curriculum and infrastructure, as the key areas that need policies.

DISCUSSION

The most significant issues facing English language instructors teaching Bengali in West Bengal's secondary schools were determined by the current study. The findings demonstrate that obstacles to teaching English include pedagogical, psychological, policy, and infrastructure problems. The findings support the earlier study's conclusion that learning English in rural and vernacular language education schools is still a difficult task.

The findings of the study also showed that 87% of the teachers indicated that the students had difficulties

learning the English language and speaking is considered as the most problematic skill among the skills that the students experienced. Similarly, the majority of 90% indicated that students do not want to speak English mainly because fear of making mistakes, lack of confidence, and lack of vocabulary. The results of this study corroborate the Interlanguage Theory of Selinker (1972), which states that L2 errors are natural and inevitable in L2 acquisition and that errors need to be constantly practiced and meaningful communication needs to be established. The findings are also corroborative of the study conducted by Bhattacharya and Jha (2021) which revealed that the students of Bengali medium of instruction have a tendency to not use English due to low exposure and lack of confidence in speaking this language.

The investigation also showed that, the large class size, lack of exposure to English outside the classroom, and dominance of mother tongue has a negative impact on the student's communicative competence. The majority of students are bilingual in Bengali and opportunities for the use of authentic English are limited. The results corroborate Haidar and Chowdhury (2012) who noted that language competence can be built by frequent communication and meaningful interaction, not just through textbooks.

Another significant finding is that despite the fact that 87% of teachers indicated that they used certain methods, the Translation Method is still the most common method while the use of activity-based learning, group discussion and audio-visual techniques

are comparatively less common. This suggests that the teacher-centred approach is still a predominant one in English classrooms. This was also noted by Chhetri (2023) who reported that the teachers of English in West Bengal encounter some problems in adopting interactive and communicative teaching methods due to the constraints within the classroom and lack of teaching resources.

The study also shows that teachers use ICT tools (YouTube, mobile applications, smart board, audio recordings) in English teaching with 48%. It indicates the inadequate integration of ICT in language instruction even though it is known that ICT is crucial in language teaching. This is likely to be due to the lack of infrastructure facilities, teacher training and technology facilities in rural schools, among other factors. The use of ICT in a greater integration can facilitate interactive learning, enhance listening and speaking skill, and motivate learners based on the recommendations of the National Education Policy (2020).

Results also indicate teachers' high level of support for the reform of English language teaching. The majority of the respondents suggested more attention to be paid to Communicative Teaching, Frequent Practice in Spoken English, Enhancement of infrastructure, teacher training, curriculum revision and continuous assessment. The recommendations suggest that there is a need to improve English proficiency by applying a holistic strategy that engages in both classroom practices and educational policies. Overall, the results indicate that coordinated efforts between teachers, school leaders, parents, curriculum planners and policy makers in English language teaching in Bengali medium secondary schools are required. Implementing communicative classrooms, making greater use of ICT, developing teachers' teaching skill and providing more opportunities for authentic language usage can make significant contributions to the English language proficiency and confidence level of the students.

CONCLUSION

The results of the current study have clearly shown that teaching and learning English language in the rural schools is challenged in a multifaceted manner. Despite the motivation of the students to learn the English language and the presence of active encouragement of communicative participation by the teachers, there are still serious psychological, infrastructural, and systemic obstacles. The results indicate that speaking skill is the most challenging area, which is mostly because of fear of errors, low confidence, scarce vocabulary, and mother tongue interference. The largest size of classes, insufficient teaching-learning resources, as well as inadequate use of ICT tools also limit the opportunities to interact with the classroom and be exposed to the real language use. Although most teachers utilize different teaching strategies and promote the use of English-speaking

activities, the most common use of English in classrooms remains the traditional teaching strategy that is more commonly known as the translation method. Besides, despite the extensive awareness of the positive impact of regular assessment, especially oral tests, the necessity of more practical and communicative design of the syllabus can be traced. The research indicates that there is a high demand among policy level changes, particularly in curriculum design, development of infrastructure, training of teachers and monitoring system. These results ensure that enhancement of English proficiency in rural settings needs a complex solution that involves the combination of pedagogical innovation, ongoing professional growth, psychological assistance to students, and structural change in education.

In conclusion, it is not sufficient to improve just one aspect of teaching English as a second language in rural Bengali-medium schools; instead, a variety of changes are required, including changes to infrastructure, education policies, teaching aids, teaching methods, and teaching processes. Students should no longer be afraid of the English language. The most crucial aspect is being able to speak English confidently, which is something that most students are afraid to do. Many obstacles to learning English will be reduced in the future if this element is established.

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