
3-10-2022

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Recommended APA Citation

Rouf, M., & Mohamed, A. (2022). Secondary School EL Teachers' Classroom Language Proficiency: A Case Study in Bangladesh. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(3), 691-715. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5293>

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Abstract

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Keywords

secondary school, EL teachers, classroom language proficiency, case study, Bangladesh

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Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank the English language teachers and the head teachers, teacher trainers, and curriculum expert who agreed to participate in the study.

Secondary School EL Teachers' Classroom Language Proficiency: A Case Study in Bangladesh

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The study reported here aimed to examine the classroom language proficiency (CLP) of secondary school (SS) English language (EL) teachers in Bangladesh. It is obvious that the EL teachers in a non-native English-speaking context like Bangladesh need to have a very good oral proficiency in the target language (TL) as part of their content knowledge so that learners can take them as models and classroom teaching-learning is effective. Following a multiple case study approach, data were collected from six SS EL teachers as primary informants and four head teachers (HTs), three teacher trainers (TTs), and one curriculum expert (CE) as secondary informants through classroom observations and face-to-face interviews. The collected data were analyzed with the qualitative data analysis software NVivo 11 Pro using thematic analysis as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006). The key findings indicate EL teachers' poor CLP as they demonstrated: (1) limited grammatical structures and lexical range of TL use; (2) TL inadequacy for interaction with learners; (3) nominal use of the TL for classroom instruction; and (4) overwhelming use of the L1 in the classrooms. Discussing the implications of the main findings, this paper proposes some recommendations for the stakeholders concerned.

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Introduction

Sullivan (2011) stated that “all can agree that the French teacher who cannot speak French will not be a successful teacher of French.” (p. 241). In a broader sense, teachers are the main agents for ensuring qualitative changes in English language teaching-learning. A relationship exists between teachers' quality and learners' achievements in formal education (Wamala & Seruwagi, 2013; Wiens, 2012). It must be noted that this study examined the classroom language proficiency (CLP) of the secondary school (SS) English language (EL) teachers in Bangladesh, not their general English language proficiency. Teachers' CLP refers to their oral proficiency in English for carrying out some typical classroom activities (e.g., task instructions and asking questions), whereas their general English language proficiency indicates their skills in reading, writing, speaking, and listening. As for the language teachers, their CLP is a key part of their content knowledge. The EL teachers' job is different from that of the teachers of other disciplines as they teach a language as “knowledge” while simultaneously using the same language as medium of instruction (Faez & Karas, 2017). So, a good oral proficiency in the target language (TL) is essential for them to ensure effective teaching-learning (Canh & Renandya, 2017; Chambless, 2012; Richards et al., 2013). Moreover, according to the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL)

(as cited in Chambless, 2012), “the heart of language instruction is the ability to teach students to communicate, which can only be possible if teachers themselves exemplify effective communicative skills” (p. 144).

Young et al. (2014) defined CLP as:

...the essential English language skills a teacher needs to be able to prepare and enact the lesson in a standardized (usually national) curriculum in English in a way that is recognizable and understandable to other speakers of the language.
(p. 5)

The classroom language is, consequently, linked to teachers’ overall lesson activities. Likewise, Freeman et al. (2015) described the classroom language as “English-for-Teaching” (p. 132) which is needed to teach the English language learners (ELLs) inside the classrooms. “English-for-teaching” does not essentially follow the native-speaker model of language skills; rather, it advocates the clarity of language use so that teachers and learners concerned in an EL teaching-learning context can understand one another. There exists a close connection between teachers’ general language skills and CLP, but the discourse on general language proficiency usually does not address the issue of classroom language (Freeman, 2017). Furthermore, according to Hunter et al. (2015) the “classroom language” embodies those segments of a language that teachers and learners frequently use for classroom interaction. So, the CLP is more about competently using the TL for carrying out some typical classroom functions. Weddell (2011) claimed that despite large-scale curriculum and materials development and huge monetary investment, most of the learners around the world have failed to develop “a useable knowledge of English” (p. 129). To address this dismal situation, it is essential to examine what is happening inside the language classrooms. So, this study aimed to examine whether EL teachers in Bangladesh could use the English language efficiently for carrying out some typical classroom activities. The findings of the study would let us know different aspects of teachers’ classroom EL use and help initiate policy formation and restructure teacher preparation programs for addressing their classroom language deficiency, if any. The in-service and pre-service EL teachers are the intended audience for this study. Through this study, they would be able to see the relations between teachers’ CLP and typical classroom activities and feel encouraged to reassess their CLP for ensuring effective classroom teaching.

Conceptual Framework

The present study examined the issue of Bangladeshi SS EL teachers’ CLP using a conceptual framework that was mainly informed by an assessment framework known as the Language Proficiency Assessment for Teachers of English (LPATE) developed by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (Coniam & Falvey, 2013; Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2016). The framework aims to gauge the language skills of the present and forthcoming EL teachers of primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong. Along with the writing, speaking, reading, and listening skills, the LPATE examines the teacher candidates’ classroom English language proficiency. It is assessed through classroom observations and covers teachers’ classroom language skill only. The assessment consists of four scales as shown in Figure 1.

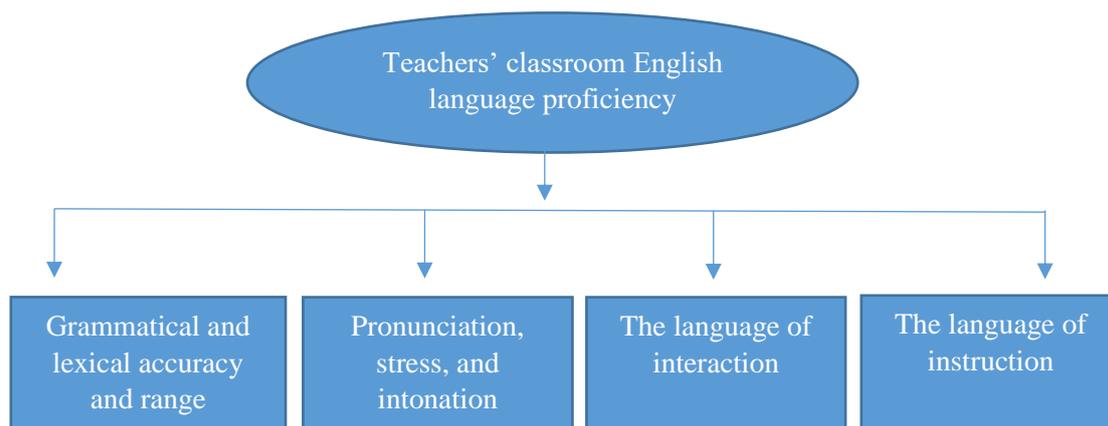


Figure 1

Four scales of language proficiency assessment for teachers of English (LPATE)

The LPATE framework was partially adopted as it was devised to assess the primary and secondary EL teachers' CLP in Hong Kong by classroom observations, and the EL teachers in both Hong Kong and Bangladesh were non-native English-speaking teachers in an Asian context. The conceptual framework was also informed by teachers' language-specific competencies as advocated by Richards (2010). He contended that the EL teachers must have a certain level of proficiency in the TL so that they can understand texts, present learners with exemplary language models through input, use the EL fluently in classes, explain things and instruct learners using English, elaborate grammar points and vocabulary properly, use relevant language materials, ensure accuracy of their language use, provide feedback on learners' language production, and create scope for learners' immersion in the TL in classrooms.

Literature Review

This section reviews literature related to teachers' CLP, focusing on the impact of CLP on classroom teaching and explaining the relations among CLP, language input, and teachers' PD. It also points out the gap for the present study considering the existing studies.

CLP: Impact on Teaching

Language teachers' oral proficiency level impacts classroom teaching and their confidence level. Cheng and Wang (2004) claimed that as language teachers want to develop the language skills of their learners, teachers themselves must have enough proficiency in the TL. If teachers are not proficient in the TL, it would be very difficult for them to make learners proficient. Oral proficiency of EL teachers also affects other aspects of classroom teaching, e.g., classroom management and teachers' input in the TL. Learners' learning outcomes are not produced by teachers' oral proficiency alone, but it is a critical component of teaching (Chambless, 2012). Zheng and Zhou (2014) argued that teachers' classroom language helps achieve the lesson objectives. In addition, the non-native EL teachers' language proficiency level affects their sense of efficacy and confidence level in teaching (Richards, 2017). If they do not possess the required proficiency in the TL, they display low confidence inside the classrooms, and it affects their pedagogical practices. This sense of low esteem becomes a barrier for teachers to interact in a communicative way with learners (Choi & Lee, 2016; Ghasemolani & Hashim, 2013).

CLP, TL Input and Teachers' PD

Moreover, teachers' classroom language can provide learners with essential TL input. Teachers with good content knowledge can create a "linguistically rich" environment in their classes where learners get a substantial amount of input from their teachers (Qian, 2015; Richards et al., 2013). Chambliss (2012) argued that learning outcomes in language classes are influenced by the amount and diverse forms of input in the TL. Comprehensible input and enough opportunity to interact with others using the TL help learners become proficient in the TL. In the EL teaching-learning contexts where learners get input predominantly from their teachers, as in Bangladesh, it would be challenging for them to attain a better proficiency level than that of their teachers. Additionally, teachers' CLP also has implications for their employment opportunities and professional development (PD). Hiver (2013) commented that teachers often find it difficult to manage employment because of their deficient language proficiency; it also influences their professional growth.

Locating the Gap for the Present Study

There was a dearth of field study on teachers' CLP both internationally and in Bangladesh. Richards et al. (2013) investigated whether the differences in teachers' proficiency in the TL influenced their classroom practices in New Zealand through surveys, case study observations, and interviews. The findings showed that teachers' proficiency levels in the TL affected their teaching practices. The teachers with low language proficiency could manage some aspects of effective language teaching, e.g., using the TL materials, presenting language models, giving feedback, or using the TL for class management. However, only the teachers with higher-level proficiency could give clear explanations for the grammatical and lexical aspects of the TL, provide learners with rich language input, and answer learners' questions with confidence.

Choi and Lee (2016) through a survey explored the correlation between the non-native SS EL teachers' language proficiency, pedagogical skills, and their self-reported perceptions of effectiveness in South Korea. The findings showed that below a threshold level, the teachers faced difficulties in using English in their classrooms. It also found that teachers' levels of language proficiency and their self-efficacy beliefs are interdependent. Similarly, Ghasemolani and Hashim (2013) used a survey to investigate the EFL teachers' self-reported efficacy beliefs, their language skills, and the correlation between these two in a Middle-East country. Significantly, the study found a correlation between teachers' self-assessed teaching efficacy and their language skills. The teachers with higher-level language proficiencies claimed that they could manage the teaching activities better.

Han and Yao (2013) also studied the bilingual student-teachers' use of the classroom language in Australia while teaching Mandarin to a group of learners using English by classroom observations and audio recording. Their findings showed that the bilingual student-teachers could use the appropriate classroom language in their teaching. They used English more effectively in building relationship with the learners, providing language model and scaffolding learning. However, their use of English was less effective while appreciating the learners' work, taking care of individual learners' needs, and managing the learners' manners. Nakata (2010) investigated the prospects of using the Classroom Language Assessment Benchmark (CLAB) as an instrument for the EL teachers' professional learning in Japan with a reference to the English Language Assessment Benchmark for the EFL teachers in Hong Kong through two questionnaire surveys. The findings of the study showed that the Classroom English Observation Program (CEOP) with the help of CLAB and Classroom Language Assessment Sheet (CLAS) could facilitate the improvement of teachers' CLP.

Rabbidge and Chappell (2014) explored the South Korean elementary EFL teachers' use of language in the classrooms through observations and interviews. According to the Teaching English Through English (TETE) policy, the EL teachers were supposed to teach English only through English, but the findings revealed that the teachers used both English and Korean (L1) in their classrooms. Similarly, the EL teachers in Bangladesh were supposed to use English as the sole language of instruction. Farooqui (2014) investigated how different contextual factors affected the use of the proposed language of instruction in the urban and rural schools in Bangladesh by classroom observations and interviews. The study found that the language proficiency of the teachers and learners was better in the urban schools than those of in the rural schools. To conclude, the studies reviewed above on various aspects of teachers' classroom language were conducted in different regions. However, very few intensive studies have been carried out on the SS EL teachers' CLP in Bangladesh. Moreover, the ELT scenario in Bangladesh has some unique features. First, there exists a consensus that most of the learners are not proficient in the TL though they are taught English from grade one in Bangladesh. Second, many of the in-service EL teachers do not have any formal degree in language teaching (Rouf, 2021). Third, teacher preparation is often neglected, and an effective and rigorous program has not yet been initiated for preparing the teacher candidates for classroom teaching. They are recruited and sent inside classrooms for teaching without even initial training. Fourth, as teachers do not regularly attend PD activities, their knowledge base and skills are not usually updated (Rouf & Mohamed, 2017). Therefore, the study was carried out based on the following research questions (RQs):

RQ1: How did the secondary level EL teachers use the EL for carrying out class activities?

RQ1.a: What about the grammatical structures and lexical range of their EL use?

RQ1.b: How did they use the EL for interaction with learners and classroom instruction?

RQ1.c: What about their overall CLP, and what are their perspectives on that?

Authors' Characteristics

The first author teaches English language and literature to undergraduate and graduate students at a public university in Dhaka, Bangladesh. He is also involved in research on different issues related to the EL teaching-learning. From his experiences of teaching and research, he believes that teachers are the main agents to ensure quality classroom language teaching-learning, and their knowledge base and skills, among other things, play a vital role in this regard. The second author mainly played a supervisory role in this project. Both were careful about their role as human instruments in this qualitative research (Creswell, 2007), and ensured that their personal and professional beliefs and disposition did not influence the findings of the study. They aimed to examine the secondary level EL teachers' readiness for implementing different aspects of a lesson using the TL.

Method

Approach and Rigour of the Study

For this study, a multiple case study approach was used to collect in-depth data on the examined issue (Stake, 2006). Researchers very often use the case study approach when they target to understand an issue in a comprehensive manner (Carlsen & Glenton, 2011; Creswell,

2007; Yazan, 2015). The qualitative research design helped us capture the “lived experience of the participant” (Tufford & Newman, 2010, p. 80), and we could directly observe the teachers’ real use of the EL for certain classroom activities. One key challenge for qualitative researchers is to maintain the rigour or trustworthiness of their studies. The trustworthiness of the present study was ensured by maintaining a case study database, collecting data from various sources using different methods, staying at the schools with the participating teachers for a long time, and using self-reflections to avoid bias (Baškarada, 2014; Berger, 2013).

Participants

Six SS EL teachers were selected through the purposive sampling technique to compare and trace “replication” in the findings across the cases and get in-depth insights into teachers’ CLP. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the highly relevant and “information-rich” cases. The first author visited several schools, met the school authority, and talked to the EL teachers about their participation in the study. Some teachers did not agree to allow an observer inside their classrooms and to sit for interviews. However, six teachers eventually agreed to participate in the study on a voluntary basis. They were selected from four non-government secondary schools located in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. None of the six EL teachers had any formal degree in English or language teaching. They taught about 40-60 students in each class. Each of the six EL teachers was treated as a separate case to investigate their classroom competency. Researchers argued that in a multiple case study a sample of four to ten cases generally yields a comprehensive understanding of a situation (Eisenhardt, 1989; Stake, 2006). Initially the teachers were briefed on the objective of the study and informed that their personal details would never be disclosed; they could also withdraw from the study at any stage (Chenail, 2011; Hamid, 2010; Praag & Sanchez, 2015). Alpha-numeric labels (T1-T6) have been used throughout the paper to ensure anonymity of the participating EL teachers (Ambler, 2016; Zein, 2016). The demographic and other details of the participating EL teachers are shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic and other Information on the Participating Teachers (T1-T6)

Teachers	Age (Years)	Gender	Teaching Experience (Years)	Initial training	Level	Number of Classes (Per Week)	Comments
T1	47	Female	21	None	Class six to ten	17	Had some administrative duty
T2	40	Female	7	None	Class seven to ten	20	
T3	42	Male	21	None	Class six to nine	25	
T4	50	Male	22	None	Class six to ten	28	

T5	58	Female	34	None	Class seven to ten	08	Had some administrative duty
T6	51	Male	20	None	Class six to ten	30	

Moreover, along with the primary informants, data were also collected from four head teachers (HTs), three teacher trainers (TTs), and one curriculum expert (CE) through face-to-face interviews to double check the findings on teachers' CLP and to obtain supplementary data as they closely worked with teachers for a long time. This ultimately facilitated to get, as stated by Creswell (2007), a "holistic account" (p. 39) of the examined cases. The relevant demographic data on the HTs, TTs, and CE are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Demographic Data on the HTs, TTs, and CE

Secondary Informants	Gender	Experience as Teachers/TT/CE (Years)	Experience as HT (Years)	Total experiences (Years)	Institutions
HT1	Female	20	5	25	SS
HT2	Male	28	3	31	SS
HT3	Male	18	2	20	SS
HT4	Male	19	3	22	SS
TT1	Male	20	-	20	Dhaka TTC
TT2	Female	18	-	18	Rajshahi TTC
TT3	Male	21	-	21	NAEM
CE	Male	24	-	24	NCTB

Research Instruments

Two instruments were developed and used to collect data on teachers' CLP: (1) a semi-structured classroom observation guide; (2) a semi-structured interview checklist. Most of the items in the classroom observation guide on teachers' CLP were partially adopted from LPATE (Coniam & Falvey, 2013; Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority, 2016) and some were based on the relevant literature. LPATE was partially adopted as the EL teachers in both Hong Kong and Bangladesh were the non-native English-speaking teachers in an Asian context. The semi-structured interview checklist had five items on teachers' CLP based on the classroom observations. The rigour of the developed and partially adopted instruments was ensured in three ways: (a) the relevant literature review, (b) experts' opinions, and (c) a pilot study.

Research Procedures

Like some of the reported studies in the literature review section, relevant data on teachers' CLP were collected by observing classrooms and interviewing the individual EL teachers, HTs, TTs, and CE (Merriam, 1988). Consulting each of the six participating teachers, detailed schedules were developed for classroom observations and face-to-face interviews. Fifty-five non-participant direct classroom observations were carried out by the first author to collect data on teachers' classroom language (Tellis, 1997). On the agreed day, the first author used to take a seat at the back of the class before the start of the lesson with all his materials. He played a passive role during the lesson and ensured that his presence did not disrupt the natural flow of the class. However, very often both teachers and learners were aware of his presence inside the class. Lessons were observed for five or more times for each case, and each lesson lasted about 35-40 minutes. Concurrently, 1080 minutes of teachers' live classroom voices were recorded using a professional voice recorder to get data on their CLP. Face-to-face individual interviews were conducted with the HTs, TTs, and CE after analyzing the data from classroom observations and interviews with the teachers. All interviews were conducted by the first author, and individual interview durations ranged from 39 to 123 minutes; the total interview duration was 1065 minutes. For getting rich data, interviews with the EL teachers and HTs were conducted in Bengali (L1).

Data Management and Analysis

Data from classroom observations were recorded by writing class narratives, using the observation guide, and recording the teachers' classroom voices live. All interview data were recorded using a professional voice recorder and preserved properly. When the observations were over, the data from classroom observations were digitised. The interview data were transcribed verbatim and later, all the oral data were scanned as PDF documents for digitisation. The analytic software NVivo 11 Pro was used for data management and analysis as it is an effective tool to deal with qualitative data (Houghton et al., 2013). After inserting all data in NVivo as internal sources, initial nodes were created. An exhaustive list of nodes was made to examine all emerging issues related to teachers' CLP. All these nodes which were supported by evidence from the data set helped form the theme and subthemes. Thematic analysis (TA) was used for data analysis as advocated by Braun and Clarke (2006). To ensure the reliability of the findings, data were analyzed in their entirety, member checking was carried out (Berger, 2013), and the results were confirmed through the primary and secondary informants' verifications. Detailed descriptions of the findings are reported below supported by the representative excerpts from the participants, some of which were translated into English by the first author.

Findings

The findings of the study are presented in this section according to the RQs. Moreover, the findings reported here relate to the six participating EL teachers only.

Limited Grammatical Structures and Lexical Range of TL Use

All the participating EL teachers used limited range of TL grammatical structures and vocabulary in their classes. However, T6 was a noticeable exception. We can get a picture of the teachers' typical TL grammatical structures and vocabulary use in the classrooms by looking at Tables 3 and 4.

Table 3*TL Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary Use (T1, Class 5)*

Class Level & Lesson Title	Class Duration	Teacher Words (TW)	Teacher Phrases (TP)	Teacher Sentences (TS)
Class Eight Right Forms of Verbs	30 Minutes	Fine, write, see , play, verb, structure, sentence, read, bracket, change, topics, now, tense, set, am, I, is, are, was, were, yesterday, played, subject, form, teach, learn, teaching, learning, play, playing, note, present form, always, regularly, sometimes, often, generally, every day, daily, noun, moves, news, physics, mathematics, book, books, eat, eats, dog, dogs, singular, politics, honesty, be, water, plural, every, each, everybody, everyone, somebody, someone, anyone, anybody, anything, everything, have, has, nobody, no one, nothing, want, no, there, homework	Parts of speech, very good, past form, right form of verbs, at this moment, present continuous tense, last night, last year, past indefinite, we learn, present indefinite tense, universal truth, present form, third person singular number, the earth, plural number, singular number, be verb, singular verb, a pen, third person, continuous tense, plural noun, no birds, one of, one of the, each of, none of	I (read) a book now. We played football yesterday. I read a book. I am reading a book now. We (teach) English now. We (learn) English now. The earth (move) round the sun. Honesty is the best policy. Everybody (have) a pen. Nobody (want) to die. No birds (be) there. One of the boys (be) absent. Man is mortal. We are learning English now.
	Total	TW = 76	TP = 28	TS = 14

Table 3 shows that T1 uttered or wrote only fourteen full sentences in the TL in her 30-minute class as the examples of Right Forms of Verbs, and most of them were taken from a grammar guidebook that she used in her class. She then frequently used code mixing, i.e., mixed Bengali and English in sentences to explain the grammar rules. All the teacher's words and phrases mentioned in the table were used concurrently with the L1 to teach this lesson.

Moreover, most of these words and phrases were used to explain grammatical rules and mention the key terms of grammar.

Table 4

TL Grammatical Structures and Vocabulary Use (T3, Class 1)

Class Level & Lesson Title	Class Duration	Teacher Words (TW)	TW from Textbooks (TWT)	Teacher Phrases (TP)	Teacher Sentences (TS)	Comments
Class Seven Begum Rokeya (1)	36 minutes	Topics, meaning, word, sorry, ring, receive, captain, last, verb, form, husband, side talk, bag, state, openly, ready, board, clean, marker, answer, subject, syllabus, add	Famous, social, undivided, rights, fight, landlord, always, activities, learnt, great	Unit 5, Lesson 1, Begum Rokeya, Page no.42, class test, famous person, following words, word meaning, present form, past form	Sit down, please. No sound. The woman is Begum Rokeya.	T3 read the passage on Begum Rokeya in the TL and translated into the L1.
Total		TW = 24	TWT=10	TP = 10	TS = 3	

T3 taught this lesson titled “Begum Rokeya (1)” for 36 minutes, and during this time he formulated only three simple sentences of his own in the TL. Most often he spoke in the L1, and his TL vocabulary was very limited. The same was true for T2, T4, and T5. As already mentioned, only T6 tried to use the TL in his classes, and he could use all types of sentences. Though he faced some difficulties while he was speaking in the TL, T6 had a good range of vocabulary as illustrated in the sentences below:

Listening and writing skills are interrelated. If you don't listen, if you don't read, you can't write anything.

We should not cut trees at random to maintain our ecological balance.

However, T6 also used the L1 in his classes, and from learners' reactions inside the classrooms it was obvious that they were surprised that their teacher was speaking in the TL. They were passing comments among themselves like "today our teacher is speaking in English." He used both the TL and L1 to explain concepts like character, knowledge, skill, attitude, and grammar items in his classes. Moreover, his spoken TL was monotonously repetitive.

In their classes, sometimes the teachers monitored their classroom language for accuracy. While delivering his lecture on character in a lesson titled "Good Character," T6 monitored his TL use and corrected himself:

We wish to be possess, we wish to possess good character.

Similarly, while teaching a lesson on "Prize-Giving Day at School," T2 corrected herself:

Flora was- sorry - Flora wants to know about the prize-giving ceremony of Farabi's school.

However, in many cases the teachers uttered or wrote grammatically incorrect TL, and they failed to monitor their language as shown in Table 5.

Table 5
Teachers' Grammatically Incorrect TL Production

Teachers	Grammatically Incorrect Sentences
T1	You said to me, " I am teacher." He said to me, " You are teacher."
T2	They doing prize giving.
T3	Who was the Helen Keller teacher?
T4	Dhaka is the biggest city Bangladesh. Probably she is talking the students.
T5	Salma says, "I have done my homework yesterday." Your rules has given.
T6	We haven't make a syllabus for you. You should come to school regularly is also your responsibility.

These grammatically incorrect sentences clearly show that they had problems with the TL grammatical structures. According to TT2, teachers had this habit of making mistakes because they did not use the TL in their classes regularly:

If they would have used English every day, they would not make that many mistakes, I believe.

TL Inadequacy for Interaction with Learners

Classroom observation data showed that for eliciting output from learners, the teachers' use of the TL was very limited. First, they usually used the L1 to ask questions in classes. Occasionally they could formulate questions in the TL while teaching language contents and grammatical items as shown in Table 6.

Table 6
Teachers' Use of the TL for Questioning in the Classrooms

Teachers	Lesson Contexts	Teacher Questions	Comments
T1	.....	.....	Never asked any questions in the TL
T2	.....	.....	Could not formulate questions in the TL
T3	.....	.....	Could not formulate questions in the TL
T4	Teaching a story titled "Hazrat Byzid Bostami's devotion to his mother"	"Why didn't he awake his mother?"	T4 at first asked these questions in the L1, and he then translated them into the TL.
	Teaching a grammatical item: Degree	"What do you mean by degree? What is degree?"	
T5	Teaching Direct and Indirect Narration	"Do you understand?"	
	A student being absent in the previous class	"Why did you not come? Have you any application?"	
T6	Completing homework	"Have you learned your lesson?"	
	Teaching a story about "The Hare and The Tortoise"	"What do you mean by the word 'hare'?"	
	Lesson of the same story mentioned above	"What's the lesson of the story? Can you tell?"	

T2 and T3 could ask only those questions that were given in the textbooks. They could not formulate their own questions in the TL. Second, the teachers never used the TL to modify or restructure a question. Third, they could not provide clues and hints in the TL so that learners could respond. Fourth, they did not usually use the TL to encourage learners to ask questions. T1 told her students in the L1 to ask questions whenever they faced any problem or did not understand anything. T4 also did the same thing, but he used some TL:

If you don't understand, you will ask me.

The use of the TL by the teachers to answer learners' questions was minimal. While teaching the types of sentences in a class, T1 answered learners' questions on sentences in the L1; T4 and T6 did the same thing. However, when learners asked for their next exam's syllabus, T6 said:

We are all busy to make your result. After your first term result, we will sit together and make a syllabus for you. Then the syllabus will be served, ok?

Additionally, they could not use the TL at all to ask for clarifications from students in classes, to give confirmations, or ask learners to repeat. However, the teachers sometimes answered the textual questions using the TL, though the learners were supposed to discuss and answer those questions as shown below:

Question: What does she do in school?

Teacher's Answer: "She teaches the students." (T4)

Moreover, during classes these teachers heavily depended on the L1 to provide feedback. However, they also used some words, phrases, and rarely full sentences in the TL for this purpose, as shown in Table 7.

Table 7
Teachers' Use of the TL to Provide Feedback

Teachers	Lesson Contexts	Teacher Feedback	Comments
T1	After checking students' class works	"Fine", "Very good."	T1 concurrently commented in the L1.
T2	Learners answered teacher's question	"Thank you."	
T3	In response to learners' answer to his question	"Thank you."	
T4	In response to learners' answer to his question	"Thank you very much."	
T5	Evaluating learners' responses	"Right. Good." "Good. Very good."	
T6	Evaluating learners' responses	"You are right. Thanks."	

The teachers then made limited use of the TL for rapport building with their learners. T5 at the beginning of one of her classes said:

I am fine. How are you?

Good morning, my students. (T6)

Besides, usually they did not use the TL to encourage students' participation in the lessons. Only T6 asked his students to be more active in the English classes using the TL:

We can't listen English in our family or another place in our country. This is why we can't practice these skills more. So, you should be more attentive in your class, especially in your English class.

The participating EL teachers thus could not interact with their learners effectively using the TL.

Nominal Use of the TL for Classroom Instruction

The teachers most often used the L1 to explain the rules of grammar items like Direct and Indirect Narration, Tense, Preposition, Right Forms of Verbs, and others. However, they used the TL to give examples of the grammar items as shown in Table 8.

Table 8

Teachers' Use of the TL to Give Grammar Items' Examples

Teachers	Grammar Items	Teacher Examples	Comments
T1	Transformation of Sentences	I am happy. → I am not unhappy.	
T2	.....	.....	T2 did not teach grammar.
T3	Present Indefinite Tense	I eat rice.	
T4	Preposition	Divide the mangoes between the two girls. Divide the mangoes among the girls.	T4 translated all these examples of Prepositions into the L1 concurrently.
T5	Narration	Sabina said to Jelina, "I want to borrow your camera."	
T6	Subject Verb Agreement	One of the boys is not a student.	

T4 could use some TL to explain how to change the tense of verb of the reported speech according to the reporting verb while changing Direct Narration into Indirect Narration:

If it is past indefinite tense, you must change here in the right side because...

He also translated this sentence into the L1. Moreover, T6 explained the grammar item Verb in his class using the TL:

What is verb? A verb is a doing word. The word that means to do something. A verb is a main part of a sentence.... Without verb no sentence is made.

The teachers then sometimes used the TL to explain the elements of sentences like subject, object, verb, and others. While discussing the Present Perfect Tense in her class, T5 gave the structure in the TL - "Sub + have/has + V3..." and that of Past Perfect- "Sub + had + V3...".

The TL was not used by the teachers to give the meaning of vocabulary and explain them. Most often they used the L1 to explain word meanings. They even did not provide learners with the synonyms of the new English words. However, sometimes T4 and T6 uttered some sentences in the TL to give examples of the use of new words at the sentence level. T4

explained the meaning of the word “sacrifice” while discussing the story “Devotion to Mother” and presented an example of the word using a sentence:

In nineteen seventy-one (1971: Bangladesh’s war of independence) our freedom fighters sacrificed their lives for the sake of our country.

Vocabulary development was a key concern for the ELLs. The way these teachers used the L1 to explain new words exposed their poor stock of the TL vocabulary, and it might work as a barrier to learners’ new vocabulary learning.

All these six teachers used mainly the L1 to explain concepts in their classes. However, T4 and T6 used some TL along with the L1. T4 explained the importance of questioning to his students:

I will question you. I will ask you something and you will also ask me something.

While teaching the lesson on “Good Character,” T6 also used the TL to explain the concept “character:”

Character means the works that a person does. Character means the works that a person does. A person with a good character does the works that are good for himself, for his family, and also for the society.

Only these two teachers thus used some TL to explain concepts in the classrooms.

The teachers then used very limited TL in the classrooms for other instructional purposes. There were some reading passages in the prescribed textbooks. They read those passages in English and then translated into the L1. For example, T2 read the passage on “Prize-Giving Day at School” in the TL and translated into the L1. However, only T6 used some TL to give examples related to the theme of a lesson. He was explaining why learners should practice speaking and listening in the TL:

A baby learns its mother tongue by practicing only two skills. A baby can learn its mother tongue by practicing only two skills- that is listening and speaking.

He also used the TL to introduce the class topics at the beginning of the class. For example- (1) “now today we will discuss Right Form of Verbs. What is verb?”; (2) “today our lesson is good character? What is character?”. In addition, unlike the other teachers T6 sometimes used the TL for class management:

Captain, collect the result card.

I told you to bring an application signed by your parents, but you don’t follow my advice. It’s very bad. Ok. Now, sit down everyone.

Moreover, these teachers generally used the L1 to assign homework. T6 exceptionally used some TL to give and check homework:

Homework- completing the story- “The Hare and the Tortoise” or “Slow and steady wins the race.” Ok. Thanks. This is all for today. Thank you very much.

Have you learned your lesson today? Have you completed your homework? Show your homework quick. Why haven't brought your homework? It proves that you are inattentive.

For classroom discipline management, the teachers generally made overwhelming use of the L1. T3 was having a tough time managing his class as the learners went chaotic and they were not cooperating; he predominantly used the L1 to control the learners. However, the teachers infrequently used the TL for classroom discipline management as shown in Table 9.

Table 9

Teachers' Use of the TL for Classroom Discipline Management

Teachers	Teacher Sentences	Comments
T1	.....	T1 and T2 never used the TL for classroom discipline management.
T2	.....
T3	"Sit down, please." "Attention please."	
T4	"Respond to your roll call, please." "Don't talk, please. We come to our topics."	
T5	"Sit down." "Be attentive." "No talk."	
T6	"Everyone keep silent and be attentive to respond."	

While doing some activities in the classes, the teachers delivered instructions mostly in the L1. However, T5 presented some instructions in the TL while practicing Direct and Indirect Narration in her class:

You write a sentence in your khatas (notebooks). You change into indirect narration.

T6 also gave some instructions in the TL while doing a task on completing stories:

If there is the instruction, you have to complete the story in one hundred fifty words, you have to complete the story in one hundred fifty words. So, you have to practice to write a story in your own words.

The teachers then rarely used appropriate language signals in the TL to indicate the stages of a lesson. However, to signal the end of lessons, only T6 used the TL:

Ok. Thanks. Sit down. Our time is over. Today we have learned what our responsibilities and obligations.

As the evidence showed, the EL teachers often could not present and explain lesson contents or provide instruction effectively using the TL.

Teachers' Overwhelming Use of the L1 in the Classrooms

For their overall classroom interaction, instruction, and management, the teachers used mainly the L1. It seemed that translating things into the L1 became their habit. They used the L1 for many purposes: to explain and define the grammar items; to translate the passage contents, vocabulary, and questions from the textbooks; to translate students' answers given in the TL; to explain the main theme of a story; to answer learners' questions; to explain concepts like character and the value of hard work; to greet learners at the beginning of classes; to introduce the class topics; to give instructions during language tasks; to indicate the stages of a lesson; to make fun; to assign homework; to ask questions; to give corrective feedback on learners' classwork; to appreciate learners' efforts and works; to evaluate whether learners have learned or not after discussing lesson topics or grammar items; to translate grammar examples given by the teachers in the TL.

It was not expected that teachers would never use the L1 in their classrooms. They could sometimes use the mother tongue to help learners comprehend the lesson points, but they were to do that methodically.

If the teachers tend to use only Bengali, or 50% Bengali, or 75% Bengali, that is wrong, I think. (TT2)

I think along with using English, sometimes we have to speak in Bengali. (T4)

Interestingly, the opposite was happening in the EL classes. Most often the teachers were using the L1 and occasionally they were speaking in the TL.

Teachers' Poor Classroom Language Proficiency, and their Perspectives

Classroom observation data showed that the EL teachers could not speak the very language they were teaching. None of these teachers was confident in their TL use in the classrooms.

So, often the teachers what they do, they do not use English because they themselves are not confident in using English. (TT2)

The teachers claimed that the learners did not understand if they used the TL. According to them, the learners were very weak in the TL. They also claimed that translation made learners' "brains" work better, and they could memorize fast.

I am using Bengali in my classes. Learners are still young. Apparently, they do not understand the inner meanings of many things...they are not getting things without Bengali. (T2)

If we translate, perhaps learners' brains work better, and they can understand what I am trying to say. They can understand and memorize. (T1)

Moreover, their concerns for learners' results in examinations made them avoid the TL. According to T6, learners might understand if teachers always use the TL, but it would affect their exam results. Though it sounded strange, the teachers claimed that if they use English, they won't be able to complete the syllabus. Moreover, they blamed the primary school teachers for not using English for classroom instruction.

They will be benefitted (if teachers speak the TL always) in speaking, but they will be loser in results. They will not be able to complete their syllabus. They will not be able to make a good result in the exam. (T6)

Because at the primary level, no importance is given to English. These learners do not know how to spell simple words like “dog” and “cat.” (T5)

However, the HTs, TTs, and CE did not agree with the teachers' claim that learners do not understand if they use the TL. They opined that if teachers always use the TL in the classrooms, learners will understand.

When I learned Bengali, did I understand the language at that time? Did I learn the language by understanding? I learned the language by listening to it. So, learners will learn by listening, and then they will understand. (HT4)

May be on the very first day, they cannot understand you; second day, can't understand you; after some weeks, they will start to understand you. (TT1)

According to TT2, teachers' instruction must be easy, and they need to use some body language. The CE stated that teachers usually use complex sentences and high-sounding words when they speak in English, so learners find them difficult to understand:

When I give classroom instruction, my language should be simple, understandable, and clear. I think many teachers do not have that ability to make effective instruction in English.

The fact is, the CE commented, teachers do not reflect on their classroom instruction. They should speak in such a way that is understandable to learners. It is the teachers' responsibility to make them understand.

The EL teachers were not accustomed to using the TL for classroom instructions, and they did not feel the urge to use English in the classrooms. According to TT1, nobody is out there to monitor whether they are teaching their classes using English. The HTs also commented that the EL teachers need to develop the habit of speaking English in the classrooms and change their mindset. During a training programme, TT1 tried to help some EL teachers learn about 60 to 70 common sentences in English as part of their classroom language. The teachers initially showed interest, but later they did not bother to learn and use them in classrooms.

We are not accustomed to talking in English always in our classes and outside the classes. Therefore, sometimes we fail to talk in English. (T6)

Teachers must build the habit of speaking in English. Learners should get the opportunities to speak the language, as well. (HT2)

Nobody asks them or face any situation where they have to speak in English. (TT1)

Moreover, the teachers themselves felt very comfortable using the L1 for classroom instruction. In addition, their experiences as learners and personal beliefs affected their use of English in classes.

Our native language is Bengali. We feel comfortable to speak in this language. Consequently, all are usually inclined to use Bengali. (T3)

Our teachers used to speak in Bengali in the classes. They taught us English grammar using Bengali. We understood things that way. We did not get much opportunity to learn speaking. (T1)

According to TT2, teachers must not uphold the tradition; rather, they need to use English in classes so that learners can enhance their skills:

If you be traditional, the result will be the same. The output will be the same. To get something new, you have to do something new.

The teachers also failed to provide the learners with rich TL input. Interestingly, these teachers knew that their L1 use would affect learners' TL learning.

There should be teachers who can speak in English in their classes. Otherwise, learners will not learn. Teachers speak in the L1, learners also speak using the L1. (T3)

English class is the only opportunity to practice English and teachers are not using that opportunity due to lack of skills, due to their lack of confidence in English language. (CE)

The HTs and CE mentioned that teachers' use of the L1 was a serious barrier to learners' TL learning as most often learners followed their teachers.

Learners are not learning English. They learn only to pass the exams. Practically they cannot speak English. (HT3)

So, it is quite natural, if I can't speak in English, then I can't expect that my learners will speak in English. (CE)

The participating EL teachers did not have adequate CLP to perform some core classroom functions using the TL. The teachers themselves acknowledged that they had poor speaking skills. Similarly, all the HTs, TTs, and CE opined that the teachers had poor CLP. TT1 was critical about whether the teachers with poor CLP should continue teaching the EL.

Let me speak about my weakness. Our speaking skill is not that good. We do not have the competence to speak English thoroughly. I am speaking about my personal weakness because we are not that skilled. (T3)

Generally, their English language is very poor. Even many teachers do not have the survival English. (CE)

If teachers could teach their English class using English, that would have been better. But I do not get that kind of teachers. Most of them speak in Bengali (L1). (HT1)

I asked them - have you got right to continue teaching as English teachers? You can't speak English. You are English teachers. You can't speak English. So, why you should continue teaching English. (TT1)

Discussion

The evidence showed that the participating EL teachers had low classroom language proficiency. They did not possess the language-specific classroom competencies as advocated by Richards (2010) for effective teaching. Obviously, T6 was an exceptional user of the TL compared to the other teachers. The finding on the teachers' poor proficiency in the TL was consistent with the findings of other studies (Andrews, 2007; Farooqui, 2014; Quader, 2015). Similarly, Choi and Lee (2016) in South Korea reported that the teachers with low proficiency found it difficult to use English in their classes. In another study, Rabbidge and Chappell (2014) found that the South Korean elementary EL teachers used both Korean (L1) and English in their classes. Like the participating Bangladeshi EL teachers, they asserted that the students enjoyed their classes when they used Korean. In contrast, the bilingual student-teachers in Australia could use the TL at an appropriate level in their teaching (Han & Yao, 2013).

Previous studies (Choi & Lee, 2016; Faez & Karas, 2017; Ghasemboland & Hashim, 2013; Richards, 2017) reported a correlation between teachers' language skills and their teaching efficacy beliefs. Those studies found that the teachers with a higher level of TL proficiency were more confident about the effectiveness of their classroom practices. This correlation between teachers' language skills and confidence could partially explain all the participating EL teachers' low confidence in their classes. Richards et al. (2013) also found in their study that the EL teachers' language proficiency affected their classroom pedagogy. Unlike the teachers in their study in New Zealand, the participating EL teachers could not use the TL materials, provide the learners with good language models, give feedback, or use the TL for classroom management. Moreover, the participating teachers did not involve learners in that many activities and could not go beyond the given syllabuses and textbooks because of their poor functional language skills (Richards, 2017).

Different factors could explain the participating EL teachers' low classroom language proficiency. None of the participating teachers had bachelor's and master's degrees in English. Besides, the teachers did not have the right mindset and habit to use the TL in the classrooms as pointed out by TT1 and the HTs. Moreover, these teachers did not want to go beyond their comfort zone and start speaking the TL, as was confirmed by T3. They were not at all interested in walking the extra mile to teach the ELLs through the TL. Their experiences as EL learners also encouraged them to use the LI in the classes. When they were students, they were taught through GTM by their EL teachers. Another issue that could clarify the teachers' poor language proficiency was that these teachers did not attend that many PD activities (Hiver, 2013). Moreover, the teachers could not use the TL in the classrooms as they lacked language knowledge and confidence (Freeman et al., 2015).

Emphasizing the need for teachers with a higher level of skills in the TL, Fischer (2013) commented:

Anything less will cheat curious and motivated elementary, middle, and high school students out of meaningful and rewarding language learning opportunities. (P. 548)

It would be difficult to agree more with Fischer reflecting on what was happening in the SS EL classrooms in Bangladesh. As the ELLs observed that their EL teachers predominantly used the L1 in the classes, they might develop negative perceptions about

teachers' ability to help them learn the TL (Canh & Renandya, 2017), and feel demotivated in classes. Moreover, the teachers could not ask their learners to speak in the TL in the classes as they themselves rarely used the TL.

Conclusion

Classroom observation data substantiated that the participating EL teachers had poor classroom language proficiency as they could hardly use the TL to carry out certain classroom functions. Their TL use for interaction with learners and classroom instructions was marginal. Their range of TL grammatical structures and vocabulary use was very limited, as well. They mostly used the L1 as their classroom language, though they were teaching English. The teachers' poor proficiency in classroom language did not allow them to interact with the learners and give instruction using the TL. Their use of very limited TL grammatical structures and vocabulary, too much L1, and code mixing deprived the ELLs of TL input and good language models. Randomly using translation and code mixing was not also fulfilling the curricula expectations. The ultimate target of developing the learners' TL skills was not given due attention. With their poor CLP, the teachers failed to teach the EL classes effectively. It was highly essential for the EL teachers to improve their CLP.

Recommendations for the EL Teachers and Other Stakeholders

The EL teachers must take initiatives to improve their CLP so that they can carry out the typical classroom activities using the TL smoothly (Hunter et al., 2015). They need to change their existing mindsets and habits to use the TL in classes. They can initially focus on developing their proficiency in those areas of classroom language which are most frequently used in the EL classrooms. They can do it individually or in a group with other fellow EL teachers. If required, they can request that their respective school authorities arrange in-house training on classroom language, or they can attend courses outside schools run by different language centres. Concurrently, they can appeal to the authority concerned to add a component on classroom language in the in-service training programs. At the end of the day, the EL teachers must be able to speak in English. The learners can "see" the TL as "real" only when their teachers speak the language in classes (Freeman et al., 2015).

The government and ministry of education (MOE) are to take an array of initiatives to address the poor CLP of the EL teachers. As the absence of monitoring was affecting teachers' classroom practices, it is crucial to initiate internal and external monitoring. As suggested by the HTs, TTs, and CE, close monitoring by the MOE might encourage teachers to speak in the TL. It is also vital to set standards for the EL teachers' language and other competencies. There should be a teacher licensing system that must assess teacher candidates' both subject knowledge and pedagogical skills (Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016; Shulman, 1986). The MOE might examine the proficiency level of all the practicing EL teachers nationwide to decide on remedial programs. They can share experiences with Malaysia in this regard, as Malaysia assessed the English proficiency of 61,000 EL teachers and set a target to develop the proficiency of SS EL teachers at Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) level C1 and for primary teachers at B2 (Macalister, 2017). The MOE in Bangladesh may also use the LPATE for the EL teachers following Hong Kong, not only to assess their language performance but also to facilitate their PD (Coniam et al., 2017; Nakata, 2010).

The teacher educators can play a great role in improving classroom teaching-learning. Both the pre-service and in-service teacher education programs need to incorporate modules to enhance teachers' TL proficiency. The HTs then can play an important role in engaging teachers in PD activities (Evans, 2014). There should be more effective in-house training for

teachers. Specialized long-term training may be arranged for teachers to enhance their CLP (Andrews, 2007; Freeman, 2017; Hunter et al., 2015; Yook & Lee, 2016). The teacher organizations should also take responsibility to enhance teachers' CLP by arranging training and other PD activities for them.

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Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank the English language teachers and the head teachers, teacher trainers, and curriculum expert who agreed to participate in the study.

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Article Citation

Rouf, M. A., & Mohamed, A. R. (2022). Secondary school EL teachers' classroom language proficiency: A case study in Bangladesh. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(3), 691-715. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5293>
