



# Effective ways of English language teaching at secondary schools in Bangladesh: challenges and the way forward

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## Abstract

English is one of the major subjects in all grades (from Grade-I to Grade-XII) in the national education system of Bangladesh. The secondary level of the system covers from Grade VI to Grade X and is supposed to harness the substantial portion of the teaching and learning of English subject. This research aims to discern the challenges, breakthroughs, and ways of improvement in teaching English effectively at the secondary level. Following the constructivist paradigm, it applies qualitative research approaches, which include open-ended questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD) respectively. It is conducted among 90 English teachers from 24 secondary schools (13 from Dhaka City based urban areas and 11 from rural areas of different districts), where 60 participants responded to open-ended questionnaire and 30 participants participated in FGDs. The findings reveal on the way to effective English teaching and learning, number of pressing challenges, like students' inattentiveness in the English language class, their unwillingness to learn a foreign language, poor command of vocabulary, limited grasp of the four English language skills, and inappropriate class size. Accordingly, this study attains several plausible breakthroughs from existing obstacles and prospective suggestions for improvement in actualizing effective English teaching at the secondary level of education in Bangladesh.

**Keywords** Effective teaching · Secondary schools · Challenges · Way forwards · Teaching skill and students' · English performance

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## Introduction

All the Education Commissions formed and activated in Bangladesh since her independence in 1971 put greater emphasis on the arrangement, teaching and learning of English language, which has consistently received an enviable priority in both school and college curricula (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014). Due to the increasing importance of English in the virtually borderless world, English teaching in Bangladesh has been subject to an utmost concern in terms of retaining economic growth and developing skilled manpower (Rahman et al. 2019). Nevertheless, it has not so far been possible for this international language to cross the cocoons of academia and prevail in everyday communication in a remarkable way. Even in educational set-ups, English education is often seen as a sheer instrumentalist effort and as such, has barely succeeded in being a non-threatening subject of study for the learners (Chowdhury and Kabir 2014). English teaching in Bangladesh, for a long time, was mostly done through Grammar Translation Method (GTM), which was replaced in 2001 by Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) bringing significant changes to the English curricula of the Secondary level of education (Ahmed 2012; Rahman 2015). But except for some initial stirring, with time's passage, CLT has not succeeded in performing satisfactorily due to improper change management principles, untrained English teachers, insufficient infrastructural arrangement, lack of appropriate resources, and teachers' unsatisfactory classroom performance (Rahman and Pandian 2018; Rahman 2015). It is, thereby, largely believed that the capability of our learners in English classes, particularly at the secondary level, is not up to the mark because of some core reasons. In fact, the status of learning and teaching English in Bangladesh is quite despairing, for the syllabus and curricula are examination dependent, preventing the learners from obtaining language know-how (Das 1998 and Hasan 2005 as cited in Golam and Kusakabe 2018). Bangladesh, in reality, does not seem to have a clear and steady language teaching policy for the primary, secondary, and tertiary levels; and in the absence of a clarified language policy, many of the activities that happen in the classrooms in the names of teaching and learning prove to be ambiguous, impractical, and wastage of time and assets (Golam & Kusakabe 2018) According to Nur (2018), in secondary schools, in a generic consideration, all over the country suffers, among many anomalies, insufficient provision of teachers, questionable practice of teacher employment, and inadequate care for teacher training. Language learning can never occur fruitfully unless and until four fundamental skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing are given equal importance (Ahmed 2012). That is why, schools systematically need to arrange listening practices, which may include English video games, documentaries, and movies, both teachers and students should refrain from speaking any language other than English in the English classes and during school periods as much as possible, and reading materials should include both textbooks and many other interesting reference books and publications in English (Ahmed 2012). In terms of writing skill, students should, firstly, practice writing by illustrating pictures of real-life environment and everyday issues and activities

which they have to go through day-in and day-out (Ahmed 2012). Rahman et al. (2019) believe that policymakers, developers of curriculum and materials, setters of public examinations, teacher trainers, and teacher training organizers should devise suitable policies and effective plans to make English teaching a desired success. English classes need to engage the learners in the practice of authentic activities, accordingly, curriculum objectives and testing should be aligned in a proper manner, and after all, a pro-English atmosphere is to be created and sustained (Rahmatuzzman 2018). Likewise, this study, keeping a line with the findings of the previous researches in the matter in question, seeks to further investigate the existing challenges of pragmatic English teaching at the secondary level of education in Bangladesh, their possible breakthroughs and prospective initiatives for further improvements.

## Literature review

The field of English teaching has been experiencing rapid changes and innovations due to the radical march of globalization and its sheer demand for the citizens of the world to be efficient in a lingua franca (Ahmed 2012; Barman 2020). Like almost all others, Bangladesh too has joined the journey and, as such, has introduced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) and its subsequent refurbishments in English teaching in her education sector, ranging from primary to higher secondary (Ahmed 2012; Barman 2020). For a couple of decades, English has been enjoying an enviable social status in Bengali context, i.e., it plays a significant role in the administration, mass communication, and the pursuit of knowledge. Moreover, it is popular as well as unavoidable in each and every walk of international relations (Hasan et al. 2019). Nevertheless, attempts and endeavours in teaching English have so far proven unfruitful in terms of achieving the desired results, which means students have not been able to perform effective interactions and communications marked by their equal efficiencies in the four skills of the language (Barman 2020). According to Ahmed (2012) and Nur (2018), a number of crucial reasons are responsible for the current dilapidated condition of the achievement of English subject in the secondary education sector of Bangladesh. They are mostly, but not limited to, inappropriate syllabus and curriculum design, infrastructural deficiency, insufficient logistic support, absence of proper training for teachers, little or no learner motivation, scarce level of public awareness, inadequate number of proficient English teachers, lack of atmosphere for effectuating the constant practice of the four skills of the target language, and the like (Ahmed 2012; Nur 2018; Hasan et al. 2019). Songbatumis (2017) in her study, attempted to explore the challenges of English teaching faced by the English teacher with its possible solutions capturing the English teachers' views that they face in English classrooms. The authors identified a number of challenges, which are partly related to students, and partly related to teachers and the school's facilities. Challenges related to students' side are lack of their vocabulary mastery, low concentration, lack of discipline, boredom, and speaking problem. Lack of teachers' training and professional development, language proficiency issues, limited mastery of teaching methods, and unfamiliarity to IT are the

main challenges related to teachers' side. This study also depicted other challenges, which are directly related to school facilities, for example, inadequate resources and facilities, and time constraints. Additionally, this study portrayed some plausible solutions to way forward the challenges that include reforming attitude and improving resources and facilities, applying and looking for appropriate materials, teaching methods and techniques, use of available resources and facilities, providing motivational feedback, and teachers' self-reflection. In another case study Straková (2015) described the situation of English teaching at primary schools in Slovak, where the author mentioned that lack of qualified teachers and the level of teachers' language command were the main constraints of effective English teaching. To overcome the prevailing failure of the CLT approaches in the secondary education of Bangladesh, Barman (2020) has come up with some feasible suggestions, like changing marks distribution, building infrastructure for English classroom, providing extensive training for English teachers, and compulsory use of English in ELT classes. Though many researches are conducted inside and outside the countries, this study has taken an effort to carry out the study to address the following research question.

### **Research questions:**

- What are the challenges of effective teaching teachers encounter in English classroom at secondary schools in Bangladesh?
- What are the way forward the challenges that teachers face in the classroom for effective English teaching?
- What are the ways of improvement of teachers' teaching skill and students' English performance?

## **Methodology**

### **Research type and design**

The nature of the study is descriptive. Qualitative research approach was employed to generate information for the study. Open-ended questionnaire was used in the study to gather data at a particular point in time with the intention of describing the nature of existing conditions (Cohen et al. 2000; p. 169). FGD was used in this study as it is "helpful in the elicitation of a wide variety of different views in relation to a particular issue" (Bryman 2004; p. 348).

### **Sample and sampling technique**

Different types of schools (i.e., urban, rural, government, and non-government) located in Dhaka division were selected to carry out the study. In this study, 24 secondary schools were selected from urban and rural areas. 24 secondary schools were selected using random sampling, where 13 schools were selected from Dhaka city, and the rest 11 rural schools were chosen from four different

districts of Dhaka division. Districts were selected using purposive sampling. The population for this study was comprised of all English teachers of secondary schools in Bangladesh. Ninety (90) teachers who teach English in grade nine constituted the sample of this study. Sixty (60) teachers out of 90 participated in open-ended questionnaire, and the rest 30 teachers participated in five different FGD (Focus Group Discussion) sessions, where six teachers participated in each of the FGD sessions. Purposive sampling appeared to be the best technique to select teachers, who teach English in grade nine (IX).

### **Data collection instruments**

The sample of English teachers was surveyed through a self-completion open-ended questionnaire. In order to collect more depth information, focus group discussion (FGD) sessions were conducted with a pre-determined FGD schedule. The open-ended questionnaire and FGD schedule were developed to obtain information about challenges that teachers face for effective teaching, how to overcome these challenges, how to improve teachers' teaching skills and students' English performance. After developing the questionnaire and FGD schedule, a pilot study was conducted to test the suitability, validity, and practicability of the items or questions of the questionnaire and FGD schedule (Oppenheim 1992; Wilson and McLean 1994). The main intention of piloting was to get an apparent idea of whether the items or words of the questions were on right track to address the research questions. However, no significant errors were found in the questionnaire and FGD schedule that needed to be corrected and finally, the research questionnaire and FGD schedule were finalized for the study. Approval of proper authority was ensured before conducting the study. A verbal consent was taken from the teachers as it is believed that the participants have the right to decide whether they like to participate in the study. The purpose of the study was explained to the teachers, who agreed to participate in the study before the data collection process. The teachers also said that they had complete freedom to withdraw themselves at any point of the study. Besides, the teachers were ensured that confidentiality would be maintained strictly and all their information would not be disclosed to anyone.

### **Data analysis procedure**

For data analysis, the study followed qualitative analytical techniques. In fact, with qualitative data derived from the pre-determined FGD schedule and open-ended questionnaire, the conditions or themes related to the challenges and the way forward of challenges of effective teaching were identified. Then the "frequencies and occurrences of responses" (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 468) were ascertained under the themes, and the narrative part of the qualitative data was prepared manually under each of the conditions or themes that were determined for the analysis of qualitative data.

## Findings of the study

The main intention of the study was to explore the challenges and way forward of challenges of effective English teaching at secondary schools in Bangladesh. Findings found analyzing the data are presented in the subsequent section.

## Challenges of effective English teaching at secondary schools in Bangladesh

Effective teaching is not an easy job. Many factors are interrelated to effective teaching that includes teachers' knowledge of pedagogy, content knowledge to be taught, classroom organization and management skills, instructional planning, use of teaching aids and teaching strategies, and ability to engage students in teaching learning activities. In order to make teaching effective, teachers often face a number of challenges in classroom teaching. Focusing on this point, information was generated from the sampled teachers manipulating open-ended questionnaire and focus group discussion (FGD). Three themes emerged under the level of challenges of effective English teaching, for illustration, challenges at the student level, teacher level, and classroom and school level. The "frequencies and occurrences of responses" (Cohen et al. 2007, p. 468) ascertained under each theme are presented in Table 1 that portrays what challenges, in reality, English teachers face for making their teaching effective.

### Student level and teacher level challenges

At student level the findings reveal that the most common challenges English teachers usually face are students' unwillingness or fear to learn English as a foreign language, weakness in developing vocabulary skills because of their abysmal level vocabulary and four skills (i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing) of English language, shyness in speaking English, students' irregularity in attending the classes, and memorization tendency to learn English lesson only to pass in the examination. At teacher level teachers' voice strongly raised the issue that it is really hard for them to capture students' attention in English class. Moreover, limited class time, teachers' workload, and hard to make the students understand English for their very poor level English knowledge are also big constraints for effective English teaching. Teachers' views depicted from the collected information are given as follows.

While teaching English, I observe that many of the students remain inattentive. They are unwilling or feel fear to learn English as a foreign language as most of them have lack of ability to understand English (Assistant teacher, urban-school).

It is hard to capture students attention as they are unwilling or feel fear to learn English for its being a foreign language, and most of the students remain inattentive in their class (Assistant teacher, urban school).

**Table 1** Challenges teachers face for effective English teaching in the classroom

Challenges	<i>N</i>	(%)
<b>Student Level Challenges</b>		
Students' weakness in developing vocabulary skills, they have very poor level of vocabulary and four skills of English, i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing	71	78.9
Students' unwillingness or fear to learn English as a foreign language as they lack of ability to understand English	47	52.2
Students' memorizing only to pass the examination	35	38.9
Students' irregularity in attending the classes	27	30.0
Students' shyness in speaking English	26	28.9
<b>Teacher level challenges</b>		
Hard to capture students' attention	59	65.6
Teachers' workload	23	25.6
Limited class time	28	31.1
Difficult to make the students understand English as most of the students has no basic foundation in English	27	30.0
<b>Class and school level challenges</b>		
Large class size and inappropriate sitting arrangement	45	50.0
Lack of teaching aids	36	40.0
Improper class environment for effective English teaching	31	34.4
Problem in conducting group work	23	25.6
Administrative limitation	24	26.7

[Source of data: Primary data collected from field work, November 2019-January, 2020]

"In my English class, what I see is that students know fewer word meanings and they have poor vocabulary. Moreover, the students are unwilling to read grammar and more prone to memorize for making better results in the examination" (Assistant teacher, rural school). "Yes, I face problems in my English class. Sometimes students do not bring their textbook. They feel shy to speak in English in the classroom. All of them are not equally attentive in my class. Furthermore, 30 min class time is not enough for effective teaching" (Assistant, urban school).

### Classroom Level Challenges

Large class size and inappropriate sitting arrangement (50%), lack of teaching aids (40.0%), unsuitable class environment for effective English teaching (34.4%) and conducting group work (25.6%), and administrative limitation (26.7%) are the critical issues ascertained from teachers' opinion at class and school level that encumber effective English teaching. A few of the teachers' voices regarding the challenges they face in the classroom while teaching English are illustrated below.

It is hard for me to manage classroom when the number of students in my class is more than 60, which hinders my teaching effectively, as I believe (Assistant, urban school).

Flow chart of challenges of effective English teaching

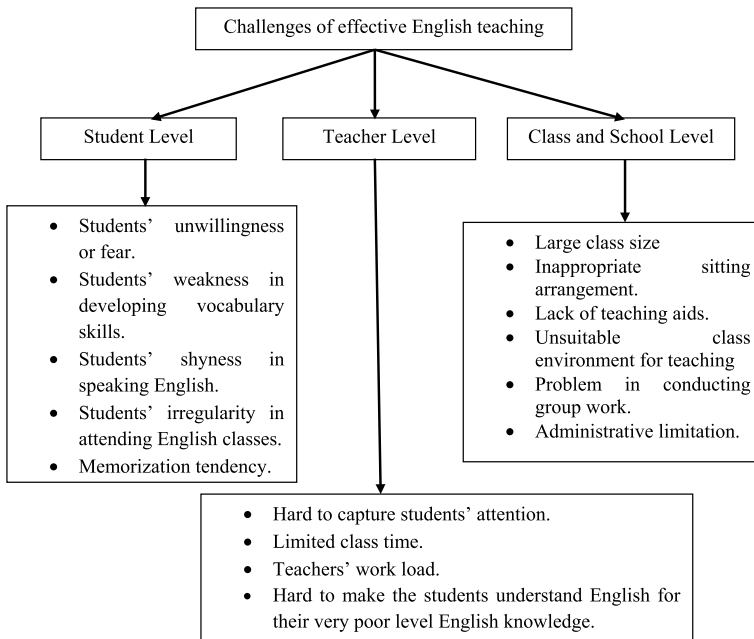


Fig. 1 Flow chart of challenges of effective English teaching

“It is not possible to teach English effectively in a classroom, where the number of students in each class is huge. Furthermore, for effective English teaching we need teaching aids and equipment that our school authority cannot provide us, as for example, for listening skill we need a tape recorder or multimedia, we need microphone as we teach in a large class size, where the student number is about 50 or above 50” (Assistant teacher, rural school).

The flow chart of the challenges of effective English teaching identified from the study is given below (Fig. 1).

### Way forward challenges of effective English teaching at secondary schools in Bangladesh

Teachers were asked to mention how to overcome these challenges for making English class effective and in this respect, three different themes, for example, effective teaching practice, institutional support for effective teaching, and motivational support from teachers are identified. The frequencies of key items determined under the themes are presented in Table 2.



**Table 2** Way forward the challenges of effective English teaching

Way forward the challenges	<i>N</i>	(%)
<b>Effective Teaching Practice</b>		
Teacher should give enough time to the students	48	53.3
Plain the lesson properly and engage students' indifferent class activities (like group work, pair work, question–answer, presentation, brainstorming etc.)	41	45.6
Manage classroom efficiently to create a good class environment	35	38.9
Use innovative teaching techniques	21	23.3
Use the native language, i.e., Bengali language, for students' better understanding of English	21	23.3
<b>Institutional Support for Effective Teaching</b>		
School authority should reduce student number or class size	34	37.8
School authority should provide teaching aids and equipment or effective teaching	28	31.1
School authority should increase class time for English class	25	27.8
Create an opportunity of using multi-media projector	21	23.3
Increasing number of teachers	21	23.3
Make good sitting arrangements for effective teaching	3	3.3
<b>Motivational Support from Teachers</b>		
Provide special care to weak students	25	27.8
Give the inspiration to overcome students' fear in learning English	30	33.3
Advice students' to read more at home	23	25.6
Teachers should not put too much pressure on students for examination	21	23.3

[Source of data: Primary data collected from field work, November 2019-January, 2020]

## Effective teaching practice

The frequencies of the teachers' responses imply that for effective teaching practice teacher should explain the lesson properly and engage students more in different class activities, like group work, pair work, question–answer, presentation, and brainstorming. Apart from this, for effective teaching practice, teachers need to provide enough time for the students to learn English effectively, manage the classroom efficiently to create a good class environment, use innovative teaching techniques and use their native language, i.e., Bengali language in their instructional process for student's better understanding of English.

Teachers' opinions found analyzing open-ended questionnaire and FGD are presented as follows for a better understanding of the findings.

To solve the problems, I try to explain lessons more clearly and engage students in different activities, illustration, group or pair work, presentation, debate etc., to make the students more attentive (Assistant teacher, urban school).

Number of the students need to be proportioned, and students have to be given enough time (Assistant teachers, urban school).

In my English class, I manage my classroom efficiently and make students' sitting arrangements properly in order to create a good class environment. I believe that good and friendly classroom environment is essential for effective teaching (Assistant teacher, urban school).

### **Institutional support for effective teaching**

The occurrences of teachers' responses under the theme of institutional support for effective teaching include the following: school authority should reduce student number or class size, which are crucial for effective teaching, provide teaching aids and equipment, increase the duration of class time for English class, create the opportunity of using multi-media projector, increase the number of English teachers, and arrange a good sitting arrangement.

Teacher's view regarding institutional support for effective teaching is given as follows to grasp the picture more clearly.

First of all, I think I need to make students attentive to their lesson. For effective teaching, I need teaching aids and equipment, i.e. multi-media projector, pictures, tape recorder etc. and school authority should cooperate us supplying these aids, so that we can solve some of the problems that we face in our teaching learning activities (Assistant teacher, rural school).

### **Motivational support from teachers**

The key points depicted under the theme of motivational support from teachers reveal that teachers should provide special care to students, who are weak in English, inspire students' overcoming their fear of learning English, advise students' to read their lessons more or practice at home for well preparation and teachers should not pressurized students too much for examination.

Teacher's opinion derived from the findings is-

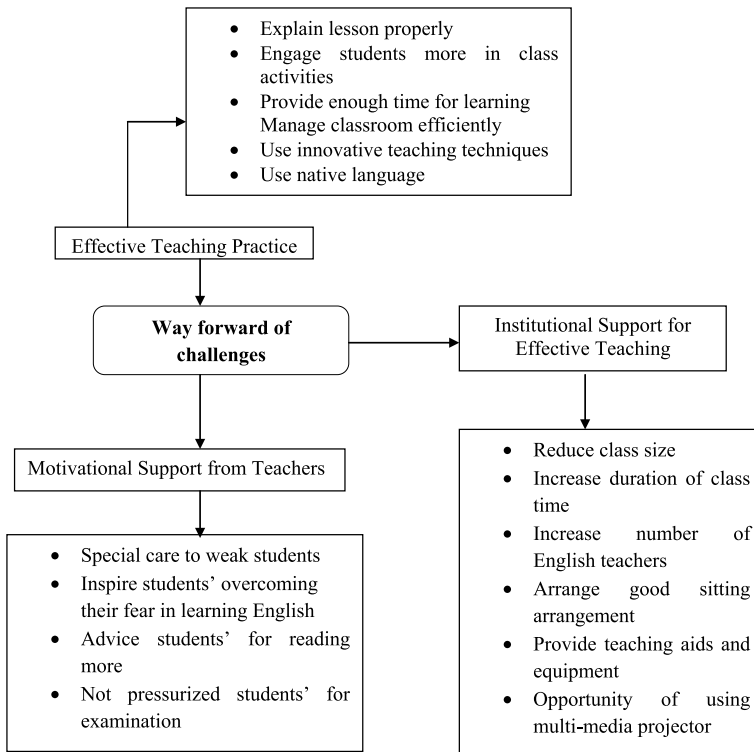
*"I inspire students to overcome their fear of learning English and try to make them understand the necessity of English in our everyday life" (Assistant teacher, rural school).*

The summary of the way forward the challenges of effective English teaching are illustrated below in Fig. 2.

### **How to improve teachers' English teaching skill**

Many valuable suggestions are depicted from the findings about how to increase teachers' English teaching skills and students' English performance. The findings explored two themes, namely, teachers' preparation and teaching activities, and institutional initiatives for increasing teachers' teaching skills that are vital for

*Flow chart of the way forward the challenges of effective English teaching*



**Fig. 2** Flow chart of the way forward the challenges of effective English teaching

improving English teachers’ teaching skills. Table 3 represents the key points of the themes derived from the qualitative data under the title of ‘how to improve teachers’ English teaching skill.

**Teachers’ preparation and teaching activities**

The frequencies of responses about teachers’ preparation and teaching activities ascertained some robust indicators that can be considered as areas of improvement for effective English teaching. The dominant key areas of effective teaching are teachers’ well preparation, use of teaching aids and lesson plans and different teaching techniques, positive teaching environment, use of LAD (Language Acquisition Device) according to teaching environment, share new knowledge, idea and provide feedback and increase the use of target language (i.e., English). Furthermore, some teachers mention that when anyone of them receives new knowledge from training, seminar or workshop, they can share their new knowledge, ideas, and give feedback to each other to improve their teaching knowledge and skill.

**Table 3** How to improve teachers' English teaching skill

How to improve teachers' English teaching skill	N	(%)
Teachers' preparation and teaching activities		
Teachers' well preparation	32	35.6
Use of teaching aids and lesson plan	36	40.0
Use of different teaching techniques	30	33.3
Use of LAD (Language Acquisition Device) according to teaching environment	24	26.7
Share new knowledge, idea and provide feedback	22	24.4
Increase the use of target language (i.e., English)	21	23.3
Institutional initiatives for increasing teachers' teaching skills		
Increase training opportunity for English teachers	70	77.8
Change in English curriculum should be brought focusing on four language skills for enhancing teaching skill	25	27.8
Provide opportunity of using multi-media projector and how to operate multi-media projector	27	30
Regular supervision or monitoring of English class	25	27.8
Increase wages and other facilities for teachers' welfare	30	33.3
Appoint subject based (i.e., English) teacher	23	25.6
Arrange workshop for providing knowledge about effective English teaching	21	23.3

[Source of data: Primary data collected from field work, November 2019-January, 2020]

One of the teachers views is given below that reflects the nature of teacher preparation and what teaching activities teachers should follow for effective teaching.

*"I think a skilled teacher can be an effective teacher. In order to improve teachers' own skill he/she should use lesson plan, teaching aids and increase using the target language (i.e. English) in their classes"* (Assistant teacher, rural school).

### **Institutional initiatives for increasing teachers' teaching skill**

To boost up teachers' teaching skill, institution also needs to take effective measures and the findings of the study portray some major areas that include increase training opportunity for English teachers, change in English curriculum should be brought focusing on four language skills for enhancing teaching skill, provide opportunity of using multi-media projector and how to operate multi-media projector, supervision or monitoring of English class on a regular basis, increase wages and other facilities for teachers' welfare, appoint subject-based (i.e., English) teacher and arrange a workshop for providing knowledge about effective English teaching.

Some of the teachers' views regarding institutional initiatives are narrated below that are imperative for increasing effective English teaching.

I believe all English teachers need to be trained as there is no alternative of training to improve teachers' teaching skills. If teachers get proper in-service training on English teaching, they can improve their teaching skills and teach effectively, which certainly may contribute to enhance students' performance in English (Assistant teacher, urban school).

Some changes have to be brought into the curriculum for enhancing teaching skills. Although there are tests on speaking and listening, no credit is given to them, which is why only written tests or memorized knowledge is given more emphasis on. Therefore, class nine (ix) to class ten (x) curriculums should be designed in such a way that ensures equal treatment to all the four skills of English language. Likewise, though the teachers are supposed to speak English fluently, they use mother tongue (i.e. Bangla) very frequently in the classroom as for students' standard of understanding English generally remains below the mark here. Our teachers need to deliver lecture in much simpler English so as to let the learners understand it easily, and to inspire them to speak English even if they make mistakes while trying as such. Training arrangements for English teachers need to be increased (Assistant teacher, urban school).

Schools should provide training opportunity to improve teachers' teaching skills. For effective teaching, a good teaching environment and regular monitoring are important. School authority should take into account these issues to improve teachers' teaching skills (Assistant teacher, rural school).

“Our due rights, including remuneration and other facilities, need to be raised, which certainly influence our motivation, satisfaction and job involvement. Eventually, the meritorious students will take teaching as a profession” (Assistant teacher, urban school).

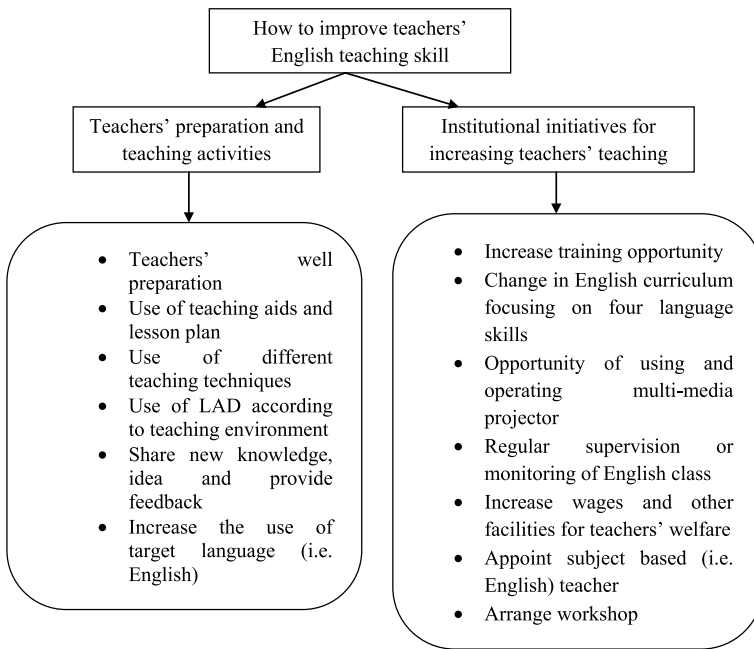
The summary of how to improve teachers' English teaching skill is illustrated through a flow chart in Fig. 3.

### **How to improve students' English performance**

Teachers were asked to suggest how they can improve students' English performance. Suggestions originated from analyzing the responses derived from open-ended questionnaire and FGD, are presented below in Table 4.

Having a close look at Table 4, it is clearly understood that in order to improve students' English performance, teachers can take a number of initiatives that include students should read their textbooks thoroughly, learning English grammar properly and increasing their English vocabulary, students should develop four prime skills of English language such as, speaking, listening, reading and writing and encourages students to use the target language (i.e., English) in the classroom. In addition to these suggestions, 24.4% of teachers think, if teachers take the examination and give homework on a regular basis, which will be helpful for the students to improve their English performance. On the other hand, a good number of teachers think that

*Flow chart of how to improve teachers' English teaching skill*



**Fig. 3** Flow chart of how to improve teachers' English teaching skill

students should discourage from memorizing the content of English textbook to achieve good scores.

Few of the teachers' voices are illustrated below that reflect the findings. of the study.

To have better achievement, the students need to increase their command of vocabulary, their writing and reading skills are to be improved, and they have to be inspired not to hanker after number-seeking study (Assistant teacher, urban school).

Students should give importance to their textbook and read their book very well. Apart from this, English teachers should encourage and provide the opportunity to students to increase the use of target language (i.e. English) in their English class (Assistant teacher, urban school).

For good results in English, I think, students have to increase their vocabulary and know English grammar and word meaning adequately (Assistant teacher, rural school).

**Table 4** How to improve students' performance in English

How to improve students' English performance	<i>N</i>	(%)
Encouraging students to use target (i.e., English) language	55	61.1
Motivating students to read textbook very well and thoroughly	47	52.2
Promoting students' English grammar knowledge	42	46.7
Developing students' four language skills	41	45.6
Creating a good teaching environment for effective English teaching	37	41.1
Enriching students' English vocabulary	36	40.0
Discourage students from memorizing only reading texts to achieve good scores	30	33.3
Taking examination and assigning homework on regular basis	22	24.4

[Source of data: Primary data collected from field work, November 2019-January, 2020]

## Discussion

The salient findings found in the study are discussed in this section. A number of challenges that English teachers face during English teaching are identified from the findings of the study. One of the challenges that English teachers face is the difficulty of capturing students' attention in English class. Multifaceted reasons can be assumed for not capturing students' attention in English class; for illustration, students' unwillingness or fear to learn English as a foreign language. Fear of English learning is generally developed among students for their poor level of vocabulary and four prime skills of English, i.e., speaking, listening, reading, and writing. According to Nunan (2005, cited in Oktavia et al. 2022), students still felt strange with English words because English is not their first language.

For effective teaching, class size, teaching aids, class arrangement and environment play a crucial role. Findings of the study are supported by the research evidence of other researchers that identified similar challenges that teachers generally confronted for making teaching effective; for illustration, large class size or over crowded classroom (Emery 2012), students find it difficult when they are instructed to state their opinion in English (Fatiloro 2015) lack of resources (Songbatumis 2017, Ajibola 2010, Fatiloro 2015 and Garton et al. 2011), lack of practicing four language skills (Pande, 2013, cited in Songbatumis 2017), low-level content or attention (Khajloo 2013), classroom management (Virginia Department of Education and time constraint (Songbatumis 2017). Students' sitting arrangement in the classroom is largely interrupted by over crowded classroom or class size, which create many problems in teaching-learning activities, for example, "*desks and chairs are fixed or difficult to move; students sit close together in rows; little space for the teacher and students to move in the classroom; walls between classrooms are thin, and noise will disturb other classes*" (Baker and Westrup 2000; p. 2; see also Songbatumis 2017; p. 57). One of the most challenging tasks students encountered is mastering vocabulary (Songbatumis 2017, Hasan 2016; Maruyama, 1996 as cited in Hoa and Mai 2016 and Chung 2016). Additionally, other impediments to effective teaching are improper class environment, limited class time, teachers' workload, administrative

limitation, students' shyness in speaking English, irregularity in attending the classes and memorization of the lesson as the students only try to memorize their English lesson for obtaining pass marks in the examination.

A number of suggestions are portrayed from teachers' opinions that teachers think are helpful to overcome the challenges. For example, teachers should engage students in class activities, like group work, pair-work, question–answer, brainstorming, and other activity-based English teaching. In order to get rid of the challenges of English teaching, teachers provide students with much care to learn English effectively, and this is important for students, who are weak in English. Teachers should inspire students to overcome their fear of English language as a foreign language. English as a foreign language makes English phobia among students. Thus, teachers should not create too much examination pressure on students. In order to make teaching enjoyable and effective, teachers should use innovative teaching methods, i.e., participatory or CLT methods rather than only lecture or grammar-translation methods and innovative teaching techniques such as group work, demonstration, or presentation. Findings of the study are supported by the findings of the other researchers, implying that “*in handling English teaching problems, teachers must use a variety of methods for teaching English language*” (Fatoro 2015, p. 29) and teachers should encourage to apply different teaching methods as it is helpful for teachers to establish an effective teaching process (Holenšinská 2006). Further, classroom management (Virginia Department of Education 2006) and teaching aids or resources (Mishra 2015; Songbatumis 2017) are imperative for effective English teaching, and it is important to ensure that “*teachers get proper teaching facilities, including space, books, and teaching aids*” (Pande, 2013, p. 419, cited in Songbatumis 2017, p. 58). Thus, it can be suggested that the findings of the study may have policy implication to improve their teaching effectiveness and students' performance.

A number of suggestions regarding how to increase teachers' English teaching skills and students' English performance are achieved from the findings of the study that may help to increase teachers' teaching effectiveness. These suggestions can also be helpful in taking effective measures for the improvement of language teaching and students' English performance. To promote students' English performance, teaching activities should be more effective and enjoyable. To cope with the new idea and knowledge of 21st century's pedagogy, teachers should be allowed and encouraged to participate in different training, seminar, or workshop. So that they can share their newly gained ideas and knowledge with other teachers and get feedback from them. In addition, teachers' devotion to teaching largely depends on their wages and other benefits, like incentives, teachers' welfare, treatment, and housing opportunities (Jahan & Ahmed 2018; Latifet al. 2011; Page and Page (1982); and Giacometti (2005). Findings of this study reveal that teachers in the sample think their teaching effectiveness can be accelerated if school authority increases their wages and other facilities for their welfare. It is expected that such measures will be helpful in improving students' English performance.



## Limitations of the study

It is believed that there are some limitations of the study, and all of the limitations have been taken into account to make the study more reliable and valid. Firstly, the scope of this study was limited to only 90 teachers selected from 24 schools of Dhaka city and rural areas located in four different districts of Dhaka division. Only open-ended questionnaires and FGD (Focus Group Discussion) were used to generate data for the study. Other methods could be used to achieve more depth information about what happens in a real English teaching setting. This study focused on exploring only three aspects such as the challenges, the way forward of effective English language teaching, and ways of improvement of teachers' teaching skills and students' English performance. There are other aspects, like characteristics of an effective English teacher and teaching effectiveness, variations in students' English performance at different levels (i.e., school, class, and student levels) and predictors of students' English performance, which have not considered in this study.

## Policy implication of the study

Findings of the study may have some policy implications. For illustration, for effective teaching and students' good grade, it is important to encourage English teachers to use participatory based CLT (communicative language teaching) method in their English class along with lecture based GT method. English teachers should use teaching aids, like pictures, charts, vibe cards, and multi-media projector along with English textbook for making their teaching learning activities more effective and attractive. Teachers should emphasize on the practice of four skills, i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing, while teaching English in the classroom, and they should use lesson plan and give homework regularly. In-service training, workshop, seminar and symposium can be arranged at school and government levels to improve English teachers' teaching efficiency and skill. For effective teaching, classroom factors, like class size, sitting arrangement, and good environment, are imperative and school authority should ensure all of these for increasing teachers' teaching skills and students' English performance. In order to way forward challenges, teachers can use participatory teaching strategies, like group work, pair work, question-answer, presentation, brain-storming. Additionally, teachers should take special care to the students, who are weak in English and use their native, i.e., Bengali language in their instructional process for students' better understanding of English. The duration of class should be increased as 30 min time is not sufficient for effective teaching. The school authority should increase the number of English teachers to reduce teachers' workload. School authorities should take the following steps to improve English teachers' teaching quality such as, bringing change in English curriculum by focusing on four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing), encouraging teachers to increase the use of target language, i.e., English in instructional activities, appointing subject-based teacher (i.e., teacher from English

background), providing LAD (Language Acquisition Device) according to the teaching environment, and regular supervision or monitoring of teachers' teaching–learning activities. Teachers' motivation and involvement in teaching largely depend on their wages and other benefits. Thus, the authority should pay attention to this point to accelerate teachers' job satisfaction, which may have positive effect on teaching effectiveness. It is expected that all of these measures may help teachers to be more effective and efficient, which can certainly help to improve students' performance.

## Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the challenges of effective English teaching and the way forwards the challenges. A number of significant findings are explored from the study that seems to be essential to improve the quality of English teaching at secondary schools of Bangladesh. Teaching is an art but making this art effective is not that much easy job since teachers have to face a number of challenges during their teaching–learning activities, as depicted by the findings of the study. A number of suggestions also emerged out from the study that are expected to be helpful in improving teachers' teaching effectiveness. To boost students' English performance, prescribed English textbook is not enough. For making teaching activities more attractive and effective, teachers should use different teaching aids and use participatory based CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) method in their teaching–learning activities. Teachers' good level of content knowledge, well preparation, and class management capability are imperative for effective teaching, which certainly can increase students' English performance. Effective teaching is the single most important school-based factor influencing student achievement. Assessing teacher effectiveness is vital as it helps the researchers to identify the possible measures or predictors of teaching and teacher effectiveness. From this view, it can be said that the selection of this research idea is a significant one with respect to policy implications and it can contribute to improve English teachers' teaching quality. Moreover, the findings of the study can add new knowledge for the researchers, educators, head teachers, policymakers, and particularly for English teachers, so teachers can include this knowledge as essential ingredient in their effective teaching practice and policymakers can add new knowledge in future education policy as well to improve the quality of teaching. Finally, further research is recommended for the interested researchers, which may be able to explore other aspects of effective teaching, and the teacher can be benefited from the research findings to improve their teaching quality.

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**Data availability** The research is an original research and the researchers generated primary data to address the research objectives. The researchers can provide SPSS data file to fulfill the journal's data availability requirement.

## Declarations

**Conflict of interest** There is no conflict of interest that is directly or indirectly related to the research work for publication.

**Ethical approval** Full name of the committee that approved the research; The research committee of Jagannath University, Bangladesh approved the research. The researchers conducted the research following the research guideline of the committee.

**Informed consent** Informed consents were obtained from the school authorities (i.e., Head teachers) and sample teachers and explained them the purpose of the research before conducting the research.

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