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## EFL Learners' Participation in Primary Schools of Coastal Areas in Bangladesh

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### Abstract

Despite numerous initiatives by both governmental and non-governmental organizations, primary level students' skills in English language are still below the expected level in Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012; Sultana, 2010). Our study examined reasons behind the limited participation of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in primary level classrooms in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. To conduct the research, we followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). We collected data from 37 male and 23 female students in grades four and five through questionnaire surveys and three focus group discussions (FGDs). We also collected data from five teachers through interviews and three class observations. We found that teachers had less motivation to create an interactive learning environment for the students due to heavy teaching loads and administrative assignments. Many of the students had low academic expectations and motivation, lived in poor socio-economic conditions that required them to work, and were impacted by frequent natural disasters that interrupted their regular classes. The results of our research provide insights for educationists and policymakers related to primary education in disaster-prone coastal areas as well as other rural parts of the country.

### Keywords

mixed methods, primary level learner, EFL classroom, coastal areas of Bangladesh

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# EFL Learners' Participation in Primary Schools of Coastal Areas in Bangladesh

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Despite numerous initiatives by both governmental and non-governmental organizations, primary level students' skills in English language are still below the expected level in Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012; Sultana, 2010). Our study examined reasons behind the limited participation of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learners in primary level classrooms in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. To conduct the research, we followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). We collected data from 37 male and 23 female students in grades four and five through questionnaire surveys and three focus group discussions (FGDs). We also collected data from five teachers through interviews and three class observations. We found that teachers had less motivation to create an interactive learning environment for the students due to heavy teaching loads and administrative assignments. Many of the students had low academic expectations and motivation, lived in poor socio-economic conditions that required them to work, and were impacted by frequent natural disasters that interrupted their regular classes. The results of our research provide insights for educationists and policymakers related to primary education in disaster-prone coastal areas as well as other rural parts of the country.

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## Introduction

Primary school students of coastal areas in Bangladesh face some distinct challenges when learning English. Natural disasters frequently threaten this region, causing schools to serve as cyclone shelters. Additionally, the students mostly come from low-income families and occasionally engage in income-generating activities to support their families. Given these factors, modern teaching facilities are unlikely here. Hence, our paper explores the factors influencing the students' participation in English classes at primary schools in disaster-prone coastal areas of Bangladesh.

Student engagement in the learning process in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context has always been considered essential for acquiring a foreign language. This engagement is possible through collaborative learning in a classroom situation where learners interact and negotiate to solve a problem or prepare an assignment (Ferdous & Karim, 2019). Thus, engagement in a language class creates an opportunity to practice the language. To engage learners in a language class, there are different approaches and methods in English Language Teaching (ELT). Despite several modern approaches in promoting learners' autonomy and engagement, a traditional method like GTM (Grammar Translation Method) has

been more popular among teachers in Bangladesh. GTM (one of the earliest teaching methods in EFL) is a teacher dominated method where students have limited interaction with the teacher and other fellow learners. Reading and writing skills were given priority and speaking and listening skills were completely ignored. Students' native language was used to translate the target language to make it clear to learners (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Among many more modern approaches, CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) has gained more acceptance and has been advocated by language practitioners as it allows interactive pedagogy in the class. In the CLT approach to teaching language, students are engaged and involved in interacting with their teachers and peers to negotiate for meaning in the target language. Thus, students' communicative competence is enhanced (Lightbown & Spada, 2006 as cited in Abebe & Deneke, 2015). CLT entails individual, pair, and group activities, e.g., "hot seat," role-play, group discussion, and so on, that ultimately benefit the students in learning the language and developing communicative competence in that language (Bean & Peterson, 1998; Larsen-Freeman, 2000). It is believed that students participate better in EFL classes if they receive the teacher's encouragement and support. At this point, Nunan (1991, as cited in Choudhury, 2005, p. 80) has suggested that "learning to speak in a foreign language will be facilitated when learners are actively engaged in attempting to communicate in groups."

However, active engagement of the students remains a rare case for several reasons, as evident in multiple studies. For instance, Fritschner (2000) and Tatar (2005) report that a high-anxiety environment increases the learners' feelings of isolation and leaves learners inactive in class participation. Krashen (1982) identifies some affective variables, such as anxiety, motivation, personality traits and self-confidence that can negatively affect second language acquisition. He asserts that low motivation, low self-confidence, anxiety and introversion can create a mental block that impedes language acquisition. To ensure students' participation, the teacher as a facilitator should provide supportive classroom environments and actively motivate the learners to speak in English and gradually, the teacher should take less directive roles (Choudhury, 2005; Tatar, 2005). In addition, an input-rich environment is required where the learners can be relaxed, motivated and self-confident in acquiring the second language, i.e., English, successfully.

The English learning situation in a predominantly monolingual country like Bangladesh is one where students are known to have English language anxiety (Rahman, 2005). A recent study shows that more than 80% of students feel anxious in English classes at the secondary level in rural areas of Bangladesh (Kabir, 2015). As a result, it is difficult to expect good participation in the English class. Kabir has explored some reasons behind the students' anxiety in English classes—teachers' lack of understanding about the CLT approach, lack of classroom activities and communication strategies, and the content was difficult for the learners. He has recommended that teachers ensure anxiety-free learning environments by using friendly approaches, helping to motivate students, and boosting student self-confidence. In addition, Rahman (2005) shows that students identified their teachers' lack of competence to teach English in schools and colleges as a serious concern.

Given that the scenario at mainland primary-level schools is not satisfactory, the researchers sought to examine the situation of English language learning at the primary level in coastal areas, which are prone to natural disasters and likely to remain on the periphery of attention. The coastal areas of Bangladesh have 25% of the country's population (Mazid, 2015), and about 50% of this population lives below the poverty line (UNDP, 2011; UNICEF, 2010, as cited in Erling et al., 2012). In fact, a good number of students living in these areas need to work for their families' economic survival. In line with this, there are some students who attend the classes just to collect the stipend provided by the government. Students as well as teachers are absent several times in an academic year due to storms.

## **Aim of the Research**

The aim of this mixed-methods research is to illustrate the factors that impact the students' participation in English classes in disaster-prone coastal areas in Bangladesh, inclusive of what impact teaching techniques might have on student involvement.

Our study is also an attempt to contribute to an understanding of the nature of socio-psychological factors, socio-economic factors, and natural disasters on the nature and pattern of students' participation while we try to promote interactive pedagogy. We will attempt to provide insights for the policy planning of sustainable intervention strategies for learning English language skills in the coastal areas.

## **Research Questions**

A mixed-methods approach was used to answer the following research questions from the perspectives of teachers and students:

1. What factors affect students' participation in primary school English classes in the coastal areas?
2. What is the impact of teaching techniques on the learners' classroom participation in the schools in coastal areas?
3. To what extent do socio-psychological factors, socio-economic factors and natural disasters impact learners' classroom participation in English classes?

## **Background of the Study**

Bangladesh has witnessed a rapid rise in the number of students in primary education (The World Bank, 2016). To teach the enormous number of students at the primary level in different parts of Bangladesh, the Government of Bangladesh has provided 86.64% of primary school teachers with both short-term and long-term training (CAMPE, 2015). According to the Third Primary Education Development Program (PEDP-3; DPE, 2015), primary school teachers have received a range of training and development initiatives including a Diploma in Primary Education, in-service training and a teacher support network to improve their English language teaching skills at the primary level. These initiatives are supposed to enhance teachers' skills to implement more engaging teaching and learning strategies to get better learning outcomes.

Some non-government organizations (NGOs) are also working to support primary-level students by accommodating education to those who drop out. For example, BRAC, one of the leading NGOs in Bangladesh, is working with the students who have dropped out within the first three years of schooling so that these students can be merged within the mainstream of education without losing a schooling year by taking part in the Primary Education Completion Examination conducted by the Directorate of Primary Education Bangladesh (BRAC, 2016). According to the BRAC Education program, they have a well-organized teacher training program to facilitate learning at their schools in different parts of the country.

However, despite several initiatives by government and non-government organizations, primary-level students' English language abilities remain below the intended level (Hamid & Honan, 2012; Sultana, 2010). There are a wide variety of factors responsible for the poor quality of English in Bangladesh. Among them, students' participation in English classes has remained a serious concern for teachers, researchers, and educationists. Compared to urban areas, the situations in rural areas are even worse. In this regard, studies conducted by Hamid and Honan (2012) and Kirkwood (2013) observed that teachers were dominant, and the

expected interaction was largely absent from the EFL classes that is integral to enhancing students' speaking and listening skills.

Iftakhar (2014) reported that about 96% of rural primary school teachers did not have a clear idea about CLT, and teachers really struggled to engage many students in-class activities as well as provide necessary feedback. She further asserted that like mathematics (a compulsory subject at the primary level), most of the teachers considered English as a subject rather than a language. Subsequently, knowingly, or unknowingly GTM is followed to teach students to get better grades in the subject of English. Therefore, the focus has shifted from practicing the language to memorizing different examination-oriented topics for achieving good grades.

In another study, Kabir (2015) has presented that in the rural setting of Bangladesh, more than half of the students refrain from participating in English classes at the secondary level due to fear and a lack of confidence since they could not improve their skills in the English language at the primary level. In this regard, Tatar (2005) has emphasized that active classroom participation is necessary for achieving success in language learning. In an empirical study, Precourt and Gainor (2019) explored that the students who had good contributions in classroom discussions got 25% better grades than the students who did not participate to the expected level. Vygotsky (1978, as cited in Hall, 2018) argues that learning takes place through social interaction, where learners are active and interactive with their peers and teachers. Hence, to improve students' learning efficiency, it is necessary to give young learners a learning-friendly environment (Jones, 2007) so that they can participate actively without any worries.

In the given academic environment of primary schools, the students of coastal areas face some other unique challenges in learning the English language. Firstly, primary schools are used as cyclone shelters (Spector, 2015). Moreover, the parents play an important role in students' attendance. In our study areas, parents are mostly uneducated and are involved in different low-income professions, such as artisan fishermen, small farmers, rural and urban wage laborers, etc. They would prefer to get their children engaged in their professions as helping hands rather than sending them to schools (Chowdhury, 2013). The schools of coastal areas are always under the threat of natural disasters like cyclones, storms, tidal surges, floods, or high tides. In a study, Islam (2004, as cited in Minar et al., 2013) has explored that in the past 200 years, the people of the coastal belt were attacked by about 70 major cyclones. In addition, the use of multimedia for teaching is rare in these schools where a smooth supply of electricity is unlikely. In this EFL context, we wanted to explore the actual learning conditions, especially the level of student participation that propels language learning. Since the existing literature does not show any empirical studies focusing on the practices of English at the disaster-prone primary schools in the coastal areas of Bangladesh, we felt an urge to investigate the phenomena.

As researchers, we have several advantages to conduct this study. First, we have firsthand knowledge about the research setting as both of us geographically belong to this region. Second, we share our common interest in the study as the first author is working with this issue for his M.Phil. study, and the second author, apart from being the supervisor of the study, has extensively worked in English studies at rural areas and has published a series of papers by the British Council (UK). Moreover, the first author was born in one of the districts of the coastal areas and he has experienced the problems of primary education in the coastal areas. Third, both of us are teachers at the tertiary level and we have taught some students who completed their primary education in the study areas. The students gave us an opportunity to know more about the problems in English studies at the primary level in the coastal areas. They shared with us the different challenges they faced which were not directly related to English classes but nonetheless impacted their learning. The prominent challenges were teachers' absenteeism, interruption in electricity supply, lack of academic facilities, teachers' methods

of teaching, and students' poor attendance. It is a well-known fact that primary education gives students a basic educational foundation, but unfortunately, the English language skills of the students at our universities are not up to the mark. Therefore, we decided to focus on English studies in the coastal areas since research on English studies in these geographical locations has received little attention. As we believe that the more the students participate in a target language in the classes, the more they are likely to learn the language. Hence, in this study, we examined the factors behind their existing participation level from both students' and teachers' perspectives.

### **Review of Literature**

An English language classroom is comprised of a teacher and several learners who come together for a pedagogical purpose (Allwright, 1992, as cited in Hall, 2018). However, Tudor (2001) and Erikson (1986) have pointed out that a classroom is also a social environment where language lessons can be understood through social events and social interaction. Regarding classroom participation, Hall (2018) describes: "The beliefs and expectations of parents, institutional managers and governmental agencies beyond the classroom and the relationships between the participants in the classroom (i.e., teachers and learners) affect classroom practices and behavior" (p. 3).

At present, CLT is widely used to make the EFL class a place of active participation for the learners (leaving GTM aside) because students may know the rules of the language, but they are not able to use the language properly (Widdowson, 1978). The shift to CLT occurred in the late 1970s and early 1980s (Widdowson, 1990) in the field of language education. Referring to CLT, Larsen-Freeman (2000) has pointed out that in this approach, students are real communicators, and the teacher acts as an advisor. Hence, CLT encourages students by encouraging active participation in EFL classes.

Studies showed that students' participation varied in a language class due to different factors. Firstly, the students who have high self-efficacy or a high level of self-confidence participate better in class activities (Krashen, 1982; Pajares, 1996; Schunk, 1995). In addition, Yashima et al. (2004) observed that the learners who had high self-efficacy were willing to use a second language (L2) to communicate inside and outside the classroom and even ask teachers questions. They further reported that the students who were interested in international affairs and international vocations tended to be willing to communicate in English and frequently engage in voluntary communication. On the other hand, students who have low levels of self-confidence are less engaged in class activities (Fassinger, 2000; Gomez et al., 1995).

Secondly, instructor traits like friendly and supportive behaviors, being approachable, and being encouraging contribute to the active participation of students in the class (Mustapha et al., 2010). David (2007) found that teachers' questioning behaviors also had an impact on the students' classroom interaction. He noticed that Nigerian EFL teachers verified their students' knowledge of the lesson by using more display questions, which are like closed-ended questions due to their demand for short and limited answers. For example, "What is the title of the story we read yesterday?" Also, the answers to these questions are already known to the teachers. Thus, this questioning strategy helps keep students focused and increases classroom engagement. Teachers' abilities to involve students in participating more in class activities is another important factor (Nurzatulshima et al., 2009, as cited in Abdullah et al., 2012). A study by Furrer et al. (2014) noted that teachers could increase positive interaction in the classroom by creating a proper opportunity to collaborate on certain learning activities. This could be done by activating passive peers to get engaged with their active counterparts, resulting in productive and increased classroom participation.

Anxiety is another factor that plays a significant role in students' inactive participation in an EFL class. Foreign language classroom anxiety has three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and anxiety of negative evaluation (Horwitz, 1986; Li & Liu, 2011). Different studies show that communication apprehension mainly lies in verbal communication which has a positive relationship with anxiety. That is, anxious students are not willing to express themselves verbally in an EFL class, moreover, when they are asked to share something, they become silent for the whole class time (Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Liu & Jackson, 2011). Habiburrahim et al. (2020) identified some factors like low self-confidence, lack of competency, and fear of making mistakes that created anxiety among the Acehese students (an ethnic group from Aceh province in Indonesia) and as a result, the students' classroom participation was weakened. They suggested that teachers could reduce anxiety and enhance participation in English-speaking classes by creating a friendly classroom environment.

Peers can provide motivation for students to participate in class (Mustapha et al., 2010), but sometimes peer rejection has negative impacts on learners (Kadir & Salija, 2018). Kadir and Salija have suggested a learning-friendly environment for the EFL learners where teachers play a very important role. Teachers should plan class activities that encourage peer support instead of competition, which oftentimes elevates anxiety (Bekleyen, 2004). Classroom size could also be a factor that affects the motivation of students to participate in class. A study conducted by Shaheen et al. (2010, as cited in Abdullah et al., 2012) showed that 90% of students are interested in participating in small group discussions and hesitant to discuss in large classrooms. Thus, by engaging the students in the activities they are interested in and by motivating them, teachers can enhance students' participation in English classes.

In Bangladesh, English is taught as a compulsory subject from grade one to grade twelve. However, it is observed that many students struggle to perform well in English, particularly in speaking, when they reach the tertiary level. To better understand this, many studies were conducted to see how the students were practicing English at primary levels in the rural or urban areas of Bangladesh. However, rarely any research was conducted focusing on the teaching-learning environment of EFL classes at primary level in the coastal areas. Hence, we believe this is a unique opportunity to conduct research on the teaching-learning environment of the coastal areas since their socio-demographic picture and challenges are different from those of other parts of Bangladesh.

Therefore, in our study, we focused on the factors that affect the students' participation from the students' points-of-view and the teachers' points-of-view. The result of the research will give some useful information for teachers and policymakers. For the teacher, the outcome of the study will offer some reasons why students participate less in the EFL classes and perhaps how to best respond. The policymakers will gain insights into the challenges of the teaching-learning environment and possible ways to encourage better EFL learning practices in the coastal areas.

## **Methodology**

The limitations of qualitative and quantitative studies are evident in the existing literature. Quantitative research is often criticized for its limited understanding of the contextual factors influencing data collection, while qualitative research is considered non-generalizable (Charamba, 2020; Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017). We adopted a mixed-methods approach to address these concerns and gain deeper insights into the research problem while increasing the generalizability of the outcomes and preventing potential biases (Bryman, 2015). Ivankova and Stick (2007) explained the purpose of mixing quantitative and qualitative data, stating, "The quantitative data and results provided a general picture of the research problem, while the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained those



statistical results by exploring the participants' views regarding their persistence in more depth" (p. 97). In this research, we employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods approach to investigate the factors contributing to the limited participation of EFL learners in coastal areas. This approach involved conducting quantitative research, analyzing the results, and then using qualitative research to provide a more detailed explanation (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

To overshadow the pitfalls of a single method (Dörnyei, 2007), we gathered both qualitative and quantitative data which helped to triangulate the data for making the research more concrete (Bulsara, 2015; Dörnyei, 2007; Johnson & Christensen, 2014). Besides, we wanted data from both the students and teachers since it was difficult to collect sufficient data from one single source at the study sites which were in the remote coastal areas. We collected data using different tools to ensure the quality of the data given the small sample size.

We followed an explanatory sequential mixed methods design in this study which consists of two distinct phases (Creswell et al., 2003). In the first, quantitative phase of the study, we collected the data from the students with a survey questionnaire. Then, in the qualitative phase, we collected the data from students through three FGDs and from teachers through interviews and class observations. This qualitative data helped us explain the quantitative data that we collected in the first phase. In this study, the quantitative data helped us identify potential factors that affect the learners' classroom participation. Then, the qualitative data from multiple sources explained why the factors were significant or non-significant for affecting students' level of participation. Thus, the quantitative data gave us a general picture of the research problem, while the qualitative data and its analysis refined and explained in more depth those numeric data by investigating the participants' views and class observation data regarding the factors influencing students' participation level in English classes (Creswell, 2014; Ivankova & Stick, 2007).

From the beginning of this study, we gave more emphasis on qualitative data collection though it is the second phase of the data collection process (Creswell et al., 2003). It is because the purpose of the study is to identify and explain the factors that affect the learners' classroom participation. The primary focus of the first phase, quantitative data collection, was to reveal the potential factors that influenced learners' classroom participation. The second phase, qualitative data collection, sheds light on the factors for our deeper understanding and in-depth explanations. We connected the quantitative and qualitative phases when developing FGD and interview protocols and an observation checklist based on the result from the descriptive statistics from the first phase (Hanson et al., 2005). We collected both phases of data roughly in the same month. Finally, we integrated both the results of the quantitative and qualitative phases during the discussion of the outcomes of this study (Creswell et al., 2003). Figure 1 presents different phases of the design of this study.

**Figure 1**  
*Our Explanatory Sequential Mixed Methods Design*

Phase	Process	Product
<b>Quantitative Data Collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A survey questionnaire</li> <li>• A systematic sampling method was followed to select students (n=60)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numeric data</li> </ul>
↓		
<b>Quantitative Data Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Data screening</li> <li>• Factor analysis</li> <li>• Frequencies</li> <li>• IBM SPSS Statistics 20</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Descriptive statistics</li> <li>• Factors</li> </ul>
↓		
<b>Connecting Quantitative and Qualitative Phases</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selecting 8-10 students randomly from grade 4 and grade 5 for each FGD session</li> <li>• Selecting 5 teachers and 2 head teachers for interviewing from the three schools</li> <li>• Developing FGD and interview questions based on the result of the quantitative phase</li> <li>• Preparing a class observation checklist</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• FGD protocol</li> <li>• Interview protocol</li> <li>• Class observation checklist</li> </ul>
↓		
<b>Qualitative Data Collection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Semi-structured interviews with teachers</li> <li>• FGD with students</li> <li>• Class observation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interview transcript</li> <li>• FGD transcript</li> <li>• Field notes</li> </ul>
↓		
<b>Qualitative Data Analysis</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coding and thematic analysis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Codes, categories, and themes</li> <li>• Similar and different categories and themes</li> </ul>
↓		
<b>Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Interpretation and explanation of quantitative and qualitative results</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discussion</li> <li>• Implications</li> </ul>

## **Procedure and Instrumentation**

We designed a bilingual (Bangla and English) survey questionnaire for students who are speakers of Bangla language in an EFL setting. The bilingual questionnaire was distributed among the students with the hope of getting better responses. Through the questionnaire, we expected to get the data related to current teaching and learning practices, students' classroom participation and the effects of natural (environmental) calamities on primary-level English classes. We were present physically to monitor and clarify any confusion during the completion process of questionnaires.

We conducted three FGDs to triangulate the questionnaire data in three different schools in Noakhali and Cox's Bazar districts that belong to the coastal areas of Bangladesh. In line with that, the FGDs were conducted in a friendly atmosphere using Bengali language instead of English for collecting better information about the factors that motivated them to participate actively or passively in the classroom activities. The FGDs lasted from 30 minutes to 40 minutes and were recorded with an audio recorder and in the form of field notes. Next, five teachers, one male and four female teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4 & T5) from both the districts were interviewed through semi-structured interviews to get their opinions about the teaching/learning status in the coastal areas and the participation level of primary students in EFL classes. Besides, two head teachers (HT1 & HT2) participated in two semi-structured interviews that also gave the researchers an opportunity to collect information about the learners' family backgrounds and the socio-economic conditions in addition to the teaching-learning environments in EFL classes.

We observed three different classes of two districts in the coastal areas to have a deeper understanding about the factors that affect students' participation. To observe the classes, we developed a 23-point classroom observation checklist. The checklist helped us to keep a record of teachers' talk time, students' engagement such as pair work, group work, asking and answering questions, students' motivation to reply to teacher questions, teacher and student interactions, etc. These points helped us to frame how the students participated in the class.

## **Participants**

To collect data through a survey questionnaire, we selected a total of 60 students from class four and class five following a systematic sampling method from three primary schools of coastal areas in Noakhali and Cox's Bazar districts. To avoid being biased, we selected 20 students from each class who had an uneven roll number (ex. 1.3.5...). However, the schools were selected purposively (Etikan et al., 2016) from the above-mentioned districts because the schools were easy for us to access and allowed us to observe the classes as well as conduct FGDs. Three FGD sessions were conducted with three groups of students (group 1, group 2 and group 3). In each group, eight to ten students (both male and female students) participated, and they were chosen randomly from grades four and five.

In the same way, the five teachers were selected purposefully (Patton, 2002) for face-to-face interviews from the same schools. Among the teachers, the minimum teaching experience was five years and a maximum of 15 years. An interesting point is that three of the teachers had a master's degree. Among them, only one had an M.A. in English whereas others received their master's degrees from other disciplines. One of the teachers completed a Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC indicates that a student has completed his/her 12 grades of formal education in Bangladesh), and another teacher had a Bachelor of Arts degree. Regarding the qualification of primary school teachers, Hamid (2010) reported that primary teachers in Bangladesh are expected to teach English as a subject and they are not subject specialists.

However, they receive training in English as like in other subjects. The head teachers were well experienced and both got a master's degree in a discipline other than English.

**Table 1**  
*Demographic Profiles of all Teacher Participants*

Teacher	Gender	Academic qualification	Experience (Number of years)	Received both long-term and short-term training for teaching English
T1	Female	MA (Non-English)	5	Both the trainings
T2	Female	MA (English)	5	Both the trainings
T3	Male	Bachelor of Arts	10	Both the trainings
T4	Female	HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate)	10	Both the trainings
T5	Female	Masters (Non-English)	15	Both the trainings
HT1	Female	Masters (Non-English)	8	Only short-term training
HT2	Male	Masters (Non-English)	12	Only short-term training

### Data Analysis

The research was done following an explanatory sequential mixed methods design (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Ivankova & Stick, 2007). At first, we analysed the quantitative data using IBM SPSS Statistics 20 software for frequency and percentages. After that, the qualitative data was recorded from three different sources. In the beginning, the data of three FGDs with the students was recorded with an audio recorder along with the field notes. Then, the data was transcribed verbatim, organized, and prepared for analysis. Next, after a thorough reading, the FGD data was coded and categorized to create interpretive themes. Finally, the identified themes were used to present the findings (Creswell, 2014; Creswell & Poth, 2017).

Similarly, the interview data were collected through audio recording and field notes. The recordings were then transcribed verbatim and organized for analysis. Following the tradition of qualitative methods, the interview transcripts and field notes were read several times and coded to create interpretive themes; ultimately, answering the study questions (Creswell, 2014). Later, the class observation data, which emerged from the class observation checklist and field notes, were merged with the interview data. All the data were summarized, coded and organized for analysis. In the end, the observation data was categorized and presented under different themes in the "Teacher Interviews and Class Observation" section. Table 2 contains detailed information on the codes and themes of the qualitative phase of the study.

<b>Qualitative Phase</b>		
<b>Types of data</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Themes</b>
FGDs with students	Difficult language, No use of English in real life, Lack of interest in learning English, Not interested to participate in class activities	Lack of Intrinsic Motivation
	How to speak in English, How to ask questions, Did not dare to ask questions, Teachers might scold for wrong questions, Teachers do not ask different questions	Asking and Answering Questions
	Struggle to understand English, Teacher's use of English, Everybody would laugh, Fear English	Anxiety about the English Language
	Could not prepare the homework individually, Could not do the homework properly, Parents do not understand English well, No one else to support preparing homework, Could not afford private tutors	Support at Home
	Individual writing and reading tasks, Discussion with a classmate was not encouraged, Lack of pair work or group work	Group Work or Pair Work
	Students engaged in after-school wage-earning activities, Too tired to practice the lessons at home	Poor Socio-Economic Status
	Natural disaster or bad weather, Missed classes due to heavy rain, Roads became muddy and slippery, No make-up classes for natural disasters, Could not connect the missed class content with the new class content	Disruption in Regular Classes
<b>Types of data</b>	<b>Codes</b>	<b>Themes</b>
Teacher interviews and class observation	Do many administrative jobs, Conducted more than five classes, Affected teaching performance, Extra classes, Teacher's absence, Burden for them, Did not get adequate time, Compromising the qualities of a student-centered class	Teacher Workload
	Follow-up training, Following the GTM, Managing a large class, Collaborative learning strategies, Did not receive the training properly, Utilizing the questioning technique, Close-ended questions, Class time was limited, Preparing lesson plans, Teacher talk time was long	Teacher Training
	Collaborative learning strategy, Group work or pair work activities, Teacher-student ratio was high, Not practicing the language, Prone to achieve good scores, Individual reading and translating	Group Work or Pair Work Activities

	No intrinsic motivation, Did not see any use of English in daily life, Scared of making mistakes, Motivate the learners to ask questions, Got stipend, No speaking exam, No participation marks, Proficiency in English was not up to expected level, Short time for asking and answering questions, Teacher tried to make them active, Average size of the class was about fifty students	Motivation
	Natural disasters, Student attendance was reduced, Schools were shut down several times, Smooth learning was interrupted, No alternative plan to make-up the missed classes, Hardly got enough time, Number of students reduced, Hot summer days, Rainy days, Cold environment, Students became irregular, Convincing the students and parents, Raining from the morning, Fifty per cent of the students were absent	Disruption in Regular Classes Due to Natural Disasters
Teacher interviews and class observation (continued)	Families were not economically solvent, Parents were either illiterate or not literate enough, Parents were poor wage-earners, Could not afford any supplementary teaching, Did not get support to prepare their lessons at home, Became passive in classes, Students were engaged in different wage-earning activities, Father worked as a replacement labourer for his son	Socio-Economic Status

## Results

### Quantitative Phase

#### *Questionnaire Survey for Students*

The quantitative data was collected from 60 students through a survey questionnaire from three different schools in the coastal areas in Bangladesh. We had four categories of questions in the survey questionnaire: group work or pair work activities, teacher talk time, students' attitude to asking and answering questions in the English classes, and disruption in regular classes due to natural disasters.

**Group Work or Pair Work Activities.** Among all the students, 33.3% of respondents replied that they “always” did group work or pair work in English classes. In contrast, 56.7% answered that they “most of the time” did group work or pair work and 5% of students reported that they “sometimes” did group work or pair work activities. The remaining pupils (5%) responded that they rarely participated in group work or pair work activities.

**Teacher Talk Time.** Regarding teacher talk time in English classes, 70% of students replied that teachers “always” dominated the class discussion. In addition, 73.3% of students reported that the teacher asked students questions in English classes “most of the time.”

**Students' Attitude to Asking and Answering Questions in the English Classes.** In this category, only 11.7% of students replied that they “always” ask and answer the teacher's questions to actively participate in class discussions or activities while 70% responded that they participated often by asking and answering questions about the lesson. A small percentage of students, 5%, indicated that they occasionally enjoyed participating in class discussions, while

an equal number (5%) mentioned that they rarely engaged themselves by asking and answering questions. However, 8.3% of the students expressed a lack of interest in participating in-class discussions using this strategy.

**Disruption in Regular Classes Due to Natural Disasters.** Regarding the interruption of natural disasters in regular classes in the coastal areas, 15% of the students responded that natural disasters interrupted their classes “always,” 67% of the students said disasters disrupted classes “most of the time” and 13% of the students reported it did disrupt “sometimes,” while 5% considered that it did “a little bit.”

## Qualitative Phase

### *FGDs with Students*

We conducted three FGDs with students and identified some reasons behind their lack of participation in English classes, and found some suggestions from the young minds as possible solutions to the problems. We have presented the reasons below under various themes.

**Lack of Intrinsic Motivation.** Some students from each group reported that they did not find any benefit in learning English. As a result, they were not interested in learning the language, and did not participate actively in English classes. A student from group 2 responded, “English is a difficult language for me, and I am scared of it. Besides, I do not see anyone using English here.”

**Asking and Answering Questions.** Some other students from group 3 said that their teachers did not motivate them enough to ask or answer questions. “I do not know how to speak English well, then, how can I ask questions?” commented a student from group 3. That was why they did not dare to ask for any clarifications, and they thought their questions might be wrong because of incorrect English. As a result, they worried that the teachers might scold them. A student from group 3 pointed out, “Teachers do not ask us sufficient questions in English classes.”

**Anxiety about English Language.** Next, some of the students from group 2 thought that English was a challenging language to learn as it was not their first language. Consequently, they became anxious about the English course and hardly contributed to the class discussions because of their fear of English. Besides, students from group 3 were very concerned about the teachers’ use of English in the class continuously in their lectures. According to a young learner, “I struggle to understand the lecture of my English teacher when she uses English continuously.” Another student added, “I wanted to ask questions but did not because everybody would laugh at me.” Thus, an English phobia grew among them, and they felt anxious to participate in class discussions.

**Support at Home.** In addition, a few students from group 3 reported that they did not participate actively in English classes because they could not prepare their homework individually. One of the students from the group informed, “I could not do my English homework properly since my parents do not understand English and no one else is at home to support me in preparing the homework nicely.” Furthermore, they were so poor that they could not afford the support of private tutors. So, they neither studied the lesson at home nor asked questions in the classroom.

**Group Work or Pair Work.** Students from group 1 and group 3 said that their classes were mainly exam-oriented, and often they did not get the opportunity to practice the language skills through group or pair work. A boy reported, “I usually do my in-class reading and writing tasks individually to achieve a good result in the final exam. Besides, we are not encouraged to do the in-class work with our classmates.” A young girl informed, “I wanted to write the questions’ answers discussing with my friend, who was sitting beside me, but the teacher did not allow me.” Additionally, a significant number of students from all three groups reported that there were not enough engaging activities in English classes that could be completed in groups or pairs.

**Poor Socio-Economic Status.** Several students from group 2 shared that they were unable to participate actively in class activities because of their engagement in wage-earning activities. These students found it challenging to concentrate in classes because they were preoccupied with various jobs to support their families. For example, a few students from group 2 were working in the brick fields and other places to earn money. “I am working in a nearby tea stall (a small shop where prepared tea and a few snacks are sold or served for money) as a waiter, and the owner of the tea stall allows me to join the classes. However, I am often too tired after work to practice my lessons at home,” mentioned a student in class five.

**Disruption in Regular Classes.** Finally, most students from all three groups reported that their regular classes were interrupted, or they could not attend classes several times a year due to different natural disasters or bad weather, especially during heavy rain, floods and storms. For example, a fourth-grade student reported, “Last month, I missed many classes due to heavy rain.” Similarly, another student from the same class stated, “On rainy days, I avoid coming to school as the roads become muddy and slippery.” Students also expressed their disappointment that they did not get make-up classes for the lessons they missed due to natural disasters at different times of the year. Therefore, it was difficult for them to bridge between the missed content and the subsequent lessons, which ultimately discouraged their participation in English classes.

### ***Teacher Interviews and Class Observation***

Five English teachers from three primary schools who conducted classes for grades four and five in Noakhali and Cox’s Bazar districts were interviewed to understand their views about the students’ participation. Additionally, two head teachers gave valuable opinions on the current teaching and learning scenarios of English at the primary level in the study sites. The researchers merged the data obtained from classroom observations with the insights gathered from the interviews. Teachers’ interviews and class observations gave the researchers substantial data that was organized under different themes to understand the factors that affected students’ classroom participation in English classes.

**Teacher Workload.** Four teachers (T2, T3, T4, and T5) and both the head teachers (HT1 and HT2) explicitly said that they had to do many administrative jobs as well as conduct the classes. Regarding the number of classes, three teachers (T3, T4, and T5) and a head teacher (HT2) asserted that a teacher needed to teach more than five classes in a day and the tight schedule made him/her exhausted, and that affected their teaching performance. Moreover, two of the teachers (T3 and T5) observed that when extra classes were added to the regular schedule due to another teacher’s absence, it often became a “burden” for them to conduct the regular classes smoothly. As a result, sometimes they did not get adequate time to prepare for the



classes which led them to conduct the classes in ways that compromised some of the qualities of an ideal student-centered English language class.

**Teacher Training.** According to two teachers (T3 and T4) and a head teacher (HT2), English subject-related teachers do not receive regular “follow up” training to practice the techniques of the CLT approach. As a result, they tended to rely on the GTM to manage often a large class instead of using collaborative learning strategies. However, another teacher (T5) said, “We received training, but some of the teachers struggled to adapt to the new teaching techniques.”

In EFL classes, questioning techniques like asking close-ended questions, providing wait times for getting responses, etc. can effectively enhance the learners’ engagement. Most of the teachers were not able to utilize these techniques effectively (Class Observation 1 & 2). Regarding questioning techniques, three of the teachers (T3, T4, and T5) reported that they usually asked some close-ended questions due to limited class time. A teacher (T5) opined, “We could reduce teacher talk time by allowing learners to ask and answer questions.” Another teacher (T4) said, “We should get proper training on how to prepare lesson plans and follow the lesson plans regularly to engage the students more in learning activities.” We also observed that the teacher talk time was very long, consequently, the students got significantly less time to share their opinions (Class Observation 2 & 3).

**Group Work or Pair Work Activities.** A collaborative learning strategy is very effective in EFL classes. Two teachers (T3 and T4) said that group work or pair work activities were not a regular practice as a collaborative learning strategy in their classes since the teacher-student ratio was so high. Another teacher (T5) reported, “Class time was short, and we needed to complete the syllabus before the final examination instead of focusing on four basic skills of English.”

“In this examination-oriented system of education, both students and teachers were not focusing on actively practicing the language rather they focused on achieving good scores in the summative assessment,” asserted a head teacher (HT2).

During the observation of three classes, we found only one activity was conducted in groups (Class Observation 1). In another observation session, we found the teacher followed the GTM to conduct the class. The teacher started the class with greetings and taking the roll. Then, the teacher asked the students to open their English textbooks. After that, the students, one by one, read the text, and the teacher translated it into Bangla (L1). In this way, the class ended before the teacher could complete the translation, and the students were instructed to finish reading the text at home. The teacher also mentioned that they would continue reading to the end in the next session (Class Observation 2). Hence, practising English was not encouraged through collaboration in the classes.

**Motivation.** Students’ intrinsic and extrinsic motivations play an important role in an EFL class. However, some teachers found a lack of intrinsic motivation among students to ask questions (T3 and T5). “It was because they did not see the practical application of English in their daily lives,” reported a teacher (T4). Another teacher (T5) said, “Students did not like to participate in class discussions because they were scared of making mistakes.”

On the other hand, a teacher (T1) described, “We, teachers could motivate the learners to ask more questions (maybe grammatically right or wrong) in EFL classes and we did it.” It is worth mentioning here that a good number of students attended classes regularly in these schools because they got a stipend from the schools (T3, T4, and HT2). However, all the teachers (T1, T2, T3, T4 and T5) and head teachers (HT1 and HT2) agreed on a point that students participated less in EFL classes because they did not have any speaking exams and

there were no marks allocated for class participation. As a result, students lacked the motivation to participate orally in EFL classes. Class observation data also corroborated the same idea where we found that students' proficiency in English was not up to the expected level to make them motivated and active participants in classes (Class Observation 3).

Again, it was evident in the observation data that the teacher attempted to encourage students to ask any questions on the class content and answer her (teacher's) questions for a short duration to make the current class engaging. However, this approach was challenging to maintain because of the large class size, averaging about fifty students (Class Observation 1).

**Disruption in Regular Classes Due to Natural Disasters.** Due to different natural disasters, students' attendance has been significantly reduced, leading to shutting down the schools several times in the academic year. Consequently, smooth learning in classes has often been interrupted. Considering these circumstances, a teacher (T3) asserted, "During the warning of the last cyclone named "Bulbul," the school was shut down for two days, and students' attendance was very poor on the days before and after the cyclone. However, there was no alternative plan to make up for the missed classes." Regarding this issue, another teacher (T4) informed, "We hardly got enough time for conducting makeup classes as we did some administrative jobs and also provided substitute teaching for colleagues who were absent due to training or personal issues. Hence, we emphasized completing the whole syllabus of class five before the PEC (Primary Education Completion) examination which was conducted nationwide." Thus, the academic environment has become exam-oriented for passing the English subject and achieving good scores, rather than practicing the English language.

Additionally, two teachers (T3 and T4) reported that during hot summer days, students did not take part in the classes actively and if there was any disruption of continuous electricity supply, it was impossible for the students to concentrate effectively. T5 explicated:

After a natural disaster or bad weather (in winter, summer or rainy season), students became irregular in attending school. We worked hard to convince the students to attend the classes regularly by visiting their houses and arranging meetings with their parents because many of them were working at different places to support their families.

Furthermore, a head teacher (HT2) stated, "In winter, students felt uncomfortable in the cold environment. As a result, they often missed classes, especially morning classes, and struggled to concentrate on their studies; ultimately, their participation level went down."

During our observation of an English class (Class Observation 3) in Cox's Bazar when the cyclone "Bulbul" was approaching, we found that fifty per cent of the students were absent in the class due to heavy rain.

**Socio-Economic Status.** A significant number of students in the schools came from economically disadvantaged families. The parents of these students were either illiterate or lacked sufficient literacy skills to help their children prepare for English classes. In this regard, a head teacher (HT1) asserted, "Students who got support from the parents (for shadow teaching or for preparing lessons) were doing well and participating in the class actively." In addition, teachers (T2, T3, and T5) reported that most of the students' parents were poor wage earners who could not afford any supplementary teaching aids for them. At this point, three teachers (T3, T4, and T5) and two head teachers (HT1 and HT2) claimed that the students who did not get support to prepare their lessons at home were passive in English classes. Moreover, T5 highlighted, "There were some students in this school who engaged in different wage-

earning activities to support their families.” Considering this, a head teacher (HT2) recounted an incident:

Last year, we requested a parent (whose son was working in a brick field at that time) to send his son to school to complete his primary education. We made him understand the importance of doing well on the PEC examination. Later, the man agreed and worked for his son for about two months in that brick field. The boy got the opportunity to continue his studies and sit for the PEC examination. Finally, he passed the Primary Education Completion examination with a good result.

Thus, students’ socio-economic status played a vital role in their level of participation in the EFL classes.

### **Discussion**

In this study, the researchers aimed to examine the reasons that affect students’ participation in primary level English classes in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. The analysis of both qualitative and quantitative data showed that teachers were more likely to follow the GTM instead of using collaborative learning strategies. It was evident from the students’ FGDs, teachers’ interviews, and class observation data that pair and group work were not used regularly and effectively. A similar result was found in a study conducted by Hamid and Honan (2012). However, to achieve better learning outcomes, students should be engaged in learning activities through pair and group work where students will interact with each other in English to learn the language (Jones, 2007; Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Yavuz & Arslan, 2018).

The data also revealed that teacher talk time was long, which affected student participation in the EFL classes. Due to this excessive teacher talk time, classes often became one-way talks or teacher-centered classes (Hamid & Honan, 2012). Maniruzzaman and Aktar (2011) found a similar result and suggested that reducing teacher dominance could increase learner participation in the classroom. The studies conducted by Nath and Mahbub (2008) and Hamid and Baldauf (2011) also yielded similar results and suggested adopting a learner-centered pedagogy in the EFL context.

The researchers also found that heavy teaching loads affected teachers’ teaching performance. As a result, they failed to engage the learners with in-class activities. Similarly, Hossain et al. (2015) found that primary teachers needed to teach six to seven classes per day since many schools did not have the required number of teachers in proportion to students. Besides, researchers found that sometimes the teachers had to conduct extra classes due to the absence of their colleagues.

It was evident from the interview data that different administrative tasks affected the EFL teachers’ teaching performance. Due to the administrative responsibilities, sometimes they could not adequately prepare for the lessons and the lessons turned into teacher-centered and didactic, having little room for communicative activities to engage students. Consequently, learners could not participate in the class to the expected level, and it negatively affected their learning. This finding is consistent with Kirkwood’s point-of-view (2013) that English lessons were mostly teacher-centered with less collaborative work to enhance students’ speaking skills. In this regard, Agcam and Babanoglu (2016) suggested assigning less administrative workload to the primary school teachers.

In addition, the findings revealed that although teachers received English subject-related training organized by the local education office, the gap between the two English subject-related training sessions was too long. As a result, they followed GTM as they often

needed to manage large classes and complete the syllabus before the final examination. Further follow-up training sessions for English subject teachers would be beneficial in addressing this issue. These sessions would help them review the techniques of CLT they learned during the long-term training session and apply them effectively in their classes.

Moreover, another challenge observed in the study was students' lack of active participation in learning activities, particularly in large classes. The challenge aligns with the findings of Shaheen et al. (2010, as cited in Abdullah et al., 2012) which indicated that students showed little interest in sharing anything in a large class. To tackle this issue, teachers could use the questioning technique, but most of the teachers could not utilize the questioning technique successfully to enhance the students' participation in EFL classes, as recommended by David (2007).

The investigation further showed that the students' intrinsic motivation, which refers to their willingness to engage without any obvious external reward, also affected their active participation in EFL classes. The researchers identified three factors that negatively influenced students' intrinsic motivation: a lack of visible benefits of learning English, anxiety about learning English and struggling to do the homework individually. A similar concern was reflected in previous studies (Bahous et al., 2011; Ghonsooly et al., 2012; Liu & Jackson, 2011; Rahman, 2007). In this regard, Ng and Ng (2015) reported that teachers could enhance students' intrinsic motivation by creating a safe classroom environment with a low level of anxiety and stress, which would affect students' participation in the EFL classes positively.

The findings of the study also revealed that students sat for the final examination (for class four) or the PEC examination (for class five) where only writing and reading skills were tested and there was no provision for testing speaking and listening skills. In line with that, students were not rewarded any marks for participation in English classes. This assessment policy impacted the students' participation level negatively. The finding is also congruent with the previous studies of Al Amin and Greenwood (2018) and Das et al. (2014).

One of the significant factors that adversely affected students' participation in English classes was their low academic expectations and motivation, which could be attributed to their poor socio-economic status. Since a good number of students were engaged in wage-earning activities, they could not pay the required attention to English classes. Even the slow learners who were interested in learning English faced difficulties receiving support from private tutors because of their poor economic status. In this regard, Nath (2008) explored that the students who got the support of supplementary tutoring performed better than those who did not get such support in primary education. Furthermore, the study revealed that teachers' motivation and smiling faces could inspire the students to participate actively in class activities. In a study, Savaşçı (2014) found the same results, where she argued that teachers' positive traits helped the students participate more in EFL classes.

Another important reason that affected students' participation in primary-level EFL classes in coastal areas was the frequent interruptions due to different natural disasters. Since the schools were used as cyclone shelters, there was a risk that they would be closed for several days due to a storm or a flash flood. It was evident in the data that the schools' academic activities were interrupted or completely halted multiple times throughout the year. At the same time, many students missed classes due to these natural hazards. Eventually, such disruptions led to a decline in student participation.

The discussion shows that the three research questions have been addressed adequately. The first question dealt with the factors that affected learners' participation in primary EFL classes in coastal areas, and the second one examined how far the teaching performance impacted learners' participation in EFL classes. The last question provided insight into the socio-psychological factors and natural disasters that impacted learners' classroom participation in English classes.

## Conclusion

Modern approaches like CLT advocate for learner-centric pedagogy, encouraging learners' active participation in language classes through group work or pair work to maximize interaction and achieve the learning objectives (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Similarly, the national education policy of Bangladesh focuses on learner-centred pedagogy, which includes individual and group activities following an active teaching and learning method. The policy suggests replacing the traditional teacher-centred approach with a learner-focused, task-based method (Ministry of Education [Bangladesh], 2010, p. 8, translated from Bangla by Hamid, as cited in Hamid & Honan, 2012). However, applying this policy in the coastal areas of Bangladesh presents challenges due to several constraints and limitations.

One major issue highlighted in the study is teachers' competence. Teachers are not well trained and lack interest in implementing CLT. Additionally, teachers have a heavy workload, teaching about six to seven classes a day (Hossain et al., 2015). They are also engaged in administrative tasks, which add to their burden. Furthermore, the socio-economic conditions of students in the coastal areas are very poor. Moreover, different natural disasters interrupt regular classes several times a year. Given the current context of primary education in the coastal areas of Bangladesh, ensuring the active participation of students in English classrooms is quite challenging unless we address the factors that affect students' learning.

The findings of the study are not generalizable since the scope of the study has some limitations. First, the number of respondents is limited. Second, the study site is in remote areas creating potential barriers to the accessibility of information. Third, the researchers could have interviewed more teachers to collect more data to strengthen teachers' perspectives on students' classroom participation. Next, more EFL classes could be observed at the primary level in the coastal areas to get a comprehensive picture of students' participation in the classroom.

To improve the current teaching-learning situation in the primary schools of coastal areas, the researchers offer some suggestions based on the findings. Firstly, the number of teachers should be increased in primary schools in the coastal areas of Bangladesh. Along with that, a special training programme should be designed for the teachers of coastal areas with particular attention to learner-centred approaches like the CLT approach and ensure teacher motivation. In addition, follow-up training sessions should be conducted from time to time to meet the new challenges of coastal areas. The training programme should equip teachers to prepare lesson plans, which should be in line with the lesson of the textbook. Teachers should be encouraged to use more interactive activities like group work and pair work in the class in an effective way to maximize students' participation. Apart from that, teachers may use language games to ensure students' engagement in English classes and make the classes interesting. Also, to enhance the students' participation level, we need to revise the assessment policy where some marks can be allocated for in-class participation and in-class speaking tests that will motivate the students to improve their speaking skills. In addition, summative assessments should test students' speaking skills along with the writing skills if we want to make our students competent communicators and writers in English. However, it is important to enhance facilities for teachers working in the coastal areas. Well-accommodated and secure teachers' quarters should be built close to the schools in the coastal areas so that teachers can stay there and join the classes on time. As a result, teachers can save some time and utilize the time to prepare their regular lessons as well as support the students who might need some extra care. In line with the teacher's living facility, an administrative post could be created to release the teachers from doing the administrative tasks. Additionally, school authorities should consider arranging make-up schedules or designing alternative plans for the interrupted classes due to natural calamities or crises. After that, school authorities or the teachers should consider arranging extra assistance for the learners who struggle to learn English in regular classes.

Finally, a good amount of budget should be allocated for the schools of coastal areas which will be provided to the students who are engaged in wage-earning activities so that these students can concentrate more on their studies. To motivate the students to learn English and the parents to send their children to school, the school authority could arrange motivational sessions twice a year. The motivational speaker could be a former student of the school or someone who studied in the same category of schools and was a successful student.

The article aims to contribute to the English language education of the coastal areas of Bangladesh by bringing a picturesque view of the teaching and learning practices. This type of study is important for developing countries like Bangladesh, which has a large coastal area and is a frequent target of natural disasters. In the study, we focused on the factors affecting students' participation in EFL classes in the primary schools of coastal areas. The context of our study is like some other developing countries in the world, and the result will give some food for thought for the English studies programs on ways to strive for sustainable development in similar predicaments.

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