

PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE CLASSROOMS IN  
BANGLADESH DURING COVID-19: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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## AN ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of Ashraful Wadud for the degree of *Master of Education in English Language Teaching* presented in 27 December 2024 entitled *Pedagogical Practices in English Language Classrooms in Bangladesh During COVID -19: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly changed the global educational system. This dissertation delves into the pedagogical practices employed by English language teachers throughout the pandemic, offering a detailed examination of the unique challenges they encountered and the opportunities that arose during the transition to remote teaching. By analyzing their experiences, the study aims to shed light on how educators adapted their methods to effectively engage students in an unprecedented learning environment. The study is based on an interpretive research paradigm, which utilizes qualitative methods to gain insights into teachers' experiences. The study tries to reveal the pedagogical approaches, the impact of digital tools, and the educational policies during COVID-19 that shaped the experiences of higher secondary level teachers in Bangladesh through semi-structured interviews.

This dissertation employs narrative enquiry as its research methodology with a view to exploring the research participants' stories. The study includes interviews with English teachers teaching at higher secondary who shared their pandemic-time teaching experiences. Semi-structured interviews were conducted to allow participants to share their narratives freely. This approach helps to understand the teachers' experiences, which aligns with the interpretive paradigm of research.

The findings of the study reveal that teachers face challenges in continuing their pedagogical practices during the pandemic. Their challenges include the abrupt

switching to an online mode of teaching, a lack of proper training, and limited access to digital tools. It has also been noticed that there exists a digital divide between village and city areas. Despite these challenges, the teachers continue to deliver their lessons virtually by adapting themselves to the online mode of teaching. This capacity of adaptation shows teachers' resilience in the case of crisis and their determination to guarantee the persistence of educational activities amidst critical situations like the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of this dissertation are significant for all the stakeholders in the education sector, including policymakers, researchers, teachers, students, and guardians. Understanding the experience of English teachers during COVID-19 tells us about the implications of online education.

This dissertation examines the pedagogical practices of English teachers in English language classrooms at the higher secondary level during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. It portrays the challenges faced by the teachers and their proactive strategies to ensure effective teaching and learning during this global crisis. Moreover, it also recommends investing in teacher training and developing digital infrastructure to ensure quality English language teaching and preparing teachers for future challenges.



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## शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि असफल वादुद को शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक " कोभिड-१९ को अवधिमा बंगलादेशका अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा कक्षाहरूमा शिक्षण विधिहरू: एक कथात्मक अनुसन्धान " १२ पुस २०८१ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।

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कोभिड-१९ महामारीले विश्वव्यापी शैक्षिक प्रणालीलाई गम्भीर रूपमा परिवर्तन गर्‍यो। यो शोधप्रबन्धले महामारीको अवधिमा अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षकहरूले अपनाएका शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरूमा गहिरो अध्ययन गर्दछ, जहाँ उनीहरूले सामना गरेका विशेष चुनौतीहरू र टाढाबाट अध्यापनमा रूपान्तरण हुँदै जाँदा आएका अवसरहरूको विस्तृत विश्लेषण गरिएको छ। शिक्षकहरूको अनुभवको विश्लेषण गरेर, यो अध्ययनले अभूतपूर्व सिकाइ वातावरणमा विद्यार्थीहरूलाई संलग्न गराउन शिक्षकहरूले कसरी आफ्ना विधिहरू अनुकूलन गरे भन्ने विषयमा प्रकाश पार्ने प्रयास गर्दछ।

यो अध्ययन व्याख्यात्मक अनुसन्धान दृष्टिकोणमा आधारित छ, जसले गुणात्मक विधिहरूको प्रयोग गरी शिक्षकहरूको अनुभवहरूबारे अन्तर्दृष्टि प्राप्त गर्न खोज्दछ। यो अनुसन्धानले कोभिड-१९ को समयमा उच्च माध्यमिक तहका शिक्षकहरूको अनुभवहरूलाई उजागर गर्नका लागि उनीहरूले अपनाएका शैक्षिक पद्धतिहरू, डिजिटल उपकरणहरूको प्रभाव, र शैक्षिक नीतिहरूको विश्लेषण गर्ने उद्देश्य राख्दछ। अध्ययनमा अर्ध-संरचित अन्तर्वार्ताको माध्यमबाट डेटा संकलन गरिएको छ।

यस शोधप्रबन्धमा अनुसन्धान पद्धतिको रूपमा 'कथात्मक अनुसन्धान' (Narrative Inquiry) अपनाइएको छ जसले सहभागी शिक्षकहरूको कथाहरूबाट अनुसन्धान गर्ने प्रयास गर्दछ। उच्च माध्यमिक तहमा अङ्ग्रेजी पढाउने शिक्षकहरूसँग अन्तर्वार्ता लिइएको छ जसले महामारीकालीन शिक्षण अनुभवहरू साझा गरेका छन्। अर्ध-संरचित अन्तर्वार्ताको माध्यमबाट सहभागीहरूले स्वतन्त्र रूपमा आफ्ना कथाहरू साझा गर्न पाएका छन्। यस किसिमको दृष्टिकोणले शिक्षकहरूको अनुभव बुझ्न मद्दत गर्दछ र अनुसन्धानको व्याख्यात्मक दृष्टिकोणसँग मिल्दोजुल्दो छ।

अध्ययनका निष्कर्षहरू अनुसार महामारीको समयमा शिक्षण अभ्यासलाई निरन्तरता दिन शिक्षकहरूले विभिन्न चुनौतीहरूको सामना गर्नुपरेको छ। ती चुनौतीहरूमा अचानक अनलाइन शिक्षणतर्फ स्विच गर्नुपर्ने, उचित तालिमको अभाव, र डिजिटल उपकरणहरूको सीमित पहुँच प्रमुख थिए। साथै, ग्रामीण र शहरी क्षेत्रमा डिजिटल पहुँचको असमानता पनि देखिएको छ। यस्ता चुनौतीहरूको बाबजुद पनि

शिक्षकहरूले आफूलाई अनलाइन शिक्षणमा अनुकूल बनाउँदै शिक्षण कार्यलाई निरन्तरता दिएका छन्। शिक्षकहरूको यो अनुकूलन क्षमता संकटको घडीमा उनीहरूको लचिलोपन र शैक्षिक गतिविधिहरूलाई निरन्तरता दिने दृढताको प्रमाण हो।

यो अध्ययनका निष्कर्षहरू शिक्षा क्षेत्रमा संलग्न सबै सरोकारवालाहरू—नीतिनिर्माता, अनुसन्धानकर्ता, शिक्षक, विद्यार्थी, र अभिभावक—का लागि महत्त्वपूर्ण छन्। कोभिड-१९ को समयमा अङ्ग्रेजी शिक्षकहरूले भोगेका अनुभवहरूबाट हामी अनलाइन शिक्षाको प्रभावबारे बुझ्न सक्छौं।

यो शोधप्रबन्धले कोभिड-१९ महामारीको समयमा बङ्गलादेशका उच्च माध्यमिक तहका अङ्ग्रेजी कक्षाहरूमा अपनाइएका शैक्षिक अभ्यासहरूको अध्ययन गर्दछ। यसले शिक्षकहरूले भोगेका चुनौतीहरू र सिकाइ प्रभावकारी बनाउन अपनाइएका सक्रिय रणनीतिहरूलाई उजागर गर्दछ। साथै, आगामी चुनौतीहरूको तयारीका लागि शिक्षक तालिममा लगानी गर्नु र डिजिटल पूर्वाधार विकास गर्नु आवश्यक रहेको सिफारिस समेत गर्दछ।

*Ashraful Wadud*

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अस्रफल वादुद

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

१२ पुस २०८१


This dissertation, entitled *Pedagogical Practices in English Language Classrooms in Bangladesh During COVID -19: A Narrative Inquiry*, was presented by *Ashraful Wadud* on 27 December 2024.

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I understand that my dissertation will be part of the permanent collection of Kathmandu University Library. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request.

  
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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my own work and has not been submitted for candidature to any university for any degree.



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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my beloved parents, whose faith in me has been my greatest source of strength.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

A2i	Access to Information
BELTA	Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association
BOU	Bangladesh Open University
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease - 2019
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ELT	English Language Teaching
ETB	English Teachers' Association of Bangladesh
GATE-SELTA	Sylhet English Language Teachers Association
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IT	Information Technology
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
M.Ed.	Master of Education
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the key elements of the dissertation. The introduction of this chapter presents an overview of the dissertation topic and focuses on the necessity of addressing the issues surrounding the subject matter, whilst the research context provides the background of the study. The importance of the study is depicted in the rationale section. The problem statement section contains the central issue of this dissertation and identifies the problem that is going to be addressed by the study. Likewise, the research objective has been mentioned in the purpose of the study section. The research questions of the dissertation are designed to address the key problems. Finally, the delimitation of the study section depicts the limitations of the study.

This dissertation encompasses the pedagogical practices in English language classrooms in Bangladesh amid COVID-19. The study outlined the issues that the students and teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it changed our formal education system for the future. The research further explored how teachers addressed the challenges brought by the pandemic to ensure continuous learning for students. During the study, the researcher interviewed teachers to investigate COVID-19's impact on English language teaching in Bangladesh. This research interview revealed their thoughts and feelings about the pandemic's educational effects. Based on the framework of interpretive paradigm research, the researcher develops his research further. The researcher also endeavours to suggest a way to cope with an exceptional situation posed by the COVID-19 pandemic and deliver the best education for our students.

#### **Background of the Study**

The COVID-19 virus was first discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and quickly spread worldwide. The COVID-19 virus is still prevalent. To fight the catastrophic impact, the global community came together to limit and control the COVID-19 virus. In a bid to stop the spread of the virus, scientists and researchers worldwide made tireless efforts to find a vaccine. Eventually, scientists developed a vaccine for COVID-19. However, a vast majority of the world population could not



get the COVID-19 vaccine due to different factors, including the limitation of resources. The study by Richtie et al. 2021 shows “only 25.1% of the world's population has been vaccinated against Covid-19”. It was essential to make an effective strategic plan to cope with the pandemic situation. Almost every aspect of our lives was deeply affected by COVID-19. However, this impact varied from country to country, based on the socioeconomic condition of each country. Some countries were better equipped and resourced to deal with the pandemic and already had a contingency plan to minimise the loss in an unprecedented situation like COVID-19. On the other side of the spectrum, developing countries struggled to meet their citizens' everyday demands and had limited or no resources to deal with a pandemic. For those countries, having a situation like COVID-19 was a nightmare.

Countries with resources can help their students in many ways by minimising the impact of COVID-19. For example, in the UK, the minister has announced a 50 million pounds budget to support students during COVID-19 (GOV. UK, 2021). In the UK, the Department for Education distributed over 1.3 million laptops and tablets among underprivileged students and young people to join online education during the pandemic (GOV.UK, 2021). This clearly demonstrates the capability and willingness to support students in a more developed nation. As such, students face fewer challenges in wealthy countries compared to countries with limited resources. In a country like Indonesia, many students do not even have electricity and no access to TV and the internet in their homes (World Bank, 2021). This shows how badly students are affected in a country with inadequate infrastructure and resources. Countries like India and Bangladesh have massive populations but not enough resources to invest in their citizen. In those countries, even in normal times, many students cannot access essential textbooks. In situations like these, students need only become acute, as many students have no internet or TV set in their home, which means they cannot take part in e-learning. In such a situation, teaching any subject is complex, particularly teaching generally regarded as difficult subjects such as English and mathematics becomes very challenging. Students who live in remote parts of the country are mainly the worst hit by the closure of educational institutions. As a result, students need access to any traditional learning facilities, for instance, a physical classroom, a library and research lab facilities. Both the students and teachers had to rapidly familiarize themselves with the online education system using digital tools to

continue student learning facilities (Rahman & Barua, 2021). The need for swift change required a significant pedagogical shift. This dissertation will explore pedagogical practices teachers employ to deal with new challenges.

The challenges of online learning were new to teachers, students, and all those involved with delivering education. In most instances, teachers employed in higher secondary education have only limited or no familiarity with digital teaching tools. Not having prior training in online pedagogies, coupled with limited technological resources, posed significant hardship to the smooth transformation of online learning (Islam, 2020).

Teachers had limited guidance and support to transform their pedagogical practices online. This study investigates how English teachers in Bangladesh reacted to these challenges, adapted to new teaching methods, and employed various strategies to facilitate student learning during the COVID-19 outbreak.

At the centre of the research is the understanding that pedagogy goes beyond the delivery of the curriculum content, and it includes the techniques and approaches used by the teacher to facilitate effective learning. During the pandemic, teachers had to significantly reassess their teaching strategies to effectively meet students' needs in an online learning environment (Sarker et al., 2021). However, the lessons learned from this swift transfer to online teaching will help shape future teaching practices.

Besides, this study positions itself within Bangladesh's broader context of English language teaching (ELT). English, being a mandatory module both in the secondary and higher secondary levels, determines students' overall academic success. However, the shift to online learning highlighted the pre-existing issues, including inadequate technological skills amongst teachers and insufficient access to resources. (Chowdhury et al., 2021). The endeavour to research explores how these factors influenced English teachers' ability to maintain teaching quality and student engagement amid the pandemic.

This dissertation seeks to enhance the expanding body of research on the intersection of technology and education, particularly in developing countries, by examining the pedagogical practices of English teachers in Sylhet, Bangladesh. It reveals how teachers coped with the rapid shift to online education, their challenges, and their innovative strategies to overcome these difficulties. The outcomes from this research provide important insights into how pedagogical practices can be adapted in

times of crisis and may offer recommendations for future teacher training and policy development to better utilise IT tools in classroom teaching.

### **Research Context**

The educational framework of Bangladesh is not up to standard. This is because Bangladesh is a country with inadequate resources. Sarkar et al. (2014) note that the limited budget allocation for education in Bangladesh has a direct impact on its ability to develop sufficient educational resources and infrastructure. Bangladesh is a poverty-stricken country with a recessionary economic situation. As such, the government of Bangladesh does not have enough resources to fund the education sector. In this regard, Mridha et al. (2013) stated, “Inadequate educational resources, unqualified teachers, and lack of community involvement are key factors contributing to the poor state of education in rural Bangladesh, despite the critical role of education in economic growth and poverty alleviation”. This is the prime reason why Bangladesh is unable to compete with countries that have higher standards of education. At the beginning of the COVID-19 outbreak, the government was unable to make a clear strategy to minimize academic disruption during the pandemic. Nitu et al. (2020) observed that the absence of an emergency crisis management plan during the COVID-19 pandemic hindered Bangladesh’s education sector in implementing effective strategies to mitigate disruptions. This observation aligns with the findings from the study of Al-Amin et al. (2021), which highlights that online learning during COVID-19 in Bangladesh faces challenges due to insufficient preparedness, participation, and limited scope of classroom activities due to insufficient internet and electricity availability. Moreover, Ahmed and Tajwar (2023) noted that “The COVID-19 pandemic has brought a drastic change to the field of education all around the world, and Bangladesh is not an exception to the situation” (p.1). As such, at the beginning, it was a sheer mess, and no one knew what to do apart from keeping shut all educational institutes throughout the country. In the absence of proper guidance, both students and teachers were in confusing situations (Rouf & Rashid, 2021).

A number of factors contributed to the overwhelmed situation of Bangladesh during the COVID-19 outbreak. Our academic infrastructure was poor, and there was no contingency plan in place. Very limited or no facilities at all for e-learning, such as Moodle or any other online learning platforms, in most of the academic institutions. According to Arefin et al. (2023), the COVID-19 pandemic significantly disrupted

Bangladesh's formal education system, creating challenges that impeded the successful implementation of online learning. As a result, the majority of students and teachers alike have no clue about the online teaching process. On the other hand, the developed nations were very familiar with online learning platforms long before the COVID-19 outbreak, and this has helped them to cope well and enjoy the benefits of technology at the start of the pandemic. The scenario is completely opposite in the context of Bangladesh. However, the co-operation among teachers, parents, and students is remarkable in adjusting to the new way of life. Despite these amazing efforts, it was very difficult to implement effective teaching facilities for students. The vast majority of the students and teachers have no or only have limited access to a smart device, such as a laptop, tablet, or even a smart mobile phone, to use for educational purposes. Students and teachers living in remote areas do not have access to broadband facilities. Being so, they have no means to access an online teaching platform. Even those who have access to broadband often suffer from unstable Internet connections. Sadly, vast numbers of students and teachers do not have enough means to pay for their broadband bills. Therefore, even those living in cities with internet access often cannot benefit from online platforms.

English language teaching (ELT) at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh faced various challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Rouf and Rashid (2021), throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, English language teaching at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh confronted significant challenges, namely technological barriers, poor student interaction in virtual classrooms, lack of preparation, and unstable internet connectivity. This dissertation investigates the narratives of English teachers teaching English at the higher secondary level during the COVID-19 pandemic. By using a narrative inquiry approach, the study aims to illustrate how these English teachers adapted their teaching practices to continue students' learning amidst the crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Teaching English becomes more challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, educational technology is rarely used in classrooms (Fatema & Sultana, 2020, p.53). Following the closure of educational institutions in Bangladesh, teachers, particularly those from remote areas, encountered significant challenges in adapting to the virtual teaching method. However, within a very short

period of time, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) teachers received training from different government and non-government institutions to enable themselves to take online classes and monitor online classes. Even then, there were numerous challenges for EFL practitioners in Bangladesh to continue their online lessons amid the pandemic.

Initially, the government of Bangladesh declared that all the educational institutions of Bangladesh would be opened on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2021 (The New Nation, 2021). However, the government was unable to reopen educational institutions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. In the meantime, the education ministry ordered institutions across the country to prepare for reopening and maintain adequate measures. However, the Higher Secondary Certificate (HSC) examination, initially scheduled to commence on April 1, 2020, was postponed due to the COVID-19 outbreak (The Daily Star, 2020).

Consequently, EFL teachers in Bangladesh were going to face more challenges in teaching English. Considering the facts stated above, there is a need to address the issue of challenges to pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic period.

As a member of the English Language Teaching (ELT) community, the researcher firmly believes that this research brings out some new ideas that will help the ELT community to cope with the challenges of teaching English during an emergency period like the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The study will offer an understanding of the current perceptions and practices of teaching English and help our policymakers and teachers develop effective strategies to improve the English teaching scenario. Further, parents, learners and all the stakeholders involved in the education sector will benefit from this study.

### **Problem Statement**

To stop the mass transmission of Coronavirus on March 17, 2020, the government of Bangladesh made the difficult decision to close all educational institutions (The Business Standard, 2020). As a result, the studies of 38 million students have been disrupted, and the lives of nearly one million teachers have been significantly impacted. (World Bank, 2021). The Bangladeshi government announced that schools and colleges would reopen on September 12, following an 18-month

closure due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as cases in the country began to decline. (Xinhua, 2021).

The sudden shutdown of academic institutions shocked students and teachers, as no one knew what to do. Islam et al. (2020) noted that this shift posed unique challenges for countries like Bangladesh, where there are significant disparities in access to technology and digital infrastructure. The challenges were particularly pronounced in the teaching of English at the higher secondary level, where both teachers and students had to adapt to new methods of instruction and learning, often with little prior experience with online tools (Rahman, 2021). At the start of the closure, students did not have any teaching facilities. As the day progressed, institutions took numerous steps to facilitate online learning, such as arranging lectures on Facebook live stream, Zoom and using other online platforms. However, these measures were very inadequate since most students and teachers did not have adequate means to access online platforms. Rahman and Sharma (2021) pointed out that many English language teachers, especially those in higher secondary institutions, were unprepared for the abrupt shift to online teaching. Studies have shown that while some teachers managed to develop creative and resourceful methods of engaging students, others struggled due to a lack of access to stable internet, appropriate devices, and digital literacy skills (Khan, 2021). In addition, Rahman (2021) found that while some English teachers were able to adapt digital tools such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and other online platforms, others faced difficulties in engaging students due to limited digital access and students' varying levels of proficiency with online learning. The government initiative of facilitating online-based teaching was not enough either. For instance, at the beginning of the lockdown, the government took the initiative to air pre-recorded lectures for primary school students on state television. However, 50 percent of households with primary school goers did not have a television set at home (Khan et al. 2021). A recent report from the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) revealed that 63% of school-age children in Bangladesh lack access to the internet at home (UNICEF, 2021).

For this reason, half of our students missed the benefits of these lessons. COVID-19 not only caused disruption in the study, but it also brought the challenge of mental health. Students being isolated from their normal life resulted in severe

anxiety and depression. This has both short and long-term effects on students' well-being. Widespread misinformation and uncertainty about the school reopening date and the resumption of examinations were the prime reasons for anxiety among students.

Students were staying at their homes as the educational institutions were closed. This started to affect the other aspects of our lives. Many students relied on free school meals; this has stopped since the closure of the school, resulting in poor nutrition. Since the institutions closed unexpectedly for uncertain times, teachers became stressed and confused by not knowing how to serve their students in the best way. Having no option, working parents were forced to leave young children at home, which can lead to risky behaviour such as peer pressure or the use of substances. Further, working parents might have to miss work for childcare commitments, which can result in reduced wages or even loss of jobs. Moreover, according to Alam et al. (2021), the economic divide in Bangladesh meant that students from rural areas or underprivileged backgrounds were disproportionately affected, further complicating teachers' efforts to facilitate equitable learning.

Despite facing significant challenges, many teachers demonstrated remarkable resilience by attempting to support their students. They maintained regular communication through phone calls, WhatsApp, and other informal methods when formal online platforms were unavailable (Khan, 2021). This study aims to document these stories, providing a platform for English language teachers at the higher secondary level of Bangladesh to reflect on how they managed their professional responsibilities during the pandemic. By understanding their narratives, this research will contribute to a better understanding of the pedagogical practices that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic and how they might help to reform future teaching strategies, especially in times of crisis. Theoretically, it is easy to come up with solutions to overcome this unprecedented problem. Implementing theory into practice is tough, considering Bangladesh's limited resources. However, Bangladesh must strive to cope with the pandemic situation and ensure education for its students.

### **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to investigate the pedagogical practices of English language teachers at the Higher Secondary level in Bangladesh. Particularly, the study

aims to explore the challenges they faced during COVID-19 and the ways they devised to address those challenges.

### **Research Questions**

To meet the given purpose, the following research questions become pertinent:

1. How do English Language teachers narrate their experiences of teaching English in Higher Secondary classes during COVID-19?
2. How did they facilitate students' learning during the pandemic amidst the challenges?

### **Delimitation of the Study**

This research study primarily focuses on teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic. It explores the challenges faced by English teachers in Bangladesh and suggests possible solutions. The study specifically examines the narratives of four English teachers who teach at the higher secondary level.



## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents an in-depth exploration of the existing literature on innovative pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. By delving into these practices, we uncover how educators have adapted and thrived in the face of unprecedented challenges. This review not only highlights the resilience of teaching methods but also emphasizes the importance of embracing new strategies to enhance learning experiences in this evolving educational landscape. The literature review is divided into three sections, namely thematic review, empirical review and policy review. Every section focuses on the various aspects of the research. The thematic review section focuses on the key themes connected to the pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during COVID-19. This section discusses how to adapt pedagogical approaches in a virtual classroom, the challenges teachers and learners face, the utilization of digital tools, and the impact of these changes on students' learning outcomes. In the empirical review section, pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during COVID-19 have been explored through global and local empirical studies. The policy review segment examines the policies and guidelines established by the government of Bangladesh and educational authorities aimed at maintaining teaching and learning during the challenging circumstances of COVID-19. This section explores how these policies influenced the pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during the pandemic. Further, it depicts the strengths and weaknesses of the educational policies imposed by the concerned authority during the pandemic.

#### **Thematic Review**

The global education system faced widespread challenges as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. In Bangladesh, shifting from virtual classrooms to traditional classrooms opened the door to opportunities and challenges for English language teachers. The pedagogical practices of the English language classroom had to be redesigned by using digital tools. This thematic literature review delves into the various pedagogical practices adopted during the pandemic, examining how prepared teachers were for online instruction. It highlights the transition from traditional

classrooms to virtual learning environments and investigates the distinct challenges that educators in Bangladesh encountered throughout this shift.

Online teaching in the field of English language teaching was not widely accessible before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the scenery had to change unexpectedly due to the pandemic. Teachers had to move to virtual classrooms to continue teaching activities. Rahman et al. (2020) found that a good number of English language teachers initially faced challenges in adapting to online teaching due to insufficient training in digital tools. Arefin et al. (2023) pointed out in their study that inadequate training for teachers, poor socio-economic conditions, and limited internet access are significant issues impeding the effective implementation of online education in Bangladesh during the pandemic. The pandemic has emphasized the need for continuous professional development and training in digital tools.

The traditional English language classroom was shifted to virtual platforms, for instance Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, Facebook Live and Microsoft Teams during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to Mahmud (2021), although these platforms provided an opportunity for learning, the shift also exposed significant inequalities in access to technology. Students from rural areas or low-income families struggled to attend online classes due to limited access to smart devices and the internet. Rahman, Panday and Karim 2020 argue that the uneven distribution of technological resources hinders the effectiveness of online learning, particularly in rural areas.

Despite these challenges, Alam and Sultana (2021) found in their study that teachers in city areas were more successful in utilizing virtual platforms to engage students in interactive activities, namely group work, pair work, quizzes and multimedia presentations. Virtual teaching opened the doors to innovative teaching practices. Teachers can use videos, animations, and online language games in order to upgrade their learners' language skills. However, different scenery was seen in the remote areas where internet connectivity was poor. Khan et al. (2021) stated in their study that teachers in low-resource settings conducted classes using phone calls or via social media, which limited the potential for interactive learning.

In addition, it was difficult to ensure students' active participation in the virtual classroom. According to Sultana and Rahman (2021), students often faced distractions at home, making it challenging for teachers to create an environment conducive to

learning. Further, technical issues, such as unstable internet connectivity and power outages, often disrupt virtual classes.

Nevertheless, there were notable positive aspects of switching to virtual classrooms for English language teachers in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. Khan and Akhter (2021) found that some teachers were able to blend teaching methods, using live classes for real-time interaction and pre-recorded material for self-paced learning. The recorded materials helped students to understand their lesson on a large scale. Rahman et al. (2020) observed that the pandemic accelerated the adaptation of digital literacy among teachers and students alike. Many teachers who were resistant to technology became skilled in using digital tools.

Therefore, it is observed that the pedagogical practices in English language classrooms in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic passed a critical time. Teachers faced multiple challenges, including inadequate teacher training, technological issues and issues in providing interactive lessons. However, challenges inspire us to think innovatively on a large scale. The lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic suggest providing effective teacher training, ensuring access to technology for all and promoting interactive approaches to English language teaching.

### **Empirical Review**

The empirical review focuses on various studies conducted in the area of pedagogical practices, particularly in English language classrooms during the COVID-19 pandemic. The transition to virtual teaching imposed challenges for teachers worldwide, including in Bangladesh. This review examines empirical findings from national and international research to understand how English language teachers faced these challenges, the strategies they employed, and the impact of these practices on students' learning outcomes.

### **COVID-19's Influence on English Language Classroom Pedagogy**

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a global shift in the education sector, leading to an abrupt transition to online learning. In Bangladesh, the pandemic exacerbated pre-existing issues in education, such as limited access to technology and insufficient teacher training in digital pedagogies. Rahman et al. (2020) highlighted that many English language teachers in Bangladesh were ill-prepared to transition to online teaching due to their lack of experience with IT tools. The study surveyed 120 secondary and higher secondary school teachers across Bangladesh and found that

85% of the respondents had never conducted an online class before the pandemic, and nearly 70% struggled with basic computer literacy. The study demonstrated the urgent need for training in digital tools to support remote teaching during the pandemic.

Similarly, Chowdhury et al. (2021) conducted a comprehensive survey involving 200 English teachers from Bangladesh's urban and rural areas. Their findings showed that teachers in rural areas faced additional challenges, such as unreliable internet connectivity and a lack of access to technological devices. Only 30% of rural teachers had access to a stable internet connection, compared to 75% of teachers in urban areas. Furthermore, rural teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the technological demands of online teaching. These disparities highlighted the digital divide in Bangladesh and the need for targeted interventions to ensure equitable access to education during crises.

Additionally, the study by Islam and Bhuiyan (2021) focused on teachers' experiences with online teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 20 English teachers from different regions of the country to understand their experiences, challenges, and adaptations. The teachers expressed frustration over the lack of institutional support and inadequate infrastructure to facilitate online learning. Most teachers had to bear the costs of internet data packages and purchase personal devices to conduct online classes. Despite these challenges, the study also found that teachers displayed remarkable resilience and creativity in adapting to the new teaching format. Many teachers use social networking platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook to communicate with students and share learning materials, as they find these platforms more accessible to students than formal learning management systems (Islam & Bhuiyan, 2021).

### **Digital Literacy and Teachers' Professional Development**

A critical issue highlighted in the empirical literature is the lack of digital literacy among teachers in Bangladesh. According to Sarker et al. (2021), digital literacy remains a significant barrier to effective online teaching. Their research, which included surveys and interviews with over 300 teachers from secondary and higher secondary institutions, revealed that more than 60% of teachers lacked basic digital skills, such as using email or conducting video conferences. Teachers had to quickly adapt to new platforms such as Zoom, Google Meet, and Microsoft Teams,

with minimal training or guidance. The lack of institutional support, a recurring theme in the study, was a significant hurdle for teachers in navigating the technological demands of online education.

However, the same study also identified some positive outcomes from the forced digitalization of education. Despite initial difficulties, many teachers reported significant improvements in their digital skills over time. Teachers who received training from non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private institutions were better equipped to handle online classes. NGOs like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC) and Save the Children played a crucial role in this, providing free training on digital tools, which benefited many teachers in rural and underprivileged areas. One teacher interviewed in the study remarked, "Before the pandemic, I could hardly operate a computer. Now, I can teach a class on Zoom, create PowerPoint presentations, and even record my lectures. It's been a steep learning curve, but I'm proud of what I've achieved" (Sarker et al., 2021).

Another study by Yasmin and Sultana (2021) examined the role of government-led initiatives in providing training to teachers during the pandemic. The study highlighted the efforts made by the Ministry of Education in Bangladesh to offer online courses and webinars on digital pedagogy through the Bangladesh Open University (BOU) and the Access to Information (a2i) program. The researchers found that while these initiatives were commendable, most teachers were unaware of these resources or lacked the technical infrastructure to participate in the training programs. As a result, many teachers relied on peer learning and self-directed efforts to improve their digital literacy.

### **Students' Active Participation and Learning Outcomes**

Student engagement and learning outcomes, crucial measures of pedagogical success, are significantly affected by online teaching. This impact is particularly pronounced in regions with uneven technology access, such as Bangladesh. A study by Rahman and Akter (2021) revealed that 65% of students in 15 higher secondary institutions in Bangladesh faced difficulties in accessing online English classes due to poor internet connectivity, lack of devices, or unfamiliarity with digital platforms. This underscores the challenges students face in online learning.

Moreover, the same study found that their engagement levels were low even when students could access online classes. Teachers reported that students were often

distracted, unresponsive, or absent from online discussions. This lack of engagement can be attributed to several factors, including the absence of a conducive learning environment at home, limited interaction with peers, and the passive nature of many online teaching methods (Rahman & Akter, 2021). As one teacher noted, "In the classroom, I can see my students, read their expressions, and respond accordingly. Online, I feel like I'm talking into a void. It's hard to know if they're listening or understanding" (Rahman & Akter, 2021).

However, the study also highlighted some strategies teachers used to improve student engagement. Teachers who incorporated interactive elements into their lessons, such as quizzes, polls, and group discussions, reported higher levels of student participation. Additionally, teachers who maintained regular communication with students through social media and messaging apps were able to keep students more engaged in the learning process. Rahman and Akter (2021) concluded that online teaching requires a different pedagogical approach than face-to-face teaching, emphasising interactivity, communication, and flexibility.

### **Mental Health and Well-being of Teachers**

The transition to online teaching during the pandemic had a profound effect on teachers' mental health and well-being. Research indicates that many teachers faced elevated levels of stress and anxiety, driven by the pressures of adapting to online instruction alongside the uncertainty and fear brought about by the pandemic. Rahman et al. (2020) found that 75% of teachers reported experiencing moderate to high-stress levels during the pandemic. The pressure to quickly adapt to new technologies, manage students remotely, and maintain academic standards was overwhelming for many teachers. One teacher shared, "I've never felt this stressed in my career. Every day, there's something new to learn, a new problem to solve. It's exhausting" (Rahman et al., 2020).

Additionally, the blurring of boundaries between work and personal life contributed to teachers' stress. Many teachers had to conduct online classes from home, often in less-than-ideal conditions. Teachers with children or other family responsibilities struggled to balance their professional duties with their personal lives. The study by Yasmin and Sultana (2021) also found that female teachers, in particular, were disproportionately affected by the demands of online teaching, as

they were often expected to manage household responsibilities alongside their teaching duties.

Regardless of these challenges, some teachers found ways to cope with the stress of online teaching. Teachers who had strong support networks, whether from their families, colleagues, or institutions, reported lower levels of stress. Additionally, teachers who received training and technical support from their institutions felt more confident and capable of managing online classes. The study by Yasmin and Sultana (2021) emphasized the importance of institutional support in ensuring teachers' well-being during times of crisis.

### **Pedagogical Adaptations and Innovations**

Despite the challenges, the shift to online teaching also spurred pedagogical innovations among English language teachers in Bangladesh. Several studies highlighted the creative strategies teachers used to overcome the limitations of online teaching. For example, Sarker et al. (2021) found that teachers who used multimedia tools, such as videos, podcasts, and interactive simulations, could keep students engaged and motivated. Teachers also experimented with flipped classrooms, where students were assigned reading or video materials before the class, allowing for more interactive discussions during the online sessions.

Moreover, some teachers used the pandemic to develop their professional skills. Islam and Bhuiyan (2021) found that teachers who engaged in professional development activities, such as online courses and webinars, were more likely to experiment with new teaching methods and tools. These teachers reported higher satisfaction levels with their online teaching experience and were more confident in their ability to use digital tools effectively.

### **Summary of the Empirical Review**

The empirical literature on the pedagogical practices of English language teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh highlights the numerous challenges educators face, including limited digital literacy, inadequate infrastructure, and low student engagement. However, these challenges also prompted significant pedagogical adaptations and innovations. Teachers displayed remarkable resilience and creativity in navigating the complexities of online teaching, often with minimal institutional support. The lessons learned from this period can inform future

educational policies and teacher training programs, particularly in integrating digital tools in the classroom.

### **Policy Review**

The COVID-19 pandemic powerfully reshaped educational policy around the world, placing governments and institutions of learning in an unprecedented position to rethink their approaches to teaching and learning. As schools were being closed and moved to remote learning, the need for innovation escalated, bringing on new adoptions of technologies and new learning instructions that would ensure students could continue their education during the critical period of the COVID-19 pandemic challenges. This policy review will focus on the educational policies in Bangladesh, particularly those related to English language teaching (ELT) during the pandemic. The review will also examine international policies and practices that influenced or could inform Bangladesh's approach to managing crises in education. Analyzing these policies aims to provide insight into how they shaped pedagogical practices in English classrooms during the pandemic and beyond.

### **National Education Policy and Its Adaptation During COVID-19**

Bangladesh's National Education Policy 2010 is a comprehensive framework designed to guide the country's educational development, including provisions for curriculum reform, teacher training, and the use of technology in education (Ministry of Education, 2010). The policy emphasizes the importance of English language learning at the secondary and higher secondary levels to prepare students for global opportunities. However, before the pandemic, these policies were ambiguous and did not offer concrete guidelines related to digital education or e-learning. Thus, shifting gears toward online education was going to be really difficult during COVID-19. Most teachers and educational institutions had to face the challenge of shifting to online classes without there being any set rules and effective equipment that could guarantee good learning processes for the students.

In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Ministry of Education implemented emergency measures to facilitate the continuity of education. One of the key initiatives was the introduction of online classes through various platforms such as Sangsad TV, a national educational television channel, and online portals like the Muktopaath platform (Access to Information [a2i], 2020). These initiatives, according to Rahman (2021), had helped to keep the system operational but needed to be



comprehensive if it had to address all the needs of both students and teachers, especially in rural areas where there was no availability of a web network. Most of these initiatives have been inadequately served regarding the non-availability of proper digitized infrastructure for online education and a clear policy framework.

Furthermore, the government made commendable efforts to provide digital training for teachers through the ‘a2i’ program. Although this was a positive step, many teachers, especially those at the higher secondary level, reported that the training was insufficient for them to feel confident using IT tools in their teaching (Yasmin & Sultana, 2021). Teachers were often left to navigate online teaching platforms with little support, a situation that highlighted gaps in the policy framework regarding teacher training for digital education.

### **Teacher Training and Professional Development Policies**

It is widely recognized that teacher training forms a critical element in quality education. In fact, the National Education Policy, 2010, underscores that teachers must undergo continuous professional development, especially regarding the enhancement of their competence in pedagogical and subject matter skills (Ministry of Education, 2010). However, prior to the pandemic, CPD opportunities in the area of digital literacy were limited, leaving teachers ill-prepared to handle the abrupt shift to online teaching during COVID-19.

During the pandemic, the Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the ‘a2i’ program, developed short-term online training modules for teachers to help them adapt to digital platforms. However, Rahman and Akter (2021) noted that while these training sessions introduced teachers to essential digital tools, they did not provide in-depth training on how to integrate these tools effectively into English language teaching. As a result, many teachers, particularly at the higher secondary level, struggled to maintain student engagement and learning outcomes during online classes.

Another significant policy gap is the lack of specific guidelines for integrating digital tools into the English language curriculum. While the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) is responsible for overseeing the curriculum, there were no substantial revisions or updates to include digital competencies or online teaching strategies during the pandemic. This policy oversight posed significant challenges for

English teachers who had to adapt traditional, face-to-face teaching methods to an online format with minimal guidance (Hossain & Ahmed, 2021).

### **Global Policy Models and Best Practices**

Several countries with more established digital education policies provide valuable models for how Bangladesh can improve its approach to ELT during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. One notable example is Finland, where the National Core Curriculum includes digital competence as one of the vital transversal competencies across all subjects, including English (Ministry of Education and Culture, 2014). Teachers in Finland receive extensive training on digital pedagogy as part of their initial teacher education, which ensures that they are well-prepared to transition to online teaching during the pandemic (Sahlberg, 2021).

Another significant model comes from South Korea, where the government's Smart Education initiative, launched in 2011, laid the groundwork for a seamless transition to online education during the pandemic. With its comprehensive policies on teacher training, infrastructure results, and digital resources for students and teachers (Kim & Lee, 2020), this initiative provided a robust framework for teachers to continue delivering quality education even during school closures.

In contrast, Bangladesh's policy responses were more reactive than proactive. The country could benefit from adopting elements from these global models, particularly in areas such as digital literacy training for teachers, the development of a robust digital infrastructure, and the inclusion of digital competencies in the national curriculum. According to Islam and Bhuiyan (2021), policies focusing on long-term capacity building in digital education are essential to ensure teachers are better equipped to handle future crises.

### **Role of Non-Governmental Organizations in Supporting Educational Policy**

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) have played a significant role in supporting the government's efforts to sustain education during the pandemic. BRAC, one of the largest NGOs in Bangladesh, launched several initiatives to bridge the digital divide and support teachers and students in rural areas. For example, BRAC's Community-Based Education program provided offline resources and facilitated small group learning sessions for students without access to the Internet (BRAC, 2020).

Furthermore, BRAC and other NGOs like Save the Children and Plan International Bangladesh have actively collaborated with the government to offer

digital training for teachers. According to Yasmin and Sultana (2021), these partnerships have been instrumental in addressing policy gaps, particularly in terms of teacher training and resource provision. However, the reliance on NGOs to fill these gaps also underscores the weaknesses in the government's own policy framework for digital education.

While NGO-led initiatives have been valuable, they are not a substitute for comprehensive government policies. As Rahman (2021) pointed out, the sustainability of these initiatives depends on strong government leadership and policy support. Moving forward, the government must institutionalize the lessons learned from NGO-led programs and integrate them into national education policy to create a more resilient education system.

### **Policy Gaps and Recommendations**

Even as the Bangladeshi government has taken all possible measures to overcome the challenge of COVID-19, several policy gaps still persist. First, there is an urgent need to revise the National Education Policy 2010 by incorporating digital education. As Sarker et al. (2021) emphasized, the policy should mandate the integration of digital competencies into the curriculum for both teachers and students. This will ensure that future generations are better prepared to navigate digital platforms, both in times of crisis and in normal circumstances.

Second, there must be a stronger emphasis on teacher training in digital literacy. While the 'a2i' program provided some support during the pandemic, the scope of these training sessions was limited. The government should develop a long-term CPD framework with regular, mandatory training on digital tools and pedagogy for English teachers. This would align with international best practices, such as those seen in Finland and South Korea, where digital competencies are a core part of teacher education (Kim & Lee, 2020).

Third, the government must invest in digital infrastructure, mainly in rural areas, to ensure equitable access to online education. As highlighted by Hossain and Ahmed (2021), the digital divide in Bangladesh disproportionately affects students and teachers in remote areas. Addressing this issue requires both infrastructural development and policy interventions that prioritize resource allocation to underserved communities.

Finally, future policy development should include regular feedback and assessment mechanisms to ensure that teachers and students benefit from digital education initiatives. Rahman and Akter (2021) thus present recommendations that the policies should be focused on monitoring and evaluation frameworks regarding digital tools and teaching strategies, with an aim of establishing if these interventions have actually brought changes in learning outcomes. In such a way, the refinement of policy and practices can continuously meet the needs of educators and learners.

### **Summary of the Policy Review**

The Government of Bangladesh took commendable initiatives to continue educational activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. However, there are significant gaps in policy that must be addressed. The National Education Policy, formulated in 2010, needs to be modified to include the importance of digital education. Teacher-training programs need to be extended and include comprehensive elements of digital literacy. More investments in digital infrastructure are also required to ensure that all students and teachers, regardless of their geographical conditions, have all the facilities for online education. By implementing global best practices and collaborating with Non-Government Organizations (NGOs), Bangladesh can create a more resilient education system that can endure future crises.

### **Research Gap**

Numerous studies have been conducted regarding the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education in different parts of the world. However, very few studies have focused particularly on the teaching methodology of English Language Teaching (ELT) at the higher secondary level in Sylhet, Bangladesh, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of the literature reviewed so far discussed challenges and adjustments made by educational institutions during the pandemic period, such as the transition from a traditional face-to-face classroom interaction to an online learning environment. Moreover, these studies often focus on the urban or national perspective and neglect the regional context, like Sylhet.

Precisely, the varying pedagogical strategies that were implemented for teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) during the unparalleled pandemic situation in higher secondary institutions in Sylhet have not been extensively analyzed. Research on their effectiveness and adaptation in this unique context remains limited. There exists a serious gap in extensive research considering how the

teachers modified their teaching behaviour with a view to meeting the challenges of this global crisis, the tools they used to facilitate online learning and how these practices impacted student engagement and learning outcomes in English language classrooms. Additionally, the unique socio-economic and technological challenges faced by students and teachers in this region remain underexplored.

This dissertation, therefore, tries to address these gaps by examining the specific pedagogical practices employed in the English language classroom at the higher secondary level in Sylhet, Bangladesh, during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also explores the challenges encountered by teachers and their influence on language acquisition.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter deals with the research methodology that is to be adopted for the dissertation entitled *"Pedagogical Practices in English Language Classrooms in Bangladesh During COVID-19: A Narrative Inquiry"*. The research is designed within a qualitative framework through the adoption of an interpretive paradigm to capture teacher experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic. The philosophical considerations are then discussed, emphasizing my interpretivist perspective. Narrative inquiry has been chosen as a research method to study the personal and professional narratives of English teachers teaching at the higher secondary level and their adjustment to teaching methodology.

The research design section illustrates the structure of the study in selecting a site and participants from higher secondary institutions in Bangladesh, describing the data generation techniques, mainly semi-structured interviews, and the meaning-making approach through thematic analysis. Moreover, the chapter discusses quality standards such as credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability to ensure rigor in research. It ends with a discussion of ethical considerations. This section addresses informed consent, confidentiality, and my obligations toward the correct representation of the stories of participants. Overall, this chapter offers a clear framework for understanding the research's methodological choices and ethical considerations.

#### **Research Paradigm**

This dissertation adopts an interpretive paradigm that aligns with the qualitative nature of the research. The interpretive paradigm is based on the belief that reality is socially constructed, context-dependent, and subjective (Creswell, 2013). This approach is suitable for exploring how English teachers at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh adapted their teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also emphasizes understanding the participants' experiences, motivations, and the contextual challenges they faced from their perspectives during this period.

The study explores and interprets teachers' experiences during the transition to online teaching from the traditional method of face-to-face teaching. According to

Willis (2007), the interpretive paradigm allows researchers to explore the complex realities of individuals, making it suitable for understanding how English teachers negotiated their teaching methods in response to the sudden transition to remote education. The study basically depends on semi-structured interviews to collect data that allows participants to provide an elaborate narration about the teaching approaches they have adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. This method ensures flexibility and depth because participants are allowed to talk freely. Thus, it can capture sophisticated insights from the participants (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2015).

Moreover, this study acknowledges that each participant's experience is stimulated by the context from which he /she deliver their lesson. English teachers in Bangladesh faced unique challenges, such as limited access to technology, a lack of resources, and their own preparedness for online teaching. Through the interpretive lens, the study intends to reveal how these contextual factors shaped the teachers' pedagogical practices, emphasizing the subjective and context-specific nature of the data (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Thus, this paradigm enables an in-depth evaluation of English teachers' experiences during COVID-19 and the implicit meanings they connected to their experiences during COVID-19.

### **Philosophical Consideration**

#### **Ontological Assumption**

“Ontology as a branch of philosophy is the science of what is, of the kinds and structures of objects, properties, events, processes and relations in every area of reality” (Smith, 2003, p. 1). In other words, ontological assumptions relate to beliefs about the nature of reality and what can be known about it (Creswell & Poth, 2018). In qualitative studies, the ontological assumptions have been theorized to conceptualize multiple subjective realities, rather than a single, objective truth, as discussed by Denzin and Lincoln (2011). Guba and Lincoln (1994) identified these realities as socially constructed and shaped by individuals' experiences, interactions, and contexts. For example, in a narrative inquiry on teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, the ontological assumption is that every teacher's experience of adapting virtual teaching is unique and shaped by factors such as institutional support, personal resilience, and socio-cultural settings. The diffusion of opinions allows me to explore the juxtaposition and interaction of realities, emphasizing the importance of

understanding individual experiences within their specific environments, as noted by Clandinin and Connelly (2000).

### **Epistemological Assumption**

Epistemologically, this is a relativist investigation based on the belief that knowledge is created by the interaction of the researcher and participants, as supported by Lincoln et al. (2018). Semi-structured interviews will be utilized, which tend to increase the expression of individual and particular experiences; this may suggest that knowledge is interpretive and not something fixed or certain, as noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2015).

### **Axiological Assumption**

Palmer (2003) urges that axiology is the analysis of value and another branch of philosophy that is very close to moral philosophy. The axiological assumption from the perspective of the participants is the value that is found in discovering the challenges teachers face in teaching during the COVID-19 pandemic period in the context of Bangladesh. In addition, axiological factors are important: the values and conceptions that the researcher maintains inherently influence the research study. Narrative inquiry acknowledges the crucial role of the researcher in both interpreting the narratives and building meaning from them (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In this case, the positionality of the researcher, especially when coming to an understanding of the educational setting in Bangladesh, will shape the analysis of data; therefore, reflexivity becomes an important part of the research process (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Therefore, philosophical consideration is a framework that serves as a foundational belief system. It encompasses assumptions about four key areas: 1) ontology, 2) epistemology, 3) methodology, and 4) methods. In simpler terms, a research paradigm shapes how we understand and study the reality of the world (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016, p. 51).

### **Interpretive Paradigm**

The research study is based on interpretivism. Interpretivism is defined as "a collection of epistemologies, or theories about gaining knowledge of the world, which generally rely on interpretation or understanding of the meanings that people attribute to their actions" (O'Reilly, 2009). In other words, the interpretive paradigm is based on contextualizing the subjective experiences of people (Cohen et al., 2007a).



Considering the fact that this study focuses on interpreting the participants' narratives about their teaching journey during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interpretive paradigm for this study can be justified in order to collect data as well as interpretations of how the participants perceive teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic in the Bangladeshi context.

The study explores the experiences of English teachers during the pandemic and focuses on how they adapted to challenges such as online learning, limited resources and students' engagement in virtual classrooms. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2011), these experiences are significantly influenced by cultural and institutional factors, underscoring the need for an interpretive approach. By adopting an interpretive paradigm, the study not only captures the strategies employed by teachers but also reveals the meanings they assigned to their pedagogical adjustments, offering insights into resilience and innovation in teaching practices. Moreover, the interpretive paradigm effectively employs qualitative methods, including interviews and thematic analysis, to thoroughly examine and understand the lived experiences of participants. Creswell (2014) stated that it highlights reflexivity. Further, Patton (2015) noted that interpretivism emphasizes that meanings arise naturally and progressively, often illustrating the dynamic relationship between individual agency and the broader structural context. Therefore, the interpretive paradigm is effective for constructing meaning from the experiences of Bangladeshi English teachers during the global crisis of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Narrative Inquiry as a Research Method**

Narrative inquiry refers to a qualitative method that explores lived experiences through the collection and analysis of stories. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) stated that this method is grounded in the interpretive paradigm, emphasizing the construction of meaning through individual narratives and their contextual significance. The research study followed narrative inquiry as a methodological choice, where qualitative data were obtained from the participants to analyze their subjective responses. The researcher has collected data and analysed it instead of relying upon other mechanisms such as a survey.

Moreover, collecting data through a narrative inquiry has allowed the study to obtain descriptions. In addition, the data collected in a qualitative research design would allow the researcher to generate precise insights, themes and findings.

According to Chase (2018), this iterative process demands a collaborative construction of meaning, ensuring that participant voices are central to the research. Further, Clandinin and Huber (2010) have defined narrative inquiry as a qualitative methodology of studying the experiences of participants through a recollection and spontaneous narrative of lived stories and events. This approach would be appropriate in this study to obtain a personal account of the participants who interpret an event or sequence of events. Experiences of the participants can be collected as complete stories instead of fragmented pieces of data. These narratives not only contribute to understanding individual experiences but also offer valuable lessons for policy and practice in education during future disruptions (Kim, 2016).

Therefore, to have the answer to the research questions, narrative inquiry can be an ideal approach to acquire the interpretations of the challenges described by the participants, which eventually allow the researcher to analyze the meanings attached by the participants to the events.

### **Research Design**

This dissertation finds its methodological niche within the qualitative research paradigm. The research design aims to understand the experiences of English teachers during the COVID-19 pandemic. It also explores the challenges they faced and the pedagogical strategies they adopted while conducting virtual lessons. This design allows for an in-depth understanding of the realities pertaining to English teachers in higher secondary levels in regional contexts. The following chapters underline the most important features of the research design, dealing first with settings and participant selection, types of data generated, meaning-making strategy, and quality criteria.

### **Selection of Site and Research Participants**

For this study, four participants were selected purposively for the interview. All of them were English teachers teaching at the higher secondary level in different colleges in Sylhet, Bangladesh. Sylhet was selected for its unique demographic and socio-cultural context.

The participants actively taught English during the COVID-19 pandemic at the higher secondary level. They were selected for their ability to share contextualized insights into their pedagogical practices in English language classrooms during the

critical time of the pandemic. They had varied levels of digital literacy and access to technology. The selection process aimed to ensure a diverse range of perspectives.

### **Data Generation Techniques**

This research study mainly used interviews as a method for collecting primary data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants to collect data. Bryman (2012a) argues that using an interview as a method of data collection can be useful in giving emphasis to the participants' views and opinions and allowing the participants to talk about the issues to explore the topic in detail and reveal detailed information. The interview was conducted using online platforms. All the interviews with the participants were recorded with the prior consent of the participants themselves for research purposes. Both Bangla and English were used to conduct the interview.

### **Meaning-Making Approach**

The meaning-making approach is the process of interpreting and constructing meaning from experiences, events or narratives. According to Crotty (1998), individuals actively create their understanding of the world through subjective interpretations of their experiences. Hutchinson (2019) highlights the role of narrative as a primary mechanism for organizing life experiences into meaningful frameworks. Moreover, Baumeister and Newman (1994) suggest that the meaning-making approach encompasses personal, cultural, and social elements of storytelling, which serve as tools for interpreting life events. In my dissertation, which has explored pedagogical practices in English language classrooms in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic, the meaning-making approach has been helpful in creating meaning from participants' narratives. I have analyzed how teachers make sense of their challenges and strategies in facilitating student learning amidst unprecedented disruptions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The research participants' stories were interpreted using narrative inquiry. For example, Panna, a research participant, shared during her interview that *"I tried to upgrade my skills of using online tools for making my virtual class more effective and engaging by attending webinars and online training sessions along with the training offered by my college."* This statement of Panna reflected the struggle and a deep sense of responsibility of the English teachers teaching at higher secondary during the critical time of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The collected data were coded, and important themes were generated and interpreted. These interpretations assisted me in answering the research queries. Having coded all the data, the data was grouped to find out the major themes. The themes developed within the broad context of teaching English during the COVID-19 pandemic were analyzed, considering the socio-economic challenges of the region, access to technology, and institutional support. Thematic analysis is a useful approach for closely re-examining and interpreting the collected data. This approach helped to understand how teachers adapted their pedagogical practices, the challenges they faced, and the strategies they employed to confirm students' spontaneous participation in virtual classrooms and learning continuity.

### **Quality Standards**

The quality standards of the research study were confirmed by maintaining the research's trustworthiness. Primarily, the quality standard of research can be maintained in terms of the trustworthiness of research by making sure that the research has the attributes of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Bryman, 2012b).

#### **Credibility:**

Bryman (2012b) states that the acceptability of the findings depends upon the credibility of the research or the extent to which the findings indicated by the research are believable among the readers. The credibility of the study was confirmed provided that the researcher had rightly understood the participants. The transcribed data was sent to the respective participants to validate their information. Thus, the credibility of the research study was maintained.

#### **Transferability:**

Transferability is to make the findings applicable to other situations. Secondly, transferability refers to the degree to which the findings can be applied to other situations. The standard of transferability will be secured by ensuring that thick data will be collected. Such a collection of thick data will help in making judgements about the potential transferability of the research findings in other contexts (Bryman, 2012b). Indeed, the rich qualitative data obtained from the participants assisted in the transfer of the research findings to other diversified settings.

#### **Dependability:**

The quality standard of dependability was maintained strictly, provided that drafts of the entire research study had been stored. For this, each draft of the research paper was stored in a chronological order.

### **Confirmability:**

Confirmability indicates the degree to which the researcher allows his or her values to intrude on the research findings. In this regard, Bryman (2012b) pointed out that the issue of confirmability can be maintained by making sure that the research is not guided by personal values or specific theoretical predispositions. To maintain this quality standard, the researcher was not influenced by any personal biases.

### **Ethical Considerations**

My research complied with ethical and moral values all the time. Apart from this, citations for sources were provided wherever required. Throughout my research, I ensured that ethical considerations were upheld during interviews, data collection, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

### **Privacy and Anonymity:**

I ensured the privacy and anonymity of research participants according to ethical guidelines. To keep the source of data confidential, the names or any information that could identify the participants were kept confidential. Any data obtained from participants was kept securely and used only for academic purposes. The research ensured participant anonymity by using pseudonyms instead of participants' real names.

### **Informed Consent:**

Research participants' rights and obligations were fully acknowledged throughout the research process. Prior to any data collection, informed consent was obtained from the participants. Additionally, prior permission was obtained from the participant before recording the audio conversation. The responses from the research participants were spontaneous and free from any undue pressure. All participants joined the research of their own free will, meaning the researcher did not force anyone to take part in the research. The participants were allowed to withdraw from their interviews at any point for any reason. Further, the research participants had the option not to respond to a specific question if they wished.

### **Fairness:**

Finally, the researcher was very cautious to avoid any harm, whether physical or mental, to the participants. The research participants were given the utmost respect and were not discriminated against based on any protected characteristics such as race, gender, religion, and so on. The researcher ensured that participants would not face future harm due to their involvement in the research. Further, plagiarism was avoided when writing the research, and proper citations were provided as necessary. All data collected by the researcher remained in its original form, meaning the researcher did not change any data in any way for their own benefit. Finally, the researcher avoided any deceptive practices.

## CHAPTER IV

### NARRATIVE PORTRAYAL

This chapter narrates the backgrounds and contributions of the four key research participants in our narrative research study. They are Rahat (pseudonym), Rayhan (pseudonym), Ms. Panna (pseudonym), and Ms. Sumayyah (pseudonym). Participants' pseudonyms have been used throughout the dissertation to present their stories. All the participants are experienced English language teachers. They were involved in teaching English during COVID-19. Each participant shares a unique perspective and valuable experience of teaching English during the pandemic. By going through their narratives, we have gained insight into the diverse viewpoints that shape our research findings.

#### **First Participant: Competent Teacher**

Rahat, the first participant in this study on *Pedagogical Practices in English Classroom during COVID-19 in Bangladesh*, is a distinguished and passionate English lecturer at a government college in Sylhet. His expertise and dedication are reflected in his professional accomplishments, active involvement in academic research, and a strong commitment to education.

Throughout his career, Rahat has remained deeply engaged in academic development and knowledge sharing. His consistent participation in both national and international conferences underscores his commitment to staying informed on the latest trends in English Language Teaching (ELT). During our interview, Rahat emphasized, “*Conferences aren’t just a platform to present my work—they’re valuable opportunities to learn from others, exchange ideas, and bring back fresh approaches to enhance my teaching.*” His presentations and contributions to these conferences demonstrate his advanced understanding of ELT and pedagogy.

Beyond his active participation in conferences, Rahat has made notable scholarly contributions through his book and several research articles. His publications serve as important resources for other educators in the field. “*Writing helps me organize my ideas and offers a means to share my findings with colleagues facing similar teaching challenges,*” he shared. Rahat’s clarity in explaining complex concepts has earned him respect in academic circles.

Rahat's commitment to growth extends to his research endeavours, as shown by his involvement in a 10-day workshop on 'Research Methodology' at Assam University in India. This experience enhanced his research skills and influenced his teaching. *"The workshop allowed me to deepen my understanding of research methods, which I now apply in both my academic work and classroom practices,"* he reflected. His proactive participation in such initiatives illustrates his continuous pursuit of excellence in education.

In addition to his current teaching and research responsibilities, Rahat is studying for a Master of Education (MEd) in English Language Teaching (ELT) at a university abroad. *"For me, pursuing an MEd is more than just earning another qualification—it's about refining my teaching methods and finding innovative ways to engage my students,"* he said. His pursuit of further education highlights his dedication to both personal and professional growth and his desire to continually improve his teaching strategies.

Rahat also contributes regularly to *The Phoenix*, an ELT-focused periodical, where he shares his insights and reflections on teaching. Through this platform, he fosters collaboration and knowledge-sharing among educators. *"Writing for The Phoenix allows me to reflect on my teaching experiences and offer practical advice that others can apply,"* he explained. His involvement in the periodical further solidifies his reputation as a thought leader in the field.

In addition to his academic work, Rahat also takes on leadership roles, such as serving as Chief Coordinator of the Book Reading Festival, which focuses on Bangladesh's Liberation War. This initiative holds great importance for him, as it encourages students to engage with their country's history and culture. *"Education goes beyond textbooks—it's about connecting with our heritage and learning from the past. The Book Reading Festival helps students explore history in a meaningful way,"* Rahat remarked. His dedication to promoting a comprehensive education demonstrates his passion for cultivating well-rounded learners.

Rahat's reflections on virtual teaching amid the COVID-19 pandemic provide a significant contribution to this research. Like many educators at the higher secondary level, he encountered significant difficulties when teaching transitioned to online platforms. *"Teaching during the pandemic, with limited resources, was challenging. We had to be creative in keeping students engaged, often relying on our*



*own initiative to make lessons accessible,”* he recalled. Despite these challenges, Rahat’s ability to adapt and provide quality education demonstrates his resilience and commitment to his students.

Rahat’s overall teaching philosophy, which prioritizes critical thinking and student engagement, remained dominant in his approach during the pandemic. *“I’ve always believed that a teacher’s role extends beyond delivering content—it’s about inspiring students to think critically and ask questions,”* he said. Even amid technological and logistical challenges, Rahat maintained his emphasis on creating an interactive and thought-provoking learning environment.

In conclusion, Rahat’s extensive experience as an English lecturer, his scholarly contributions, and his commitment to continuous professional development make him a vital participant in this research study. His adaptability during the pandemic, along with his passion for academic and cultural education, showcases his exceptional qualities as an educator. Rahat’s insights and experiences provide a valuable understanding of pedagogical practices during the COVID-19 pandemic, and his ongoing pursuit of excellence continues to inspire both students and colleagues alike.

### **Participant Two: The Mentor**

Mr. Rayhan, the second participant in this research study, demonstrates a commitment to his students that goes beyond traditional teaching roles. His function is not limited to imparting academic knowledge; rather, he acts as a mentor, role model, and source of inspiration. He has a solid nine-year background in teaching, combined with his B.A. Honours and M.A. in English from a well-regarded public university. His academic foundation ensures that his students receive an excellent education.

Mr Rayhan’s influence on his students stems from his ability to motivate and support them academically and personally. *“I always remind my students that education extends beyond merely passing exams. It’s about personal growth, developing resilience, and acquiring life skills,”* he remarked during our interview. His holistic approach fosters an environment where students feel nurtured in all facets of their development. He regularly provides invaluable guidance on personal development and practical life skills, helping his students handle challenges not only in academic settings but also in everyday life.

Alongside his teaching responsibilities, Rayhan significantly contributes to language learning and linguistic diversity. As a co-author of the *English to Sylheti Dictionary*, he showcases his dedication to making language learning accessible to a wider audience. This work reflects his passion for promoting linguistic diversity and providing essential resources for effective language acquisition. *“Language transcends mere words; it serves as a bridge connecting people, cultures, and ideas. Therefore, I felt compelled to contribute to a project that would benefit students and the broader community,”* Rayhan explained, articulating his motivation behind the dictionary.

Rayhan's influence reaches beyond academics. His talents as a poet, composer, and singer infuse creativity into his teaching, rendering his lectures dynamic and engaging. *“I believe that creativity is vital in education. Whether through music or poetry, I strive to integrate elements that enrich and add depth to the learning experience for my students,”* he stated. His creative abilities not only encourage students to explore their potential but also make learning a more enjoyable and memorable experience. Rayhan's artistic pursuits foster a vibrant and thought-provoking learning environment, prompting students to think critically and innovatively.

Both educators and learners faced substantial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic; however, Rayhan's adaptability and unwavering commitment to his students made a remarkable difference during this period. *“It was a challenging time for everyone, but I recognized the importance of being present for my students in any way I could,”* he recalled. As classes transitioned to online formats, Rayhan swiftly adapted his teaching methodologies to facilitate remote learning. He actively participated in training sessions to enhance his digital competencies, ensuring that his virtual classes were as effective as traditional in-person lessons. His efforts extended beyond academic instruction; he also provided emotional support to his students, many of whom grappled with the uncertainties and anxieties induced by the pandemic. *“I made it a priority to regularly check in with my students, not only about their academic progress but also about their emotional well-being. It was crucial for me to convey that they were not alone during this difficult time,”* Rayhan noted.

His compassionate and empathetic approach during these challenging times solidified the connection between him and his students. *“Teaching transcends the*

*mere delivery of content. It involves understanding the academic and emotional needs of your students and striving to support them to the best of your ability,*” Rayhan emphasized. He customized his lessons to align with the varied learning needs of his students, ensuring they remained engaged and motivated despite the challenges of online learning. His students frequently expressed appreciation for his support, often commenting on how his guidance helped them navigate the difficulties of the pandemic.

Besides his role as a teacher and mentor, Rayhan is also an active member of a professional organization of English language teachers. This membership has allowed him to stay updated about the latest teaching strategies and methodologies, which he then incorporates into his lessons. *“Being part of this community has proven immensely beneficial. It has provided me with access to innovative ideas, resources, and a network of like-minded educators who share a common goal: improving English education in Bangladesh,”* Rayhan stated. His commitment to continuous professional development ensures that his teaching remains both innovative and effective.

In conclusion, Rayhan's exceptional qualities as a mentor, educator, and creative individual make him a valuable participant in this research. His dedication to his students, encompassing both academic and personal dimensions, underscores the pivotal role of educators in shaping the future of education, particularly during challenging times such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Rayhan's capacity to adapt, innovate, and provide steadfast support to his students reflects his profound commitment to teaching and mentoring.

### **Participant Three: The Life-Long Learner**

Ms. Panna, an English teacher from the holy city of Sylhet, plays a crucial role in this research on teaching practices during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. With five years of classroom experience, she currently teaches English at a collegiate school in Sylhet City. Her educational background is noteworthy; she holds a first-class bachelor's and master's degree in English from a prestigious public university in Bangladesh.

Before the pandemic struck, Ms. Panna primarily relied on traditional teaching methods that emphasized in-person interaction with her students in the class. However, the unexpected arrival of the global COVID-19 pandemic compelled her to

quickly adapt to a new mode of instruction. Reflecting on those early days, she shared, *"It was a shock for all of us. Suddenly, we were told that we had to teach online, and none of us were prepared for it. The whole system had to change overnight."*

Ms. Panna's ability to adapt and her determination were key to navigating the challenges that appeared during the pandemic. The transition to online teaching was far from easy, yet her proactive mindset enabled her to overcome these uncertain times effectively. *"I knew that I had to step up and take responsibility. My students were counting on me, and I couldn't let them down,"* she explained. To support this transition, she participated in training sessions organized by her college, which provided essential skills for online teaching, including the use of digital platforms like Zoom and Google Classroom, along with troubleshooting techniques necessary for conducting virtual lessons.

Recognizing the importance of continuous self-improvement, Ms. Panna sought additional opportunities to enhance her digital skills. *"I realized that relying solely on my college training wouldn't be enough. So, I attended webinars and virtual training sessions focused on online teaching methods,"* she stated. These additional learning experiences boosted her confidence in managing online classrooms. *"At first, I felt nervous about using the technology, but over time, I became more comfortable. Now, I believe I've acquired valuable skills that will benefit my teaching in the long run."*

Her commitment to professional growth is further demonstrated by her involvement in a professional organization for English language teachers. This community has offered her invaluable resources, networking opportunities, and a space to share experiences with fellow educators. *"Being part of this organization has been incredibly supportive. It allowed me to connect with other teachers who were facing similar challenges. We exchanged ideas, strategies, and solutions, which really helped me enhance my online teaching,"* she noted. Her participation in this organization also provided access to workshops aimed at improving teaching strategies and effectively integrating technology into the classroom.

One significant challenge Ms. Panna faced was keeping her students engaged during online classes. She explained, *"In a physical classroom, you can gauge your students' expressions and body language, which helps you adjust your teaching*

approach. However, it is different in online teaching. Many students wouldn't turn on their cameras, and it was hard to tell if they were following along." Despite these hurdles, she made a conscious effort to incorporate interactive elements such as quizzes, discussions, and group projects into her lessons. *"I aimed to make the lessons as interactive as possible. I encouraged my students to participate in discussions, ask questions, and share their opinions, which made the lessons more lively,"* she said.

Adapting her assessment methods for the online format was another challenge. *"Assessing students online was tricky. Traditional exams weren't feasible, so I had to come up with new ways to evaluate their understanding. I started using more formative assessments, like short quizzes and assignments, to gauge their learning,"* she noted. This shift allowed her to provide personalized feedback to her students, ensuring they remained on track despite the challenges of online learning.

Reflecting on her journey, Ms. Panna believes that, despite its challenges, the pandemic offered opportunities for growth. *"It was a tough time, no doubt, but it also pushed me to become a better teacher. I learned how to use technology more effectively in my teaching, and I became more adaptable and open to new ideas,"* she reflected. Her resilience, proactive approach, and commitment to her students embody the dedication of many educators in Bangladesh who faced similar challenges during the pandemic.

Ms. Panna's experiences and insights as a participant in this study provide valuable perspectives on the pedagogical adjustments educators made during COVID-19. Her journey underscores the importance of adaptability, continuous professional development, and maintaining a positive approach when facing the complexities of teaching during such unprecedented times.

#### **Participant Four: An Active Learner**

Ms. Sumayyah is an English language and literature lecturer with almost seven years of classroom teaching experience. She teaches the students of grades 11 and 12 in a college in Sylhet, Bangladesh. She holds an Honours and Master's in English from a public university. She was awarded a Bachelor of Education degree at an earlier stage of her teaching career from the Government Teachers' Training College under the National University. She has been known for her dedication to ensuring quality education throughout her career. However, the COVID-19 pandemic made her jump into the virtual teaching world.

Ms. Sumayyah, an English teacher, had limited exposure to digital tools before the pandemic, possessing only basic computer skills that enabled her to prepare handouts and assessments. Reflecting on her prior teaching experience, she said, *"I was accustomed to traditional methods—chalk and talk, classroom discussions, and face-to-face interactions."* The sudden closure of educational institutions due to COVID-19 demanded a rapid transition to online teaching, which she found unexpected and challenging. *"I had never even considered teaching remotely before,"* she admitted. *"The idea of using the internet to conduct lessons was entirely new to me."*

Recognizing the need to equip educators like Ms. Sumayyah with the necessary digital skills, various non-governmental organizations offered training sessions on online educational tools. She participated in several of these training programs, which introduced her to platforms such as Zoom, Google Classroom, and other digital tools designed to facilitate virtual instruction. While these sessions were instrumental in providing a basic understanding, they did not fully prepare her for the complexities of teaching in an online environment. *"The training helped me grasp the basics, but when I started teaching online, it turned out to be much more complicated than I had anticipated,"* she remarked.

One of the significant challenges Ms. Sumayyah faced was balancing her professional and domestic responsibilities while working from home. *"Juggling household duties and online teaching simultaneously was exhausting,"* she shared. Moreover, unreliable internet connections and frequent power outages exacerbated the difficulties. *"There were instances when the internet would drop during class, interrupting important explanations. It was frustrating for both me and my students,"* she added.

Despite these difficulties, Ms. Sumayyah remained persistent in her commitment to ensuring her students' education continued without interruption. A major adjustment was her newfound responsibility for creating and editing video tutorials, which she uploaded to her college's Facebook page. *"I had no prior experience with video editing,"* she admitted, *"but there was no other option. I had to find a way to keep the lessons going."*

Determined to meet the needs of her students, Ms. Sumayyah dedicated numerous hours to learning video editing, largely through trial and error. *"Initially, I*

*felt overwhelmed by the technical details and didn't know where to start," she explained. "But with the help of YouTube tutorials and advice from colleagues, I slowly began to understand the basics."* Although her early efforts were far from polished, her videos improved over time, and her students appreciated the clear explanations and consistency in covering the syllabus. *"The videos may not have been professionally produced, but I ensured they explained the concepts thoroughly and helped students stay on track,"* she emphasized.

In addition to creating educational content, maintaining student engagement in an online setting proved to be another significant challenge for Ms. Sumayyah. *"The dynamics of online interaction were vastly different from the physical classroom,"* she noted. *"In person, I can read students' body language and adjust my teaching in response. Online, it was much harder to gauge their reactions."* To foster student engagement, she introduced interactive elements into her virtual classes, including quizzes, discussions, and student presentations. *"It wasn't a perfect system, but I had to adapt. I wanted my students to remain connected and involved despite the physical distance,"* she explained.

Ms. Sumayyah's experience of teaching during the pandemic was a period of intense learning and adaptation. Although the transition to online education was fraught with difficulties, it also pushed her to expand her skill set and grow as an educator. Reflecting on her journey, she stated, *"I never imagined I would be able to teach in this way, but I have gained a new level of confidence. The experience, though challenging, has made me a stronger teacher."*

In overcoming these challenges, Ms. Sumayyah exhibited a remarkable commitment to her students' education during an unprecedented time. Her resilience and determination to adapt to rapidly changing circumstances exemplify the struggles and triumphs of educators worldwide. Her story underscores the profound capacity of teachers to grow and evolve in the face of adversity, ultimately ensuring that learning continues despite the most challenging circumstances.

## CHAPTER V

### TEACHERS' EXPERIENCES AND TEACHING PRACTICES DURING THE PANDEMIC

This chapter presents an analysis of the varied experiences of teachers and the wide range of teaching practices amidst the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. The sudden shift to remote learning imposed unprecedented challenges and demanded rapid adjustments and innovation in teaching practices. By understanding the challenges they faced and the innovations they developed during the pandemic, we can better prepare for future disruptions and enhance the resilience and adaptability of our educational systems.

#### **Teachers' Stage of Confusion**

From the analysis of the data, it was observed that teachers initially struggled with using technology as a means to conduct virtual classes for students at the onset of the COVID-19 outbreak. This theme reveals how teachers like Rahat, Rayhan, Panna, and Sumayyah passed the stage of confusion. The sudden closures of educational institutions left teachers unprepared for the transition to online teaching. Sumayyah, a research participant, said, *"The lockdown was declared across the country. I was confused about teaching virtually. We were moved to virtual teaching almost overnight. Truly speaking, I didn't know how to begin the online teaching journey."* Hossain (2021) stated that "... the virtual classroom experiences of both teachers and learners demonstrate that imparting ELT education, or education as a whole, via online system in Bangladesh is neither an unmixed trouble nor an absolute blessing. Rather, teaching and learning through online here offers a mixture of both advantages and disadvantages, though the latter holds the lion's share, so the views of the teachers and learners participating in this study reveal." (p.49)

Having received the instructions from the college authority, they started to use the online platform that was available to them. Initially, the teachers were not prepared for the online class, and they did not even receive any training on online tools to conduct an online class. Moreover, they were primarily uncertain about the duration of the disruption and the alternative teaching methods to be implemented.



This uncertainty is highlighted in a study by Karim et al. (2023), which stated that “Due to the emergency situation, institutions did not get an opportunity to systematically plan for this transition to adapt to the new set of teaching and learning practices.” (p.7)

One of the research participants, Panna, said, *“We had to take class using Zoom. Many of us were confused regarding how to install and use Zoom.”* “*At the beginning of my online teaching, I often sat in front of my computer screen and thought about how to deliver my lesson effectively,*” Sumayyah added. In this regard, Das and Kusakabe (2021) pointed out that “Regardless of how digitized the modern world has become, it cannot be denied that the transition to digital media for education has not been easy for anyone.” (p.118)

Another participant, Rahat, said, *“Initially, we used WhatsApp to connect with our students during the pandemic and continue our teaching. There were challenges for us to overcome on online platforms as we were not trained in IT tools.”* Khan et al. (2021) stated, “Regarding training, survey findings show that an overwhelming majority (87.3%) of the teachers did not receive any training on online teaching.” Moreover, Das and Kusakabe (2021) mentioned in their study that “Teachers are not the generation that grew up with many of the devices and social media platforms that are required of them during these hard times. They have had to learn an entire medium of communication in their later years of life and reshape their routine structure of teaching.” (p. 119) Therefore, in order to conduct effective online classes, teachers needed training on the use of online tools.

Rayhan, another research contributor, said, *“Many of my colleagues lacked adequate technological skills and resources to conduct online classes effectively. Particularly, the teachers who reside in rural areas like me during the pandemic faced challenges in using the internet due to unstable internet connections.”* Karim et al. (2023) noted that “Some other problems that affected the online education included slow internet speed, lack of smart devices, teachers’ inability to make classes interactive, no control on ever-muted students while the teacher talk continued the whole class, lack of materials and resources, challenges of conducting tests reliably, no monitoring tool during tests, lack of camera to show the face, limitation of not observing all students on the screen together etc. What was more, teachers and

students struggled initially with how to share a screen, set up questions in Google Forms, and submit answers and assignments.” (p.6)

There was confusion about which virtual platforms were most suitable for conducting English classes. All of the research participants agreed on this issue. Khalil et al. (2021) focused on the challenges teachers faced in selecting online platforms, which varied in accessibility and functionality. Rahat, one of the research participants, said, *“I used the free version of Zoom Meeting to conduct a virtual class. So, there was limited access to premium facilities of Zoom Meeting”*. Further, Sumayyah added, *“ There were many things to learn to conduct an interactive online class. I was confused about the outcome of my online lesson”*.

Teachers experienced confusion in selecting effective teaching strategies at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, they faced additional challenges as they had to move to virtual teaching platforms. Hossain (2021) noted in his study, *“Coping with the call of time, English language teachers from various institutes of Bangladesh, including secondary, higher secondary and tertiary institutes, are conducting online classes in the current pandemic days, albeit with much hype and controversy.”* Many teachers felt uncomfortable with online teaching as they did not have clear guidance and adequate training. The lack of proper guidelines and training led them to a state of confusion at the initial stage of the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **Getting Prepared for Teaching During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers at the higher secondary level in Bangladesh were accustomed to delivering lessons through traditional face-to-face methods in physical classrooms. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on in-person gatherings, teachers were compelled to transition to online teaching methods. This shift required them to adapt their teaching styles, utilize digital platforms for instruction, and find new ways to engage and support their students in a remote learning environment. At the very outset of the COVID-19 pandemic, there were no training arrangements for the teachers to make them capable of conducting online classes. Dewan et al. (2022) reported that *“Although after the initial closure, most higher education institutions shifted their classes online, it was not possible for schools to begin online classes due to many reasons, including the lack of logistics, technological support, internet and digital devices. Very few schools started synchronous online remote teaching, while others*

took the initiative to record lectures and upload them on social media platforms, mainly Facebook”(p.18). Consequently, English teachers serving at the higher secondary level started to teach online without preparation and training. This theme explores how English teachers like Rahat, Rayhan, Panna, and Sumayyah prepared themselves to deliver their lessons effectively on virtual platforms.

Rahat described his realization of the online teaching journey during COVID-19. He said, *“I realized that I had no other option but to learn how to teach online effectively. I spent quality time upgrading my skills in using digital tools.”* His experience reflects the broader challenges faced by teachers who have no prior experience with online teaching. Khan et al. (2020) noted that during COVID-19, Bangladeshi teachers faced challenges in emergency remote teaching and suggested solutions for smoother implementation.

Das (2021) emphasised on the importance of the teachers’ training on digital tools and stated “... my observation as an academic (first-hand experience) is that many teachers and students need to be trained in online classes since they are not skilled and therefore found least interested in it.” (p.68) To answer an interview question about training, Rayhan, another research participants stated, *“Having received the instruction from our institution we started to teach online using WhatsApp. We had some challenges.”* To address this issue, various organizations, including government and non-government bodies at both national and local levels, provided essential training to equip teachers with digital skills and online teaching strategies. Rahat, one of the research participants, said, *“I joined a three-day virtual training program organized by a2i (Access to Information).”* Das and Kusakabe (2021) stated that “Bangladesh, as a densely populated and poor country, has been facing many challenges in combating the pandemic, and the Ministry of Education has undertaken numerous initiatives and interventions to respond, recover and transform the education sector to be a responsive and resilient system for future education management in the country.”(p.114)

When talking about the collaboration, Panna said, *“We formed a WhatsApp group where we shared our resources and ideas to make our online class effective. Mutual collaboration helped us to be prepared for the uncertain challenges imposed by the pandemic”*. Similarly, Sumayyah opined, *“There was a WhatsApp teachers’ group where we shared our thoughts and innovative ideas. The group was*

*administered by the principal of our college. He also contributed to the group by providing us with instructions.*” Further, she said,

*When I moved to an online class from a traditional classroom, I faced various challenges. Initially, I did not feel comfortable using digital tools. I was scared to use digital tools at the beginning. However, I was determined to overcome my weaknesses in using technology.*

Her determination helped her to cope with the situation with the assistance of her colleagues. Therefore, it is clear that mutual collaboration was vital for teachers’ preparation to offer effective online lessons.

In addition, teachers also got the opportunity to attend webinars organized by both national and international organizations. Sumayyah noted, *“I participated in webinars on digital teaching tools. These virtual training sessions were crucial for my development.”* Similarly, Panna said, *“I got training from my college to be skilled in using digital tools. Consequently, I started to utilize digital tools to make my online class more interactive.”* Rahman et al. (2021) narrated that non-government organizations, namely BRAC and British Council, also played an incredible role by offering webinars, workshops, and courses for educators to upgrade their proficiency in virtual teaching.

Bangladeshi English teachers' professional organizations, namely Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA), English Teachers’ Association of Bangladesh (ETAB), and Sylhet English Language Teachers Association, popularly known as GATE-SELTA, organize various training sessions to enhance teachers’ ICT skills. In this regard, Panna, a research participant, stated,

*I joined three webinars on the effective use of ICT tools organized by GATE-SELTA along with some of my colleagues in order to enhance our ICT skills. Basically, these programs were designed to increase teachers’ confidence in using IT tools like Zoom, Google Classroom, Google Meet and other online platforms.*

Rayhan stated, *“I understood that the traditional method of teaching would not be suitable for the online classroom. I had to think creatively to make my lesson more attractive and effective.”* Moreover, he introduced different digital tools and educational apps like Kahoot to ensure an interactive virtual classroom. He said, *“I*

*dreamt of delivering my online lesson effectively where my students participated spontaneously.”*

Teachers like Sumayyah not only emphasized providing quality education through virtual platforms but also provided emotional support to the students in order to make them mentally fit. *“I regularly asked my students about their physical and mental health, which proved that I cared about their study and wellbeing,”* said Sumayyah. Hossain and Rahman (2020) noted that this holistic approach to teaching reflects the broader recognition of mental health’s significance during the pandemic. Thus, this approach contributed to making the virtual classroom more accessible to students.

The experiences of Rahat, Rayhan, Panna and Sumayyah highlight the diverse challenges and adaptations English teachers faced during the COVID-19 pandemic in Bangladesh. The way these teachers invested in professional development, adapted their teaching techniques, and emotionally supported students demonstrates their remarkable ability to adjust during the COVID-19 pandemic. Their narratives emphasize the flexibility, creativity, and empathy with which they approached virtual English teaching for higher secondary students in Bangladesh.

### **The Challenges in Classroom Activities**

Teachers used a variety of virtual platforms to continue their teaching activities during COVID-19. Most of them used the platform that was available and convenient to them, as well as assigned by the college authority. Rouf and Rashid (2021) found in their study that “The EL teachers used different technological tools for teaching online, but their respective schools and colleges could not provide them with the required technologies. Most often, they managed their own technological devices like cell phones, laptops, cameras, tripods, boards, etc” (p.5). According to the participants, Zoom Meeting, WhatsApp, Google Meet and Facebook were used to deliver online classes. In addition, they used the free version of these tools, and therefore, there was a limitation on access to the premium features of these tools. Mamun et al. (2021) state in their study that limited internet access and the digital divide in rural areas remained significant challenges, affecting the effectiveness of online teaching in some regions. The study conducted by Ahmed and Tajwar (2023) also discovered that “Both the teachers and parents mentioned that the poor connectivity of the internet has been a major problem in holding smooth online

classes” (p.6). There was a significant need for professional development so that our teachers could keep pace with virtual teaching. Sumayyah shared that one of her senior colleagues told him, “ *Being older, we find it hard to keep up with technology. Using touch phones or computers is not easy. Managing online classes or participating in online training is a great challenge for us. Frankly speaking, we will need more time to get used to this new way of working.*”

Traditional methods of classroom teaching were not easily transferable to virtual classroom teaching. Rony and Awal (2019) said, “The Majority of the participants expressed that they can practice the online teaching learning, but they face lots of unwanted difficulties due to their knowledge lacking, device issues and electrical failures” (p.62). Rayhan, a research participant, said during his interview, “Keeping students responsive during virtual lessons was challenging for *varied reasons.*” According to Alam et al. (2021), engaging students in a virtual environment proved difficult, especially for those with limited access to technology.

To choose the best approach for virtual teaching, teachers often depend on informal networks and peer support. A research participant, Panna, said, “*I talked with my colleagues on a regular basis to know about their approach to teaching. Frankly speaking, sometimes I attended and observed my colleagues’ virtual class to enrich myself.*” Alam et al. (2021) noted that informal peer support became crucial for teachers to navigate the challenges of online teaching.

Teachers faced trouble in designing and implementing fair and effective assessments for evaluating students’ performance. The traditional process of assessment was not applicable to virtual classes. Haque and Hossain (2022) found that throughout the COVID-19 lockdown in Bangladesh, the shift to virtual assessments in English Language Teaching necessitated considerable technological enhancements. This transition faced challenges primarily due to unreliable internet connectivity, alongside the urgent need for comprehensive training programs for both teachers and students to effectively navigate this new educational landscape. Panna, a research participant, stated, “*We were in tense regarding the evaluation of our students’ academic progress. We needed an innovative approach to assess students’ progress.*” Regarding assessment, Islam et al. (2020) noted in their study that the traditional assessment system was unsuitable for online learning. Moreover, Tasneem (2023) noted in her findings, “The teachers also manifested that the English language

assessment modes are not properly adapted to the online medium. Here, instant feedback and error correction to written work cannot be provided due to several technical constraints.”

Another challenge that the teachers face in conducting online tests is academic integrity. It was a valid concern for teachers to ensure academic honesty. Rahman et al. (2021) highlighted the difficulties in maintaining academic integrity in remote assessments.

Ensuring mental health and maintaining work-life balance during the pandemic became a challenging issue for the teachers' community. According to Khan and Roy (2021), work-family balance positively impacts Bangladeshi employees' mental health during COVID-19. Moreover, Alam et al. (2022) reported that vaccinated teachers in Bangladesh had significantly lower rates of psychological distress, depression, anxiety, stress, PTSD, insomnia, and fear symptoms compared to unvaccinated teachers. Panna, a female research participant, said, *“I passed a challenging time balancing between my work and family responsibilities. In addition, keeping a quiet environment during virtual class was tough for me as my kid was only four years old.”* Another participant, Rayhan, added, *“I had to do family tasks and look after my little sons while my wife, an assistant English teacher in a local school, was delivering her online lessons.”* A study by Khalil et al. (2021) discussed how the blurring of personal and professional boundaries increased stress levels. Sumayyah added, *“It was challenging, especially for female teachers to make a balance between work and life during COVID-19 as they were working from home.”* So, maintaining work-life balance became a great issue for the teachers while conducting online classes from their own homes.

Additionally, teachers had to implement a blended approach of teaching and learning when educational institutions began to reopen partially. Islam et al. (2021) noted the challenges of combining in-person and online teaching methods effectively. Another layer of challenge during this stage of reopening is to ensure the safety of students and staff. All the institutions had to follow the safety instructions provided by the government. Khalil et al. (2021) emphasized the additional pressure on teachers to adhere to health protocols while teaching.

Moving from a virtual classroom to a traditional classroom brought a number of challenges for English teachers teaching at the higher secondary level in

Bangladesh. Selecting the right digital tools or virtual platform for teaching, ensuring students' active participation, developing an effective assessment system, students' integrity, and teachers' wellbeing were some of the major issues that teachers faced while delivering online classes during COVID-19. Despite these challenges, teachers like our research participant Rahat, Rayhan, Panna, and Sumayyah developed their individual systems to ensure a congenial atmosphere in the online classroom.

### **Teaching Strategies with Confidence**

Academic institutions moved to virtual platforms to continue teaching. Conducting class virtually had not only difficulties but also many advantages. Virtual classes during the pandemic assisted the teachers in ensuring uninterrupted teaching. Research by Sing and Thurman (2019) found that online learning can be an effective substitute for face-to-face instruction when implemented properly. Rahat, a research participant, said,

*Initially, we faced different challenges in continuing our class virtually. However, we enjoyed the benefits of virtual class, such as staying at home safely during a pandemic, sharing class notes with students easily, using short video clips related to our lessons and so on.*

Another research participant, Rayhan, opined, *“There were many advantages of conducting the online class. One of the advantages is to share resources easily with students through email, WhatsApp or a Facebook private group.”* Panna stated,

*I shared lecture notes and other resources with my students before the scheduled class through a WhatsApp group chat. Moreover, I uploaded my recorded class to our college's private Facebook group, like my other colleagues, to ensure easy access for our students to watch the recorded class.*

Habib et al. (2020) noted that by leveraging digital platforms, schools and universities were able to provide students with access to learning materials, assignments, and interactive sessions, thereby minimizing the disruption caused by school closures.

College teachers adapted to virtual teaching with innovative strategies and overcame initial challenges. According to Hasan et al. (2021), the use of digital tools like Zoom, Google Meet, Microsoft Teams, and Moodle for live sessions and assessments enabled teachers to conduct interactive classes, quizzes, and online examinations while maintaining student engagement. Additionally, Islam et al. (2021)



noted that the integration of multimedia resources like videos, infographics, and interactive components created an engaging learning atmosphere that promoted student involvement and teamwork. Gradually, the teachers became confident about using virtual platforms. Panna, a research participant, shared with the researcher, *“I became confident to conduct online classes after participating in virtual training sessions on the use of digital tools”*. Rahman et al. (2021) pointed out that many teachers initially faced difficulties, particularly with technical issues and access to reliable internet. However, with time and practice, educators became adept at managing these challenges, demonstrating resilience and adaptability. Shak et al. (2022) found that during the COVID-19 pandemic, students found Google Classroom useful for acquiring new knowledge and language skills, but faced challenges in device and connection issues, readiness, and receiving instant feedback.

Further, the teachers use online quiz tests to provide instant feedback to students. A research participant, Panna, said,

*I used Kahoot, an interesting digital tool, to make a quiz based on my lesson. I noticed that my students enjoyed the quiz test using Kahoot. The result of the test was created automatically on the basis of the instructions I set while making the quizzes. Thus, I realized the progress of my students on certain topics.*

Another participant, Rayhan, stated, *“I used Quizlet to conduct a surprise test on some topics for my students. Students participated in the test spontaneously.”*

Roberts (2021) suggested that the use of formative assessment strategies, namely online quizzes, peer feedback, and collaborative group projects, helped educators to evaluate students' progress and provide timely feedback. This ensured that students were not left behind despite the lack of physical interaction in a traditional classroom. According to Uddin and Mahmud (2021), this shift to digital platforms promoted a more student-centered approach to learning, encouraging greater autonomy and critical thinking among students.

However, there was a digital divide that influenced both the teachers and students of the rural areas. Rahat, one of the research participants, said,

*I went home after the closure of my college due to COVID-19. So, I was staying in my native village with my family at the initial stage of the pandemic. I started to provide online classes from my village. There was an unstable*

*internet connection. As a result, sometimes I had to abstain from providing virtual classes.*

Despite these obstacles, the virtual platforms allowed college teachers to continue their teaching and ensured students' learning. Meier (2021) noted that while technical difficulties persisted, teachers became increasingly proficient in adapting their teaching methods, enhancing both student learning experiences and their own pedagogical skills.

The experience of virtual teaching during the pandemic has significantly influenced the teaching and learning styles of college educators. The shift to virtual teaching improved teachers' ability to incorporate digital tools into their teaching methods. This shifting has assisted the teachers in ensuring more interactive and engaging learning experiences. It has also opened the avenue for collaboration and knowledge sharing. Overall, the experience of virtual teaching has positively transformed Bangladesh's education system and opened the door to more dynamic and effective teaching strategies.

### **Research Participants' Response to the Research Questions**

After the discussion, I realized that the participants' responses to the research questions provided enriching insights into their experiences of teaching English at the higher secondary level during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through interpreting the interview data and analysing the key themes, it is clear how English teachers faced the challenges imposed by the pandemic. Participants' responses to the first research question, *'How do English teachers narrate their experience of teaching English at higher secondary classes during COVID-19?'* reflected a clear progression from uncertainty to the adaptation of digital tools through the various stages.

Many teachers primarily described their experience as marked by confusion and anxiety. The dramatic shift from traditional classrooms to virtual teaching created a sense of disorientation, particularly for those English teachers who were unfamiliar with digital tools. Participants expressed their anxiety about inadequate training, poor digital infrastructure and selecting a suitable teaching approach for online teaching. This stage of confusion was prominent during the initial phase of the pandemic.

Despite the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, teachers started to adapt the necessary skills to conduct online English classes. Participants narrated their efforts to participate in training sessions, seek guidance from peers, and explore new

technologies. The participants' responses emphasized the importance of professional development and the contribution of institutional support in facilitating online teaching. Eventually, teachers' confidence increased gradually. They became more accustomed to online platforms, such as Zoom, Google Meet, Google Classroom, and Facebook Live and learned to incorporate digital resources into their lessons.

Research participants' response to the second question: *'How did English teachers facilitate students' learning during the pandemic amidst the challenges?'* discovered the participants' commitment and vision in confirming student learning continuity regardless of the significant obstructions imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Teachers narrated their struggles with student engagement or the technological devices needed for students' effective learning. Classroom management became a critical challenge in the virtual classroom. Additionally, some participants mentioned the challenge of assessing students' progress and providing personalized feedback in an online setting.

Despite these challenges, the participants also shared about a variety of strategies they adopted during the critical time of the COVID-19 pandemic to facilitate online teaching and learning. Many participants showed resilience and adaptability to overcome the constraints of virtual teaching. Moreover, to make the virtual classroom more engaging and attractive for students, English teachers at higher secondary institutions used multimedia resources, namely learning videos and online quizzes. Research participants opined that their confidence level grew as they found new ways to provide effective online lessons for their teenage students.

The participants' responses show English teachers' journey from the initial stage of confusion to the confident stage of teaching. English teachers at the higher secondary level encountered significant challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, which included limited access to technology, student engagement, and online assessment. However, their responses to the research questions also illustrated their commitment to overcoming these challenges through teachers' professional development.

## CHAPTER VI

### KEY INSIGHTS, CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE RESEARCH

#### **Key Insights**

The COVID-19 pandemic triggered a rapid and unprecedented shift in English language teaching at the higher secondary level, creating significant challenges for educators. At the onset, teachers faced confusion and uncertainty as they transitioned to virtual learning environments without adequate preparation or formal training in digital tools. The sudden closure of educational institutions left educators unprepared to navigate the challenges of online teaching platforms such as Zoom, WhatsApp, and Google Meet. Most teachers lacked access to premium features of these tools, further limiting their capacity to provide seamless instruction. Compounding these difficulties, unstable internet connectivity, particularly in rural areas, exacerbated the digital divide, obstructing the delivery of online lessons.

Despite these initial obstacles, teachers showed remarkable adaptability. They gradually acquired digital competencies through both formal training programs and informal peer support. Government initiatives, such as the Access to Information (a2i) project, along with non-government organizations like BRAC and the British Council, offered vital training opportunities that empowered educators to engage students using digital platforms. This newfound competence enabled teachers to integrate interactive tools such as Kahoot and Quizlet into their lessons, fostering student engagement and enabling more effective assessment of student progress. Nonetheless, the digital divide continued to present a significant barrier, especially for teachers and students in underprivileged areas, highlighting the inequities in access to education during the pandemic. Over time, however, educators adapted their practices, incorporating creative solutions to ensure continuity in student learning despite these challenges.

#### **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly transformed the landscape of English language teaching at the higher secondary level, highlighting the vital role of digital literacy and adaptability in contemporary education. Although teachers initially

struggled with the abrupt transition to online teaching, their resilience and willingness to embrace new technologies enabled them to navigate these challenges successfully. The pandemic experience has revealed the necessity of continuous professional development aimed at improving digital skills and has highlighted the potential benefits of blending traditional and digital pedagogies to enhance both instructional quality and student engagement. The crisis has also reinforced the importance of digital equity, revealing the urgent need to address disparities in access to technology, particularly in rural areas.

### **Implications**

The findings of this research offer critical implications for the future of education. First, there is a clear and ongoing need for comprehensive training programs to equip teachers with the skills necessary to efficiently utilize digital platforms, not only in times of crisis but as part of routine teaching practice. Continuous professional development will be essential to ensure that educators remain capable of adapting to future disruptions. Second, significant investment in digital infrastructure, particularly in underdeveloped regions, is imperative to mitigate the digital divide and ensure equitable access to education for all students. Addressing this inequality is crucial for fostering inclusivity and reducing the educational gaps exacerbated by the pandemic.

Additionally, the experience of the pandemic highlights the necessity of rethinking assessment strategies to align with the demands of online and blended learning environments. Ensuring academic integrity in remote assessments requires innovative approaches that are adaptable to the digital context. Finally, fostering a culture of collaboration and peer learning among educators will be key to enhancing the sharing of best practices and sustaining innovation in teaching methods. By addressing these challenges and opportunities, educational systems can build greater resilience and ensure more flexible, student-centered approaches to teaching and learning in the future.

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