

Secondary Level English Language Teachers' Pedagogical Skills: A Case Study in Bangladesh¹

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Abstract

The study was carried out to explore the pedagogical skills of secondary-level English language (EL) teachers in Bangladesh. Classroom teaching is a challenging job, and more so for English language (EL) teachers as English is a skill-based subject. Teachers are supposed to demonstrate the required pedagogical skills for effective classroom EL teaching-learning. Following the constructivist research paradigm and a multiple case study approach, qualitative data were collected through direct non-participant classroom observations and face-to-face interviews with six EL teachers and other secondary informants. The collected data were analysed by a qualitative data analysis software, NVivo 11 Pro, using thematic analysis. The main findings of the study substantiated that the participating EL teachers had poor pedagogical skills in classroom management, ignored the four skills, built no rapport with learners, failed to retain learners' attention, encouraged memorization, could not motivate the learners, assigned ritualistic homework, taught grammar and vocabulary without contextualization, used teaching aids insufficiently and ineffectively, and exhibited poor planning and preparation for classroom teaching. The paper also discusses the implications of the key findings and proposes some recommendations for the EL teachers and other stakeholders concerned.

Resumen

El estudio se llevó a cabo para explorar las habilidades pedagógicas de los profesores de inglés (EL) de nivel secundario en Bangladesh. La enseñanza en el aula es un trabajo desafiante, y más aún para los maestros de inglés (EL), ya que el inglés es una materia basada en habilidades. Los maestros deben demostrar las habilidades pedagógicas requeridas para la enseñanza-aprendizaje eficaz de EL en el aula. Siguiendo el paradigma de investigación constructivista y un enfoque de estudio de casos múltiples, se recopilaron datos cualitativos a través de observaciones no-participativas directas en el aula y entrevistas cara a cara con seis maestros EL y otros informantes secundarios. Los datos recolectados fueron analizados por un software de análisis de datos cualitativos, NVivo 11 Pro, utilizando análisis temático. Los principales hallazgos del estudio corroboraron que los maestros EL participantes tenían habilidades pedagógicas deficientes en el manejo del aula, ignoraban las cuatro habilidades, no establecían una relación con los alumnos, no lograban retener la atención de los alumnos, alentaban la memorización, no podían motivar a los alumnos, asignaban tareas irrelevantes, enseñaban gramática y vocabulario sin contextualización, usaban ayudas didácticas de manera insuficiente e ineficaz, y exhibían una planificación y preparación deficientes para la enseñanza en el aula. El documento también analiza las implicaciones de los hallazgos clave y propone algunas recomendaciones para los maestros EL y otras partes interesadas.

Introduction

In general, pedagogy deals with how to teach different subject matter. Subject-specific pedagogy (i.e., pedagogical content knowledge [PCK]) refers to teaching content. Teaching is a complex activity, in which teachers try to reach their objectives through various tasks and strategies (Atjonen et al., 2011). According to the Centre for the Use of Research and Evidence in Education (2012), "pedagogy refers to the teaching skills teachers use and the activities these skills generate to enable students to learn the knowledge and skills related to different subject areas" (p. 2). Pedagogical decisions are taken considering the previous knowledge of learners, and through these decisions, teachers aim to establish a link between a curriculum and the outside world. Ryegard (cited in Măță et al., 2013) defined pedagogical competencies as "the ability and will to regularly apply the attitude, the knowledge, and the skills that promote the learning of the students in the best way" (p. 30). Likewise, Mehta and Doctor (2013) described pedagogical skills as "the practical ability to use knowledge and professional judgment effectively in classroom settings" (p.10).

Teaching strategies have two indispensable aspects: they are informed, and intentional in guiding teaching. They are sets of principles that derive from teachers' experience and knowledge and are always situated in a definite context (Abad, 2013). Inclusive teaching strategies take into consideration learners' varied backgrounds, and facilitate learners' own learning (Cole, 2008). In language teaching-learning, teachers' pedagogical skills play a key role as content, and media are the same here. According to Gatbonton (1999), pedagogical knowledge is divided into six categories:

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- (a) *knowledge of how to manage specific language items so students can learn them...*
- (b) *knowledge about students and what they bring into the classroom...*
- (c) *knowledge about the goals and subject matter of teaching...*
- (d) *knowledge about techniques and procedures...*
- (e) *knowledge about appropriate student-teacher relationships..., and*
- (f) *knowledge about evaluating student task involvement and progress during the lessons....* (p. 42)

Effective teaching practices also include two more aspects: engaging the learners by asking analytical questions, and managing the classroom (Cooper, 2014a).

Literature Review

Approaches to teachers' pedagogical skills

Kennedy (2016) argued that in the 1960s and 1970s teachers' teaching practices were given the main importance, but, in the late 1980s, the focus was on teachers' knowledge bases. However, at present, classroom teaching practices are again given more significance than teachers' knowledge. Kennedy also mentioned three significant initiatives to divide teaching into different segments. The first one was the Commonwealth Teacher Training Study in the late 1920s, in which teachers' activities were divided into 1,001 items in seven categories. Second, in the 1960s, following a process-product approach, researchers developed a list of twenty-two items that were directly related to student learning. The very recent approach led by Stanford University analysed teachers' activities, focusing on the core practices of teachers in different subjects. Kennedy also proposed an alternative approach to analysing teaching with a focus on five core challenges teachers face in their classrooms: (1) curriculum presentation; (2) learner engagement; (3) exposure to learners' thoughts; (4) learner behavior management; and (5) teachers' individual needs.

The recent approach to pedagogy has focused on teachers' cognition, reflective teaching, and contextual factors. Măţă et al. (2013) claimed that teachers' cognitive, behavioural, and attitudinal elements are the main constituents of pedagogical competence. Teachers choose their instructional strategies according to their pedagogical beliefs. Most teachers have these beliefs, but they may not be aware of them. These principles are affected by various factors (e.g., context and curriculum) (Atjonen et al., 2011; Farrell & Bennis, 2013). Moreover, Hayes (2010) asserted that teachers' beliefs and previous experiences have more influence on teachers' instructional activities than the procedures advocated in any curriculum. Besides, the mere presence of the best practices inside the classroom cannot guarantee effective teaching-learning; rather, teachers' reflective use of them can enhance the teaching-learning practices (Gabriel, 2016). Moreover, there are no agreed standards in the relevant literature to define effective English language (EL) teaching and instructional techniques that can be used in different contexts (Farrell, 2015). Another aspect of pedagogy is that it cannot be separated from the overall context of the language policy of a country. Most often, the pedagogical choices are predetermined by the policy-level decisions (Diallo, 2015).

Frameworks for assessing teaching practices

Different theoretical perspectives have been proposed for effective teaching practices and how they can be assessed. First, Stanford University and the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) jointly developed the teaching performance assessment (edTPA) for assessing novice teachers' skills. This framework is subject-specific and based on performance, as it emphasizes teachers' practices in the real classroom (Mehta & Doctor, 2013; Pecheone & Whittaker, 2016). Second, the Commission on Teacher Credentialing (2013) presented a framework for assessing teachers' performance in California titled *The California Teaching Performance Expectations*. This framework focused on creating a positive environment for the learners where they will learn enthusiastically, and their achievements will be properly measured by the teachers. It also emphasized the professional growth of teachers through reflective practices. Danielson (2014) also proposed a framework outlining four domains with twenty-two core features for assessing the effective teaching and teachers. The framework focused on teachers' knowledge of contents, pedagogy, learners, assessments, and outcomes of instruction, a positive classroom environment, learner-centred teaching, and professional development of teachers. Moreover, Cooper (2014b) presented a reflective model of effective teaching. This model highlighted three aspects of effective teaching: planning, implementing, and evaluating.

Exploring effective pedagogical skills

According to Arnove (2010), effective teachers are those teachers who: (1) very often personalize their classroom activities; (2) can suggest effective techniques of learning; (3) are friendly and highly motivated; (4) see learners as unique individuals; (5) are reflective; and (6) are part of a learning community. Besides, Gabriel (2016) stated that effective teaching should answer four things: (1) whether teachers' instructional goals have any value for the school and the rest of the community; (2) what pedagogical beliefs underpin teachers' practice; (3) what teachers know about their learners and how they incorporate this knowledge in their teaching activities; and (4) how they assess that they have attained their lesson goals. Farrell (2013) also identified five main features that effective teachers represent: "knowledge of learners and learning, engage in critical reflection, access past experiences, informed lesson planning, and active student involvement" (p. 82).

Haberman (2010) pointed out that when teachers are involved in giving lectures to learners, and learners play a very passive role in teaching-learning, no learning actually takes place. He defined this type of teacher-centred pedagogy as "the pedagogy of poverty" (p. 82). Learning occurs when learners are engaged in different activities, and teachers play the role of a facilitator. Besides, Richards (2010) claimed that EL teachers need various core classroom skills to teach learners, e.g., "opening the lesson, introducing and explaining the tasks, setting up learning arrangements, checking learners' understanding, guiding student practice, monitoring learners' language use, making transitions from one task to another, ending the lesson" (p. 107). Moreover, Richards and Reppen (2014) argued that grammar is both 'an ability' and 'knowledge.' The different components of grammar can be used as the tools to engage learners in meaningful communicative activities inside the class.

Previous studies on teachers' pedagogical skills

In their study, Sanchez and Borg (2014) found that two experienced English teachers in Argentina used different strategies for teaching grammar items, which corresponded to their respective pedagogical concerns. Both were also influenced by contextual factors in their decision-making, especially by the knowledge of their learners. In another study, Atjonen et al. (2011) reported that primary and secondary level teachers in Finland focused on four main pedagogical principles: (1) learner-centred teaching-learning arrangements and methods; (2) friendly relationship between teachers and students, and a positive learning environment; (3) learners' multidimensional growth; and (4) the development of learners' moral disposition and practical skills. On the other hand, the main barriers were a lack of time for supporting learners' individual growth, heavy workload, disorganized class routine, extensive curriculum, lack of resources, teachers' inadequate skills and low motivation level, large class size, and non-cooperation of the guardians.

According to Oder (2014), Estonian secondary level EFL teachers believed that they needed to function as facilitators in the EL classes. However, according to them, teachers must control the decision-making aspects of the class. Interestingly, they appreciated silent classrooms for the sake of maintaining discipline with their young learners. Though most of the responding Estonian teachers believed in the constructivist model of teaching-learning, their EL classes were still teacher-centred, and grammar-focused. The findings thus indicated a non-alignment between the teachers' stated beliefs and their actual classroom practices. Again, Farrell and Bennis (2013) found that one experienced EL teacher in Canada developed his EL teaching principles based on his vast experiences, and he could translate most of his beliefs into practice. The novice teacher, Tory, on the other hand, could not reflect on most of his beliefs in his teaching as his beliefs were not established yet.

Hayes (2010) through a biographical case study of an EL teacher, Sasikarn, in Thailand discovered that the teacher preparation courses in the teachers' college were not helpful for learning the practical aspects of classroom teaching. When Sasikarn joined a school as a permanent teacher, she was expected to teach the EL without any practical training. However, Choy et al. (2013) in a longitudinal study in Singapore reported that the novice teachers' self-reported pedagogical skills and knowledge enhanced significantly in the areas of lesson plan development, classroom management, and teaching strategies during the first three years of teaching. Hamid and Honan (2012) claimed that the primary school EL teachers in Bangladesh did not follow the learner-centred pedagogy as advocated in the CLT approach. So, the primary level learners were found to play a very passive role in the classrooms. The studies reviewed above focus on different aspects of teachers' pedagogical skills. Notably, very few studies were available on the secondary level EL teachers' pedagogical skills in Bangladesh. Therefore, the present study was carried out based on the following research question (RQ):

RQ: What type of pedagogical skills do the secondary-level EL teachers possess?

Research Design

Approach and rigour of the study

The present study was carried out following the constructivist research paradigm and a multiple case study approach. The multiple case study approach helped us gain a deep understanding of secondary-level EL teachers' pedagogical skills (Creswell, 2007). Maintaining the rigour or trustworthiness is a significant aspect in qualitative studies (Baškarada, 2014). Unlike quantitative studies, qualitative studies do not ensure validity and reliability through statistical probing, rather methodological orientations ascertain their rigour (Noble & Smith, 2015). The rigour of the present study was ensured by collecting data from different sources using different methods, utilizing a case study data base, staying at the schools for a long time, and applying self-reflections for eliminating bias (Baškarada, 2014; Berger, 2013).

Participants and ethical issues

The EL teachers were approached officially through the head teachers at the schools and were requested to provide their written consent to voluntary participation in the study. They were told about the objectives of the study and the expected contributions from them, so that they could make informed decisions regarding their participation. Finally, six EL teachers were selected following the purposive sampling technique as it helped select data-enriched cases. The teachers were assured that their individual identities would never be disclosed, and they had the option to withdraw from the study at any stage (Chenail, 2011; Praag & Sanchez, 2015). Alpha-numeric labels (T1-T6) have been used in this paper to ensure their anonymity (Ambler, 2016). Many of the researchers have claimed that six to ten cases are enough to gain an in-depth understanding and trace replications of the emerging themes (Stake, 2006). The demographic details of the EL teachers are given in Table 1.

Teachers	Age (Years)	Gender	Teaching Experience (Years)
T1	47	Female	21
T2	40	Female	7
T3	42	Male	21
T4	50	Male	22
T5	58	Female	34
T6	51	Male	20

Table 1: The EL teachers' demographics

Moreover, additional data were collected from four head teachers (HTs), three teacher trainers (TTs), and one curriculum expert (CE), as they worked with the teachers for a long time. These secondary informants (details in Table 2) also helped with data triangulation and enhanced the reliability of the findings.

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

Table 2: Demographic data on the HTs, TTs, and CE

Data collection tools

Two tools were developed for collecting data for this study: 1) a semi-structured classroom observation guide (See Appendix 1); and 2) a semi-structured interview checklist (See Appendix 2). The classroom observation guide included items on different constructs: instructional strategy, classroom management, classroom instruction, and tasks, teaching English grammar and vocabulary, teaching aids including traditional and digital technology, lesson organization, and personal attributes of the EL teachers considering the relevant literature. Then, the items on the semi-structured interview checklist were mainly based on the classroom observations. The rigour of the developed tools was ascertained in three ways: 1) a relevant

literature review; 2) experts' opinions; and 3) a pilot study. After conducting the pilot study with two EL teachers, necessary changes were made in the classroom observation guide and interview checklist.

Data collection methods

Data on teachers' pedagogical skills were collected through classroom observations and face-to-face interviews with the EL teachers, HTs, TTs, and the CE (Merriam, 1988). As the primary and secondary informants had a heavy workload, individual schedules were developed for classroom observations and interviews according to their preferred time slots. The first author carried out fifty-five non-participant direct classroom observations for collecting data on teachers' classroom practices (Tellis, 1997). After a primary analysis of the data collected from classroom observations and interviews with the EL teachers, interviews were conducted with the HTs, TTs, and the CE. Interviews with the EL teachers and HTs were conducted in Bengali (the informants' first language) for collecting rich data, but T6 responded in English. Both the classroom observations and interviews were stopped when the study reached the data saturation level (Trotter, 2012).

Data management and analysis

Classroom observation data were recorded using the observation guide, fieldnotes, and by writing class narratives. When the classroom observation phase was over, all the observation data were digitized. Moreover, the interview data were recorded using a professional voice recorder and a cell phone. Later, the interview data were transcribed verbatim. Besides, for data management and analysis, the analytical software NVivo 11 Pro was used as it helps qualitative data management and analysis in an efficient way. The thematic analysis as advocated by Braun & Clarke (2006) was used as an overall framework for data analysis. Exhaustive analysis of the data, member checking, and the participants' verifications confirmed the reliability of the findings. Most of the excerpts presented in the findings section have been translated into English by the first author.

Findings

This section presents the key findings of the study supported by representative excerpts from the participants.

It's a teachers' show

The classroom EL teaching-learning was mainly a one-man-show run by the teachers through lecturing. Teachers were the 'jug' and learners were treated as the 'mug'. A typical example was how T6 in a lesson titled *Responsibilities* just lectured and explained the meaning of 'responsibility.' Learners were not involved in a single language task though the prescribed textbook had four tasks in that lesson. This resulted in no interaction among the learners. Learners were rarely involved in pair work, group work, presentation, debate, role play, or dialogue. Moreover, teachers did not let learners answer questions; rather, they provided the answers to their own questions without allowing 'wait time.' T3 asked two questions in his class on *Begum Rokeya*⁴: (1) What do you know about her? and (2) What was the name of her father? He then gave the answers, and the learners copied those answers in their notebooks. So, the overall teachers' talking-time was high, leaving limited time for learners' practice and production. Moreover, in most cases, the teachers themselves read the given passages in the textbooks and translated them into Bengali. Learners would sit silently and listen to their teachers.

In addition, the learner-centred teaching strategies were ignored by all the participating teachers. No differentiation was made in classroom instruction to facilitate language learning of all types of learners. As the learners were not given the opportunity to speak in classes, the teachers failed to explore what learners were thinking. Besides, they did not focus on addressing the individual learners' target language (TL) difficulties. However, T1, T2, and T5 in their classes tried to address learners' difficulties to some extent by giving further explanation of lesson contents, unknown vocabulary, and assigned tasks. Most of the teachers did not try to develop a sense of community among the learners in the classes through cooperative learning. Besides, no teacher used peer tutoring as a strategy in their classes. However, T2, in her classes, used peer checking when she asked the learners to comment whether their classmates' answers were correct or not. Problem-solving was not then used as a strategy to involve learners in TL practices. They never let learners

⁴ Rokeya Sakhawat Hossain, known as Begum Rokeya (1880-1932), was a famous Bengali feminist writer, educator, and political activist. She played a great role in women's emancipation across South Asia. (Wikipedia, 2022)

choose the class contents or some relevant materials. The teachers also did not assess whether learners really learned the language contents or grammar.

The teachers said that the use of teacher-centric classroom practices exposed their weaknesses, but they were used to teaching that way. They also argued that they could not use the learner-centred teaching strategies, as the learners were weak in English, and there was limited time.

We have failed to change the tradition (teacher-centred class) that is being followed for a long time. It has become our habit. Learners have also been habituated to this culture. (T4)

Because they are not fit for the class. This is why their involvement is low. Most of the students are not fit for the class. They are not able to participate in language classes. (T6)

We need more time. Thirty or forty minutes is not enough to make a class fruitful. (T3)

They also claimed that interactive tasks like group and pair work were not done because they did not take them seriously, as there was no group and pair work in examinations. It was more important to finish the syllabus for the examinations.

We do not take group work and pair work seriously. We do not engage them in practice. This is one of the problems. (T4)

Seating arrangement creates problems for group work. We do not have the proper seating arrangement for group work in schools. (T5)

The HTs commented that teachers could not go beyond the traditional, so they continued using the Grammar Translation Method (GTM).

The government is giving emphasis on group work, we are also told in training to ask teachers to do group work, but in the classrooms, only teachers are talking. (HT1)

We are preaching that learners will learn, teachers will help them, and work as facilitators, but we have failed to implement that in our classrooms. Till now, teachers are controlling the whole lesson. (HT3)

The CE argued that the lecture method was followed as teachers' main target was to pass information to learners, and they thought that learners would learn that way. The TTs said that the existing examination system did not require teachers to use the learner-centred teaching practices. To engage learners and be creative in pedagogy, teachers needed to acquire a different way of thinking.

Four skills ignored

The teachers were not concerned about addressing learners' TL needs. So, there was no effort on their part in developing learners' language skills, particularly writing, reading, speaking, and listening skills. They sometimes involved the learners in some reading activities, but learners were not allowed to explore the reading passages themselves, as the teachers were more interested in finding the meaning of the text through translation. Occasionally, the learners were asked to do some writing tasks as classwork or homework. No teacher carried out any activity to practice the listening and speaking skills. Consequently, a major part of the English curriculum was not being implemented. Moreover, they failed to teach the four skills in an integrated manner through different tasks. As no teacher monitored learners' language use inside the classes, the learners basically spoke only in Bengali. According to the CE, as the language skills were not practiced in the classrooms, there was no emersion in English:

There is very minimum time spent for speaking, very little or almost no time for listening, and sometimes they are reading, but that is also not reading in the strict sense, and in the name of writing, it is memorization.

The HTs commented that the government asked the schools to arrange twenty marks (grade points) for the internal assessment of listening and speaking skills, but it was not working since the EL teachers marked (graded) learners as they wished. The HTs, TTs, and CE claimed that teachers avoided listening and speaking practices as these two skills were not assessed in the high-stakes public examinations.

What is tested is practiced in the classrooms. That happens in most cases. (TT1)

No rapport building

The teachers did not try to build a warm relationship with their students to facilitate teaching-learning in the classrooms. They entered the classrooms, gave their lectures, and left. So, they mechanically conducted the classes, and the teachers and students remained mutually isolated. Sometimes, they greeted their students at the beginning of the class, but it could be more than that. During the classes, opportunities were

missed that could have made the teacher-student interaction more communicative and fruitful. Usually, the teachers did not use humour in their classes, making it more boring for learners. However, T1 and T4 occasionally used some witty words and sentences in Bengali to add fun to their classes, and the learners appreciated and enjoyed those phases of laughter. In addition, the majority made no attempt to know about students' individual needs, interests, and be close to their hearts. The teachers, thus, failed to build an amicable relation with the learners. According to TT2, teachers could build rapport with them by motivating them, remembering their names, asking about their families, interacting close, supporting them, and being friendly and positive.

Good discipline management

From a disciplinary perspective, the teachers could usually maintain a positive environment in their classes. The teachers, thus, were not preoccupied with classroom management and did not face that many critical incidents. Except for T3, they managed their classes well and had no major problems. However, T3 had a tough time managing his classes. He simply struggled to teach his students, and his classrooms were chaotic as the learners were non-cooperative. Most of them were shouting, fighting, talking to one another, moving in the classes, passing papers, and did not bother to listen to their teacher. Some were also complaining to the teacher against their disturbing classmates. Though the teacher tried to control his students' disruptive behaviour, but classroom discipline was loose. Consequently, very limited learning took place.

There are some students who are very ill-disciplined, and they are not attentive in classes. Even the skilled teachers do not get the right environment to teach in classes. (T3)

Failure to retain learners' attention

All these teachers failed to retain learners' attention in their classes. They made the new contents and grammar rules learnable through translation. but did nothing interesting. Consequently, they could not make learners listen to the lessons. For example, T1 was teaching a class on grammar mostly through lecturing. Most of the learners seemed bored and one learner commented that she was falling asleep. T3 also failed to make the learners interested in his classes. They were sitting idly and creating disciplinary problems for the teacher. Some learners fell asleep during T6's classes since he could not hold their attention through lecturing. The teachers argued that learners were not attentive in the class for various reasons: (1) many of them were not sincere and cooperative in the class, and some did not understand the class content; (2) learners were not the same as they had been in the past; (3) they were now more interested in television, satellite channels, cell phones, and games; (4) they had some other options to solve their academic problems, such as private tutors and coaching centres; and (5) some teachers just could not make the class interesting.

We cannot make learners attentive to the lesson. Classes are not being interesting. Class must be more interesting. (T5)

We always try to make our class interesting, but learners are not cooperative in our school. (T6)

According to the TTs and HTs, teachers were not being methodical, and they could not make class interesting. Making class interesting depends on the respective teachers' capacity and skills. TT1 argued that as learners were widely exposed to the internet, cell phones, and television, so teachers must use technologies in the class. Besides, learners must be given some responsibility for their own learning.

Memorization encouraged

The teachers' pedagogical practices encouraged learners to memorize. Some teachers even directly asked learners in the classes to memorize language contents and grammar rules. For example, T2 was discussing some questions as part of the pre-reading activities in a lesson titled *A Sad Day for Farabi*. The first question was, "What would you do if your parents did not want you to go on a picnic with your friends?" The teacher answered, "I would be sad. I would not insist on going there." The second question was, "What will you do if you missed the picnic bus? The teacher again replied, "I would try to find the way, and I would ask other people to help." and asked her students to memorize these answers. She also inquired whether the learners could memorize 'the whole lesson' to answer questions in the forthcoming examination. Memorization of contents and grammar rules did not guarantee that learners were developing the TL skills; but it might help them pass the examinations. According to the teachers, learners memorized the essays, paragraphs, stories, and other contents in the TL because they were weak in writing.

They are not able to write something in their own way. Their vocabulary is very poor. Their writing skill is very weak. They cannot write a sentence in their own way. (T6)

T5 pointed out that the teachers were mainly responsible for memorization:

I don't think memorization is at all good. Our teachers are responsible for this; most of our teachers think that if learners memorize, successful learning takes place. Can anybody learn a language by memorization?

Rare inspiration for learners

Sometimes, the teachers praised learners for their efforts and answers, but they usually did not encourage the learners to think, speak, and ask questions in the classes. However, T4 sometimes encouraged the learners to speak and ask questions. Again, most commonly, the teachers did not inspire learners to learn the TL. However, T6 motivated his students repeatedly to study and to be attentive in the class.

So, if you continue your studies, you will be able to succeed in the exam. If you study regularly and attentively, you will be able to make a good result in the exam.

The HTs claimed that teachers did not inspire the learners; rather, sometimes they showed negative attitude in the class. The TTs commented that teachers themselves were not motivated to teach, so they did not motivate the learners.

Teachers themselves are not motivated. They do not know many things. They do not know the current changes, and happenings around the world. (TT1)

The teachers could inspire learners to learn English by telling them how English would help them in the future; they could play language games in the class and create a competitive environment to learn English. However, they could not see 'the big picture' of education and did not inspire their students to dream big, the TTs added.

Ritualistic homework

All these teachers assigned homework (HW) in their classes. For example, T1 asked her students in a class to write the antonyms of any thirty words and the structures of all tenses with examples as HW. Similarly, T2 asked the learners to write about their sports day and a few slogans for a poster on global warming as HW. T3 asked his students to write a short paragraph on *Begum Rokeya*. However, sometimes, the assigned HW was not related to the respective class contents. For example, T1 taught grammar in her class, but asked the learners to do HW on vocabulary. T4 assigned HW for the learners on writing a paragraph on *The Mobile Phone*, but the lesson was about the transformation of sentences. Besides, T1, T3, and T5 never checked the HW in their classes. In fact, the teachers usually never checked all the learners' HW; rather, they checked only a few learners' papers casually. Not checking HW might encourage learners not to complete it. The teachers reasoned that they could not check HW, as the number of students was high, and it took a major portion of their class time.

Very often, we cannot check homework of all learners. Not checking homework creates another problem, learners usually do not want to do their homework. (T3)

It appeared that assigning HW became 'a ritual' that they performed in every class. Neither the teachers nor learners took it seriously. However, HW could have been used as an effective tool to develop individual learners' TL skills, creativity, and identity.

Teaching English grammar and vocabulary without contextualization

The teachers flatly followed the deductive approach to teach grammar. They were very keen on explaining the grammar rules. Moreover, they usually did not provide many examples of one grammar rule.

It would have been better if we could provide more examples of the grammar items. (T3)

T5 was teaching narration and confused the learners with too much explanation of the rules. T1, T3, T4, and T6 also focused on the explanation of grammar rules in their classes. They never asked learners to give examples of grammar items before and after discussing the rules.

It would be good to involve learners in production of more grammar examples. If they produce examples, it then proves that they are understanding the rules. (T1)

They were thus teaching about the TL ignoring its functional aspects. The teachers' beliefs also played a role in their use of the deductive approach to teach grammar.

I think students should first learn the rules. (T6)

Moreover, grammar was treated as an isolated component of the EL and taught in isolation as well without any contextualization. Furthermore, the teachers never involved learners in language tasks practicing grammar.

It would have been better if we could teach grammar through different tasks. (T5)

Through isolated grammar teaching, learners were pushed to memorize the grammar rules. The teachers claimed that they could not focus on the communicative functions of grammar due to a lack of time. The TTs argued that as teachers taught grammar through the GTM and involvement of students was ignored, learners were not interested in grammar classes.

In addition, the new TL vocabulary was taught without any contextualization. Following a typical pedagogical practice, T2 mentioned the given key words – *slap, oasis, quicksand, erase, and engrave* – in a lesson titled *The Best Friend*. She then gave their meanings in Bengali. The learners repeated the word meanings orally in Bengali. There was no further activity on the new vocabulary. They were thus encouraging learners to memorize the TL vocabulary without understanding how to use them.

If they use the word in a sentence, it will take time. It would have been better to teach vocabulary through contextualization, but we don't get that much time. (T6)

The TTs argued that teachers were following the short cut method in vocabulary teaching, so there was no contextualization.

You know, vocabulary teaching must not be in Bengali. A student will get chances to know more words while dealing with a single word if he deals in English. (TT3)

Insufficient and ineffective use of teaching aids

The EL teachers used different traditional teaching aids like whiteboard, blackboard, marker, chalk, grammar resource book, textbook; however, some of them (T2, T3, and T4) also used digital technologies in their multimedia classes. Apart from these, only T1 prepared and used some hand-written posters on grammatical items. They did not use any other visual teaching aids in their classes. Furthermore, they did not select and adapt additional materials in the TL and use any language game in their classes. This lack of teaching aids made their classroom teaching orthodox, lecture-based, and ultimately boring.

Moreover, the teachers' use of the teaching aids like textbooks and boards was teacher-centred and not very effective. As already mentioned, T1 used some posters, but her poster presentation was not fruitful, as she just showed the posters to the learners. The teachers claimed that they could not involve learners in using the board due to time constraints.

Short duration of class is a problem, and we are bound to follow the syllabus....To write something on the board, students take a long time. (T6)

Moreover, in language classes, the EL teachers were supposed to make proper use of the two textbooks prescribed by the Nation Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) for each class: (1) *English for Today* (EFT); and (2) *English Grammar and Composition*. However, the teachers did not use the textbooks effectively. They asserted, though the textbooks were well written, there was no alignment between exam and these textbooks.

Teachers are concerned about their learners' performance in the public examinations. Most of the exam items are not set following the textbooks. (T6)

The teachers claimed that they could not use teaching aids in the class due to time and financial constraints. However, according to the HTs, teachers were negligent about using teaching aids, and they did not know how to use aids fruitfully.

The main reason is that they are studying English only to pass the exams. Neither the teachers nor the learners have the mindset to learn the language. (HT3)

The TTs stated that most of the teachers did not use teaching aids as they lacked motivation. However, this was not the only barrier to teachers' use of teaching aids. The CE argued that schools lacked teaching aids, but the main problem was teachers' mindset:

Teachers believe in their lecture only, and in fact, in a lecture mode class, we don't need any teaching aids.

Poor planning for classroom teaching

The teachers' planning for classroom teaching was not at all satisfactory. None of these teachers used a lesson plan (LP) to teach their classes. They just picked up one component from the syllabus and started classroom teaching. However, T1 took some preparation and brought the grammar guidebook and some posters for her classes. As they were following no LP, the lessons were most often progressing haphazardly. The overall impression was "let's see where it goes." Similarly, most of the time the ending was abrupt, and it depended on the sound of the school bell. The teachers usually did not wrap up the lessons properly. Though these teachers started their classes on time, none of them was careful about time management during the class. T3 spent 17 minutes in a class translating the keywords into Bengali ignoring the other tasks in that lesson.

Teachers cannot take adequate preparation needed to make a class fruitful. They have to teach at least five classes per day. And, sometimes, they have to teach six or seven classes. They are not getting any time for preparation, and they are always busy in different kinds of work. (T6)

Correspondingly, they said they could not use LP because they had too many classes to make LP. They claimed to use mental lesson plans during teaching their classes.

If a teacher had to teach two or three classes, he could prepare lesson plans. But if he is to teach six or seven classes [everyday], how many lesson plans will he prepare? (T4)

According to the TTs, sometimes, teachers were too much occupied, and they also remained busy giving learners private classes for additional earnings, so they could not manage time for class preparation.

Our teachers are very much reluctant to think about the planning because they are bored with imparting the lessons eight times a day. (TT3)

Besides, except for the grammar classes, the teachers did not have any specific instructional objectives. Infallibly, they were more interested in finishing the syllabus for the upcoming examinations.

Only to make learners able to pass in the exam. This is our only motto. If they fail the public exams, then our institution will be in problems. (T6)

Because the whole society is an exam-driven society. Our education is exam-driven. (CE)

Discussion

Scholars (Atjonen et al., 2011; Cooper, 2014b; Danielson, 2014; Farrell, 2013; Haberman, 2010; Kennedy, 2016; Richards, 2010) asserted that language teaching must be learner-centred, and the learners need to be engaged in interactive activities. Hathaway and Jaquith (2014) also talked about involving the learners in pedagogical decision-making. However, the participating EL teachers followed the teacher-centred pedagogy what Haberman (2010) defined as "the pedagogy of poverty" (p. 82). Learners' silence was not a unique trend in the Bangladeshi EL classrooms. The EFL teachers in Estonia liked their students to be silent to maintain class discipline though they were supposed to follow the CLT approach in teaching (Oder, 2014). Previous studies (Arnove, 2010; Atjonen et al., 2011; Cooper, 2014b; Danielson, 2014; Richards, 2010) also emphasized the importance of rapport building with learners and creating a friendly and cooperative class environment, but that was missing in the Bangladeshi EL classrooms. The prevalent cultural orientation in Bangladeshi society might be a barrier to building a warm relationship between teachers and students in the class as it sanctioned an invisible wall between them.

Moreover, the teachers were supposed to differentiate classroom instruction, and use questioning (Cooper, 2014b; Danielson, 2014), but that did not happen in the classes. Then, the participating teachers were never concerned about 'learning outcomes' and ignored the learners' needs in the classes (Richards, 2010). Besides, the teachers did not engage learners in communicative tasks using different components of English grammar as argued by Richards and Reppen (2014). They taught grammar only through lecture and translation, which was not consistent with the arguments of Sanchez and Borg (2014) as well. This decontextualized approach to grammar teaching could be explained by the fact that the teachers predominantly ignored the functional aspects of the TL, and they were more interested in the structural aspects.

The finding about using predominantly teacher-centred classroom techniques was consistent with that of other studies in Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012) and other contexts (Hardman & A-Rahman, 2014; Oder, 2014). The teachers were following the 'transmission pedagogy,' in which the lessons are dominated by teachers. In this kind of pedagogy, it is believed that by listening to teachers' lecture and explanation of

contents and grammar, learners will learn the TL (Hamid & Honan, 2012). The teachers' dominance in the class could be further explained by the fact that these teachers were taught by their teachers through GTM. Their classroom practices were influenced by their past experiences as learners, knowledge, and beliefs (Abad, 2013; Hayes, 2010; Măță et al., 2013). Moreover, the teachers were not ready to follow the learner-centred teaching strategies as that would require them to give up their long held "status and authority" (Hamid & Honan, 2012, p. 153) and pedagogical conservatism (Richter & Herrera, 2016). Furthermore, the traditional teacher education programs and professional development (PD) activities in Bangladesh failed to change teachers' views and beliefs. Besides, all other subjects at the schools were taught through didactic teaching as pointed out by the CE.

The finding about exam-oriented classroom practices was consistent with previous studies done in Bangladesh and other contexts (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Gu, 2013; Narkar, 2013; Yook & Lee, 2016). This exam-centred classroom teaching approach was the main barrier to developing learners' TL skills. As a matter of fact, the education system in Bangladesh had become exam-driven. From classes 1-12, the learners sat for four public examinations in Bangladesh. Whereas in Finland, a worldwide famous Northern European country for its education system, the students did not sit for any public exam till the age of eighteen (Hasan, 2018). In Bangladesh, the teachers, learners, guardians, and school authority were only interested in headcounts and good grades. The learners might obtain good grades in the exams, but that did not mean that they had good operational skills in English. The teachers also taught in the class only what was tested in the exams. As listening and speaking skills were not assessed, the teachers and learners were not interested in practicing them (Das et al., 2014). The relationship between examinations and classroom practices is shown in Figure 1.

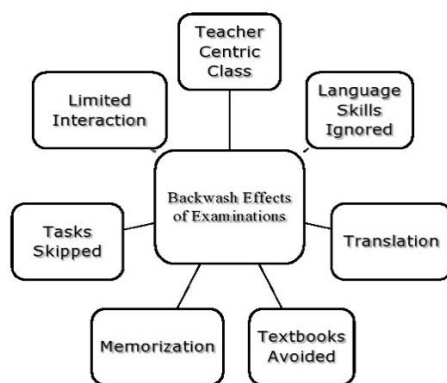


Figure 1: Relationship between examinations and classroom practices

The teachers' overall poor pedagogical skills could be further explained by other factors. They did not develop the habit of accessing their past experiences to ensure that those experiences did not affect their classroom practices (Farrell, 2013). Besides, they did not receive adequate training to enhance their pedagogical skills (Quader, 2015; Rahman, 2015). Many scholars (Arnové, 2010; Danielson, 2014; Farrell, 2013; Gabriel, 2016) focused on teachers' reflection on their everyday teaching practices, but the EL teachers did not reflect to improve their classroom practices. They were not engaged in research and PD activities. Moreover, the teachers were not used to spending time on class preparation as advocated by researchers (Cooper, 2014b; Danielson, 2014; Farrell, 2013). Little class time, a heavy workload, a large class size, and the teachers' low motivation (Atjonen et al., 2011) were some other factors contributing to their poor pedagogical skills. They followed faulty classroom practices due to the absence of monitoring as well (Das et al., 2014). They also lacked commitment to classroom teaching.

Conclusion

The evidence showed that the participating teachers possessed poor pedagogical skills, as their classroom practices were not effective for the EL teaching-learning. Classroom pedagogy was predominantly teacher-centred and lecture-based. Teachers were not concerned about learners' TL needs and developing their four TL skills. Consequently, learners were rarely engaged in interactive language tasks, and there was limited interaction among learners. They also did not build rapport with students and failed to capture their attention; they usually did not inspire learners in learning the TL. Moreover, their classroom practices encouraged learners to memorize the contents and grammar rules. The teachers did not spend time planning and preparing before the class. They regularly skipped checking homework in the class though most teachers

assigned learners homework in each class. There was a dearth of teaching aids in the class. The teachers did not use the prescribed textbooks effectively in teaching. In addition, they taught the EL grammar and vocabulary without contextualization. However, most of the teachers were good at maintaining classroom discipline. Above all, their classroom pedagogy was exam-focused.

Recommendations for the EL teachers and other stakeholders

It is crucial to change teachers' outdated pedagogical beliefs as their teaching practices are influenced by their individual beliefs. Taking their focus away from the high-stakes examinations, teachers' classroom pedagogy must be learner-centred as articulated by Haberman (2010). Their core pedagogical concern should be the development of learners' TL skills. By enhancing teachers' proficiency in the TL and developing their pedagogical skills, it might be possible to make the class learner-centred (Hamid & Honan, 2012). As suggested by TT1, the learners must be given some responsibilities for their own learning and engaged in interactive activities to develop their TL skills. Teachers also need to develop their skills to teach listening and speaking skills in the class. Moreover, they must ponder over their present level of commitment to classroom teaching, and always teach the learners considering the instructional objectives and learning outcomes, not according to their whims. Teachers then must build the habit of systematic reflection on their classroom practices to improve classroom teaching and their skills (Gabriel, 2016; Richards, 2010). Above all else, the EL teachers need to do less in the class, so that the learners can do more.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) and other stakeholders must take initiatives to address the poor pedagogical skills of secondary level EL teachers in Bangladesh. Reducing teachers' workload particularly the classroom teaching load by appointing more EL teachers might encourage teachers to pay more attention to the quality of classroom teaching. It's also vital to increase the class duration for language classes. The MOE must put an effective mechanism in place for continuous monitoring of teachers' classroom practices. Das et al. (2014) commented that "more and regulated monitoring" (p. 341) is needed to ensure teachers' use of effective classroom EL teaching-learning strategies. The HTs can monitor and motivate EL teachers to be pedagogically sound in the classrooms. The MOE also must assess the in-service teachers' teaching skills annually (Hess & Fennell, 2015) to ensure their efficiency. Then, nobody should be allowed to apply for the EL teaching position without a degree in English education. While designing programs, the teacher educators need to consider teachers' real classrooms and other professional needs. Moreover, the designers of these programs must work on teacher cognition to mould and realign teachers' beliefs, attitudes, and decision-making process. Besides, these programs should develop teachers' habit of systematic reflection.

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Appendix 1

Classroom Observation Guide

Section A: Secondary School EL Teachers' Pedagogical Skills

Sub-Section A1: Instructional Strategy

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Encouraging learners to speak, think, and raise critical questions while listening		
ii.	Motivating students to study/learn the TL		
iii.	Making learners proactive		
iv.	Arising curiosity for further learning		
v.	Integrating language skills		
vi.	Divergent or convergent pedagogy		
vii.	Differentiating instruction		
viii.	Use of direct instruction		
ix.	Emphasising cooperative learning		
x.	Use of problem-solving		
xi.	Using humour		
xii.	Addressing common interest/needs of learners		
xiii.	Individualising lessons (focusing on learners' lives, concerns, goals and interests)		
xiv.	Caring about individual learners' need		
xv.	Considering learners' comprehensibility		
xvi.	Peer tutoring		
xvii.	Teachers' use of questioning		
xviii.	Use of 'wait time' while asking questions		

Sub-Section A2: Classroom Management

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Maintaining classroom discipline		
ii.	Building rapport with learners		
iii.	Teacher role (Teacher as a guide/facilitator or Teacher running the show)		
iv.	Making a personal contact with students		
v.	Seating arrangement		
vi.	Teacher as a dispenser of knowledge/lecturing		
vii.	Teachers'-talking-time (TTT)		
viii.	Student-centred teaching-learning		

ix.	Student participation		
x.	Learners' interaction		
xi.	Learner initiatives		
xii.	Creating a sense of community in the language class		
xiii.	Students' choice of content		
xiv.	Handling critical or unanticipated incidents		
xv.	Output from learners		
xvi.	Input from teachers		
xvii.	Extent of teachers' preoccupation with classroom management and lesson plan		
xviii.	Learning outcomes		
xix.	Creating a positive environment in the classroom		
xx.	Culturally responsive classroom management: social justices, equal opportunities for leaning for all.		
xxi.	Time management		
xxii.	Constructive learning environment		
xxiii.	Diagnosing learners' problems		
xxiv.	Guiding student practice		
xxv.	Monitoring learners' language use		

Sub-Section A3: Classroom Instruction and Activities/Tasks

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Introducing and explaining the tasks		
ii.	Making new subject content understandable, interesting and learnable to students		
iii.	Addressing students' difficulties		
iv.	Responding to learners' enquiries		
v.	Offering Feedback		
vi.	Checking learners' understanding		
vii.	Evaluation/assessment		
viii.	Reflection-in-teaching (monitoring, adjusting)		
ix.	Exploring students' thoughts		
x.	Arranging varied activities and tasks		
xi.	Task completion		
xii.	Creating classroom opportunities for active use of language by students in individual and group activities		
xiii.	Use of collaborative learning activities such as group and pair work, role play, and peer-feedback		
xiv.	Engaging learners in approximate real-life activities		
xv.	Structured discussion, e.g., dialogue, debate		

xvi.	Giving Homework		
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Sub-Section A4: Teaching English Grammar and Vocabulary

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Grammar teaching approach: deductive; inductive		
ii.	Contextualisation of grammar		
iii.	Communicative functions of grammar		
iv.	Integrating grammar with other skills		
v.	Strategy for teaching Vocabulary		

Sub-section A5: Teaching Aids Including Traditional and Digital Technology

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Use of teaching aids		
ii.	Visual teaching aids (photos and images)		
iii.	Using language games		
iv.	Materials selection and adaptation		
v.	Effectiveness of using teaching aids: (Blackboard/whiteboard, Course book, Teachers' voice, Others)		
vi.	Digital technology presence in EL classroom		
vii.	Teachers' digital technology use in language classroom		
viii.	School's technological infrastructure for arranging listening and speaking practices		
ix.	Whether teachers arrange listening and speaking practices for learners using technology		
x.	Allowing students to use mobile devices inside classroom		
xi.	Learners' use of mobile devices inside classrooms		
xii.	Teachers' confidence in using technology in classroom		
xiii.	Whether technology use is teacher-dominated or learner-centred		
xiv.	Administrative and technical support for using technology in classroom		
xv.	Effectiveness of teachers' technology use		

Sub-Section A6: Lesson Organization

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.	Use of a lesson plan		
ii.	Preparation before the class		
iii.	Planned beginning (warm-up activities)		
iv.	Instructional objectives-purposes in instruction		
v.	Setting up learning arrangements		
vi.	Making transitions from one task to another		

vii.	Planned progress of the lesson		
viii.	Planned ending		

Sub-Section A7: Personal Attributes of EL Teachers

Attributes	Remarks
Respecting children	
Paying attention	
Keeping composure always and under all circumstances	
Being committed	
Being caring	
Being friendly	
Having a passion for teaching	
Being dedicated	
Being motivated	
Being confident	
Showing ethical behaviour	
Taking pride in work	
Being creative	
Showing impartiality	
Having a positive attitude	
Being well-organised	
Never giving up	
Being flexible	
Being open to new ideas	
Setting high standards for self and students	

Sub-Section A8: Any Other Relevant Observations in the Class

No.	Observation Items	Observations	Remarks
i.			
ii.			
iii.			

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Appendix 2

Semi-Structured Interview Checklist

Section A: Pedagogical Skills Based on Class Observations

No.	Items for Interview
i.	Teacher-centred class
ii.	Less involvement of learners in classes
iii.	Allowing learners to speak the L1 in English classes
iv.	Limited target language (TL) practice/production by learners (exam question pattern)
v.	Motivating learners to speak, use, and learn English
vi.	Involving learners in real use/practice of the TL in classes
vii.	Less interaction among students; limited learner participation in classes (no role play/debate/dialogue; rare pair or group work)
viii.	Very few learners' questions
ix.	Students being silent in classes
x.	Less attention of learners in classes
xi.	Too much explanation of contents and grammar items by teachers
xii.	Using very few teaching aids
xiii.	Rare warm up activities
xiv.	Teaching grammar in isolation (no contextualization); teaching grammar at discourse level; using only the deductive approach
xv.	Not using the NCTB English Grammar and Composition books in classes (using guidebooks)
xvi.	Not asking learners to practice & produce more examples of grammar items in classes
xvii.	No communicative function of grammar
xviii.	No integration of grammar with other skills
xix.	No grammar activity /task
xx.	Lecturing about grammar items/contents (learners lose motivation)
xxi.	Not that much teacher questioning
xxii.	Teachers asking questions but no wait time
xxiii.	Teachers giving answer to questions
xxiv.	Using teaching aids more effectively (posters)
xxv.	Using textbooks effectively
xxvi.	Teaching fast in the classes (skipping activities)
xxvii.	Vocabulary teaching in isolation
xxviii.	Giving vocabulary meaning both in Bengali and English
xxix.	Learners not using digital technologies (DTs) in classes
xxx.	Creative use of ICT for language teaching
xxxi.	Using DTs for exposure to native/standard English
xxxii.	Picture show in multimedia classes (MCs) (students look at)
xxxiii.	Making classes more interesting for the learners (using language game)
xxxiv.	Not using white/black board
xxxv.	Too much Teacher-Talking-Time
xxxvi.	Not using peer tutoring
xxxvii.	Seating arrangement
xxxviii.	Arranging different/creative language tasks
xxxix.	No peer feedback
xl.	Limited teacher feedback
xli.	Teacher-centred use of boards
xlii.	Using a lesson plan
xliii.	Teaching more classes with digital technology

- xliv. Inadequate output from learners
 - xl. More focus on contents than language use
 - xlvi. Talking when using the boards
 - xlvii. Classroom instruction encouraging learners' content memorization
 - xlvi. Poor classroom management and lack of discipline
 - xlix. Less evaluation (students do nothing to show their understanding)
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- I. Class duration (30-40 minutes)
 - li. Effectiveness of instruction
 - lii. Not checking homework
 - liii. Making MCs skills-based not knowledge or topic-based
 - liv. Not ensuring whether individual learners are really learning or having difficulty
 - lv. Too much engagement of certain students in classes
 - lvi. Applying teachers' pedagogical knowledge in classes
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