

ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHERS' EXPERIENCE OF PROJECT-BASED  
LANGUAGE TEACHING IN BANGLADESH: A NARRATIVE INQUIRY

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## ABSTRACT

of the dissertation of Krishna Dutta for the degree of *Master of Education in English Language Teaching* presented on 29 November 2024, entitled *English Language Teachers' Experience of Project-Based Language Teaching in Bangladesh: A Narrative Inquiry*.

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Project-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) is an intensively studied, widely used, and critically examined innovative teaching approach in schools worldwide. It is a crucial pedagogical approach for preparing L2 learners to acquire the target language effectively. However, we still observe a teacher-led, conventional pedagogical practice in the EFL classrooms of Bangladesh, accompanied by a memorization-based exam system, which results in boredom in teaching-learning activities and superficial learning outcomes from learners. This research explored how activities in our English language class can be made interactive, engaging, and learner-centered by adopting PBLT. The main objective of the dissertation was to investigate how secondary EFL teachers in Bangladesh perceive PBLT and how they encountered challenges in implementing the approach.

Using the narrative inquiry as a research methodology, I collected the stories of seven secondary-level English teachers through interviews. After the analysis of the stories collected from the research participants, the research found that adopting this exploratory learning method equips the L2 learners with a varied set of skills, overarching four language skills, 21st-century skills, or soft skills such as interpersonal skills, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and technological proficiency.

The research revealed how to turn the concept of PBLT into a tangible reality in the Bangladeshi context using social constructivism as a theoretical referent. According to the teachers' anecdotes, actualizing experiential learning using project-based language teaching methods in the curriculum is impossible if we don't address the roles and functions of the stakeholders - learners, parents, teachers, school heads, and teachers' educators.

A comprehensive review and analysis of the related literature focused primarily on teachers' roles in implementing PBLT. However, this research highlights the need for a deeper investigation into aspects such as teacher beliefs, teacher reasoning, and teacher cognition in planning and designing the PBLT tasks that align with the learners' needs within the socio-economic context of Bangladesh.

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## शोध सार

अंग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षामा स्नातकोत्तर डिग्रीको लागि कृष्ण दत्तको शोध प्रबन्धको शिर्षक "बङ्गलादेशमा परियोजनामा आधारित भाषा शिक्षणसम्बन्धी अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा शिक्षकहरूको अनुभव : एक संकथन" १४ मंसिर २०८१ मा प्रस्तुत गरिएको थियो ।



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प्रा. लक्ष्मण ज्ञवाली, पीएचडी  
शोध निर्देशक

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धर्मानन्द जोशी  
शोध निर्देशक

परियोजनामा आधारित भाषा शिक्षण (PBLT) विश्वभरिका विद्यालयहरूमा व्यापक रूपमा प्रयोगमा ल्याइएको, गहन रूपमा अध्ययन गरिएको र आलोचनात्मक रूपमा परीक्षण गरिएको एक नवप्रवर्तनात्मक शिक्षण पद्धति हो। यो दोस्रो भाषा (L2) सिक्ने विद्यार्थीहरूलाई लक्षित भाषा प्रभावकारी रूपमा सिकाउन तयार पार्ने एक अत्यावश्यक शैक्षिक दृष्टिकोण हो।

यद्यपि, अझै पनि बङ्गलादेशका अङ्ग्रेजीलाई विदेशी भाषा (EFL) कक्षाहरूमा शिक्षक-केन्द्रित, परम्परागत शिक्षण अभ्यास प्रचलनमा रहेको देखिन्छ, जसलाई कण्ठकरणमा आधारित परीक्षा प्रणालीले साथ दिएको छ। यसले सिकाइ प्रक्रियामा उबाहट ल्याउने र विद्यार्थीहरूबाट सतही शिक्षण नतिजा प्राप्त हुने स्थिति सिर्जना गर्दछ।

यस अनुसन्धानले परियोजनामा आधारित भाषा शिक्षण (PBLT) अपनाएर अङ्ग्रेजी भाषा कक्षामा गतिविधिहरूलाई कसरी अन्तरक्रियात्मक, आकर्षक र विद्यार्थी-केन्द्रित बनाउन सकिन्छ भन्ने अन्वेषण गरेको छ। यो शोधको प्रमुख उद्देश्य बङ्गलादेशका माध्यमिक तहका EFL शिक्षकहरूले PBLT लाई कसरी बुझ्छन् भन्ने र यसलाई कार्यान्वयन गर्दा उनीहरूले कस्ता चुनौतीहरूको सामना गरे भन्ने पत्ता लगाउनु थियो। कथात्मक अनुसन्धान विधि प्रयोग गरेर, मैले सात जना माध्यमिक तहका अङ्ग्रेजी शिक्षकहरूको अन्तर्वार्तामार्फत उनीहरूको अनुभवहरू सङ्कलन गरें। अनुसन्धान सहभागीहरूको कथाहरूको विश्लेषणपछि यो निष्कर्ष निकालियो कि यो अन्वेषणमूलक शिक्षण पद्धति अपनाउँदा L2 सिक्ने विद्यार्थीहरूले भाषा सम्बन्धी चारै सीपहरूका साथै अन्तरव्यक्तिक सीप, सिर्जनात्मकता, समालोचनात्मक सोच, समस्या समाधान गर्ने क्षमता, तथा प्रविधिमा दक्षता जस्ता २१औँ शताब्दीका 'सफ्ट स्किल' हरू समेत विकास गर्न सक्छन्।

अनुसन्धानले सामाजिक निर्माणवाद (social constructivism) लाई सैद्धान्तिक सन्दर्भको रूपमा प्रयोग गरेर बङ्गलादेशको सन्दर्भमा PBLT लाई व्यवहारमा कसरी उतार्न सकिन्छ भन्ने देखाएको छ।

शिक्षकहरूले व्यक्त गरेका अनुभवहरू अनुसार, यस प्रक्रियामा सरोकारवालाहरू—विद्यार्थी, अभिभावक, शिक्षक, विद्यालय प्रमुख तथा शिक्षक प्रशिक्षक—को भूमिका र कार्यहरूलाई सम्बोधन नगरिएको खण्डमा परियोजनामा आधारित भाषा शिक्षण विधिबाट अनुभवात्मक शिक्षणलाई कार्यान्वयन गर्नु त्यति सजिलो हुँदैन।

PBLT कार्यान्वयनमा शिक्षकहरूको भूमिकामा केन्द्रित पूर्वप्रकाशित साहित्यहरूको समग्र समीक्षा र विश्लेषण गरिए तापनि, विशेषतः बङ्गलादेशको सामाजिक-आर्थिक सन्दर्भमा विद्यार्थीका आवश्यकतासँग मिल्ने गरी PBLT कार्यहरू योजना बनाउने र डिजाइन गर्ने सन्दर्भमा यस अनुसन्धानले शिक्षकका विश्वास (beliefs), सोच र तर्क (reasoning), र संज्ञानात्मक प्रक्रियाहरू (cognition) को गहिरो अध्ययनको आवश्यकता औल्याएको छ ।

*Krishna Dutta*

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कृष्ण दत्त

उपाधि उम्मेदवार

१४ मंसिर २०८१

This dissertation, entitled *English Language Teachers' Experience of Project-Based Language Teaching in Bangladesh: A Narrative Inquiry* presented by *Krishna Dutta* on 29 November 2024.

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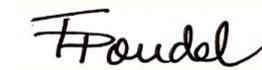
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I understand that my dissertation will become a part of the permanent collection of the library of Kathmandu University. My signature below authorizes the release of my dissertation to any reader upon request for scholarly purposes.



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## DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this dissertation is my original work, and it has not been submitted for candidature for any other degree at any other university.

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## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents, Mrinal Kanti Dutta and Joyanti Dutta, and my friend, Naznin Chowdhury Lisa, without whom I would not be who I am now.

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This dissertation is an outcome of a series of lively interactions of research participants and their stories, which shaped many of the ideas discussed in this work. So I am in debt to them for their contributions. I also acknowledge the encouragement of my colleagues at my college, classmates at Kathmandu University, and my family members during the journey of this research. I feel short of words to express my feelings about those known and unknown teachers in Bangladesh, face to face and virtual, whom I observed on different occasions to get the data for this research, and who directly and indirectly contributed to my understanding of PBLT as an innovative pedagogy.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AI	Artificial Intelligence
BANBEIS	Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BRAC	Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee
CA	Continuous Assessment
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
ELT	English Language Teaching
KUSOED	Kathmandu University School of Education
L2	Second Language
MoE	Ministry of Education
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NCTB	National Curriculum and Textbook Board
PBLT	Project-Based Language Teaching
PD	Professional Development
TPD	Teachers' Professional Development
TSR	Teacher-Student Ratio
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Project-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) is a process-based approach facilitating collaborative activities to ensure a learner-centered classroom, which ultimately results in students' achievement of learning a language and life skills. The teachers' opportunity to devise the PBLT lessons according to the learners' needs, lives, and social contexts (Grant, 2017) has made the pedagogy demanding in the advent of the 21st century integrating more than one subject such as language, science, business, social studies, etc., in an interdisciplinary approach. The materials can be in the native context so that the learners can easily relate to the target language to identify themselves in their cultural contexts. Besides, the materials can also be from the global context so that learners can associate themselves with the universal phenomenon. PBL is a framework that shapes learning around projects (Thomas, 2000). Projects refer to complex tasks that engage students to answer challenging questions or to solve problems. The tasks involve them in designing, problem-solving, decision-making, or investigative activities (Tucker, 2020) and similarly compel them to work relatively autonomously (Allen, 2004) over extended periods; and finally end in realistic products or presentations by learners (Thomas, 2000; Thuan, 2018). This 'student-centered' (Biswas & Roy, 2010) process, though in practice worldwide, in Bangladesh, is still in an emerging phase with inadequate study on this subject. Moreover, designing materials for PBL using Bangladeshi contexts is significant for a well-planned and effective teaching-learning process. This study attempts to shed light on the teachers' understanding of PBLT and their experiences regarding the scope of creating PBLT materials. The study also elucidates the areas restricting the implementation of this essentially beneficial technique in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms, along with providing viable solutions to resolve these constraints.

### **Setting the Scene for the Research Study**

Teachers' ability to design activities and administer process-based approaches like PBLT enkindled interest because I experienced the benefits of project-based learning while working as an international coordinator for the Connecting Classroom program under the British Council in 2017. During the program, I supervised more than ten collaborative project-based activities and noticed how tremendously

spontaneous the improvement was among the students when they were put in the framework of different planned tasks for any specific topic. The students of our institution collaborated with the students of an international school and obtained skills like collaboration, communication, critical thinking, and problem-solving, which are presently termed twenty-first-century skills. Moreover, the engagement with the activities ensured their deep learning.

After being assigned to the program, I, with my pupils from three different classes, finished three international collaborative activities with the international coordinator of the Sri Lankan school via email and Skype. We exchanged photos, videos of the students' work, and exhibitions of their performances. The connecting classroom was an outstanding experience for our students and me. To begin with, the performance of pupils generated language as it facilitated the conversation between teacher and learners, as well as between learners and learners, creating the opportunity for improving language skills in both Bangla and English. I understood a sharp difference between the teacher-led traditional EFL class and a learner-centered classroom created by the innovative approach, PBL. Besides, most importantly, the project-based learning can evoke an ambience for the learners to construct knowledge and develop interpersonal skills.

However, the problem emerged when I tried to involve my colleagues in certain project-based activities to make them collaborative, integrating other subjects. So, it was imperative to design the procedures of project pedagogy specifying the learning goals (Krajcik et al, 2007). But the real scenario was difficult because, first of all, the teachers were reluctant. After all, the activities were not included in the board exams and were assumed to be time-consuming. In addition, I felt that the teachers' attitude toward adopting this learner-based approach and the lack of ability to create materials are also great demotivating factors in the case of introducing the PBL in our curriculum.

Though every initiative in the curriculum reformation suggests student-centered communicative and interactive teaching pedagogy, they are underrepresented in existing curriculum materials and teaching approaches (Krajcik et al., 2007; Abd-El-Khalick et al., 2004). One of the reasons is that both the longer period PD programs and the ongoing professional support are very conventional (Rahman, 1999), and they do not encourage teachers to be innovative in bringing quality education to ensure the desired learner outcomes. Rahman (1999) pointed out that

quality assurance is a must in the TD programs for all important components, offering vis-à-vis trainers, syllabuses, course materials, methodology, resources, and, if needed, adequate assessment procedures, while suggesting an alternative paradigm for TPD.

Consequently, the introduction of PBL in the present curriculum can be effective if the teachers are successful in designing the lesson materials and activities according to the needs and levels of the learners. Then again, a few years ago, during the pandemic, when the school was closed and the students remained at home, they were given different projects to do at home and submit on the school website. My nephew was in class three and then in a local English-medium school. I observed that his school sent a 17-page project instruction on the preservation of the Earth's environment. With the help of the parents, he completed the project and presented his work on a chart paper, making a short video. While doing the project, I was with him, noticing how effectively it helped his understanding of the Earth's environment. It also improved his ability to generate language while presenting the work. The material was downloaded from the website of an American teacher who developed the materials for kids worldwide.

However, the majority of students and teachers in Bangladesh do not have access to these free materials, and sometimes they are not suitable for the level of the students. So, only if the teachers are trained to design their materials can PBL work effectively to make a learner-centered language classroom in Bangladesh. So, the research targets to find out the teachers' understanding of the PBLT approach, their cognitive skills of designing materials for PBL in the context of the culture, life, socio-economic condition, people, language, the geography of Bangladesh, and to explore the constraints of the teachers in implementing PBL in a language class.

### **Rationale of the Study**

Language teaching through project-based activities is a very fruitful teaching strategy for generating creativity, innovation, problem-solving, and communicative skills in language classrooms, but the pedagogical principle of this exploratory learning approach is unfamiliar among the teachers and not widely incorporated in the curriculum of Bangladesh. From the perspective of Bangladesh EFL classrooms, the learners in secondary and higher secondary levels still learn English for the written exam. According to Islam (2019), "The process approach is almost absent in the classroom" (p. 153). In an ordinary English classroom, the students listen to the

teacher's lectures, jot down important topics, and memorize even the composition part for the exams. The questions set in the exam also encourage the teachers to select some topics for writing items as suggestions. The learners commit those to memory to pass the test. They memorize the essays or paragraphs that were common in the previous board exam questions. So, the learners are reluctant to write their own on any topic independently, and the teachers are also compelled to follow the traditional teaching techniques. Though brainstorming before writing is practiced sometimes, repetitive topics, familiar contexts, and model texts increase copying and rote learning (Islam, 2019). Again, the grammatical items are taught to the learners by practicing the previous board questions. Hence, the learners do not find the opportunity to use their knowledge of vocabulary and grammar in independent writing and reading activities, let alone listening and speaking activities. Therefore, the first rationale of the study is to delve into the teachers' perspectives on the innovative intervention they venture to ensure the development of four language skills, as well as the life skills necessary for coping with the modern, fast-paced technology-based world.

In addition, recent years' observation shows that when the students pass the school and come to college or sit for the university's admission test, their performance displays a poor understanding of the content (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). According to Dr. Kavary Gayen (Jagoron TV, 2021), many students fail in English, though they have learned it for ten to twelve years in school. Keeping this issue in mind, the researchers (Lantolf et al., 2015; Rea-Dickins & Gardner, 2000; Dooly & Sadler, 2016) suggest more scaffolding with teacher's intervention in L2 acquisition in the form of formative and summative assessment and opt for developing curriculum or designing materials to enhance the learner's engagement for deeper insights. In these circumstances, the next very important rationale for this research is to discover the ontological premises of PBL - the obstacles and remedies, sifting the narratives of the participant-teachers to ensure this inquiry-based pedagogy in EFL classrooms in Bangladesh.

Moreover, this research can lead to a broader rationale to discover the untrodden path of opening a new era of teacher education. The insights can contribute to the design of professional development programs so that teachers can avail themselves of the skills to design materials for PBLT and the techniques of effective implementation processes in their language classrooms. Thus, it will ensure that the teachers will be better equipped to meet the needs of 21st-century learners.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Many countries have developed their PBL with enriched materials, and teachers are trained and well-equipped to prepare standard materials with effective language teaching approaches. But in Bangladesh, the PBL is emerging, and teachers are exploring factors to learn more about PBL. So, understanding the innovative pedagogy and designing lessons for PBL practice in EFL classrooms of Bangladesh are very important for our teachers to implement in language teaching. There are a variety of teaching tools and materials online, but designing materials in the context of Bangladeshi socio-culture is still facing a huge gap. Krajcik and Blumenfeld (2006) claim that PBL intrigues learners, teachers, and community members to collaborate to investigate questions and ideas, turning a classroom into a community of learners. Hence, the pupils can also contribute simultaneously to material design. However, while I was running PBLT for our pupils, I experienced that both teachers and parents were reluctant, as this kind of process-driven activity had not yet been incorporated into the curriculum, especially in the Bengali medium schools (Sabah, 2022). The teachers also faced problems as they were not trained and skilled in designing lessons that were aligned with the local context. Some teachers declined because they are comfortable only with traditional teacher-centered classrooms.

Again, though communicative language teaching (CLT) has been introduced in Bangladesh (Ministry of Education [MoE], 2010; MoE, 2020), it is rarely practiced in EFL classrooms. Hasan (2009) studied CLT classroom interaction in Bangla medium secondary schools and found that the students usually did not ask questions in class. They generally practiced reading and writing. Some students did not follow the teacher's instructions, and they were talking among themselves. Some students were found inattentive in the classes. The students revealed in the study that their teachers are not friendly; the teachers criticize the students if their answers are not right. Some students are afraid of their English teacher. They do not ask questions for fear that their teachers will ask them many questions in return. From the post-structuralist point of view, we can recognize that the students are the subaltern if their voice is not heard in a teacher-centered classroom. The Indian-American post-colonial feminist critic, Spivak (1988) accelerated the notion of the Subaltern further in her ground-breaking seminal essay 'Can Subaltern Speak?' However, Gramsci coined the word 'subaltern', synonymous with 'the proletariat'. In the EFL classrooms of

Bangladesh, the subaltern subject, the learners don't get priority due to the monopoly of the teachers.

Hasan (2009) claimed that during his observation, the learners enjoyed the activities as they were assigned to pair work and group work. However, the students revealed later that they were not normally able to participate spontaneously because of the teachers' bad attitude in the classroom. The teachers even persuaded them to take private lessons. Here, CLT did not bring the expected result (Hasan, 2009), though 21st-century quality education emphasizes the learners' freedom from trauma in the EFL classroom.

Project-based learning, not being fully novel at all in Bangladesh, can be an effective tool for enhancing students' academic achievement, especially weak learners (Bell, 2010). The reading of a great deal of literature asserts the profound benefits of PBL in second language classrooms (Dutta & Joshi, 2023; Thomas et al., 1999) but little we found how to implement it in the EFL classroom, especially in the third-world country like Bangladesh where most students are underprivileged in the rural areas. And again, learning English is a horrifying task for the learners, whether they are rural or urban. To solve the issues, interventions are less often attempted. Accordingly, many teachers have been successful in gaining students' learning outcomes by applying the PBLT method, but data on teachers' experiences in implementing PBL in Bangladeshi classrooms is lacking in the ELT literature.

My research centers on the main problem of the huge gap between policies taken by the government. At different times, for effective language teaching and the practice of L2 teaching. Apart from this, the lack of proper addressing of the issues in teacher education produces teachers unable to fulfill the needs of 21st-century learners. The lack of awareness among other education stakeholders also causes the overall absence of quality education in Bangladesh. The research envisions addressing the gaps and presenting a broader scenario where teachers' beliefs, understanding, and resilience are vital to ensure quality education, especially in the L2 acquisition in Bangladeshi secondary-level EFL classrooms.

### **The Purpose of the Study**

This study aims to critically explore the experience of secondary-level English language teachers in Bangladesh using project-based language teaching (PBLT). It focuses on teachers' understanding, challenges in implementing PBLT, and measures taken to overcome those challenges.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do secondary-level English language teachers in Bangladesh understand PBLT as a pedagogic approach?
2. How do they describe their experience designing materials of PBLT to suit their contextual needs and implementing it in their EFL classrooms, overcoming the challenges?

### **Delimitation of the Study**

This study focuses on the teachers' understanding in only three aspects: designing materials for PBLT, the challenges in implementing the approach, and the strategies they follow to overcome those in their language classroom. Therefore, the research aims to concentrate only on the practices, challenges, and remedies of those challenges in implementing PBLT at the secondary level schools of Bangladesh.

### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter established the foundation of my research study, concisely providing an overview of the research's needs and objectives. At first, I presented the anecdotes of my professional life experience in using innovative pedagogy with interactive and engaging activities as an international coordinator for my institution to win the International School Award. My stories of student engagement in deep learning set the research context, forming the ground for the research problem, rationale, purpose, and research questions. To create context for the research, I presented the way I changed my teaching approach into a student-centered one and the students' responses to it. I further highlighted the issues hampering its acceptance and implementation among teachers. Based on my experience, I constructed two research questions: how the teachers perceived the PBLT approach, making a connection of language learning to social, cultural, and national context, and how they overcome the challenges of implementing, planning, and managing such an innovative teaching approach. I delimited the research only to teachers' understanding of the approach and their experiences in overcoming the challenges. In the next chapter, I presented a review of the related literature to support my study.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents conceptual literature relevant to the present research on the experienced and well-equipped teachers' perspectives in designing and improvising project-based language teaching in secondary schools in Bangladesh. The first section in a thematic review begins by covering the changes that happened in the English Language classrooms to improve the effectiveness of teaching and to ensure desired learning outcomes, then the necessity of PBLT in ensuring students' engagement and deep learning, its salient features, and finally, the process of designing materials and developing a curriculum for PBLT in the context of students' needs and environment. The next part consists of the conceptual ideas based on the theory of social constructivism. It also aims to see the approach through the lens of Freire's conscientization, emancipating the learners from the classroom culture where the teacher takes the leading role. The final part of the chapter surveys the policy taken for English language teaching in Bangladesh.

#### **Evolving Teaching Trends in EFL Classroom**

From the late 1960s, there was a transition in the major British approaches to teaching English as a foreign language (Graves & Garton, 2017), and the shifting in educational realities was one among various other reasons. Richards and Rodgers (2001) reported that European adults needed to learn major languages to communicate in the European common market and the Council of Europe, a regional cultural and educational cooperation organization. In such a situation, a British linguist, David Wilkins, propounded a basis for developing communicative syllabi for language teaching in 1972. Until then, the teachers used Situational Language Teaching to teach the target language by practicing basic structures in meaningful situation-based activities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). However, the objective of Communicative language teaching (CLT) is to make communicative competence the goal of language teaching and develop procedures so that teaching the four language skills may incorporate the interdependence between language and communication. Interestingly, the advent of the twenty-first century demands more from the language classrooms, adding innovative pedagogical approaches like PBLT to the language curriculum.

### **Project-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) – What and Why?**

Contemporary methodological scenarios incorporate all past teaching methods, justifying those approaches by keeping them aligned with the needs of the students. Activating learners for authentic learning, 21st-century skills-based communicative language teaching introduces a manifold of strategies like task-based language teaching, Project-based language teaching, and activity-based language teaching. The new generation of pupils demands a new kind of classroom experience where the learner will be at the center and the learning will be autonomous. This PBLT approach, as an instrumental strategy, involves the student in authentic learning deferring remarkably from the traditional teacher-centered classroom, providing the students with interdisciplinary and autonomous learning activities connecting to real-world issues and practices, and being usually stretched over an extended time (Tan & Chapman, 2016; Wong et al., 2006).

Simpson (2011) states that PBL is not a new approach in general education. According to Beckett (2006), PBL can be traced back to the mid-1800s, and it was first created by David Snedden, who taught science in American agriculture classes. Later, in the early 1900s, PBL was further developed by William Heard Kilpatrick, John Dewey's student, and focused on the need for learners to have a purposeful activity (Beckett, 2006; Muniandy, 2000; Wolk, 1994). Learners had the opportunity to construct knowledge by generating their projects depending on their interests and individual differences. They made connections between their new knowledge and their existing knowledge and were able to apply them to similar settings. They learn in a meaningful context while creating an end product (Wrigley, 1998).

As an English teacher and Practitioner of PBL, I can realize that the use of innovative pedagogical approaches such as project-based pedagogy (Krajcik et al., 2007) can be instrumental in making learning more meaningful and supporting learners in authentic practices (Larmer et al., 2015) because it can integrate more than one subject (i.e., English, science, Social Studies, etc.) as a part of an interdisciplinary curriculum material development (Poonpon, 2017). According to Thuan (2018), the implementation of Project-based learning (PBL) in EFL classrooms brings students a lot of benefits. The benefits of PBL can range from developing language skills to enhancing students' life skills. Not only are the four language skills, including grammar and vocabulary, developed, but soft skills like critical thinking, collaborative teamwork, problem-solving, negotiating, and other interpersonal skills that entails the

attitudes of flexibility and tolerance (Thomas, 2000; Tretten & Zachariou, 1995) are generated by the group project work. Hence, this research embarked on exploring how teachers develop and design project-based tasks, which I believe will help EFL teachers in Bangladesh conduct their EFL classes efficiently in the future using project-based language teaching.

### ***Characteristics of PBLT***

According to Buck Institute of Education PBLWorks (n.d.), Project-Based Learning includes a set of pedagogic tools by which students acquire knowledge and skills by working for an extended period to investigate and respond to an authentic, engaging, and complex question, problem, or challenge. Although educators approach PBL from multiple perspectives, many acknowledge that the definition contains several characteristics (Gras-Velázquez, 2019). For instance, PBL has a process and an end product. It encourages students' ownership and integrates different skills; it extends over some time and is not limited to one class session. It commits to both language and content learning, giving students and teachers new roles and responsibilities in the learning process. As it arranges both collaborative and individual works, it requires students to take responsibility for their learning (through gathering, processing, and reporting information). Finally, it results in an end product (posters, PowerPoint presentation, short movies, videos, leaflets, brochures, magazines, debates, etc.) inculcating a reflection of both the process and the product from the individual learner, ensuring deep learning (Stoller, 2006).

Hedge (1993) posits that language education started integrating PBL with increased interest in student-centered, autonomous, and collaborative learning. Hence, the incorporation of 'PBL into EFL and ESL contexts has been growing since the early 1980s' (Kalvu, 2015, p. 48), and the enthusiastic educators of the PBL have designed the curriculum materials and assessments together, iteratively aligning the learning performances and national standards. The learning performances are assessable cognitive competencies (Harris et al., 2007; Krajcik et al., 2007; McNeill & Krajcik, 2006). Accordingly, the assessment items and the corresponding rubrics are also imperative to make an effective PBL lesson, ensuring its validity as an alternative assessment and acceptance among all stakeholders as a new pedagogical approach. Kalvu (2015) emphasizes self, peer, and teacher assessments in PBL not only for the end product but also for the whole product generation process from the beginning to the end, because learners can offer positive recommendations and

assistance to each other in the process of social interaction with communicative and real-life scenarios.

### ***The Possibilities and the Prospects of PBLT***

The materialization of PBLT in EFL classrooms brings students a lot of prospects and possibilities. Researchers have defined the benefits of PBL as enhancing language skills and improving students' interpersonal growth, generating soft skills like critical thinking, collaborative teamwork, problem-solving, negotiating, and other interpersonal skills, important for living successful lives (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Stoller, 2006). Larmer et al. (2015) coined the Gold Standard PBL with students' learning goals at the center. Achievement of learning goals is obtained by learners with sustained inquiry, authenticity, student voice, choice, reflection, and revision. The project results in a public presentation of a product. The continuum of the learning process facilitates the prowess of the L2 learners through the well-designed instructions of the teachers.

### **Figure 1**

*Gold Standard Project-Based Learning by PBL Work.*



(Source: Gold-standard-project-design)

When we say that PBLT triggers to enhance the language skills like listening, speaking, reading, and writing by making the L2 learners go through the learning process of project tasks, among these, enabling students to speak a second language is

a crucial one. According to Levelt (1989), the human brain goes through four main steps while talking: conceptualizing – coming up with ideas, formulation – turning those ideas into words, articulation – saying the words, and finally self-monitoring – checking to make sure that we are articulating them correctly. His research on learning to speak a second language implies how we learn to speak a second language (Bygate, 2001) and through a process and product approach, PBL offers the learners a command over both the language and content by the recurrent revision and reflection (Stoller, 2002).

Again, the approach facilitates each student in the group to feel free of anxiety because they can make their way of learning according to their interest and pace. Besides, the teachers automatically feel the urge to prepare the learners using differentiated instruction, which is an essential strategy to ensure all students engage in activities. The strategy furthermore builds an open platform for the teachers to assess the learning of learners, continuously giving feedback to improve, because according to Stabback (2016), students' learning outcome is ensured best when teachers provide feedback on their learning through continuous assessment. Through PBL, teachers can assess the students' work formatively and, if necessary, provide scaffolding through an extended period to finish with the end product.

### ***Designing or Adapting Materials for PBLT***

PBLT, being an inquiry-based and learner-led approach, requires a shift in the teachers' role to introduce it in our curriculum. The teachers need to understand their role in creating appropriate classroom instructions. The new teaching role is that of a 'facilitator', where the teacher is required to teach in interactive workshops rather than providing lectures, and in which students learn through active preparation in interactive activities with their peers (Male & Guzzomi, 2012). When I was working as an international coordinator under the British Council Connecting Classrooms Program, I observed teachers going through a series of training so that they could adapt or devise lesson plans for projects according to their classroom realities. The teachers were provided with certain samples and examples of PBL, but they knew what was best for their learners and adapted the prescribed plans to make them feasible for their classroom requirements.

While designing the integrated curriculum for PBLT, it is important to include all stakeholders to understand the context and needs for an effective and fruitful lesson. To create a functional curriculum based on its objectives, BRAC (Bangladesh

Rural Advancement Committee) sought help from international consultants but they involved the local teachers in developing the educational materials for the rural people to avoid the top-down approach ensuring the power to the local teachers and learners (Dutta & Joshi, 2023; BRAC, 1980 as cited in Fateh, 2020).

### ***AI-Enhanced PBL in English Language Acquisition***

When the question comes about how to empower the local teachers in designing the PBLT tasks, Artificial Intelligence (AI) can be the rescue to help the teachers. Usually, teachers struggle to design the instructions for PBL, catering to students' level (Belmekki & Koumachi, 2024). The design by novice teachers may become either very simple or extremely complex (Aldabbus, 2018). However, AI-enhanced PBL can provide dynamic instructional guidelines to make it engaging by breaking down the project with step-by-step guidance. It can also offer personalized scaffolding to the L2 learners according to the individual's level and preferences (Wu & Wan, 2022). Song et al. (2022) claimed that AI-assisted PBL can help with effective and equitable collaboration by supervising and monitoring each member's contribution and participation.

### ***Difficulties in Implementing PBLT***

The innovative process of inquiry-based pedagogy faces uncertainty due to the resistance of teachers to change (Rahman, 1999; Stoller, 1994), as they are comfortable with the traditional teaching style. Teachers sometimes understand the benefits the PBLT approach brings. Yet, due to deep-rooted teaching habits, they hesitate to shift to an unfamiliar pedagogical approach. Shin (2007) claimed that teachers can also find it challenging to plan real-life instructions based on the students' needs, level, and context. Lack of availability of effective PBLT examples, instructions, and resources in the local context, Lack of guidance, and in-building supports, lack of teachers' experience, and confidence are mainly responsible for the teachers' difficulties in implementing PBLT (Yang et al., 2021). Thuan (2018) found that among the commonly faced challenges in implementing PBL, the large class contributes a substantial part that impedes the teachers' ability to improve students' motivations, to make students concentrate on learning tasks and cooperative learning activities effectively, and to help them connect the new content with prior knowledge.

In light of the significance of designing tools for PBL in the context of Bangladeshi students, I would like to inquire about the teachers' understanding and implementation of this approach. I believe it is essential to examine and study how

teachers have developed their project-based activities, their assumptions when modifying existing online tools to suit their students, and how they will archive those materials for future use by other teachers. Consequently, this research aims to raise the awareness of policymakers and curriculum developers about PBL techniques, enabling EFL teachers to feel more at ease as PBL has been introduced into the national curriculum of Bangladesh (National Curriculum and Textbook Board [NCTB], 2022).

### **Social constructivism as a Theoretical Referent**

The research on designing and implementing PBLT conforms to the theory of Social Constructivism due to its focus on the importance of social interaction and cooperative learning in constructing cognitive and emotional images of reality (Tucker, 2020; Vygotsky, 1978; 1986). The champion of social constructivism is Vygotsky (1978), who advocated the view that children's thinking and meaning-making are socially constructed and emerge out of their social interactions with their environment when they are actively engaged in social practices and critically examine economic and political conflicts, in a collaborative group, or in a global community.

Regarding cognitive and linguistic development, the idea of the Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky helps us explain the teacher's role in material devising for PBLT for their learners in their social milieu (1986; Daniel, 2001; Panhwar et al., 2016; Vygotsky, 1978). He invoked the concept of Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in his explanation of L2 acquisition. ZPD refers to "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). He used the term "carers" which implies teachers, materials, contents, teachers' instructions, the collaborators in the group, and the community people. In cognitive constructivism, emphasis is placed on the importance of learners constructing their representation of reality. The world is at the threshold of the fourth industrial revolution, which compels us to study biology, nanotechnology, and artificial intelligence. Therefore, we need to reconsider the way education is being provided and the ways we can facilitate an effective transition from school to the world of the workplace, according to the World Economic Forum (2016). The teachers can look into the social context, examine the needs of learners, and design projects incorporating different subjects in an integrated lesson that will involve the students

collaboratively to be associated with the outside world. The core of PBLT pedagogical strategies can create an avenue through which students can transfer their skills to varied and diverse communities outside of the classroom.

When CLT does not bring the expected result, 21st-century quality education claims to free learners from trauma in the EFL classroom. Freire (1973) argued that “acquiring literacy does not involve memorizing sentences, words, and syllables lifeless objects unconnected to an existential universe ... but rather an attitude of creation and re-creation, a self-transformation producing a stance on intervention in one's context” (p. 48). Freire’s conscientization, likewise, social constructivism offers a critical understanding as knowing subjects of the socio-cultural reality conforms to Project-Based learning. BRAC’s “conscientization” successfully introduced a non-formal education with a psychosocial approach to raise consciousness among the rural poor to change their situations (Fateh, 2020). If this conscientization strategy is genuinely implemented among the rural population, it would benefit the villagers by changing their attitudes toward current socioeconomic issues. The teachers can design PBLT lessons targeting our dropouts in rural areas and urban slums, bringing the critical pedagogy into the mainstream curriculum so that teachers can lead pupils to do rather than rote without understanding, and students can think critically and authentically before doing. Pupils’ activities in PBL as experiences may help them choose the subjects for higher studies or their job of passion, constructing ideas through social interactions.

### **Policy Review**

Students in our country learned foreign languages either to conform to the foreign rulers or to communicate with the people beyond borders for different purposes. In this respect, Sultana (2017) claims that language policies reflect which language speakers are socially more esteemed. Pennycook (2001) also suggests that language policies involve people in a constant struggle for political and economic participation. Hence, the Policy for Language Education has a political agenda. However, Bangla reigns as a medium of instruction in the primary (Years 1-5), secondary (Years 6-10), and higher secondary (Years 11-12) education of the Bangla-medium schools. The tertiary level also holds Bangla as a medium of instruction, but understanding the global need for English, there are many private schools, colleges, and universities here that have started to emphasize English. Kachru (1996), in his article named ‘South Asian English toward an Identity in Diaspora’, claimed that

English has possessed a total existence of more than 160 years in the Indian Subcontinent (the collective geographical name given to India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh). Now, more than half a century after the British left, English appears to be very much in use in the overall bilingual and multilingual set-up of this entire region. Crystal (1995) pointed out that English has no official status in Bangladesh but is universally used as a medium of international communication. It is difficult to outline a definite policy for the English language or its development in Bangladesh, as there is no formal declaration in language policy plans (as cited in Rahman, 1999).

From the site of the Ministry of Education (MoE), Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, it is known that all the education policies from time to time understood the importance of the English language as a *Lingua Franca* to get connected with the outer world and added some changes in the policy keeping the main framework the same. In Bangladesh, the secondary level plays the role as a gateway for higher education and career building, and the students dedicate considerable time to learning the English language at this level. However, English, being strongly exam-driven as a subject, is divided into two parts: the 1st part and 2nd part (National Curriculum, 2012), which deal with reading comprehension and grammar lessons respectively. Here, both papers are based on reading and writing exams (Podder, 2011; Dutta & Joshi, 2023), and the two board exams (SSC and HSC), again two sling ring portals for entering higher education, ignoring speaking and listening as skills.

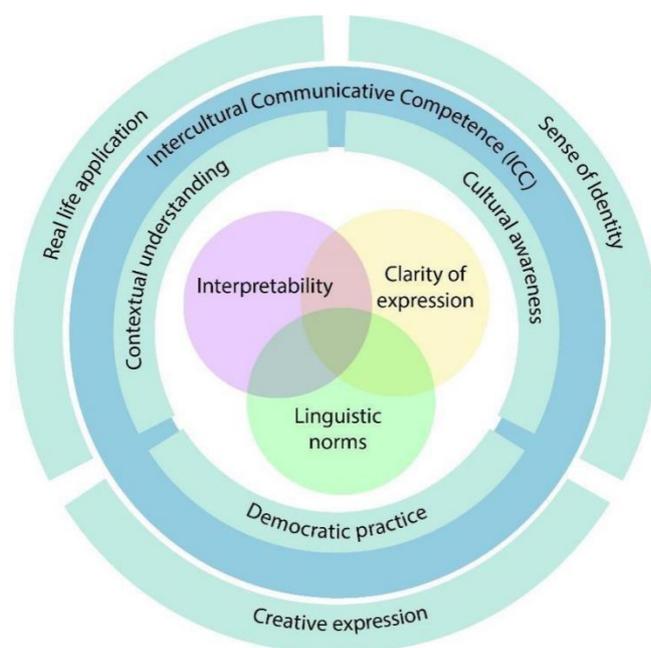
Hasan's literary review (2009) informs us that the implementation of the communicative approach in 1997 was jointly funded by the British Department for International Development (DfID) and the Government of Bangladesh. The English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) came into action with two particular objectives firstly to produce CLT-based English textbooks for classes 9-10 at the secondary level, and for classes 11-12 at a higher secondary level, and secondly, to train up the teachers to enable them to teach communicative English. The Curriculum Framework, 2012 in aims and objectives of education for classes 6-12 also prescribed to help learners develop their leadership, cooperation, and communication skills through collaborative activities (National Curriculum, 2012) that indicated the emphasis on the inclusion of 21st-century skills or soft skills (life skills) in teaching approaches. However, there are always gaps between curriculum directions and implementation and between policy and Materials (Dutta & Joshi,

2023; Hunter & Zaman, 2022). The textbooks provided by NCTB are communicative (NCTB, 2012) in nature, and the curriculum suggested a brief section emphasizing the CA for formative assessment (NCTB, 2016), but the exam policy emphasizes only reading and writing. All the stakeholders- the administrators, the parents, the teachers, and the learners don't feel motivated to practice other language skills as those are not counted in the board exam overall grade and thus, the learners get inspired for rote learning (Al Amin & Greenwood, 2018; Asian Development Bank 2015). Hence, Al Amin and Greenwood (2018) view that this practice eliminates academic curiosity, pressurizes young learners' lives, and ushers a parallel education industry engaging coaching centers, and commercial publication houses, thus creating a disparity and an opportunity for those who can pay extra tuition fees.

The recent curriculum (NCTB, 2022) includes the PBL approach for facilitating an alternative opportunity for a continual assessment and a grading system measuring students' performances in process-oriented learning. Being a competency-based curriculum, it advocates for an integrated approach emphasizing the global trends in ELT, which include Critical and Post-Method pedagogy (NCTB, 2022), taking the challenge of moving away from the traditional teacher-centered classrooms and creating a scope for 'student voice amidst the deafening channels of domination' (Canagarajah, 1999, p.197)

## Figure 2

*Conceptualization of English as a Subject.*



(Source: National Curriculum Framework, 2021)

The diagram in Figure 2 pinpoints how the curriculum framework of Bangladesh conceptualizes English as a foreign language. At this point, material designing for PBLT is instrumental in introducing this approach to the curriculum and making it handy for teachers' use in their EFL classrooms. At the advent of the new curriculum in 2023, all the secondary teachers got acquainted with a six-day orientation program. Yang et al. (2018) argue that the importance of PD in implementing PBL, in language acquisition, in ELT procedures, or in the orientation of principles underlying textbooks cannot be underestimated. The national policy of the CLT approach and the newly introduced experiential learning approach can create a strategy to fulfill its agenda by integrating PBLT into the curriculum, bridging the chasm between the policy and practices.

### **Research Gap**

After a thorough checking of the three prestigious Journals on ELT and Applied Linguistics in Bangladesh, i.e., Dhaka University Studies, The Journal of the Institute of Modern Languages, and Harvest: The Journal of English Language, it was found that there are frequent studies on English language skills, communicative Language teaching and Teacher education but less study has been on learner-centered innovative pedagogy like project-based language teaching. Addressing and theorizing pedagogic strategies like PBLT is, therefore, timely and crucially important.

### **Significance of the Study**

The findings of the research possess a plethora of significant contributions to the ELT arena in Bangladesh. The National Curriculum Framework suggested using PBL in the classroom teaching approach (NCTB, 2022) due to its manifold advantages for the learners, from improving language skills to acquiring real-life related 21st-century skills. It is a new method for many English teachers and teacher educators. Though they are provided with training and an instruction guidebook, they face many constraints regarding handling it with sufficient understanding and efficacy to materialize it in the EFL classrooms. They are also in a puzzled situation about how to use the approach in a large class environment and how to design it according to the needs of the students. With the result of this study, they can acquire a full understanding of the PBLT approach and the rationality of its use in the EFL classroom settings, discarding the traditional teacher-centered teaching style. The teachers and educators can also have an idea of preparing teacher-students for designing materials in Bangladeshi contexts and creating an authentic and

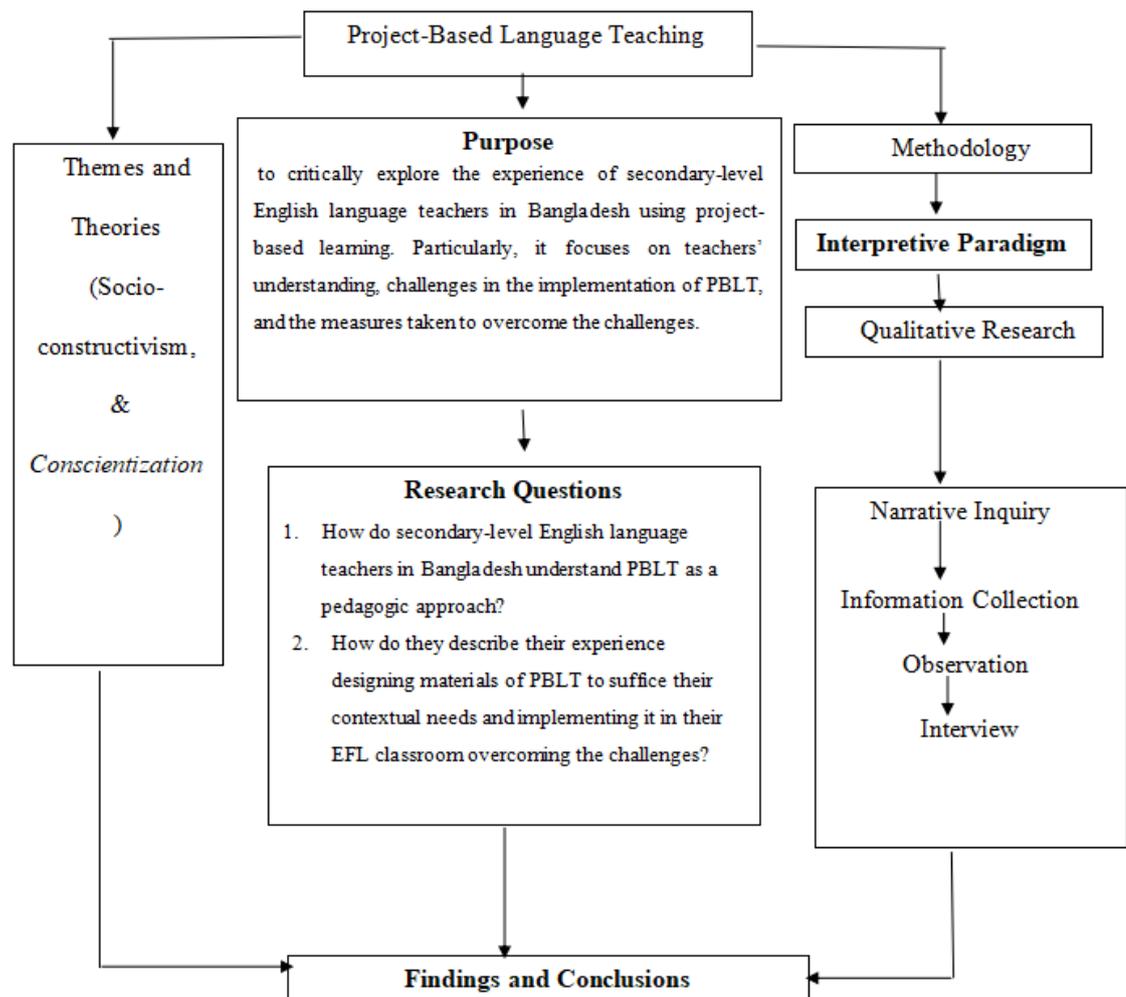
autonomous learning environment to explore a specific driving question or solve a real-life problem. Other stakeholders like the school heads, the parents, and the community people can have a clear idea of this learner-centered approach and get inspiration to be spontaneously involved in materializing this unfailing teaching pedagogy for the ultimate benefit of the learners.

### Conceptual Framework of the Study

The conceptual framework of the research relates to different components of the PBLT as an innovative pedagogy that provides a glimpse of the road map for constructing new knowledge.

**Figure 3**

*Conceptual Framework of the Study.*



### **Chapter Summary**

The second chapter of my dissertation dealt with a review of relevant literature. I attempted to explore the pedagogical shift that happened from traditional to a new innovative pedagogy in teaching-learning strategies of the English language or L2 and highlighted project-based Language teaching in detail with its characteristics, prospects, and implementation. I explained the thematic arena, policy framework, and empirical perspectives on PBLT and its implementation challenges in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. Next, I moved to the theoretical review connecting the collaborative and interactive teaching methods to the socio-constructivist theory of Lev Vygotsky. Finally, I approached the conceptual framework of my research, establishing the periphery of my study.

## CHAPTER III

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The chapter focuses on the research methodology used to run this study. It commences with philosophical consideration, followed by a research paradigm and method that I think suits and applies to my educational research. Then it aims to delineate the research participants and the data collection process. It also discusses the data analysis procedure. Finally, the chapter reveals the quality standards that helped me to authenticate my research and the ethical considerations I followed in my study.

The previous chapter established the research agenda with the previous studies done on the PBLT approach, where it fits at present, and what new things it can add to and led me to compose my research questions about how the teachers perceive the method as an instructional pedagogical approach, how they practice it in their EFL classrooms, and how they encounter the problems they face. For this quest, the first section of this chapter delineates the research design for the inquiry, which focuses on multi-faceted problems and also highlights my stance as a researcher that acknowledges how varied realities influence knowledge and the learning process constructed within the educational context. The chapter declares that the research process would adhere to ethical guidelines, strictly safeguarding participants' confidentiality, obtaining informed consent, and ensuring a respectful relationship throughout the study. Overall, the chapter presents a plan for exploring how teachers understand and use the PBLT approach in teaching the target language.

#### **Philosophical Considerations**

Philosophical commitments keep researchers aligned with existing understandings, helping them interpret the research outcomes meaningfully. Three philosophical considerations - Ontology, epistemology, and axiology- have always helped the research to be on track. Ontology refers to the exploration of being, raising basic questions about the nature of reality and the nature of the human being in the world (Levers, 2013), while Epistemology is a means of apprehending and explaining "how I know what I know" (Crotty, 1998, p.3). Again, Axiology deals with the way of valuing, in other words, giving importance to every individual's perceptions. Mills et al. (2006) say that the researchers need to choose a research paradigm congruent with their beliefs about reality to ensure a strong research design.

### ***Ontology***

My study, based on the narratives of the teachers' understanding and their perceived ability to design materials, has ample scope to include varied realities. The purpose of the research from a relativist ontology (Hugly & Sayward, 1987) is to comprehend the subjective experience of reality and multiple truths. Hence, my ontology in this research is subjective with multiple realities as the PBLT designers and content writers may utilize their own experiences, understanding, and perceptions according to their own social and environmental contexts and the required situations of their EFL classrooms. The stance also conforms to the claim of Levers (2013) that with multiple interpretations of experience come multiple realities—the involvement of many people entails many different realities.

### ***Epistemology***

My study aims to gather knowledge from practitioners in the field of PBLT. As the approach is quite new from the perspective of the Bangladeshi curriculum, there will be varied sets of observations. So, my epistemological commitment is subjective as subjectivist epistemology constitutes the idea that reality can be expressed in a range of symbol and language systems, and is stretched and shaped to fit the purposes of individuals such that people impose meaning on the world and interpret it in a way that makes sense to them (Moon & Blackman, 2017). We get a clear idea from Levers (2013) that epistemology is a way of understanding and explaining the content of our knowledge and the way of obtaining knowledge. Subjectivism is the belief that knowledge is “always filtered through the lenses of language, gender, social class, race, and ethnicity” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 21). As a researcher, my epistemological stand is to accumulate a constructed knowledge through negotiations and interactions with the teachers concerned with PBLT locally and globally, why and how they are going to create, use, and archive the contents, and what can be the ultimate effectiveness of this learner-centered EFL teaching method.

### ***Axiology***

This branch of philosophy, related to values and judgments (Litchman, 2010), focuses on the ethics of the relationship resonated by the researcher with his/her participants. My research area is understanding and designing PBLT for EFL classrooms, and my participants are teachers from public and private schools in Bangladesh who deal with students of individual norms, beliefs, and values from different social contexts. Therefore, my purpose in the study is to analyze carefully all

their values, beliefs, and judgments regarding creating a successful student-centered language classroom using a project-based language teaching method. Teachers' perceptions of the inquiry-based teaching method are shaped by their personal beliefs, opinions, or principles. As the study celebrates pluralism and differences, giving every single voice the same importance, it is a value-laden qualitative research for raising critical awareness and critical understanding in the readers.

### **Research Paradigm**

Research paradigm means bringing the broad groupings of certain approaches and perspectives to investigate any subject. To be more specific, it is a worldview followed by a community of researchers to construct knowledge (Levers, 2013). It plays an important role in governing the examinations into the policies and practices of education (Taylor & Medina, 2013). My ontological and epistemological assumptions entail the Interpretivism research design, which brings the reality of what and how aspects of innovative instructions in EFL classrooms. Repeated experiences of teacher participants can reveal emerging themes relevant to educational issues.

#### ***The Interpretive Paradigm***

Interpretivism mainly focuses on constructing knowledge, emphasizing a relativist ontology and subjectivist epistemology, influenced by the researchers' beliefs and feelings about the world (Levers, 2013). I tried to acknowledge the meaning and actions of the teachers in designing content for PBLT for Bangladeshi EFL classrooms, which intrigues the study to bring multiple realities from the local culture, societal norms, and customs into the classrooms. According to Taylor and Medina (2013), since the late 1970s, this humanistic paradigm has enabled educational researchers to build rich local understandings of the real-world experiences of teachers and students and of the cultures of classrooms, schools, and the communities they serve. While devising content for the tasks to solve a specific problem in the students' social milieu, creating new material or improvising the previously set instructions, inputs, and contents according to the need and level of the individual learner, the study substantially conforms to the core of the culture and society of Bangladesh.

Therefore, I met the research participants once and again and interacted with them in their workplaces, generating a contextual understanding of my participants' thoughts, beliefs, and actions. It is to explore whether their perceived understanding of the PBLT approach is equal to their actual proficiency in the ELT classrooms, as

Saldana (2015) claimed for meaning and sense-making by observing the real situation in the system (Walliman, 2011). I used interpretivism to get the core of my participants' practices as the interpretive orientation energizes the reflective educational practitioners to facilitate a deeper understanding with a broader focus on the social, political, historical, and economic forces shaping the pedagogies, curriculum policies, and schooling system in which teachers are immersed (Taylor and Medina, 2013). The knowledge I gained from exploring the participants' narratives was co-constructed because I had the opportunity to reflect on my self-earned experiences in teaching with the strategies of PBLT. Hence, the lens through which I can gather knowledge from the participants is interpretivism.

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

For educational research, narrative inquiry has been considered very effective as it seeks to find the authentic avenues for issues through the experiences and “experience is the story people live” (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000, p. xxvi). This research aimed to collect the narratives from the teachers practicing PBLT in EFL classrooms in Bangladesh, as well as their difficulties and successes in incorporating the project into the prescribed syllabus and curriculum.

Thus, if the experience is analyzed purposefully, it can have an educational effect (Lindsay & Schwind, 2016). So, the same happens when pieces of information are provided in the story format. Therefore, Aesop's stories have an everlasting moral effect on people's minds. “Tell a good story and all eyes are on you, all faces expectant, all voices hushed” (Garrigues, 2003, p. 21). It is the power of storytelling that can make the story of the teachers' perspectives, on exploring the difficulties that the students face in negotiating the projects in their milieu, more comprehensible for others who read this. The research provided the narratives to find an authentic story of the classroom practice so that a volume of effective PBLT materials can be stored to guide future teachers, educators, and policymakers to think about whether the strategies of PBLT are conforming to the learners' needs to empower them for the ever-changing world. Thus, the use of Narrative Inquiry as a research methodology would suffice for my research to create new knowledge in the form of a story. Clandinin and Connelly (2000) considered narrative inquiry as a means of inquiring and understanding into experiences through “collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus” (p. 20). In this research, the participants from varied social environments

(rural and urban) provided their narratives, which, if interpreted by using a standard method of narrative approach, can certainly assist us in unveiling some possible solutions for all who face difficulties in designing effective PBLT lessons and implementing them in the classrooms. From Dr. Janette Gray, Bell (2005) cited to explain the strength of narrative inquiry in research that it has “the ability to allow readers, who do not share a cultural background similar to either the storyteller or the researcher, to develop an understanding of notices and consequences of actions described within a story format” (p. 22). Hence, from the narratives of the study, the novice teachers will even get the proper notion about the PBLT, which may be a new phenomenon for them.

### **Selection of Research Sites and Participants**

While I was writing the proposal, I thought I would go to both the school of national and international schools to bring the stories of both local and the worldwide proven perspectives of the practice of PBL. But, to understand the difficulties in implementing PBLT in English language teaching and the challenges while devising PBLT lessons in the context of Bangladeshi EFL classroom practice, I purposively selected the government-run schools and the private schools of the national curriculum so that the study could bring the lived stories of teachers of the local context.

As I selected purposive research participants, I preferred the teachers using Project-Based Language Teaching in their EFL classrooms. As a researcher, I sought knowledge that is dynamic and relativist (Richards, 2003) in nature and gathered insights on the PBLT approach by purposive sampling. The research was conducted by interviewing secondary school teachers in Rajshahi, Sylhet, and Chattogram. I have interviewed three male and four female teachers. Fortunately, one teacher was from a pilot school where the new curriculum was being practiced in 2022. Initially, I interviewed two male teachers and two female teachers to keep gender parity. However, later, when I found that PBL had been incorporated into a new curriculum that started in 2023 for grades six and seven, I included more master trainers and trainees trained on the new curriculum run by the government as participants of my study, and they are all English teachers of the secondary schools.

**Figure 4***The Research Participants at a Glance.*

Name of Participants	Age	Male/ Female	Years of Teaching Experience	Region	Status (Trainer /Trainee of Experiential Learning)
Moni Begam	51	Female	24	Rajshahi	Trainer
Ayesha Amena	46	Female	18	Rural Chattogram Hill Tract	Trainer
Meher Shashi	53	Female	25	Chattogram	Trainee
Sanjiban Chowdhury	40	Male	11	Chattogram	Trainee
Dihan Ahmed	52	Male	25	Sylhet	Trainer
Shaila Sarwar	47	Female	18	Chattogram	Trainee
Rizvi Rezoan	46	Male	17	Sitakundu	Trainer

***Bringing the Prospective Participants***

I was working with connecting classroom programs in 2017 and implemented PBL in my school. During training programs, I became acquainted with teachers who are well-equipped with this new pedagogy. I tried to contact the participants and obtained consent from their authority where it was required. I found three teachers who got the International School Award as international coordinators and ran projects in their schools. Consequently, their journey through the whole process made an everlasting impression on their mindset as teachers. Then, I approached two other participants – one of them, besides being a teacher, owned a school and started the PBL approach in different subjects in her school. Another is teaching English in a school where a pilot of a new curriculum was implemented in 2022. I reached out to the other two participants at the end of the thesis when I learned that PBL is included in the new curriculum as a summative assessment.

***The Research Participants***

A brief introduction of the seven teachers of different secondary schools situated in different regions of Bangladesh highlights the reason for choosing them

purposively to get their lived experiences on using PBLT, in which learning is context-dependent and situated in real-world experience.

***Moni Begam***

Ms. Moni was born and brought up in Sylhet but completed her master's degree at a private university in Dhaka and her MPhil at Rajshahi University. Her 24-year teaching career started to bloom at the SOS Hermann Gmeiner School and College, Bogura, in 2000. At present, she is teaching in a government school in Pabna; she has achieved the Best Teacher Award for four consecutive years. She was awarded as an international coordinator for her work under Connecting Classroom by the British Council. Her Experience of running projects and promoting learners' language learning exposure has a great role in my study of PBLT.

***Ayesha Amena***

Ayesha started her teaching career in 2008 in Chattogram, an English-medium school. However, she established a school and a daycare center a few years later. Then, she obtained a PGD in Educational Planning and Administration at NUEPA, New Delhi. At present, she is pursuing her MSc in Early Childhood Development at BRAC University, Bangladesh. At the same time, she works as a teacher educator in different schools. She has already commenced experiential learning in her school.

***Meher Shashi***

Meher was born in Narayanganj, but she was raised both in Narayanganj and Chattogram. After finishing her M.A. at Chittagong University, she started her teaching journey in a renowned public School and completed the BELT program at the Open University, Bangladesh. In her 25-year career, she was awarded the Best Teacher Award by a National Daily, the Janakantha. She ran different projects while working for the International School Award under the British Council in 2014.

***Sanjiban Chowdhury***

Being born in an affluent family and having schooling in a Catholic missionaries-run reputed school in Chattogram led this research participant, Sanjiban Chowdhury, to have a better English learning environment in his early phase. Later, after earning an M.A. in English at Chattogram University, he started his teaching career in a school well-known for its progressive approach to education, with a strong emphasis on creativity, culture, and values-based learning.

***Dihan Ahmed***

After obtaining a Graduation with Honours & Post-graduation from National University, Dihan Ahmed joined a Public school in Sylhet. As a government employee, he availed himself of the opportunities to attend many training programs from the prestigious government professional training institutes, and he has been a master trainer of English teachers since 2010.

***Shaila Sarwar***

Born and brought up in Chattogram, Shaila started teaching in 2003 at a college in Chandanaish, Chattogram, and then at an English version school. She has experience teaching for nearly 18 years. She attended many workshops, seminars, and webinars for continuous professional development and mentioned her 18-year teaching experience with love and respect from the students as her achievement.

***Rizvi Rezoan***

Rizvi Rezoan was born in Kishorganj and got his schooling in a rural area where he was nurtured by the luster of nature. Later, he came to Sitakundu, which was his father's workplace. He started his career as an assistant teacher in a non-governmental school. School in Sitakundu, Chattogram. Rizvi led his school to win the International School Award two times by presenting collaborative projects, earning fame for his school and equipping his pupils with extraordinary soft skills and language skills.

**Data Collection**

As I headed to the research, I first visited the EFL classroom of the research participants in the research sites. I made a thorough observation of the PBLT process going on in the classroom and beyond. According to Bell (2005), "Data collection for narrative research requires the researcher to allow the storyteller to structure the conversations, with the researcher asking follow-up questions." So, being congruent with the research questions, I have made more sub-questions. I have received data through the interviews with the teachers. Then, after observing the learners' presentation in PBL, I conducted another interview to measure the success and difficulties in the process through the participants' shared stories. I recorded the interview using a mobile phone in audio. But before that, I obtained the consent of the authorities of the chosen schools to ensure proper inclusion of the methods and tools. To meet the rationale of the research, I interviewed the participants, sticking to the research questions. For the participants in Sylhet and Rajshahi, I used the Zoom

platform because of the distance, and I recorded their stories. In some of the cases, I watched the videos of the projects of those schools that they uploaded to their social media pages.

### **Analysis Procedure**

While organizing and interpreting data, categorical content analysis (Lieblich et al.1998) and the constant comparative method (Glaser and Strauss, 1967) were followed. Both these methods of data analysis involve comparing, contrasting, and classifying the data (Murray, 2009). Once the data had been collected through an interview recording, the audio data was transcribed in English, and a thematic analysis of the data was finally used to analyze it. Under this approach, the transcribed data were coded with the referential labels using the pseudonyms instead of the participants' real names. The important themes generated and interpreted were useful in answering the research questions. To avoid misinterpretation, the interpreted data were sent back to the interviewees for further checking to ensure the authenticity of the data. To get the information for the PBLT practice, I tried to include the teachers' lived stories- stories of the beginning, turning points, and its closure while they were sharing their best practice of the PBL in the EFL teaching, and the planning of the PBL they would like to execute in future as it is novel for the teachers.

### **Quality standards**

A researcher certainly feels it is important to keep his or her research standard as it is a significant contribution and an utmost duty to maintain high-quality research. Worthy topic, rich rigor, sincerity, credibility, resonance, significant contribution, ethics, and meaningful coherence are eight markers identified in the "Big-Tent" (Tracy, 2010). The model for quality in qualitative research by the topic of PBLT is worthy of being used in the digitalized and globalized world to make our EFL classroom more learner-centered. Furthermore, coherence and cohesion should be present in any written piece. So, my study followed the standard of quality by following a meaningful coherence. Again, to ensure the trustworthiness of the research, there are four criteria – credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

### ***Plausibility***

To ensure plausibility in observation data, Erickson (1986) suggested that there should be adequate evidence to support interpretation, and it should come from a variety of data types. The data should possess good interpretative status, and any

disconfirming evidence should be actively sought, analyzed, and included as a powerful antidote to a researcher's inclination toward supportive evidence. While incorporating the information to reach any verdict, I tried to bring as many voices of the teachers as possible to exemplify and establish the real scenario of the lived world.

### ***Credibility***

Maintaining credibility requires prolonged engagement and observations. Hence, as a researcher, I spent time getting to know my participants and listening to their stories about their classroom experience in Project-Based Learning. I closely examined the content they designed or improvised lessons collected from others for running PBL and observed how they engaged the learners by using PBLT instructions in the class. To maintain credibility during the interview, the participants were facilitated to ask and were asked more questions to make their and my perception clearer about something innovative like designing and devising activities, implementing those, and the outcomes.

### ***Transferability***

Project-Based Learning is a new phenomenon for many teachers and learners to introduce in the curriculum of Bangladesh, which has focused on learning through investigation as key to reforms (Abd-El-Khalick et al., 2004). Lincoln & Guba (1985) claim, "Transferability concerns the aspect of applicability". My research intends to help the readers find PBLT more applicable in their EFL classrooms. I endeavored to provide enough data and followed the research process for the teachers and curriculum designers to make my findings on PBLT transferable in their settings and contexts.

### ***Dependability***

While collecting the data, i.e., while interviewing the PBLT Practitioners, I maintained consistency with the interviews, asking them the same questions and in the same order; this has maintained dependability. As a researcher, I must ensure that the data I have is interpreted correctly and accurately. To maintain consistency and dependability, I made sure to analyze the data correctly in line with the standards of data analysis, following the method of qualitative research.

### ***Confirmability***

Confirmability of findings means that the data collected accurately represents the information the participants provided, and the inquirer does not create or manipulate that data (Elo et al., 2014). The data that was collected was truly provided

by the participants and has not been, by any means, influenced by the researcher. So, after interpreting the data, it was sent to the participant for further checking.

### **Ethical considerations**

A sound research environment requires the researchers to maintain some ethical standards. So, I kept holding to ethical principles in the research process. Each referential resource was acknowledged, and consent was taken from all concerned authorities. Blaxter et al. (2001) summarize that the principles of research ethics consist of being clear about the nature of the agreement a researcher has entered into with the research subjects or contacts. Project-based lessons are the creativity and intellectual assets of the teachers and organizations. I got them to understand that their contribution might bring a great transformation in the curriculum as well as in the teaching-learning environment of the country. The privacy of participants and research sites was honestly observed. I intended no harm to any of the constitutional rights and duties of our country, Bangladesh.

### ***Informed Consent***

According to Bell (2005), the informed consent procedure reduces the legal liability of the researcher. These days are litigious, so it is important to be certain we have done everything, not only to ensure participants' rights but also our status as researchers. So, I asked for the participants' consent and the administrators' approval of the schools to carry out my research because it made me confident that I could collect data with authenticity and originality and ensure a comfortable zone in which to do the research.

### ***Anonymity & Confidentiality***

Sapsford and Abbott (1996) said, 'Confidentiality is a promise that you will not be identified or presented in identifiable form, while anonymity is a promise that even the researcher will not be able to tell which responses came from which respondent' (p. 319).

When I observed the classes or took information from the participants by interviewing, I was careful to keep the name of the participant secret by giving each participant a pseudonym. To ensure anonymity, I gave them a fictional character name. So, I would keep up the confidentiality of the participants' identity as a requirement of ethical consideration.

***Respect to the Participants***

I intended to take care of the problems and difficulties that might arise while observing Project-based lessons on the process to make the participants comfortable, as they are valuable parts of my research. So, I did not go against their sentiments. Hence, at any point in my research, the research did not cause any harm to the participants, confirming respect for their emotions and sentiments.

I followed the rules and regulations mentioned in the constitution of the home country, Bangladesh, and the codes of Kathmandu University, Nepal. Besides, to avoid plagiarism, I followed the proper citation and referencing, giving respect and credit to the original authors. Thus, this research meets the ideal ethical considerations appropriate for qualitative research.

**Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I first depicted the interpretive methodology of my research since my study targeted to explore teachers' perceptions of using interactive and innovative pedagogy, PBLT, in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. Accordingly, I introduced my seven research participants who had acquired expertise in the PBLT approach using our social, cultural, and economic context. Likewise, it presented the process of data collection and the way I analyzed data through repeated interviews. Going through the data analysis process, the chapter ended with quality standards and ethical considerations.

## CHAPTER IV

### PARTICIPANTS' VIGNETTES

This chapter presents the magnet parts of my research participants' lives – their schooling and professional careers, shedding light on their teaching and practices of PBLT. Specifically, the chapter focuses on how they perceived English language learning during their schooling days and how they managed the problems in learning English. Moni Begum, Ayesha Amena, Sanjiban Chowdhury, Dihan Ahmed, Shaila Sarwer, Meher Shashi, and Rizvi Rizoan are the research participants, teaching English for more than ten years. I have taken shelter under pseudonyms to keep confidentiality. When participants first explored their motivations and the issues while learning the language, they understood where the shoes pinched. So, they felt it was easy to express why the teachers should bring innovative approaches like PBLT into practice.

#### **Moni Begum**

Moni Begum, the first participant in my research, has been considered a valuable resource for collecting data because of her varied experience running PBLT in her EFL classrooms. I first met her in 2019 in Dhaka when I, along with other ISA winners, received the award as an international coordinator under the British Council Connecting Classroom program. She also received the award, and since then, we have always kept in touch. When I called her and requested to be my research participant, she immediately agreed and promised to help. As she resides in Rajshahi, we scheduled to meet on the Zoom Platform. There were several meetings, and in the first meeting, I explored her learning experience as an L2 learner and then her teaching career.

#### ***Learning English at the School Level***

Moni Begum was born in Sylhet, located in the north-eastern part of Bangladesh. She feels lucky that her schooling happened in a suburban area, and her school was a sophisticated and well-managed institution. Our conversation started with her sharing about L2 learning. She shared:

*My exposure to L2 learning commenced with letters and the alphabet from grade one in 1982. Then, we were exposed to vocabulary, such as small stories or passages and grammar. Teachers used both Bangla and English to make us understand. Now I realize that there was a practice of the grammar-translation method at that time.*

She further added, “*Even question papers used to be set based on memorization and deductive approach of grammar teaching, i.e., write a definition, give examples, or write five rules of the use of ....*”

So far, she recalled her teachers using the grammar-translation method in English class, and her English learning was based on memorization. She memorized a lot of translations to attain command over L2.

### ***Motivation and Received Scaffolding in Learning English***

Her teacher used to help them make sentences with words and phrases from the textbook in high school. Her teacher motivated her to practice writing independently, integrating the ideas that the teacher used in class. The teacher also used to give individual feedback and give more input if there was any lack. She was always studious and good at English. So, she could catch whatever the teachers explained. Another god-gifted trait she possessed was that she could remember whatever information the sir provided in the class.

*So, I used to make notes, integrating the information provided by my teacher in class, and get feedback from the teacher. He used to correct my writing and motivated me a lot to keep practicing independently and make a portfolio of writing parts. He also used to give more input into my writing if he thought it was lacking.*

Moni Begum, as a student, was successful in developing her writing skills in English when she received scaffolding from the teacher at her secondary level. The teacher’s method of helping students played a crucial role in developing students’ skills in learning the target language.

### ***Teaching English and Influences of Previous Teaching Techniques***

After finishing her Master's degree in English Language and Literature, Moni Begaum started her teaching career in Rajshahi in the northern region of Bangladesh. She has been teaching English in different government secondary schools for more than two decades. As an international coordinator under the Connecting Classroom

program, she has had opportunities to teach project-based teaching in her EFL classroom. She described her teaching journey:

*I have several training programs, studied teaching methods, and accumulated everything to try to make an individual teaching style. However, I believe that the teaching I am doing now is based on my teacher's teaching style. Like my teacher, I never provide notes but help the pupils write, providing information, sentence patterns, and vocabulary.*

She said that she follows her teacher's techniques when it comes to developing the writing skills of her students. She thinks that there is an influence of her teacher's teaching method, though it is her version, as she has brought some changes. Bringing the issue of a large class into consideration, Moni Begum recalled:

*We were also in large numbers in the class. But he used to motivate everyone to write independently. Maybe he could not check all of them. The problem occurs when there is a large class. Bringing out potential students and motivating them was then and still is.*

Moni Begaum emphasized motivation by saying, "I will encourage everyone, but according to their level. I learned this from my teacher in school." According to her, there are normally three categories of students. The good ones are taught one way, the medium ones another, and the slow learners are taught differently. Just like her teacher, she never intends to make every student a scholar. She tries to motivate the weak ones only to pass. She deeply motivates those who are quick in learning and want to go further. So, bringing the point of differentiated instruction according to the learners' level, she claims,

*The technique is a good one that I adopted from my teacher. Later, when I did different training sessions, it helped me to hold on to that belief. Especially in the last class when I have students at different levels. Amazingly, I found they are doing their work, they are doing their level, but they are doing the same thing.*

*For example, I can say something about today's class. There were 11 groups of 5 students each, and I gave one lesson to each group to find out the meaning, parts of speech, at least one similar word, and an opposite word of each new word they found in the passage. Within 20 minutes, they completed their job, and another 10 minutes they spent jotting down the main vocabulary, and then made a gallery presentation. The amazing thing that*

*happened, within a very short time, was that most of the weak students, slow learners especially, reported to me that they learned 25 new words.*

Moni Begum intrigued the slow learners to learn from their peers by intervening in their learning process with scaffolding in a planned way. But she confessed that in her school days, she did not experience any group or pair work.

### ***Her Experience with PBL in Teaching***

She did many PBL activities while working for the British Council's Connecting Classrooms program. For that purpose, she went through many training sessions. When she was asked how she felt when she first came across this type of innovative teaching methodology where she needed to make a project plan or action plan and distribute work dividing students into 4 or 5 groups, she opined that the process is quite similar to Project-Based Language Teaching and she felt extremely excited to implement it. She also felt sad that her previous pupils missed such a good experience of learning.

### **Ayesha Amena**

Ayesha Amena, a resourceful teacher educator, is the second participant in my research. I met Ayesha in 2008 when she started her teaching journey as a teacher in an English-medium school where I happened to be an English teacher. However, she started her school for the children of tea garden workers with her husband in a very remote area named Patiya, Chattogram, in 2012. She collected teachers from the local areas and trained them in modern teaching methods. She takes classes and regularly runs continuous professional development programs for teachers. She received training in India and the USA to educate and prepare teachers for the EFL class at her school. As my former colleague, I have a good connection with her and am always amazed at her revolutionary activities in the education sector. So, I asked her to be my participant, and she immediately set the date and time for me. We met for discussion several times, and she shared valuable information regarding her learning L2 and her teaching practices.

### ***Learning English as a Learner at the School Level***

Ayesha's education started in 1990 in the village of Sitakunda. She toiled hard in learning English at her primary school. High school also made no difference, as the system was fully dependent on memorization.

Sharing her experiences, Ayesha narrated, *“I had to struggle to learn English in my school days. During that time, our system was such that we had to memorize everything.”*

Her sharing entails that the grammar-translation method existed in English class, and English learning was based on memorization in her schooling days back in the 90s. *“We still find it in practice, despite the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching in the national curriculum,”* she claimed. She also disclosed that brainstorming before writing is practiced sometimes, but recurrent topics, familiar contexts, and model tests tend to increase copying as well as rote learning. Ayesha exposed her grievances, saying:

*I had to learn by memorizing. Again, I would write the lessons that I could not understand. I would try to write by myself in English, and when I became a little grown-up, I used to write about science and other subjects. I used to practice a lot by writing whatever I could not understand.*

The repetitive attempts to exercise helped her attain language skills. She learned English with great hardship, and when she did not understand anything, she did not give up. She put her best effort into learning the language.

#### ***Motivation and Received Scaffolding in Learning English***

Like all other subjects, English is included in our curriculum, having a very important place to make the students fit for the global challenge in a broader sense. Ayesha shared that she understood its importance and used to do the classes very carefully in her school. She claimed,

*“.....in learning English and rather than the teaching method of the teacher, I think his friendliness was a thing I would love much, and his friendly behavior with us helped us to learn English.”*

The participant Ayesha revealed that her teacher’s friendly attitude in the class motivated her to put in more effort. Besides, the conversations during class on the topic would provide vocabulary for her writing. Thus, Ayesha has given much importance to acquiring new vocabulary and accelerating the learning of L2.

*“... The teacher’s instruction used to be Bangla and English mixed. He might be speaking in Bangla, but he used to provide new English vocabulary. And it would help me a lot.”*

Ayesha used to put much emphasis on building new vocabulary while learning the target language. Though the teacher used to explain the English lesson in Bangla, he used to make it effective by explaining new English words.

### ***Impression of Her Teachers on Her Teaching***

In 2012, Ayesha established her new school at the primary level, but it has now expanded to the secondary level. She takes English classes there and trains the teachers on how to teach English. Ayesha never followed the grammar-translation method like the English teachers in her school. Rather, she is sincerely practicing experiential teaching in her classroom. When asked Ayesha if she follows the grammar-translation method of her teacher, they negated, saying:

*No, I try to think back and reflect on my issues when I was learning English.... At which points did I struggle? So, I try my best while teaching and training other teachers so that the children may not face the same situation. For example, the things that are not clear to the students should not be placed in any assessment or test. Like I think that I could write well about what I could realize myself and what I experienced before. So, when I train teachers, I explain to them to make the students write from their own experience.... inspire the teachers, saying to make students write something which is connected to their life.”*

As a teacher, she reflects on where she faced problems while learning English and plans accordingly so that her students might not face the same problems.

### ***Experience with PBL***

The narrative of Ayesha entails that she is quite familiar with PBL, and she is a well-equipped teacher with dynamic teaching techniques. Here she illustrates:

*The basis is here constructivism. While doing that to utilize the learner’s experience, I normally like to listen to his issues regarding the topic in his context and then offer the problem, not the solution to the problem. It can be Maths or any unknown topic in literature or science ...ask him – how are you going to solve it yourself.... Such as offering him a project like ... is there any pollution in your surroundings? ... find out if there is pollution, what that is, and how it is happening. Sort out how you can decrease pollution by using local materials and present it before class.*

It seemed that Ayesha is greatly motivated in using PBL, and the way she offered the driving questions for the task is quite engaging and brainstorming.

*There are projects going on all year round. A few days ago, it was environment day and they were mixed grouped with the students of the different classes..... they collected the bio hazards from the entire area ..... plastic or polymer components..... they were told to measure how much polymer components they collected.... they presented .... This much bio hazards covered this certain surface level of the area and they freed this much area from biohazards.*

She and her teachers in school are trained in planning and implementing PBL. She expressed that the teachers planned for the task, and sometimes the students are involved in finding the topic.

### **Sanjibon Chowdhury**

Sanjiban Chowdhury, the third participant, is in love with English, the language itself. He was motivated to learn English from his highly qualified father. He got the environment from his family and desired to learn English properly from his childhood, as his family members used to have a great proficiency in English. His father used to correct his mistakes.

#### ***Learning English as a Learner at the School Level***

Mr. Sanjiban was fortunate to have the experience of schooling at an institution set by Christian Missionaries during the British rule in Chittagong. In his EFL class, he was taught both by native speakers and non-native speakers of English. He said,

*A teacher from Canada used to teach us English. Though our ears were not fully prepared to grasp his pronunciation, he had his way of making the lesson understandable. We had other teachers from our country, and they used to make classes lively with their extraordinary competency in teaching.*

Even his translation class was fun because his teachers were versatile in their teaching of how to make their class enjoyable and effective. He shared that the warmth of heart he felt then in his school life is absent in today's class. Everybody in school is in a rat race to get an A+. He compared his teachers with today's teachers.

According to him, it is because of financial constraints that they feel nowadays they cannot go into detail in their teaching. But in his time, teachers were more involved with students and with their context. He pictured many funny moments of his previous school through his story:

*In one of our translation classes, our English teacher, who was bald, used to give a sentence to translate: Amar mathay joto chul ache tor toto ayu hok (May you live as long as the number of hairs on my head). Thus, the translation class was contextual and engaging for the students.*

The teacher often tried to make the lesson humorous with witty content. He recalled a grammar class where he was taught punctuation:

*The teacher wrote on the board,*

*Ekhane paner pic feliben, na Felile 100 taka danda dite hobe.*

*The teacher would ask, 'Can you correct it?' Then we used to correct:*

*Ekhane paner pic feliben na, felile 100 taka danda dite hobe. The whole meaning changed due to the misplacement of a comma.*

Sanjiban articulated his EFL class as traditional, but he pointed out that it was very amusing.

### ***Motivation and Received Scaffolding in Learning English***

Sanjiban Chowdhury was motivated to learn English from his highly educated father. He got the environment from his family and desired to learn English properly from his childhood, as his family members used to have a great proficiency in English. His father used to correct his mistakes.

According to him, in English class, teachers' warmth of heart and cordiality inspired him much in his learning. His teachers were well conversant in teaching methods and highly resourceful in subject knowledge. Their continuous care for students in the class helped him improve his competency in English.

### ***Influences of Previous Teaching Techniques***

Sanjiban doesn't follow his teachers' method in his class, though he thinks his class is funny and engaging. His school is under the pilot project, and he teaches English in classes six and seven using experiential learning methods. When I was talking to him in November 2022, his school participated in a pilot project for the new curriculum. He said that he follows the Teachers' Guide strictly, and it is based on soft skills like tolerance, team spirit, democratic spirit, etc.

### ***His experience with PBL in Teaching***

Though he teaches in a renowned school in Chattogram, which follows experiential learning in classroom teaching, he is not directly familiar with PBL. However, as the newly introduced curriculum incorporated it as a summative assessment, he got trained with it and opted to use it in his EFL classroom.

During the first interview, Sanjiban mentioned that PBL is not included in the new curriculum, and he had never practiced the method before in his class. He shared that other subjects like Science, Bangladesh, and Global Studies have, but he has not yet experienced anything like PBL in English. However, in the second interview after his final training on the new curriculum, he shared that PBL is incorporated in the assessment and that he hoped to introduce it in his class.

### **Dihan Ahmed**

Dihan Ahmed is a government teacher and a master trainer of teachers. He obtained many trainings from the education ministry from time to time. He trained many teachers in his teaching career and possesses a sound knowledge of teaching methodology. When I visited Sylhet for training purposes, I met him and took the interview. Later, I met him on Zoom several times before and after the introduction of the new curriculum in 2023. His sound knowledge of teaching techniques and expertise as a teacher trainer in our country are commendable.

#### ***Learning English: His Love for Reading***

Dihan Ahmed used to be a reading-loving student and had a great love for reading English textbooks. He thinks that this attitude towards studying is key to his doing well as an English language learner. But he faced difficulty in attaining competency in grammar.

*I loved reading English textbooks at the primary level. I used to read the textbook time and time again. I can't recall anything about learning English at that time. But I remember an incident in class six. We had three exams in a year. In the first term exam, I got 77 or 78 on the English 1st paper, but in the second paper, I failed to get a passing mark. One of my teachers asked me the reason, and I confessed that I don't understand grammar ... so I got a lower mark in the English second paper, while I scored well in the first paper, as it is based on memorization.*

#### ***Motivations for Learning English***

The English teacher of Dihan Ahmed was the only SSC-passed teacher, but he influenced him not only in learning English but also in choosing a career as an English teacher. He came to Sylhet after the division in 1947 from India, and he could only bring his certificate of matriculation; and he joined a high school there. Dihan Ahmed felt emotional while talking about him.

*He used to give me tuition one hour before the class starts in school, and I got 98 in the second paper, which also creates suspicion among others that it is impossible to obtain 98 in English, and it can be possible only in Maths. The head teacher rechecked my copy and declared it justified, as I made no mistake in grammar. That's how he helped in class eight, and I obtained a scholarship from the government.*

The one-to-one session the participant got from his teacher changed him entirely. Having got attention from the teacher, he was inspired to do better. Later, he decided to study English and became an English teacher in high school.

### ***Influences of Previous Teaching Techniques***

As he was asked about the influence of previous teachers on his teaching techniques, he mentioned:

*I follow my teacher and try to give attention to the pupils who are struggling, though it is not possible as I have a large class. I try to give one-to-one service to my students when it is necessary. I know how it works if the students get extra care from the teacher. As English is a foreign language, the students find it difficult and are sometimes reluctant to strive. I try to motivate them.*

One takeaway from this interview with Dihan is that it is possible to address the students' needs, even in a large class, if the teachers are sincere and motivated. His love for teaching inspired him to be more efficient with training.

*.... But I took training on teaching methodology and trained many teachers how to handle the students in an EFL classroom. So, I have developed my own teaching style.*

Dihan Ahmed, having joined the Government High School, was privileged to receive and train later as a master trainer in many training sessions like TQI-SEP in 2008- 2016 and the 2012 curriculum guide in 2015. The life skill-based curriculum will be in 2019, E-learning will be in the pandemic period, and finally, the 2022 curriculum will be in 2023. So, he is familiar with modern teaching methodologies as well as modern technologies for teaching and learning. He tries to motivate his students in his own way. He shared:

*One day, I was teaching suffixes and prefixes, and I started the class with a warm-up session, which I normally do every day. However, that day, I shared my poem, which was about me. I told them to find new words and find the suffix and prefix for those pre-designed words. On one side, they found it*

*interesting as they discovered their teacher in the very poem and also learnt new words with suffixes and prefixes.*

Here we see that our teacher participant is quite active in designing lessons with innovations. He designed a poem that is related to the target language teaching and also connected to real life. Teachers' creativity in designing the task and keeping a connection with the surrounding context is observed here.

### ***Experience of PBL in Teaching***

Before the introduction of the new curriculum in 2023, he hadn't practiced PBL in the language classroom directly, but his sharing of the prefix-suffix class with innovative tasks reveals his attempts at PBL in a partial way, although they don't fulfill the criteria of PBL. As the new curriculum incorporated PBL as a summative assessment, he was trained and hoped to implement PBL in his future class. However, he felt that incorporating PBL required more training for the language teachers.

### **Shaila Sarwer**

Shaila is from Chattogram, situated between the Chattogram Hill Tracts and the Bay of Bengal, in the south-eastern part of the country. She works in an urban school situated in the vicinity of her residence. We were in the same class when we were in college. I found her enthusiastic about learning English because it was fascinating to learn a language for her. When I approached her to collect the story of her journey in learning and teaching English, she immediately extended her hand to assist me in my research. But she was busy with a hectic schedule as a teacher in high school. We attempted several times, and finally, we met in the cold winter in her residence.

### ***Learning English: a bookworm***

All she could remember about her English learning in school was being a storybook lover. She enjoyed reading stories, and that's how her vocabulary got strong. She emphasizes numbers, gender, and parts of speech while learning new words.

*I was passionate about learning new words in my learning stage. I search for new vocabulary now and then. The English words used to be very attractive, and I felt thrilled to use them later in my conversation and writings.*

According to her, we can learn grammar sooner or later, but we need to consistently prioritize the regular intake of new vocabulary, level by level. The meaning of the words helps us understand them.

### ***Motivations for Learning English***

Shaila was very passionate about learning new languages. Her interest in generating new languages encouraged her to thrive and strive to make a new word stock and gain firm mastery over the language. She does not remember any school English teacher who used to be special in her eyes. However, one of her brother's friends, a medical student, told her that he would study English Language and Literature if he failed to be admitted into medical college. This inspired her to take an English Major for her Honours degree.

### ***Influences of Previous Teaching Techniques***

Shaila Sarwer is a teacher in an English-medium non-government secondary school. She started her career as a lecturer in a college and later joined a school as an assistant English teacher, leaving the job in college because it was in a remote rural area. She is a very enthusiastic English teacher who always wants to develop and keep herself up-to-date.

Shaila could only remember her English teacher in higher secondary classes when she used to take tuition from one of her college teachers. The teacher used to be very funny when he taught English.

*Sir used to make a lot of fun and create an environment that we felt light and did not know that we were learning a very difficult language, which has no connection to our mother language.*

Shaila committed to being as friendly and funny as her favourite teacher in her college days. She added that the newly introduced curriculum also mentioned making the lesson easy-going and flexible. She is quite confident about implementing the new curriculum, which is based on experiential learning.

### ***Experience of PBL in teaching***

She makes students do a lot of projects, but she confessed that those are not PBL. She tells her students to write the dialogues they create in groups on chart papers and hang them on the wall so that they can see what they have done and let others learn from each other. She makes the students do group work and pair work.

*I want to learn how to design projects, and I think we need more sessions on this specific teaching technique. We need to be skilled and well-equipped to design PBL activities using the students' context.*

Shaila seemed hopeful that once the teachers became aware of how engaging and interactive PBL activities can be for the students, they would get interested in implementing them in the EFL classroom.

### **Meher Shashi**

Meher Shashi is a Government Secondary English teacher. She is also a full-bright scholar who has visited different states in America. She visited England too, as part of the British Council. She gained many insights into teaching language through many training programs. After having a degree in English Language and Literature, she took a certification course at the Bangladesh Open University, which offered an effective course on English language teaching.

#### ***Her Schooling: A Traditional EFL Classroom***

Like Shaila, Meher also can't remember anything special about English classes in school. She recalled a traditional, teacher-centered, and memorization-based learning environment. She shared:

*I used to emphasize word collection. I also translated some stories during my high school time. But I can recall nothing much about my language learning in school.*

*... I did not find any English teacher impressive in my school or college days. All of them are conventional. But I used to read a lot of English storybooks.*

It reveals that the participant's love for reading stories helped her learning English. Translating English into Bengali is time-consuming and can ensure deep learning. Here, these activities like reading and writing made a base for her English learning at the beginner level.

#### ***Motivations for Learning English***

Her beginning of English learning was self-initiated. She didn't take any help from any teacher privately or through coaching. The students in the class used to read textbooks book and she loved to read the Rapid Reader book series. There used to be many short stories in the Rapid Reader. In class ten, she enjoyed reading the novel "Gulliver's Travels" by Jonathan Swift. This conversation took Meher up to the tertiary level to get a teacher worth mentioning.

*I was fond of one teacher who used to be funny, dramatic in offering lessons, and interactive. The teacher taught us Keats, and I could imagine every incident and emotion of the poem as he explained. He was always wearing a smiley face and a friendly attitude.*

In her university life, the lessons in class were fun, and she thinks she could learn more because of a friendly atmosphere.

### ***Influences of Previous Teaching Techniques***

She can't remember specifically any of her school teachers who used to teach English because the classes in her school used to be very conventional and teacher-centered. But she tries now to let the students' voices be heard:

*I try my best to make class student-centered, though it is not always possible because of large classes. I arrange different activities like group and pair activities. Very often, I give a clue to write a story in a group. I think my students love the group work of making a combined story. It proves that writing a story in a group is fun. It seems amazing to me that the different groups present many different stories with the same line of situations. Sometimes I can give feedback in the same period. The feedback given to one group helps others to improve, too. I also make them do ideation on a topic and then start to write in a planned way. I tell them to brainstorm first and then write.*

She thinks her Bachelor of English Language Teaching (BELT) from the Open University crucial factor for becoming a diversified and dynamic teacher in the classroom. She was trained then on English communicative approach which she has been applying from her early teaching career.

*... I think it's worth mentioning that I have learnt from a coaching center for IELTS how to write independently on a topic and how to speak, though I obtained B.A. Honours and a Master's degree from a renowned public university in Bangladesh. I think the curriculum and exam system are responsible for making us dependent on memorizing some notes made by others.*

That's why she mentioned her endeavour to make her pupils write and speak, though the exam only requires reading and writing based on memorization.

### ***Experience with PBL in teaching***

Meher Shashi is familiar with Project-Based Learning. She was trained in this special teaching method as she participated in the connecting classroom program by the British Council.

*While doing connecting classrooms activities, my students experienced many project activities. I also learned how to do these activities practically while*

*running this program. I experienced its effectiveness in an EFL class. PBL helps surprisingly develop all core skills- interpersonal skills, empathy among classmates, collaboration, creative skills, as well as four language skills. Still, I give them some tasks similar to PBL. They presented a few days ago a poster presentation on 'Deforestation' in class nine, as the topic was in their English textbook.*

She also grudges over the test system because while she was invited to set question papers for the board exam, they were given little provision for bringing innovation in administering question items. As the question does not allow the students to be innovative in answering, they find it easier to memorize the notes written by the teachers or the experts in the coaching center.

### **Rizvi Rezoan**

The set of research participants presents a dynamic team of dedicated teachers with unwavering passion and commitment toward their self-growth as teachers. The study sifts through the experiences and explorations of the teachers to bring a vibrant tapestry of innovative teaching approaches for teaching a target language in EFL classrooms in Bangladesh. I included Rizvi to go beyond the obvious and his fresh journey with the new curriculum has brought the insights unexplored before. An extraordinary teacher of a private high school nestling in the hills of Sitakunda, Chattogram, and Rizvi shared the escapades of his learning and teaching English.

#### ***His Schooling in Greenery***

My query on his school days made him nostalgic as he is away from his home district for work. He remembered his school situated in a green landscape. His days in school were very dynamic with the teachers and friends exploring the life of the adolescent period. His teachers followed the conventional teaching method as usual, and he could remember memorizing a lot of Bengali poems. He used to write one page in Bengali and one page in English. The teachers would praise his handwriting a lot. His love for languages could flourish from here.

#### ***Learning a Language Valued the Most***

Rizvi reiterated the utility of learning a widely used language as a skill to cope with the fast-running world of technology and massive globalization. In school, he was enthusiastic about learning the English language. He could not recall the contribution of any teacher in his schooling days. Still, a Bengali teacher intrigued to

have a sustaining impression on his mind with his motivational encouragement to study and have a good career in the long run.

### ***Love for Literature***

Initially, one of his Bengali teachers motivated him to read Bangla literature, which led him to the world of literature. He passed a BA and completed an MA in English.

He started teaching English in a non-government high school in Chattogram.

However, his love for literature brought him closer to the language of English, and he later explored the method of teaching English to his students.

### ***Exploring the Innovative Methodology***

It all started when his school decided to run a connecting classroom program for the International School Award (ISA). He was then the second head of his school, and it was easier for him to follow PBL and share their end products with the local schools and an international school. He claimed,

*This program intrigued his pupils to express their thoughts and project findings in a target language, and their articulation became compulsory as they had to present their works to others in the class and beyond.*

The experience inspired him to continue the journey even after winning ISA, but the journey afterward was not easy because it did not align with the national curriculum.

## **Chapter Summary**

The participants' vignettes upheld that, as students, they most importantly appreciated the language teachers who were knowledgeable in their area, engaged their students with differentiating instructions, and used different strategies in the EFL classrooms to bring scope for a varied range of learning styles and preferences. On one hand, the learning style of Shaila, Meher, Rizvi, and Ayesha was self-motivated and self-paced, whereas Moni Begum, Sanjiban, and Dihan showed gratitude towards their English teachers for being so helpful and inspirational in supporting their struggle of learning. They could address the constraints of learning a foreign language only when they felt motivated and engaged by themselves or their teachers. When they could identify their problems in learning a foreign language, they sought solutions accordingly. Though all the teacher-participants indeed went through hardship in mastering the foreign language, they all became successful language teacher in their arena. Thus, the participants felt comfortable sharing their thoughts and became more introspective about their beliefs and practices in the classroom.

## CHAPTER V

### TEACHERS' UNDERSTANDING OF PBLT

The chapter focuses on the teachers' comprehensibility of PBLT, addressing their ability to use PBL in the secondary EFL classroom in Bangladesh. For most teachers, trial and error can be the best way to learn and understand PBLT. While some teachers can grab the skills and insights with self-paced learning, for others, I believe that the framework of how the PBLT works best is through the training, the follow-up sessions, and support from the trainers, mentors, peers, the teacher community, and the head of the school. In the vignettes section, all the participants emphasized the importance of the teacher's expertise in the subject area, their skills of engaging the students in differentiated learning, and their ability to use the strategies according to students' needs. Surprisingly, all these are the core factors in the trajectory of the innovative methodology, the PBLT approach.

Tamim and Grant (2013) contend that the appropriate implementation of PBLT depends on the pedagogical beliefs and the roles of the teachers in creating an "authentic learning experience" for the learners, designing tasks according to students' ZPD (Vygotsky, 1978; 1986; Panhwar et al., 2016). That is how it conforms to the experiential learning of the new curriculum of Bangladesh that started in 2023. Again, PBLT, a more open-ended and inquiry-driven approach that Dewey (1938) stated as learning by doing, creates an engaging and interactive classroom and facilitates meaningful learning experiences, intriguing students to engage in diverse activities. However, as Rahman (1999) asserts, such an innovative teaching approach of engaging and interactive pedagogy is not entirely unfamiliar to secondary teachers in Bangladesh because many teachers are already well-versed in communicative language teaching through pair and group work.

#### **Traditional Classroom and Teachers' Acquaintance with PBLT**

The novel competency-based curriculum introduced in 2023 has incorporated PBLT as one of the summative assessment techniques and holds the teacher factor important (Sakkir, 2018) to materialize in the EFL classrooms. Before, a handful of teachers were aware of this inquiry-based instructional approach. However, the inclusion of PBL in the new curriculum may compel policymakers to familiarize teachers nationwide with the PBLT approach.

In reference to my research participants, two of them were trained on PBLT by the British Council before the introduction of the new curriculum. After completing the training, when they came back to school, they made the learners do at least three successful interdisciplinary projects to exchange ideas with partner schools in another country. They needed to design projects and distribute tasks, dividing the students into groups. As the learners engaged in group discussions and presented to the learners overseas, they were intrigued to listen, speak, read, and write (Thomas, 2000) in English. One of the potential participants, who ran the program very effectively, claimed:

*I felt excited to implement PBLT when I got introduced to this approach. But I became sad that my previous students missed such a good experience.*  
- Moni Begum.

The assertion shows clearly that the teacher could understand in their training session how liberating and energizing an approach PBLT can be for the L2 students. They found positive learning outcomes. Whenever the teachers felt challenged during the project, they got ‘community support’ (Fallik et al., 2008). Furthermore, there were follow-up training sessions. The stepwise process builds a conducive environment, and the learning group gets the opportunity to engage with its members in more interactive sessions (Frederiksen & Donin, 2015). This is similar for the trainee teachers as well as the students in the PBL. However, the case is not the same for all teachers because they do not equally possess the same insights into the PBLT approach and the motivation and courage to practice and implement it in the EFL classroom.

Adopting PBL in the EFL classroom necessitates a pedagogical shift from a teacher-centered classroom to a learner-centered classroom (Yang et al., 2018). In this teaching strategy, the teacher does not provide information directly but rather tries to guide the learners in engaging activities with motivating content and instructions.

*When I implemented the pedagogy in my EFL classroom, I became a facilitator, instructing the learners standing on the sidewalk and making the students do the different tasks. Teachers must come out of the conventional lecture method, lessening the teacher talk.* – Ayesha Amena

In the previous studies, it is also evident that our teaching traditionally manifests the dominance of the lecture method in EFL class, but teaching techniques like group work, pair work, role play, assignments, etc. work effectively in teaching

four skills of a language (Alan & Stoller, 2005; Stoller, 2006). For example, group work helps a lot to practice speaking skills. Again, the lesson integrated with four skills would rather offer a better outcome than the discrete one targeting only one skill. Another participant, Dihan Ahmed, in the first interview, emphasized, *“Normally, the L2 learners hesitate to open up out of shyness. However, the responsibility of group presentation intrigues them to be engaged.”*

The L2 learners shake off hesitation and feel self-motivated to represent their group. The collaboration motivates them to speak for their group. As interaction and cooperation increase, activities result in new knowledge construction through sharing it with other learners (Schreurs & Dumbraveanu, 2014), and it aligns with socio-constructivism, fostering a learner-led approach. That is why the teachers, unsatisfied with the existing pedagogy and testing system, are always thirsty for something new to motivate and engage learners. Consequently, enhancing teaching skills for transforming into a teacher who fulfills the learners’ needs is a voluntary effort (Gnawali, 2008). The idea aligned with the expression of Shaila Sarwar:

*I was looking for some innovative ideas that would help my students who were lagging. Fortunately, then I started to take MOOCs (Massive Open Online Courses), which helped me be well-equipped with new teaching ideas and techniques. I began to apply those in my class. To make my students engaged, I designed tasks to accomplish sometimes in groups, sometimes in pairs, and sometimes individually. For example, I teach them grammar and make them do exercises in class. To engage the pupils, I told them to take a class on grammar rules with examples using a chart or poster paper. They present their work in groups and take the responsibility for their learning.*

– Shaila Sarwar

According to the author, Laur (2019a), it is a ‘conventional notion of PBL approach’ (p.3), which Shaila Sarwar followed in her teaching as she first took a class on a grammatical topic and then made her students take the class on a particular part of the topic before class group-wise as a part of assessing their understanding. Laur (2019a) inversely claims that a teacher can introduce a project with an entry event to engage learners and a need-to-know list as a process of inquiry that arises from an authentic driving question. A driving question can be for Shaila Sarwar’s students – How can you utilize the specific grammar point for real-life language use? The question may lead the students to an authentic learning experience, allowing them to

bring the situations into dialogue forms and act out the conversation in front of the class. Thus, it automatically ushers fundamental PBL attributes like “agility, awareness, curiosity, collaboration, flexibility, initiative, imagination, motivation, observance, and last but not least, self-advocacy” (Laur, 2019b, p. 05). Accordingly, Dihan Ahmed’s narrative emphasizes the evaluation process, which is an essential part of the activity to record the students’ performances and give feedback based on their competency level.

*I was involved in two projects earlier when the government instructed the schools to do so in six and seven. One was “Bangabandhu and Muktijuddhoke Jani,” and another was “Planting Trees in Mujib Barsho”. However, the new curriculum has added the PBL for the summative assessment, which differs from the one instructed earlier. The teachers must provide an activity – a problem or a project to accomplish within six- or seven-days during class time. After presenting the final project group-wise, the learners must submit a written report to the teacher individually. Depending on the activities they did and the report they submitted, the teacher will evaluate the individual learner according to the rubrics provided in the curriculum. – Dihan Ahmed*

Besides understanding the process, steps, and elements of a project, it is also essential to assess the learners’ progress and give feedback for betterment. Both other two participants of the study, Meher Shashi and Shaila Sarwar, are also clearly right to include that it is difficult to give feedback on the individual student’s language competency in the traditional way of teaching, but PBL allows the teachers, peers, and parents to assess the pupils as a continuous assessment. While advocating learner-led classrooms, Schreurs and Dumbraveanu (2014) claimed to include self-assessment, team assessment, and teacher assessment, making it a learning process, not a separate activity.

### **Teachers’ Attempts to Explore the PBLT Practices**

When the teachers understand the needs of the learners, they feel the urge to reconstruct the existing teaching approach, and this brings an authentic interaction between learners and the outside social-material world. The previous practice of communicative language teaching in the EFL classroom can add more to the learning process of the students, mingled with the opportunity to experience PBLT. The word ‘more’ may include the necessity of a duo teachers-learners’ voice, the need for the context where both reside, the requirement of global citizenship, and the calling of the

4<sup>th</sup> industrial revolution (World Economic Forum, 2016). The narratives of most of the participants resonated with all these factors while they were claiming ownership of the materials they created for their EFL class based on PBLT. The artifacts evolve from the learners' critical thinking and problem-solving activities and serve as a buffer between the person and the environment that Vygotsky termed as 'mediation' (Lantolf et al., 2015, p. 208) with the physical and psychological tools (Joshi, 2019). Sakkir (2018) considered teacher factors (teachers' language proficiency, training and experience, cultural background, and preferred teaching style), learner factors (learners' learning style preferences, their language learning needs, interests, and motivations), and contextual factors (school culture, classroom condition, class size, and availability of teaching resources) to materialize this innovative approach. While interviewing the teacher participants about planning and implementation of PBLT, the three factors, i.e., teacher factors, learner factors, and context factors for devising PBLT instructions (Dutta & Joshi, 2023), emerged as crucial instruments. It is evident from their perspectives that they tailored the three main components to fulfill the learners' needs and engaged them through PBLT.

#### ***Teachers' Perceived Competency of Using PBLT (Teacher Factor)***

“ভেঙে আবার গড়তে জানে সে চির সুন্দর” - কাজী নজরুল ইসলাম

(“bhenge abar gorte jane se chiro sundar” – Kazi Nazrul Islam)

The line quoted above, taken from the poem Proloyullash composed by the national poet of Bangladesh, namely Kazi Nazrul Islam, can be translated best by another oft-quoted line by Einstein – ‘The measure of intelligence is the ability to change’. An educationist and former Government official, Syed Md. Golam Faruk used both lines to uphold the need for the adaptability of teachers in our country. The rebel poet of Bangladesh, Nazrul, wanted to demolish everything during the colonial period and aspired to bring the desired emancipation for his people in all spheres – political, cultural, and economic. Here I would like to emphasize the two expressions – ‘*bhenge* or to break’ and ‘*gorte jana* or to know how to rebuild’ to imply the necessity of transformation to a new pedagogy and the adaptation of the teachers to the novelty of the process.

#### ***Teacher Professional Development on the PBLT Approach***

The transformation in the education system is only possible with the sincere effort of the teachers. That is why realizing the necessity of the PBL activities and

gaining the skills to handle them in the classroom are crucial factors for implementing the approach. Ayesha Amena, one of research participants who previously went through the elaborate sessions on PBL in her US Exchange Program, narrates how she inspires the trainee teachers:

*We cannot motivate the teachers if we start like we have to learn and implement a new pedagogy in the classrooms. I think they won't understand why they should accept it. Instead, suppose we can make them reflect on the issues in their own learning and teaching L2 to the pupils, and possible solutions they found during their learning and teaching, like you, as a researcher, started the interview by asking me to reflect. Thus, the teachers may understand why they should try innovative pedagogy for their students. Reflecting on the teachers' learning of L2 may help them have a positive mindset toward transforming and implementing PBL in language classes.*

All the participants hold the same notion like Ayesha that PD programs are essential for cascading the innovative strategies of teaching. The emphasis on the teachers' role in creating an environment for PBLT echoes the claim by Krauss and Boss (2013) that the teachers' confidence and connection through professional networks let the projects grow more ambitious. Here, it is worth mentioning that three participants, Moni Begam, Ayesha Amena, and Meher Shashi, were privileged to attend exchange programs by the USA Embassy and British Council. Rizvi Rezoan is a participant from a local school, having an experience of 21 years in the ELT arena, was mentored from time to time in using PBLT, eventually becoming a mentor and teacher educator for his school. However, the other three participants are not as privileged as the teachers mentioned above. They are entirely new to this innovative instruction. Among them, Sanjiban got the Professional Development (PD) training on experiential learning strategies in November 2022 as his school ran experimental piloting for the new curriculum. Dihan Ahmed took the training as a master trainer in December 2022. Again, Shaila Sarwer got it in January 2023. Among all seven participants, Moni Begam, Dihan Ahmed, and Rizvi Rezoan worked as ToT (Trainer of Trainers) at the District level. Ayesha Amena owns a school and trains her teachers to align with the new curriculum.

### ***Making Teachers Adopt New Pedagogy: Grabbing the Core in Training***

Sometimes, the teachers in the training fail to understand the learning and finally do not feel motivated to carry the insights and practice into the classroom.

Moni Begum, as a trainer, also perceived the root cause and shared,

*.... the problem I should say that sometimes the teacher selections are not good as the training wanted English Teachers but the school sent a science teacher or Mathematics teacher or Religion teacher. So, they fail to perceive the core of the training that is designed thinking the English teachers. Here, we see a variation in the understanding level of the teachers too in the case of receiving the training. The way I could perceive the training, my other colleagues may not. If science or other subject teachers are given PBL training individually, they might be able to get the core of it and implement it in the classroom. I think there is a kind of gap in the teaching and learning process for the trainees. So, when they are placed in the wrong place, they can't understand and may not have the required motivation.*

A formal PBL course in teacher education, along with an effective teacher professional development methodology, is imperative in promoting teachers' confidence and positive attitude towards the PBL approach. In this regard, Yang et al. (2021) mention the PBL approach as complex and context-specific as an instructional strategy that demands a sort of “sustained, immersed, and modeled professional development (PD) for practicing teachers as well as peer collaboration for wide adoption of PBL in classrooms” (p.502). In the same vein, Stoller (2002) in her article asserts that language teachers and ‘teacher educators’ (p. 117) can adapt the ideas of the PBLT approach from different articles and books as she also outlined the primary characteristics of project work in its various configurations and presented practical guidelines for sequencing and developing a project. Hence, the participant, Moni Begum, is right to mention the importance of the motivation extending the practice into the EFL classroom, which is not only complex but requires proper attention from all the stakeholders.

### ***Variations in Instruction (Learner Factor)***

An effective instructional method entails possessing the potential to address the needs of each student in the class and their cross-cultural differences. It can be related to Vygotskian socio-cultural theory (Miller, 2008). The learners are gifted with differences in their intelligence. Then again, according to Joshi (2019), when a

teacher tries to change the usual practiced structure, the requirement for reorganizing curriculum, instructional activities, method of grouping the students, system of rewards, and so on appears to be crucial. In a large class in Bangladesh, teachers often feel puzzled about fitting their lessons to all levels of learners. However, PBL can provide the scope for the teachers to divide their lesson tasks by adjusting to the ability of the learners- slow, medium, and strong, allowing differentiation between the individual learners and ensuring creativity (Tamim & Grant, 2013). In this regard, Moni Begum shared,

*I sometimes feel at a loss, especially in the last class when I have different levels of students. But, amazingly, I found they are doing their work, they are doing their level, but they are doing the same thing.”*

*For example, I can say something about today’s class. There were 11 groups of 5 students each and I gave them one lesson each group to find out the meaning, parts of speech at least one similar word and opposite word, within 20 minutes they completed their job and another 10 minutes they spent jotting down the main vocabularies and then made a gallery presentation, Amazing what happened, within a very short time, most of the weak students, slow learners specially reported me that they learned 25 new words that day.*

Moni Begum could handle large classes as well as students with different potentials by giving them a project on the vocabulary of a specific unit, maintaining a healthy group dynamic (Tamim & Grant, 2013). The learners were facilitated to work in a team. Thus, slow learners can be intrigued to learn from their peers if the teachers can intervene by scaffolding their learning process in a planned way. Another participant, Dihan Ahmed, claimed that PBL gives opportunities to know the learners more closely and to decide a suitable task for each of them.

*While doing the tree plantation project, I found one girl who was allergic to dust. I put her in the group of students who have the responsibility to collect information from reading books and surfing information through the internet.*

The facilitators of PBLT can privilege their learners with the use of differentiated instruction, which is an essential strategy to ensure that all students engage in activities. Addressing individual and cross-cultural differences is significant in teaching and learning according to socio-cultural theory (Miller, 2008). Another participant, Rizvi shared more about connecting classroom experiences where he planned his PBL targeting lessons on the primitive history of Bangladesh and its

culture. He preferred to collaborate with the teachers of the school of a nearby ethnic group beside Sitakundu and make his students to exchange their findings on the differences and similarities between two cultures.

*The students were enthusiastic in exchanging their learnings on culture in the target language as they talk different mother tongues. The students were taken to visit the ethnic school, and most interesting was that the visiting students also picked couple of words and expressions from the ethnic language.*

There is now a broad consensus that factors like language needs, interests, and motivations as well as learning style preferences for learning a second language (Sakkir, 2018) are important to consider while designing instructions for lessons and here PBLT enables teachers to go beyond the givens and explore the diversity of the learners incorporating all these learner factors. Accordingly, a teacher can plan her lessons by taking the differences of the learners in terms of needs, interests, languages, and cultures into consideration, along with keeping the speed of understanding and learning anything in mind.

#### ***Materials for PBLT According to Context (Context Factor)***

The learners' cognition of gaining knowledge and comprehension of L2 is inseparable from context. The flexibility in the pedagogy itself helps the language instructors utilize the environment where both the school and the students co-exist. As the PBLT approach brings real life to the classroom, the strategies of the teachers' instructions can weave the language and the contents of the surrounding real life, bringing the learners and their learning abilities into their comfort zone.

#### ***Designing Projects and Meeting Curriculum Standards***

All the participants emphasized the training to upgrade the teachers' competency for the PBLT approach. While training on the new curriculum, teachers are given ideas on how to design projects. The sample was in the manual of the trainers but not in the teachers' guide provided by NCTB. Dihan Ahmed said,

*We have provided a sample of Projects during training as the PBL is included as a summative assessment in the new curriculum. We gave them ideas on how to design projects and discussed the rubrics, how to assess the projects that students will showcase, and how to assess them every single day they will work on it. They felt it was difficult, so they were called for further training and follow-up sessions.*

Regarding teachers' ability to grab the experiential learning and PBLT as a summative assessment, Moni Begum said,

*There are many trainers at the root level who may not be well-versed in PBL. So, the manual was designed with tasks step by step so that the trainers felt it was easy to follow the manual and be successful in conducting training on PBLT. But many trainee teachers might not understand. However, they eventually will know while they will practice it.*

Here, we find that the participants are optimistic and can expect the PBLT as an approach that can have a positive impact on Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. The participants who are trainee teachers know the process, but are still vague on how to design it. Again, there is a huge change in mindset before and after the teacher training. Before training, Sanjibon Chowdhury, who was practicing a new curriculum under a pilot project, claimed that there is no such thing as PBLT in English:

*There is no PBLT included in English. You can talk to our science teacher about it. He can give a better idea. We have been given a TG, and there is no mention of PBLT. But we will be joining a training for assessment in November. Then we will come to know about assessment. (1<sup>st</sup> interview)*

He was working with the new curriculum in the piloting phase and was still unaware of the assessment that would cover collaborative activities to assess the language skills and interpersonal skills of the learners. The participant's claim proved that the general English teachers were still not very enlightened about PBLT. But they expected to be informed through the training. Here comes the necessity of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) for teachers. So Amena who is a successful teacher educator, brings her all subject teachers in a round table discussion for collaboration of teachers to bring a most effective plan on the table (Tamim & Grant, 2013) and integration of more than one subjects to make it cost effective for her rural parents, who are economically weak, to bear educational expenses.

### ***Training Teachers for Generative Ideation in the Local Context***

According to Male and Guzzomi (2012), the teachers' role as 'facilitator has got a new dimension. Accordingly, any emerging innovative pedagogy like PBLT (Krajcik et al., 2007) requires training for the teachers to make them understand its necessity and the process of implementation. It entails the claim of Amena, a teacher as well as a teacher educator. When she ensures the teachers' development through training, she runs the training based on constructivism. So, teachers also generated

the plans for projects keeping their learners' in mind. In this regard, Moni Begum also emphasized,

*Training will be another way to pick the teachers who can generate ideas for the PBLT and if we can make a pool of well-equipped teachers who can generate ideas or do ideation and if we can get some project plans created by them, we can collect some plans which will be of our local Bangladeshi context and we can help other teachers providing the plans.*

Ayesha Amena emerged with the idea that the training sessions with the teachers were effective in applying PBLT. It was critical thinking and problem-solving tasks for them to generate lessons, especially keeping their poverty-stricken kids in mind:

*In the session, the teachers in the group came up with some innovative and extraordinary concepts for PBLT practice using the surroundings where the learners live and the professions of their parents. In such an Ideation, they mingled the language class with Maths and used the context of the grocery shops. While implementing, the learners made dialogues in the target language and did role-play with teammates. They also learned Maths dealing with real customers when they took the place of the shopkeeper and his assistant group-wise in a nearby grocery shop. The learners submitted their reflections on their understanding and shared their experiences in the target language in the class.*

The teachers fantastically brought ideas for the rural kids so that they can learn the basics and at the same time, the project is income generating. It can be self-motivating for both parents and learners as they are sometimes reluctant to come to school to earn for the family.

### ***Support from the School Authority and Colleagues***

Designing a project can be a precondition for effective learning outcomes from this pedagogy. Otherwise, it may fail like other previous pedagogies used in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. The participants posited several times that there is no other alternative to teachers' development through training and follow-up after training. However, Moni Begum shared that through training, we can develop materials for PBLT tasks and the teachers can plan according to the level and needs of their students, keeping their local context in mind but what is more important is the

support from the school head and colleagues as well as the assistance of the parents as the important stakeholders. She narrates:

*I planned a group activity for my EFL class where they were supposed to learn money management. According to the plan, the students can collect Tk 50 each, making a group of 10, and with the collected Tk 500, a group can start a small nursery to cultivate plants. We, teachers, can buy and purchase the seedlings, as many of us enjoy tub gardening. Alternatively, the school itself can buy the seedlings from the students. Another group may think of buying chickens so that they can get eggs and sell them in the local market. Others can brainstorm additional business ideas as well. Imagine how many ideas we can generate this way! For instance, another potential business is creating cards for special days like birthdays, marriage anniversaries, and other occasions. The project will allow the pupils to discuss in the target language and share small business plans in the group initially, and then gradually establish businesses that are often economically disadvantaged due to their rural backgrounds.*

Moni Begam, being a teacher at a public school, was trying to think of the context of the surroundings where the students can be liberated from their financial constraints and can be taught money management from a young age. The teacher participant admitted that she was never an expert in handling money matters, which she thinks is crucial in real life. So, she wanted the real world of survival in her class, making the class learner-centered, and ensuring problem-solving and critical thinking skills for her students. The project plan illustrates the conscientization theory (Freire, 1973), which includes critical consciousness, social awakening, and reflective awareness. The project can help the pupils reflect on their beliefs and actions to understand their place in the world better and inspire them to become more engaged and active members of their community.

The scenario could have been very positive if the contextual factors had worked with the assistance of the school authority and the guardians. The school head was a bar as he thought it would bring controversy from the parents since it is connected to money. But the participant laments:

*It could be an amazing project that would liberate the students from their financial constraints. I think if you want to implement the PBLT approach in the new curriculum, it is better first to target the school head and assistant*

*head. When they understand the impacts and process, this innovative approach will be handy and easy for the teachers to materialize.*

Rizvi Rezoan, a research participant from the suburban area, beside the Chattogram Hill Tracts, added that his language projects mainly revolve around the national days and festivals. He collaborated with the hill schools where they had their own language, culture, and festivals. So English for them was a *lingua franca*, and the students from the plain land and hills shared their culture, food, and festivals in the target language. The context factors for PBLT are more detailed in the next sub-theme –The process.

### **The Art of Mingling Language and Content in PBLT: The Process**

In language class, especially when it is a second or foreign language (L2) one, it takes shelter of the content of other subjects to present the culture and context of the L2, but PBL designs can bring additional features, for example, local culture, native context relating to L2, real-life problems and student choice. Accordingly, prioritizing autonomy, collaborative learning, and assessment-based authentic performances, PBL ensures learning and mastery over the L2 and enhances the learners' interest and perceived value (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Thomas, 2000). The PBL should be central in the curriculum, not peripheral, ensuring the application of already learned insights or enriching the knowledge already covered in the lesson.

*I encouraged the students to select an idea to work on, and they found the solution in the group. Problem-based learning can be blended with project-based learning. There is a lesson in English for class six where it has instructed the students to find out problems in their locality and find a solution, like Shankar's locality (the previous textbook in 2022). The activity included in the textbook is "to identify a problem in your locality and find a solution. –Meher Shashi*

Among the five criteria (centrality, driving question, constructive investigations, autonomy, and realism), the project run by Meher Shashi follows almost all the criteria of PBL. Until the introduction of the new curriculum, it was an "enrichment project" (Thomas, 2000, p.03), being at the periphery of the curriculum, not central. A project contains three stages – beginning in the classroom, moving out into the world, and returning to the classroom (Fried-Booth 1982; 1986). Thomas (2000) says, "There are instances where project work follows traditional instruction in such a way that the project serves to provide illustrations, examples, additional

practice, or practical applications for material taught initially by other means. However, these ‘application’ projects are not considered to be instances of PBL (p.03).” Yet, the process of the socio-cultural perspective is dynamic and developmental (Vygotsky, 1978). Other studies, however, that have looked at content-based instruction have found the PBL approach as a natural extension of what has already been taught in class (Stoller, 2002).

As for the second criterion, a PBL project may revolve around one theme or many thematic units or the intersection of topics from two or more disciplines (Stoller, 2002) - subjects like Languages, Science, Social issues, Mathematics, etc., with the help of an engaging driving question. There should be an orchestration of the questions that the learners pursue as well as the tasks, products, and performances that they perform during that period. Its meticulous execution ensures that every element comes together in unison, with precision, to fulfill an intellectual purpose (Blumenfeld et al., 1991; Thomas, 2000). Meher, a participant in my study, shared that she did PBL activities on the usage of herbal plants, natural calamities, and so on to attain international recognition under the Connecting Classrooms Programs run by the British Council, and her school managed the ISA award. She furthermore claimed,

*My school successfully managed the ISA award. However, I've been continuing PBL in my class. Recently, I finished a project on the endangered Royal Bengal Tigers in the Sundarbans. The driving question I used was "The Royal Bengal tigers kill people entering villages. Although they are dangerous, why do you think it is necessary to save them for the sake of our environment?" -Meher Shashi*

The participant emphasized the student’s involvement in a constructive investigation by pursuing a driving question to construct their understanding. The learners also created novel insight and knowledge, not limiting themselves merely to the concepts and facts that the curriculum intends to cover (Marx et al., 1994). Through this project, students got the knowledge and facts about the Royal Bengal Tiger, but at the same time, they learned to own the animal as their proud possession in nature, which they have to save for the sake of the ecosystem of their dear planet. The PBL approach unleashes the students’ critical thinking skills as well as language skills through the presentation of artifacts in the EFL classrooms. Another participant, Rizvi Rezoan, is in favor of offering a set of inquiry steps for students to follow:

*Last year, I taught my students a fantasy story –'Dragon of Kinabalu by Linda Can. It is about a legend. So, I gave them a group project to present. They had to prepare an imaginative creature that nobody had come across before. It should not even be a mermaid. They are also instructed to present a drama on it. Some of them are given tasks for costume, others for script, and others for acting it out.*

The creation of learners' innovative items with authentic integration of language skills and processing information from a variety of sources can enhance language skills, and this mirrors real-life tasks" (Stoller, 1997; Poonpon, 2017, p. 08). The National Curriculum (NCTB, 2022) expects certain knowledge, skills, and values to be achieved by learners through a competency-based curriculum from pre-primary to Grade 12 achieving the "ability to contribute to national and global welfare by creating new ways, strategies, and possibilities and presenting those artistic using new attitudes, ideas, and perspectives" (p. 26).

The project done by Rizvi fostered peer learning and collaboration, and the students enjoyed autonomy as they were assigned to explore with full freedom of their imagination. Similarly, Meher Shashi completed her complex tasks with the utmost efficiency. She assigned her students in groups to collect information about tigers from the internet and books, make posters and e-posters, investigate the answers to the driving question, deliver speeches on endangered tigers as a species, and do presentations among peer groups. The soft skills that the teacher integrates into the EFL lesson plan are remarkable, showing the teacher's efficiency in making her students ready for future professional life where he/she will need team spirit to finish a bigger project on a wider scale. The integration of technology is noteworthy here, and that taught the learners where and how to use the technology and why they should give emphasis on acquiring digital skills. In the integration of different subjects in a project, the teachers of different subjects in the same school can collaborate to run an interdisciplinary PBL (Tamim & Grant, 2013) which nicely and effectively ties more than one subject to teach a target content and other soft skills.

### **Chapter Summary**

The first section of the chapter delineates how the teachers comprehend PBLT from the training they received at different times. Subsequently, it chronicles the transformation of the teachers' attitudes and beliefs toward the new curriculum, particularly the English language instructions utilizing PBLT. In the final section, it

unveils the implementation process of the practice in EFL classrooms. Overall, the chapter encompasses the key points of teachers' perceptions regarding their knowledge of PBLT and links them to teachers' ability to materialize the pedagogy in their recent classroom practices.

## CHAPTER VI

### CLASSROOM REALITIES: CHALLENGES AND RAMIFICATIONS IN IMPLEMENTING PBLT

The chapter comprises the teachers' narratives on the constraints they feel in running PBLT and the solutions they suggest for bringing a long-lasting impact in the teaching-learning arena of the target language. The study calculates three aspects of challenges – lack of resources found in classroom realities, ethical issues and typical mentality of the teachers that leads to lack of skills in creating innovative instruction for PBL, and in incorporating local context in already designed PBLT instructions, and above all, assessments and evaluations aligning with the curriculum. Barron et al (1998) identified the requirements for simultaneous changes in curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices as a prominent hurdle in implementing project-based curriculum.

#### **Are classrooms and teachers ready for PBLT? Lack of resources found in classroom realities**

In any pedagogy, to make classroom teaching effective, the environment, context, the teachers' role, and the level of the learners act as crucial factors. When I was preparing the proposal for this, the new experiential teaching pedagogy was on trial in only pilot projects covering 64 schools in different secondary schools throughout the country. So, the assessment with pair and group work, in the pedagogy shift, was introduced only in the annual exam of those schools in 2022. Consequently, I needed to wait to bring the narratives of their hurdles and resilience because by then, in 2023, the inclusion of PBL in the competency-based new curriculum had become an enactment that the teachers in classes six and seven had to follow. The teachers became novices again when they tried the new curriculum, especially the inquiry-based teaching approach. Here, they encountered dilemmas regarding balancing the use of time and content coverage while also providing the students with autonomy (Marx et al., 1991, 1997; Thomas, 2000).

#### ***Class size: Unhealthy Teacher Student Ratio (TSR)***

In 2023, the new curriculum paved the way for the PBLT as one of the teaching methods, and it depends fundamentally on an intriguing question that drives the learners to be engaged in critical thinking and problem solving, fostering deep

learning. It also requires proper instructions well-devised by the teachers. Many teachers in our country experienced the approach for the first time in their EFL classrooms. However, the number of teachers is lower compared to the number of students in secondary-level schools, and this is a common scenario in both urban and rural areas in Bangladesh.

*The school where I teach is a private one with a resourceful environment and a helpful authority. So, I can incorporate the approach quite comfortably as ours was included in a pilot project, and the assessment procedures with experiential learning strategies in the newly introduced curriculum give joy to both the learners and the teachers, as we have the right ratio of teachers and students (TSR). But when I went to the last training, the teachers from under-privileged schools shared that they have more than 100 students in the class, and it makes their work difficult. – Sanjiban Chy.*

Another teacher from a low-resource school in Chattogarm expressed, *My colleague, while entering the exam hall with more than 80 students, remarked, ‘See you if I can survive.’ Ironically, she commented about the difficulty she would have. Because the government has already given the instructions, we had to implement the tasks in three consecutive days. In my class, I needed to make ten groups, each having 10 kids, and make them understand each step with a loud voice. Students also talked as they were assigned group activities. The experience was horrible. - Meher Shashi.*

The stress of the teachers managing large classes while ensuring learner-centered pedagogy can impact the teachers’ self-efficacy (Grant & Hill, 2006), and this may lead to a lack of academic achievement, developing a chronic feeling of emotional exhaustion, and a negative attitude toward their pupils and job among teachers (Wiley, 2000). I can relate the feelings of Meher or her colleagues to mine when I was running a project with 120 students in 12 groups and was fatigued and overwhelmed trying to ensure everyone’s participation. Private secondary schools run their institutions with an insufficient number of teachers. Nonetheless, public schools sometimes offer a poor student-teacher ratio. Sanjiban was sincere when he shared the real facts about the remote villages of our country:

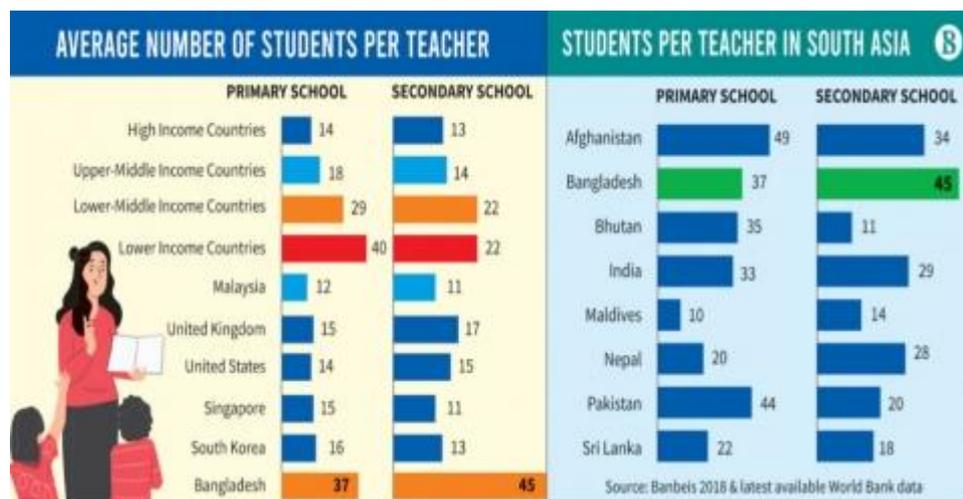
*Many schools in the remote areas run the schools with teachers unofficially collected from local areas as part-time teachers. They don’t possess the pedagogic skills or the accountability, as their job is not permanent. They are*

*not sent to the training to be familiar with the new innovative approach to classroom teaching.*

The shortage of teachers needs to be addressed because the poor teacher-student ratio (TSR) affects the learning process and future earning potential of the students, putting Bangladesh's long-term prosperity under threat. Limited teaching staff makes it difficult to prepare learners for the novel experiential curriculum and to ensure regular academic activities. Bangladesh has a total of 9.2 lakh teachers for nearly 2.78 crore pupils in Primary and secondary schools. Nonetheless, government-run schools show poorer TSR compared to private ones. Despite economic and social progress, Bangladesh trails behind India and Pakistan in this aspect (Jasim & Bhuiyan, 2021).

**Figure 5**

*A Comparative Study of Teacher-Student Ratio.*



(Source: Jasim & Bhuiyan, 2021)

The unhealthy TSR is a significant impediment to the ultimate success of the PBLT approach to implement. According to all participants, a large class with limited time makes it challenging for a teacher to provide personalized attention to each student.

### ***Ethical Issues of the Teachers***

The approach offers the teachers substantial authority in marking and measuring the learning outcomes of the learners, which categorizes the learners into the three main domains, recognizing their knowledge, skill, and abilities. In the past curriculum, there were board exams, and there was less possibility of corruption; at

least, the teachers were not as involved as they are now. All the research participants raised the point of the teachers' sense of morality and ethical comprehensibility.

*I cannot say that all my colleagues are equally strong from the ethical point of view when they measure the student's performance in the continuous assessment - Dihan Chowdhury.*

*Teachers from both urban and rural areas can be found to practice nepotism and favoritism. They cannot save themselves from corruption due to political pressure, parents' unexpected and unlawful approach, and the socio-economic condition of the teachers.” - Ayesha Amena*

*Ethics is such an issue that training cannot guide until the teachers are conscious about their ability to maintain a strong morality at this point.  
- Sanjiban Chowdhury*

It is difficult to monitor even when a teacher marks the students unethically, especially in large classes. A teacher is also a parent as her child is in class seven. She continued:

*My kid was in class six last year. He has a fascination for drawing. Last year, in class six, he was asked to make a 'bondhu khata'; so, he had been preparing it with his utmost craftsmanship, and from time to time, he had been showing it to his teacher. The whole term passed, and at the end of the term, the teacher declared that they should buy a formatted bondhu khata from a nearby shop and submit it within a week. My son became confused and told me that he should follow the teacher's instructions. Accordingly, he bought the copy and made the bondhu Khata again with details, but obviously, it missed the first vibes and potential with he started his journey in the very beginning. I could complain against the teacher, but I failed to justify it on the point that, being a teacher, I should not go against a person who is in the same boat as me. However, as a guardian, I felt the urge to raise my voice. So, the teachers are making some small mistakes, which can jeopardize the new approach. - Meher Shashi*

Here, the narratives gave two sides of a story where, first, there could be a strong bond between the teacher, parents, and the students; second, the teacher could appreciate feedback from those who showed creativity and individuality throughout the term. The teachers' role in instructing for the PBL is crucial, and teachers can better appreciate the students' unique talents and interests. The student's initial

Bondhu Khata was designed with care and enthusiasm, expressing his feelings authentically. The teachers' typical mindset in favor of tradition and formatted things can hinder the innovation and creativity of the learners.

The chapter also highlights the means to solve the issues shared by the participants as they perceived the practice. The causes pave the way to the solution. *"If we can address the issues that have blocked implementation of PBLT, we can try to minimize those and go ahead adjusting with the context of our situation."* Said Ayesha. In this context, Meher Shashi exclaimed,

*The process is so lengthy that I don't think it will be successful if we take it in PBL. Again, if we talk about "Bangabandhu and muktijuddha ke jani" (Let's know Bangabandhu and liberation war), the activity we did in our school, I have seen that there is no information for students, and they are not properly informed. They are only told, 'You will visit a freedom fighter and ask these questions.' It was like staging a drama with students. They were only guided to act, and the purpose of the activity was not even explained. Even the teachers were unable to understand the real purpose of the activity. It was our failure.*

The shower of disappointment pouring from her utterances exemplifies the difficulties in adopting a new approach to teaching. A successful incorporation of project pedagogy requires exchanging ideas and negotiating meaning (Thomas, 2000; Marx et al., 1991). Here, we see that the schools are going through their initial struggle in implementation. She also shared,

*.... The person who dealt with it thought that the government wanted it... so just connect a freedom fighter and make a short video clip .... Submit it. The same thing happens in our school and our head teacher.... I want to disclose something here ....subject teacher and head teacher... the head teacher must understand first .... Then he/she will make the subject teacher understand... because if the head teacher gets it, he/ she can make the subject teacher get it. But if the head teacher does not understand, the subject teacher can't make the head teacher understand it... because it will hurt his ego to learn from the subordinate. He will not take anything from the junior; they don't take it normally. This is a great drawback. So, I think... the activity was done in my school .... They have made a good video, but it was not made by our children,*

*but edited by a professional body from outside, not even by the teacher. How did this benefit our children?*

According to Ayesha too, “...a great initiative can face failure if we are not aware of the core of it”.

She emphasized understanding the objectives and the process of how the objectives are obtained. So, Moni Begum quipped that both the head teachers and the subject teachers should be trained so that the head can monitor and supervise the whole process.

### ***Typical Mindset of Teachers: Lack of Skill in Creating Innovative Instruction for PBL***

When I implemented the pedagogy in my EFL classroom, I became a facilitator, instructing the learners standing on the sidewalk and making the students centered on the activities of different tasks. Teachers must come out of the conventional lecture method, lessening the teacher's talk. The hyperbolic change in the role of the teachers (Grant & Hill, 2006; Tamim & Grant, 2013) dramatically put the teachers on the threshold, where they needed to start from scratch as teachers. Many teachers are involved in private tuition for a standard of living, as the salary they draw is equivalent to the expense of one leg of the dog that belonged to the Lat (Ali, 2016). Syed Mujtaba Ali, a renowned writer of Bengali literature, upheld the financial condition of the teachers during the colonial rule sarcastically, and the scenario is no better yet. So, their involvement in teaching outside the school made their classroom teaching haphazard. Dehan Ahmed lamented,

*This is a distressing phenomenon for an education system that makes the students seek help from non-teachers in the coaching center or the teacher in the teacher's house to get a GPA of 5 in the board exam. The whole education system is at risk as the guardians also are only interested in the result, ignoring other skills like life-based skills and interpersonal skills, which help a student develop mentally, physically, and spiritually.*

The rigid and typical mindset of the teachers and the other stakeholders prompts the government to be on a hard line sometimes to make a hard and fast rule to follow the instructions given centrally. Moni Begum shared,

*The summative assessment instructions from the government gave the teachers a framework to run the day-by-day activities, go through a process, and find the ultimate teaching outcome from the lessons. I understood that it is also a*

*PBLT because the students ultimately learn language skills like speaking and writing through the process. The teachers are scaffolding the learners through group work and pair work, and the students are producing an end product.*

Despite positive feedback from Moni Begum, the study finds some loopholes in the narratives of the other two participants,

*It is good that the government is providing the teachers with instructions for summative assessment, but the learners are already doing the tasks in the coaching center or at home using the YouTube video. So many of the advanced students are already familiar with the end product of the activities, and it hampers getting the expected result. - Shaila Sarwer.*

*When the instructions come from the center, there is no voice from either the teacher or the learners. It is, again, a traditional way of teaching as the students find nothing new in it. Despite all these, they are learning sentence structure and expressions. Also, they are learning to write in English. - Meher Shashi*

The two participants did not find authentic conversation and collaboration to foster cooperative learning and interpersonal skills in the activities. Moreover, teachers sometimes do not think authentic conversation is essential and curtail the time for conversation. It is deeply rooted in teachers' belief, which is much difficult to find a solution. Moreover, they may lack appropriate strategies to engage the learners in authentic conversation with turn-taking, listening, and respect for others' opinions (Krajcik and Blumenfeld, 2006). Lack of cognitive strength for creating appropriate instructions and the long-term project activities of PBLT create a sense of uncertainty among the teachers. Despite these loopholes in the procedures, another two participants seemed to be innovative in their approach:

*The instruction says to bring some objects into the classroom so that the learners can express their likes and dislikes about the objects. Here, the teacher has the scope to be innovative and to choose different types of objects to make her students brainstorm why they should like and dislike the objects, speak about them to their peers, and ultimately write a letter with their arguments. -Moni Begum.*

*After acting in the tragedy of King Lear, I made my learners reflect on their task and the impact of the character on them. The writing shapes their thought*

*process, and they can connect themselves with the story. Similarly, it helps them to improve their writing skill. -Sanjiban Chowdhury.*

Here, the study finds a resilient attitude that can be traced in some teachers who are sincere and qualified to practice teaching in an innovative approach, making the class engaged in tasks that will inspire the pupils to self-direct learning.

### ***Assessment and Evaluation of the PBLT Approach***

A substantial change in teaching and assessment with the PBLT approach triggers the learners' autonomy, creativity, innovation, collaboration, and skills to solve real-life problems, but the transformation in practice necessitates new assessment methods balanced with observation and tasks to provide information on students' progress and learning outcomes (Fitriati, 2015). Though the curriculum always suggested including all four language skills of a second language in the assessment system, the board exam excluded listening and speaking, only prioritizing the reading and writing skills (Dutta & Joshi, 2023), with the recurring questions encouraging rote learning. As an alternative assessment system, PBLT ushers a means for CA to exhilarate the learning with feedback along with required interventions from teachers and finally, to assess learners' learning outcomes with the final output.

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) (2021) suggested a new test system based on experiential learning, which Moni Begum recognized as a PBLT approach. Regarding the execution of the new curriculum, Moni Begam exclaimed,

*Before the summative, there were practice tasks to understand the assessment system. There were proper rubrics to measure the learning outcomes of the learners. Yet, the teachers became overwhelmed with marking the students, as it is totally new for them, and they have a big class size to handle.*

According to Moni Begum, the govt. made the instructions with activities and rubrics to measure their performance and behaviour indicators. But most of the participants opined that the teachers, Parents, and students have not yet gotten accustomed to the new assessment system. According to them, in the different steps and the end product of the PBLT, students and parents can be involved in the evaluation process. In this case, the teachers can train the students how to assess themselves, their peers, or how to prepare proper rubrics. Their notion of bringing other stakeholders in the evaluation process matches with the research outcomes of Kavlu (2015) who also suggested incorporating different types of assessments, from standardized tests to authentic assessments in the process of PBLT. Ayesha shared:

*As a summative assessment, the test integrates Bangla and English in class six and English with science in class seven (Appendix 2), and it exemplifies the interdisciplinary method of the PBLT approach.*

She acclaimed the interdisciplinary approach but claimed that the instruction was inadequate in facilitating the students' voice, and likewise, the teacher has less scope to make it feasible according to the context. In the second interview, Dihan Ahmed feared,

*The summative exam with PBL activities, with many limitations, fell short of obtaining validity from the parents. Because the indicators like the interpersonal skills of authentic conversation in a group, and democratic skills of showing respect for others' opinions (Appendix 1), are time-worthy qualities to measure as twenty-first-century skills. However, it is not clear that these two will be sought as admission criteria during the placement test at any university. If we could get a holistic view of the total education scenario from the primary to the tertiary level in the curriculum, the rubric for assessing soft skills would be accepted among the stakeholders, and they would not be skeptical about the approach.*

The traditional grading system of the annual exam and the board exams, like SSC and HSC in Bangladesh, which are held after the tenth grade and the twelfth grade to measure the ultimate learning outcomes of the learners, gives the universities a scale to judge their merit for enrollment in the degree programs. Accordingly, Ayesha also emphasized that the learning outcomes of the secondary level must align with the university requirements, as the learning goals of the universities usually align with the competencies of the students' future professional careers. Otherwise, the validity of the assessment system with PBL will fall short, leading the parents again to choose the previous traditional memorization-based exam system. Besides, the participants criticized the idea of avoiding pen and paper exams in the half-yearly and annual exams. Sanjiban opined:

*We can take a 20-mark MCQ test, or Short Questions and Answers to measure the learning outcomes in the process of step-by-step instructions. So, the slow students, who hide in the group work, can be identified and assisted with further scaffolding. And this process was missed in the new curriculum.*

When I was last modifying my dissertation, I witnessed the grudge of the stakeholders against the new curriculum on different social media platforms. Though

the research participants praised highly the inclusion of PBLT and its positive outcomes as a whole, its implications in a broader perspective still need wise speculations from the teachers, teacher educators, and policymakers. However, all the teacher-participants could perceive the advantages of the innovative approach in utilizing the rubrics to give feedback and offer any scaffolding required. They also focused on the teachers' preparedness for PBLT, most importantly for the ability to bring the stakeholders into the process so that they can also contribute to the project, amalgamating the old wisdom with the emerging new concept.

### **Breeding Ground for PBLT**

As the PBL in language teaching requires high cognitive skills for devising a PBL framework, many teachers feel uncertainty about its effective result in the learning process for the learners. As teachers' lecture method and assessment by paper and pencil tests have dominated the education system for so long, many teachers with personal experiences fail to support a belief in PBL (Condliffe et al, 2017). Four participants conversed well in all the phases of processing the PBL in our context, and three of them got the ideas of the PBL during the transition of the curriculum from the teacher-centered to the learner-centered teaching approach. The insights from their stories highlighted some untrodden roads to carry PBLT in the Bangladeshi EFL classrooms.

### ***Connections with Veterans and Newcomers***

We see that many schools worldwide are introducing PBL, even in Bangladesh. The government here has understood its importance and added it to the curriculum for summative assessment. So, some schools are putting their best effort into implementing PBL. Still, it is a new concept for many to start. However, Dihan Ahmed found a solution for the schools that are struggling with designing and implementing PBL:

*... Training is a must, and at the same time, different steps can be taken. For example, in a field trip, new teachers can be taken to visit schools that are running projects in different classes.*

So, field trips to the veteran schools practicing PBL can help the teachers get acquainted with this new concept practically. Moni Begum, in this connection, stressed making a network between veterans and the fresher in this new approach. Team teaching with a mentor can alleviate the pressure of a new teacher (Stanulis & Floden, 2009). Additionally, she also mentioned making a field trip to the expert

schools and learning through sharing. We find the same idea in the book “Thinking through Project-Based Learning: Guiding Deeper Inquiry,” where Krauss and Boss (2013) suggested a wall-to-wall strategy to make a network of PBL adopting Schools. They mentioned the practicing schools as laboratories and that they might open their field-tested resources and classroom stories to lead others to start using PBLT quickly.

### ***CPD and Follow-up Training***

Two of the participants who have worked with the PBLT approach for many years and worked as trainers for trainers on how to deal with new curricula stressed that incorporating PBL in our curriculum and teaching is a continuous process. In this connection, Dihan Ahmed articulates,

*I worked in the core committee for the new curriculum, and I understand that implementation of the newly received curriculum is a continuous process. There will be many ups and downs in this journey, but we have to work together to materialize it. It will take time to change the mindset of the teachers and guardians. I feel depressed when I see the parents taking their children to the coaching center, which only ensures their grades in the board exams. Though the students will be continually assessed based on their performance in the everyday class, if they are present in the school.*

The above-mentioned direct quote of the participant provides a kind of idea that intrigues us to drive our mind into the negative aspects of the mindset of both parents and teachers, as well as the denial attitude to the new pedagogy. It is seen that the parents are not ready to accept the novelty of the grade system. They still seek shelter in numbers that are provided to the students in their memorization-based exam scripts. Another participant, Moni Begum, a veteran PBL Practitioner herself, opined in her narratives,

*...I think if the training on PBL can be arranged focusing on the individual subject they teach, and if there is a time frame to implement one Project in the classroom for three months, and if they are called again after three months for a one-day follow-up training, there can be a tangible outcome. If they are asked, okay, what is the result of PBL they are doing in the class, and if there are any lacking, they can be helped with the specific issues. Thus, if we can prepare one batch, analyze the success rate of their outcomes, and measure their presentation, then we can provide incentives to the best three of four*

*schools by visiting and measuring their success if the teachers are appreciated with the prize, if the children are encouraged and the head teachers are encouraged, I think it will work. The more we can disseminate at the root level, the more it will work.*

The participant's journey to implement Project-Based Language Teaching (PBLT) as a pedagogy in their EFL classrooms was not an easy path, and the participant faced many challenges along the way. In this chapter, I explored these challenges and empathized with the participants' experiences. This research acknowledged the difficulties they faced when PBLT was not prescribed by the curriculum and the anxiety this caused. At the same time, it recognized the plight of the frictions between reality and the practice brought to them when the curriculum assigned the teachers PBLT as a summative assessment. Nevertheless, I appreciate the participants' struggles to find solutions to these constraints, as I listened to their stories with openness and understanding. Their experiences and feelings are valid and valuable, and as a researcher, I revere their dedication to using PBLT to teach foreign languages and achieve desired L2 learning outcomes.

In teaching, the role of the teacher is not focal; rather, the role of the learner is more important. Many years ago, in his "Facilitator Handbook," originally published in 1989, the educationist and psychologist John Heron said that teachers are auxiliary in delivering a lesson. All the research participants addressed it by emphasizing the students' active participation in classroom activities and lessening teacher talk to make the participatory method fruitful. It is easy to teach in the center but tough to be in the periphery and run the classroom activities (Faruk, 2022). The novel national curriculum in 2023 is implementing the participatory teaching-learning method at the secondary level in Bangladesh. For that, the government took the teachers' training significantly and provided the training countrywide from time to time throughout 2023.

### ***AI-assisted Instructional Design for PBLT***

For Continuing Professional Development (CPD), Schreurs and Dumbraveanu (2014) proposed two facets of activities. First, the trainee teachers can construct some learning outcomes depending on their own experience and devise a course structure at the learner's choice with learning activities, assessment tasks, and course topics, and second, they can analyze the proposed samples of courses with objectives and poor

learning outcomes and redesign it according to the needs of the learner-led instructions. Aligned with this, Moni Begum shared:

*Our teachers can be trained to use AI for making lessons for successful PBL. I used AI to create rubrics for self-assessment and peer assessment. Using AI saves time and ensures accuracy. In the rural areas, every Upzila can possess a digital library with computers and internet facilities where both teachers and the students, with the guidance of teachers, can have access to resources necessary for collecting information.*

The teachers in our country are both new to the use of PBL and AI. However, a systematic training program can enhance the teachers' competencies to design PBLT instructions using AI. The teachers can seek help in case of time management, content selection, assessment, and available resources (Aldabbus, 2018). Rizvi claimed that, *"We cannot deny the cutting-edge technology and cannot help but integrate AI in instruction and curriculum design. I used Chatbot to design instructions for inquiry-based tasks."*

However, all the participants mentioned that the teachers need sufficient training to effectively integrate AI into PBL (Baskara, 2023) or use AI for intelligent content generation, and customizing PBL instructions. But we should also be careful about the bias of AI. In this regard, Shaila said, *"We should not fully depend on AI when it comes to students' involvement. Rather, teachers should meticulously control students' screen time in using electronic devices."*

The participants posited that both digital literacy and English proficiency are essential and futuristic skills for establishing students in the twenty-first century. PBLT can contribute in a great way to ensure these two necessary skills through well-planned, step-by-step instructions.

### **Chapter Summary**

The chapter continued with the classroom realities, where the high ambition of the curriculum transforming the classrooms from the conventional to modern learner-centered ones, where the teachers are spotted on the aisle, yet are assigned a substantial role, came into the understanding of the participants of my research. They confronted certain issues like TSR, lack of resources, ethical issues of teachers, lack of teachers' positive attitude towards change, teachers' unpreparedness in devising skills of engaging tasks, and the teachers' typical mindset, which can ruin the initiative of introducing the useful pedagogy of PBLT. However, the participants

congregated several examined means to face the difficulties. They advocated for teachers' professional growth with mentors and a field visit to veteran schools that explored PBLT pedagogy successfully. They prompted the follow-up Training of teachers and heads of Schools and also accounted for a lot of steps from the authorities, such as ensuring activities of students' choice and needs, and introducing incentives for successful PBLT practitioners and institutions. The next chapter will discuss the essence of the research with implications, concluding the dissertation.

## CHAPTER VII

### REFLECTION, KEY INSIGHTS, AND IMPLICATIONS

The chapter with a silver lining on the horizon finishes the dissertation by denoting a positive direction toward the future of language teaching and learning in Bangladesh. It comprises my reflections - retrospection into my research journey, accompanied by introspection leading to key insights of the thesis and implications of the innovative approach of PBLT. It also filters the research participants' narratives to present the research results in this chapter and paves the way to utilize the PBLT approach in Bangladeshi EFL Classrooms. PBL, a component of experiential learning, was adopted in 2023 on a large scale in almost all subjects at the secondary level in Bangladesh. This research showed that PBLT for acquiring a target language is an incredibly productive and effective approach. Yet, the limitations and challenges of this inquiry-based pedagogy that the teachers have to face should be addressed so that the teachers can show resilience for its sustainability in EFL classrooms.

#### **Reflection**

. The reflection on the dissertation journey forked into two ways – I became retrospective with my research journey which took me to the beginning of my master's years reminding me of my purpose and future course of action and the introspection part intrigued me to look deep into my thought process to germinate ideas hidden in the surface layers of the narratives of the teacher-participants. Virginia Woolf's essay 'A Room of One's Own' expressed that the submerged and hidden truth often emerges at the top in moments of reflection, leading to profound insights.

#### ***Being Retrospective through Memory Lanes***

Connecting Classroom Program in 2017 brought PBL as a pedagogy into my knowledge for the first time, and the approach fascinated me due to its unflinching impact on the learners. Later, I wanted to continue the PBL in my class, but it was not included in the curriculum. So, my co-teachers were unwilling to follow it. Moreover, I found it very challenging to design instructions for PBL. All these issues exhilarated me to dive deeper into the PBLT approach. This curiosity paved the way for me to take the topic for my research. My enrollment in the degree of Master of English

Language Education degree at KUSOED in 2020 opened a new world of research that I had never explored before. I felt that as a representative of the subaltern teachers, I had an opportunity to be heard by the policymakers and curriculum designers by presenting my research.

In the first semester, I conducted mini research on Exploring Teachers' Perceptions about Collaborative Projects as an Alternative Assessment Technique in Bangladesh and the Academic Reading and Writing course by Prof. Laxman Gnawali, PhD introduced me to the different types of writing styles, reading different journals, maintaining cohesion and coherence, drafting, and editing in writing. I presented my first paper at a virtual international conference. However, the more I delved into the approach, the more scope to be innovative for the teachers and the learners I discovered. However, it has not yet become familiar among Bangladeshi teachers, and training on the approach is inadequate. Furthermore, competency in designing materials for PBL using the context of Bangladesh and emphasizing learners' needs is crucial for incorporating the approach into the curriculum.

During the second semester, the research methodology offered me ample knowledge on conducting research in different ways and constructing knowledge on a particular issue. This time, the tutor taught us how to choose a topic and develop a research issue. Though it was overwhelming initially, it became easy gradually, and I could prepare a research proposal for my research. I chose my research issue on incorporating PBL in EFL classrooms, and I decided to take the help of narrative inquiry, collecting narratives of the teachers who have already explored the pedagogy in their EFL classes.

Next semester, in a research project under the tutelage of my course tutor, I developed a thematic study on Designing Materials on PBLT in the Context of Bangladesh. I studied different mainstream Journals and dissertations available on the topic. The articles and books on material design and the PBLT approach assisted my thematic study on a large scale. I attempted to devise my paper with insights depending on my reading of previous literature on PBLT. The reading helped me make the factors thematized necessary to devise any new innovative teaching pedagogy, and the strategies to address the barriers that come with implementing it. The paper, having been accepted in a peer-reviewed international journal, increased my confidence as an academic writer.

The final semester, under the supervision of Dr. Bharat Neupane, placed me on a platform to present my research proposal before the ELT veterans of Kathmandu University. I prepared my proposal in the second semester and became seasoned with the compilation of knowledge gathered in these three semesters, and it is undoubtedly the curriculum of the KU that has empowered us to be confident in the research area. The proposal turned more concise and to the point. The feedback from my professors helped me chase the goal with more grit and determination.

Mr. DN Joshi, a faculty member of KU, kindly consented to supervise me and accompanied me throughout this incredible journey with his guidance and feedback from time to time. I met my research participants personally to collect their stories of how they perceived the PBLT as a language-teaching approach and resolved the problems they faced while using the approach in their EFL classes. I had long formal and informal interactions with the participants face-to-face and online, more than once. After transcribing and coding the data collected from the teachers' narratives and observing the classes (where possible), I anatomized the insights and observations of my participants on Project-based Language Teaching. It was tremendously nerve-racking brain work to get the narratives thematized and to connect these themes to the insights compiled from the literature on the topic. The process was challenging but productive when the rigorous attempt successfully constructed knowledge that was novel in quality and effective in introducing a new pedagogy instead of following a traditional teaching approach.

### ***Introspection into Layers of Narratives***

Kathmandu University is far away in another country called Nepal, nestled in the Himalayan Range, and I was in my village studying my M.Ed. in English Language Teaching online during the COVID pandemic in 2020. In the second semester, I could still remember the day when I felt relieved getting an appreciation from my course tutor for my research proposal presentation. However, I was still unaware of the topsy-turvy struggle. It took an additional two years to finish the dissertation as I wanted to cover the ongoing changes in the curriculum, especially when it included the PBL in the assessments of all subjects in a controlled way.

When I had almost finished my proposal for the dissertation, I spent ten consecutive days revisiting its first draft. I chose the title passionately, considering the difficulties my students face in learning English. My purpose is to find a way to relieve them from rote learning and lead them to the highway of the 21<sup>st</sup> century so

that they can acquire the skills to stay well, earn, and reduce poverty. The term ‘conscientization’ refers to enlightening and freeing the subaltern students from the shackles of economic constraints. I explored PBLT and wanted to learn more about our teachers’ readiness to utilize this extraordinarily innovative pedagogy. Hence, the topic of my dissertation is “*English Language Teachers’ Experience of Project-Based Language Teaching: A Narrative Inquiry.*”

After the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> semester, my supervisor assigned me to go to the field, and I needed to collect data for my qualitative research. As I conducted a program with the British Council using PBL, I got to know a few teachers who availed the opportunity of using PBL in their EFL classrooms. I chose English teachers who used PBL and English as a medium of instruction, as they needed to present it to the students abroad. So, I got four teachers from those acquaintances, and fortunately, then the Bangladesh govt. Introduced a pilot project with 64 schools to attempt experiential learning and used the PBL methods for the alternative assessment. I chose three other teachers who got training and practiced PBL in 2023 as a part of the new curriculum.

Extending the research for another year was a nerve-wracking experience for me. I wanted to collect data from the classrooms where the PBL is freshly introduced and practiced. The teachers explored the innovative approach and helped my research to be more authentic and enriched. I started visiting the research participants to find their stories of understanding the new pedagogy and the hurdles they were confronting in the Bangladeshi big-size EFL classrooms.

In the meantime, I was promoted as a college coordinator in 2023, and this new responsibility slowed me down in the research as I needed to multitask. It reminded me of the story where a king was asked to roam around his kingdom to see the real condition of his subjects, but not to drop a single drop of oil from the pot he was holding, according to the instruction of Brahma, a god of the Hindu religion. Looking after all the affairs of the college, I used to come back again and again to my research and research participants to collect their stories and live in their stories.

I was assigned the responsibility for coordinating the college section for one year, but it extended one year more from January 2024 to January 2025, and the stressful job of making people work is tremendously more difficult than teaching in the classroom. However, the constant call from my supervisor to finish the dissertation by July put me again in revisiting the almost-done thesis to give a

finishing touch. A not-satisfying thirst for making my work better overwhelmed me, but my dream to continue more research on teaching methodology and teacher development keeps me always stout against all odds to pursue more in the arena of education research.

On the skeleton of the research questions, the findings and discussion of the study have provided an image of the facts perceived by the participant teachers. The main research question inquired how the teachers of the secondary schools perceived and executed the PBLT approach in their EFL classrooms. By pondering upon the narratives, the study could finalize that they all acknowledged the significance of the PBLT and envisaged the effective impacts of the approach on the learning outcomes of L2 learners. They could grab it as an innovative means of classroom teaching to create motivation and self-reliance in L2 learners so that they can take responsibility for learning, because this is the core of a student-centered classroom. However, before introducing it at a large scale, well-planned training sessions for head teachers, teachers, and even the parents are crucial to develop their attitude and strengthen their belief towards it, or the approach may fail to bring its expected output.

In search of the first research question, the participants claimed that PBL ensures the deep learning of content and language. In the trajectory of the PBL activities, teachers can intervene in the learning process by providing vocabulary, and the learners can engage in an authentic conversation, structuring the sentence slowly while interacting in group tasks. Furthermore, authentic interaction intrigues learners in complex situations as they delve into the inquiries. The exploratory teaching of the project method helps the learners practice the four language skills, and most importantly, the life skills. The soft skills required in life assist future citizens in facing 21st-century challenges. However, the essence of the PBL is still too far from being properly perceived and incorporated into the lessons.

To address the second research question, the queries overwhelmed the teachers, and their stories revealed the constraints that the teachers faced while dealing with the school head, the school environment, the school curriculum, and parents. Their narratives celebrated the PBL to integrate into the lesson and revealed the strategies to overcome the constraints. The research constructed new ideas for showing the possible remedies that resulted from the practices and recorded a hope for the innovative educators to explore the untrodden path, liberating our learners

from the difficulties of learning a foreign language by only learning grammar rules and memorizing vocabulary.

### **Key Insights**

The research gathered insights into how teachers' EFL instructions, their openness to using PBLT, and the resources they choose to rely on work in the Bangladeshi context. The study accumulated information on how they deal with students' socioeconomic status, motivation levels, digital literacy, and English proficiency level in their attempt to implement PBLT and along with these, how they address classroom issues which include large class size, lack of access to technology, unavailability of resources like computers, internet, and textbooks, and above all, lack of systematic support from all stakeholders. This section gives a comprehensive overview of the practicalities, barriers, and possible effects of using PBL in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms.

#### ***Learning That Sustains***

The participants, time and again, reflected upon the boons of PBL as they found the outcomes in their language classrooms. While all seven participants of the study highlighted several obstacles in incorporating PBLT in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms, a consensus emerged in the case of the rejuvenating learning outcomes of the approach, emphasizing its energizing capabilities. Their perception aligned with Tamim and Grant (2013) revealing the same sets of advantages of PBL in EFL classrooms too and these are support and facilitation while the learners are in the learning process, the scope for differentiation and creativity, motivation and engagement, and collaboration among learners and among teachers in making the interdisciplinary activities.

Above all, ensuring deep learning is the cream of the harvest that the literature found previously resonates with the findings of this research and it kindles the Bangladeshi EFL teachers' motivation to dare to utilize this pedagogy which can be both applicable for the students on the river Surma as well as the river Mississippi.

#### ***Integration of the Four Language Skills***

The traditional teaching style only prepares the learners for the reading and writing test and ignores the listening and speaking skills. The research revealed that the PBLT can facilitate each of the four skills or integrate all four skills in the continuum of the learning process. Being a learner-centered approach, it fosters the significance of language learning, emphasizing what the learners want to say and how

they want to express it. Earlier in the vignettes, the teacher participants recognized the main factors, like motivation and scaffolding that they received from their teachers while they were learning English in their schooling days. PBLT similarly provides the learners with the motivation and teachers' scaffolding during the learning process, which are the unfailing components for acquiring a second or foreign language.

### ***21st Century Skills***

There is no obvious turning back from the acquisition of the skills that will help students to be able to cope with the ever-changing technology-driven world. The 4C's of 21st-century skills- 'Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity' (Laur, 2019b, p. 06) will reign in the occupational sectors undoubtedly. Acquiring those skills will help the learners get employed and socially upgraded. The participants explored all these skills in their project activities and experienced a reassuring outcome as the learners engaged in well-planned tasks and acquired the skills of collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking (Laur, 2019b, p. 06), and problem-solving.

### ***Students' Voice***

The research participants advocated the PBLT for equipping the L2 learners with a varied set of skills encompassing four language skills, soft skills, communication abilities, and technological proficiency, reducing the teacher's talk. The PBLT designed by the teachers according to the learners' context enables their voices to be heard and makes the learners capable of facing everyday challenges. Therefore, when Moni Begum asked the students residing on the river to find a problem to investigate for the project, the obvious subject was river erosion. Since the context is of their own, they could handle the project autonomously (Allen, 2004), and the students were free to forge the project process to find a relatable solution. Hence, the participant said that what was included in the assessment system of the new curriculum was PBL, there was still a lot to do to include students' voices.

### ***Authentic Real-Life Learning Outcomes: Conscientization***

More than one of the participants claimed that the PBLT approach is implicitly a continuous process to strengthen the students with life skills other than the four skills of language. With the soft skills to face the 21st-century job market, the students become proficient with vehicular language and at the same time with interpersonal skills like collaboration and empathy. Ayesha made her students engage in a grocery

shop to be able to handle the money matter. Mony Begum attempted to start a business with the learners in groups or individuals with an investment of 50 taka. This endeavor can free poor students from financial crises and equip them with critical consciousness. NCF (2021) considers the learners' context the most important factor. Through the PBL approach, learners can connect themselves to their context and be critical about their attitude towards their socio-economic condition (Freire, 1973) and the endangered environment. Hence, they create new ideas and knowledge to deal with the problems they face, and here are how the subalterns get a platform for learning life skills to face reality outside the classrooms. The inquiry process intrigues the learners to be conscious of the social and economic conditions and be critical of their shortcomings so that they can learn to solve their problems.

#### ***An Alternative Assessment System***

The traditional teaching methodology tries to make sure that the students can achieve the highest grade on the exam (Amin & Greenwood, 2018). On the other hand, the PBLT approach ensures experiential learning to enable students to become competent in four language skills and soft skills.

Though there is still demand for the traditional exam system from stakeholders of society, the participants of this research argued for an alternative assessment system through PBLT to measure the learning outcomes of the learners. The innovative teachers among the participants claimed that they 'found a way to have students choose the way of learning they are most comfortable with as well as assess abilities that are masked in traditional learning settings' (Tamim & Grant, 2013, p. 83). As it is new to measure different skills of the students, the parents and other stakeholders failed to realize its long-term positive impacts on the learning of the students. Furthermore, in the case of CA, the instant feedback from the teachers and peers helps a learner to understand his or her lacking and can provide opportunities for desired improvement.

#### ***Being Cost-Effective in an Interdisciplinary Approach***

The research revealed that many schools arranged the test using PBLT pedagogical aspects, which can intertwine more than one subject and save time and money, especially in financially vulnerable areas. Ayesha's project on Environment Day measuring the amount of bio-hazard in a certain area involving science and Math, Meher's project on Royal Bengal Tigers interweaving the geography of the Sundarbans in the south region of Bangladesh, and the ecosystem of science; and

Moni's project on money management incorporating Math, and business are done in the EFL classrooms and the end product presentations were conducted in the target language. Incorporating the interdisciplinary aspects of the PBL can cut the cost of measuring the students' different learning outcomes and skills in one endeavour as a whole.

### ***Difficulties to Face and Resolve***

The inclusion of PBLT at a wide scale in Bangladeshi classrooms is difficult according to the research participants since there are issues like teachers' preparedness, TSR, the attitude and belief of the stakeholders towards this pedagogy, and its practical implementation in Bangladesh. The reviews from time to time on the PBL implementation through the lens of teachers' beliefs and teachers' practices found that PBL is always challenging to implement. Still, Condliffe et al (2017) emphasize this lens to identify factors that may facilitate strong means for effective implementation.

Figure 6

### ***Key Insights at a glance***

The benefits that PBLT offers	Difficulties faced in implementation	Difficulties to Resolve
a. The 4C's of the 21st century - Critical Thinking, Collaboration, Communication, and Creativity (Laur, 2019b, p. 06) b. Students' Voice c. Authentic Real-Life outcomes; Conscientization d. An alternative assessment system to have instant feedback for improvement. e. Assessment of students'	a. Lack of skill in creating innovative instructions and engaging activities, b. Typical Mindset of teachers c. Poor teacher-student ratio, d. Teachers' unethical approach due to private tuition e. High cognitive load and uncertainty f. Digital divide g. Limitation in	a. Follow-up training of the teachers and the head of the school. b. Continuous supervision and monitoring c. Creating a positive mindset. d. Counselling and creating consciousness among all stakeholders e. Collaboration and integration among subjects in a school

language skills and soft skills that are masked in the traditional assessment system.	bearing educational expenses for resources	f. Intelligent content generation with AI g. Planning budget-friendly and teacher-friendly PBLT to motivate stakeholders.
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### ***Follow-up Training to Enhance Teachers' Skills***

The teacher participants emphasized training and follow-up training for both the subject teachers and the school head to track the process of PBL when the approach is new for many teachers in the country, and they have to start from scratch, leaving the comfort zone of traditional teaching. However, some participants explained how financial adversity the teachers and the school face may destroy the initiative in the bud. Hence, they proposed funds and remuneration for the teachers who are doing well in applying the innovative approach in the classroom. Organizing a fund for every PBLT initiative and providing incentives for skilled teachers can stop any unethical exercises in school, too. Again, planning different engaging activities to use target language with the PBLT approach requires high cognitive competence. Moreover, PBL may take a long time to execute, and this entails a sort of uncertainty. The participants emphasized the field trip of the teachers to the school where PBLT is often done. The school can also arrange a mentoring program pairing the veterans and the apprentice teachers (Stanulis & Floden, 2009) to ensure continuous scaffolding for the teachers.

### ***Empowering the School Head to Encourage the Approach***

The School head can play a crucial role in incorporating PBLT in the school. When they become familiar with this innovative approach, they can help conventional teachers encourage the new teaching style. Even the head can arrange in-house teachers' training to make the teachers well-conversant with the implementation of PBLT. So, the head teacher needs to be trained on PBLT firsthand. The government can provide funds for running PBLT so that the school authorities can implement it properly. According to many participants, it can cover the cost of extra teaching aids and appreciate the successful teachers' extra workloads.

### ***Creating a Positive Mindset to Address the Typical Teacher Belief***

Here, the teachers are accustomed to the traditional teaching style and a typical mindset of the *guru-shishya* approach. This attitude creates a psychological barrier to implementing the pedagogy, which entails a friendly and frank atmosphere to ensure a fearless and real-life classroom environment. The teacher participant, Meher Shashi's story of making a "*Bandhu Khata*," exemplified the conventional attitude of the teachers who failed to differentiate the level of the student's talent and to deal with the students' emotions. They compelled the students to listen to them, making them sub-ordinate and subaltern (Spivak, 1988). If the teachers cannot come out of their conventional role of treating the students as subordinates, the pedagogy may face failure like other previous pedagogical shifts, according to most of the research participants.

### ***Creating Awareness against Deep-rooted Status Quo, Parents, and other stakeholders***

An education system becomes successful with the help of the triangle relationship - Students, Parents, and Teachers. The participants expressed that many parents are confused about the new assessment system with PBL and the evaluation process. Telecasting the programs on the new curriculum on radio, television, newspapers, and social media to create awareness among stakeholders, especially the parents/guardians, is instrumental in its acceptance. The presentation of the end product of PBLT can open the eyes of the stakeholders, especially the guardians, who are psychologically dependent on the grading system. As they see the tangible learning outcomes of the students' self-paced creations, they will be motivated to retain the approach. Moreover, the research participants proposed incorporating PBLT in Board exams, valuing the learners' achieved skills in the continuum of the learning process and the enrollment process of higher education. Besides, copy-pasting and academic misconduct done with AI can be beaten by PBLT as it ensures performance-based activities and artifacts.

### ***Initiatives to Maintain Healthy TSR to Bridge the Gap in Resources***

The schools, having poor teacher-student ratios, experience a massive bar to implementing the approach. However, the government asked the schools to keep 60 students in each section. According to the participants, it would be a hard job for the teachers to conduct PBL with a huge number of students in a class. Yet, some participants opined that the approach can fit best in large classes because the teachers

only need to plan proper instructions for group work so that the learners can run the project tasks with their leads. The teachers can provide scaffolding through goal clarification, facilitation, and guidance (Tamim & Grant, 2013) to the learners if it is necessary to intervene with more help. The research also emphasized healthy group dynamics that can strengthen peer learning and peer assessment, reducing the teachers' fatigue in correcting and giving feedback. However, the shortage of teachers and educational expenses make it difficult to overcome the constraints in rural areas.

### **Implications**

The research aimed at finding the perspectives of teachers, firstly how they comprehend Project-Based Language teaching as a pedagogical method of exploratory learning in their EFL classrooms and then how to apply the PBLT approach in the context of Bangladesh and how to intervene with a well-designed plan to make the teaching and learning effective overcoming the barriers. The English education system at the secondary level of Bangladesh can utilize this constructed essence of knowledge extracted from the narratives of the research participants on PBLT.

The previous studies on the PBLT approach found its unfailing contributions in bringing positive learning outcomes in EFL classrooms. However, this present study discovered the benefits of the approach, ensuring L2 learning with soft skills in Bangladesh and its native context. At the same time, the teacher participants showcased their understanding of conducting PBL in EFL classrooms and the strategies they followed whenever they faced problems. The L2 learners, teachers, and teacher educators can employ those strategies. The key insights, consisting of the gems the research offered, uphold the reality in front of the world so that the teachers and teacher educators in Bangladesh can get a glimpse of the PBLT pedagogy and take initiatives regarding the approach.

The stories of the participants suggested a transformation in teaching practices, emphasizing a shift in curriculum design and incorporating collaborative student-centered learning. The proper implementation of the PBLT approach arranges a range of tasks for communication, collaboration, and cooperation, which represents Vygotsky's notion of the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) in the developmental context of language learning (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). The approach compels students to learn from their surroundings, and it creates an authentic environment in the classroom, which is a real-life situation. Besides knowledge of content and language,

it offers soft skills required for a future career and ensures physical and mental well-being. The study has revealed that the approach is also applicable to teacher development programs so that they can germinate ideas for this innovative approach and successfully use the teaching style according to their class needs.

The policymakers of the National Curriculum Framework (2021) understood its contributions and included the PBLT approach in classroom teaching pedagogy and assessment (NCTB, 2022). The teachers are motivated to take the initiative to implement the approach but sometimes it is difficult to continue it for the lack of support from the stakeholders. According to the suggestion of this research, the government can take the training of school heads on a serious note to provide scaffolding to the teachers and monitor the tasks supervising the teachers in implementing the PBLT approach.

In 2023, the novel curriculum included PBL in almost all subjects, especially in the half-yearly and annual exams, though the instructions for assessment are planned by the government, and the teachers are only there to administer the process. So, bringing the teachers' thoughts according to the learners' needs and context is still a long way to go and is subject to training and follow-up training from the school authority and the government at large. In this case, the examined context-specific instructional strategies of research participants in the areas of the PBLT approach, bringing "the local, historical, political, social, cultural, and educational exigencies" (Kumaravadivelu, 2016, p. 81), can help L2 teachers and teacher educators in Bangladesh and beyond.

The interdisciplinary approach of the PBLT opens another door to collaboration among teachers of different subjects (Tamim & Grant, 2013). The teachers can plan a PBL task covering more than one subject, like the research participants who experienced the connecting classrooms program and did PBL integrating language with history, environment, science, mathematics, business, and technology. The language teachers in a school can lead and sit with other subject teachers. The expert minds plan together, amalgamating target lessons from different subjects. Making plans together shapes ideas, and the best PBL activities based on the students' needs can come out into concrete form. Collaboration of teachers integrating different subject matters saves course time and the cost of educational kits, and thus, it makes PBL cost-effective in third-world countries like Bangladesh.

The dissertation aims to trigger a meta-cognitive awareness among the stakeholders, policymakers, and curriculum developers so that they may construct a pool of PBLT practices, making a wide resource for the EFL teachers and learners in Bangladesh. In 2023, the new curriculum included the PBL approach in classes six, seven, and eight as continuous and summative assessments. Most importantly, rubrics are added with the instructions to measure the knowledge and skills the learners are expected to obtain (NCTB, 2022). The assessment for measuring language and life skills can aid the universities in affirming the students in their desired areas for higher studies. A topic chosen by the students at secondary level for PBLT can trigger their interest to study more in higher education, resulting in a new invention or adding a new concept to the world order.

The synergy of AI and PBL in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms is a very new scenario, which is a very fascinating trend in the recent educational field. It ushers in more studies in the future on how it can provide context-based learning materials catering to different preferences and levels, to ensure learners' personalized learning needs (Wu & Wan, 2022). However, with limited access and affordability of AI in underdeveloped areas like Bangladesh, AI-powered PBL in language learning can negatively impact (Song et al., 2022), generating inaccurate content and cultural bias. Digital literacy can be acquired by implementing interdisciplinary PBLT powered with technology. However, the curriculum designer must address the impact that may be caused by the digital divide.

The participants with the experience of the Connecting Classroom Program tried the PBLT approach in their EFL classrooms inspired by its benefits and later, in 2023 all the participants administered the test system aligning with experiential learning to shift learners from rote memorization to critical – analytical thinking, higher-order thinking, problem-solving, and productivity (Kavlu, 2015). They also opine to keep the pen-paper exam with a meticulous proportion to measure the learners' learning outcomes. Hence, the teachers, the teacher educators, and the policy makers need to possess a positive and resilient mindset to integrate this innovative instructional pedagogy of PBLT in our curriculum and try to make the lessons more learner-centered and environment-friendly for a greener world.

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1

**Performance Indicators in Group Work**

Experience: 5 Title: Together We are a Family		Class: VI		Subject: English
Performance Indicator (PI)	Level of Performance Indicator			Activities to be observed
	□	○	△	
6.3.1 Students practice democratic skills in different situations	Students practice one of the democratic skills	Students practice any two of the democratic skills	Students practice all the democratic skills	<b>Activity 5.9</b> The teacher/peer/both observes the students' practice of democratic skills (e.g., students' ability to listen to others attentively, respect others' opinions and respond logically) during a classroom discussion.
	Specific performance to determine the level of PI			
	Students demonstrate either one of the skills i.e., listening to others attentively or respecting others' opinions or responding logically during the classroom discussion.	Students demonstrate either two of the skills i.e., listening to others attentively and/or respecting others' opinions and/or responding logically during the classroom discussion.	Students demonstrate their skills of listening to others attentively and respecting others' opinions and responding logically during the classroom discussion almost fully.	

## APPENDIX 2

**Sample of 1<sup>st</sup> Summative Assessment Guideline for Grade VII in 2023**

Five performance indicators (PI) from three competencies (2, 3, and 4) will be assessed in the 1<sup>st</sup> summative assessment in Grade VII. For this summative assessment, four practice sessions and one Final Assessment Day will be required.

### 1<sup>st</sup> Summative Assessment Guideline

**Students will write a comparative analysis of the experience/unit 1 of their English and Science textbooks and their key learning from these activities.** In doing so -

Firstly, in practice sessions 1 and 2, students in the group will study and analyse the experience/unit 1 of their English and Science textbooks. During the activity, students will write down the similarities and differences between the experience/unit 1 of their English and Science textbooks.

**Instruction for the teachers: (The focus of these activities is to assess the PI 7.3.1 and 7.3.2)**

- 1) Divide the class into some groups and name each group as Group 1 or Group 2. Each group should be of 4 to 6 students depending on the class size.
- 2) Instruct each group to read carefully first the experience/unit 1 of their English textbook, then the experience/unit 1 of their Science textbook.
- 3) Now tell them to make a list of the similarities and differences between the two units/experiences. **Make sure that all students participate in this activity.**
- 4) Help students to find out the similarities and differences between these two experiences/units. For example, students can compare the illustrations, contents, interesting tasks and activities, language, length of the units, information, and type of tasks of these experiences.
- 5) Later, invite the groups to share their list with the class.
- 6) **During these activities, assess the PI 7.3.1 and 7.3.2 following the checklists.**

Then, in practice sessions 3 and 4, students will discuss, plan, and independently demonstrate the use of synonyms, antonyms and degrees of comparison in their writings while comparing the two experiences/units.

**Instruction for the teachers: (The focus of these activities is to assess the PI of 7.2.1 and 7.2.2)**

- 1) Firstly, tell students to discuss how they will present the comparative analysis. For example, they can use a table, graph, pictures, or just descriptive writing.
- 2) Refer students to Experience/Unit 2 *Playing With the Words* and Experience/Unit 4 *The Frog and the Ox* and help them with the use of synonyms, antonyms and degrees of comparison in their writing.
- 3) Now instruct students to make the first draft of their write-ups independently. Tell them that the focus of this writing is the use of synonyms, antonyms; and degrees of adjectives (positive, comparative, superlative); not the writing skills.
- 4) Then instruct students to work in pairs to review and edit their writing.
- 5) Instruct them to submit the final version of their writings and keep these copies as evidence for assessment.

Assessment Day

Students will write a short text on 'My Key Learning from the Comparative Analysis'.

**Instruction for the teachers: (The focus of these activities is to assess the PI 7.4.2)**

- 1) Instruct students, in groups, to reflect on all the activities and discuss what they have learned from the experience/unit 1 of their English and Science textbooks, and also from their friends during the group activities.
- 2) Tell them to list all their learning.
- 3) Now ask students to discuss and select 3 - 4 important learning from the list. After that, ask students to discuss why these (3 - 4) learnings are important.
- 4) Now ask the students to write a short text (around 200 words) individually describing the most important learning they have selected. Tell them to explain why these learning are important to them.
- 5) Refer students to the note on the central theme from the poem 'If' and help them identify their key learning and how to present them in brief.
- 6) Then tell students to rewrite the text (they have written above) within 40-60 words as a first draft focusing on the main ideas (key theme) of the text.
- 7) Ask them to edit the draft as a final one with the guidance of their peers and teachers.
- 8) Finally invite students to share the main ideas of the text to the whole class. Give 2 - 3 minutes to each student for presentation.
- 9) Tell students to submit the copies of the final draft of the main ideas of the text.
- 10) **Use these copies to assess PI 7.4.2 following a checklist and keep these copies as evidence for assessment**

### APPENDIX 3

#### SAMPLE OF PARTICIPANTS' TRANSCRIBED NARRATIVES

##### Teacher's Narratives

(Transcribed Text)

P: Participant, Moni Begum

R: Researcher

R: Assalamualaikum, apa,

P: Olaikum asalam, apa

R: How are you?

P: Fine, thank you. You?

R: Good, thanks.

P: I was thinking about you the other day. You know the topic I chose for my PhD is quite similar to yours. You are working with PBLT, and my topic is soft skills in the EFL classroom.

R: Oh, that's a good topic. But today I would like to start with your schooling when you were learning English as a learner.

P: Sure

R: First, if you share a little bit about the process of learning English in your childhood...

P: Actually, I am very lucky that my schooling happened to be in a suburban area - Not at all rural, not at all urban and it was an institution of BCIC. Fairly sophisticated and well-managed school.

Pedagogy in the English class, what I understood was the grammar translation method. First of all, we have learned the letters and alphabet. We have learnt various terms, their definitions, kinds, and examples. Even when our questions were used to be set, we were asked how many types of articles there are in grammar, and what is called an article - Give examples with definition. Usage is less taught. There was less exercise done. Then our teacher made us memorize translations and phrases regularly. A very good thing was that he used to get us to make sentences with words from the textbooks. He also encouraged us to make sentences using new words and phrases, taking context from the surrounding situations.

R: Was there any other teacher in school whose teaching method you found interesting and effective?

P: There were two - one in primary school and another in high school. I would like to mention here about Mr. Islam, who was in high school.

I am lucky as I was always studious and good at English. So I could catch whatever the teacher explained in the class. Another God-gifted trait I had, I could remember whatever information teachers used to give us.

Sir would encourage us to write our own. So I used to write my own and try to integrate the notes that the teacher gave in class. Then I used to show my writing to the teacher, and he corrected my writing and motivated me a lot to keep practicing writing my own independently. He used to encourage me to make a portfolio of writing parts. He used to give more input in my writing, he would think if there were any lacking.

R: So there was a direct influence of the teacher behind your success in learning English.

P: Obviously. I never had to go to a private tutor, and between the test exam and the SSC exam, I went to a tutor, but it was the same school teacher, Mr. Islam.

R: Now you are teaching. Do you think there is an influence on your teachers' teaching method? If yes, how?

P: Certainly, it has, though it is my own version, because I have brought some changes, as I have taken some training, I studied teaching methods, I accumulated everything and tried to make it my teaching style.

But I believe that the teaching I am doing now was based on my teacher's teaching style. We were also in large numbers in the class. But in writing class, he used to motivate everyone to write independently.

Maybe he could not check all of them. The problem occurs when there is a large class. Bringing out potential students, and motivating them were then and still are.

I will encourage everyone, but according to their level. I learned this from my teacher in school. There are normally three categories of students. The good ones are taught one way, the medium ones another way, and the slow learners are taught differently. He never had a plan to make everyone a scholar and I tried to motivate weak students only to pass. He used to deeply motivate those who were good students to go further.

I follow my teacher's method and never provide notes for my students to memorize. I let them write their own and help them with information, sentence patterns, and vocabulary. This is a good technique to make a child good at English, and I adopted it from my teacher. Later, when I did different training sessions, it helped me to hold on to that belief. Especially in the last class, when you have students of different levels. Amazingly, I found they are doing their work, they are doing their own level, but they are doing the same thing.

For example, I can say something about today's class. There were 11 groups of 5 students each and I have them one lesson each group to find out meaning, parts of speech at least one similar word and opposite word, within 20 minutes they completed their job and another 10 minutes they spent jotting down the main vocabularies and then made a gallery presentation, Amazing what happened, within a very short time, most of the weak students slow learners specially reported me that they learnt 25 new words that day.

R: Really slow learners can be intrigued to learn from their peers if the teacher can intervene by scaffolding their learning process in a planned way. Well, when we were in school and college, did we get any group work or pair work? I didn't get it but if you got it please share...

P: No. we did not have any.

R: I know you did many PBL with your pupils as you worked for the ISA award under the British Council's Connecting Classrooms program. For that purpose, you went through several training sessions. How did you feel when you first came across this type of innovative teaching methodology, where you needed to make a project plan or action plan and distribute work, dividing students into 4 or 5 groups?

P: I felt very excited to implement it and felt sad that my previous pupils missed such a good experience of learning.

R: You know now a new curriculum is going to be introduced in 2023 in Bangladesh. If we want to include the method in the new curriculum, how can we implement it in the EFL classroom?

P: It already exists in the new curriculum. The vision of the curriculum is to make the citizens happy, adaptable, and flexible. He should be patriotic as well as a global citizen. So if a teacher wants to instill these among her pupils, obviously the pupils will be digitally sound, and finally, whatever he or she learns, they may implement it in real life. Now, if we want all these to happen to a student I think there is no alternative to Project-based Language Teaching.

Now we have PBL in English on a small scale. It would certainly be good if we could integrate other subjects into the curriculum.

R: The crucial question arises: if we just include that we have to develop soft skills, interpersonal skills, patriotic zeal, and global citizenship for pupils that doesn't mean that the teachers are doing this taking initiative on their own accord.

P: Indeed. They are not doing it.

R: As you are self-motivated and dedicated to students, you are implementing it. And also, your cognitive and creative ability allows you to plan and go through a process for instilling these virtues in your learners. But what about other teachers less motivated and inadequately trained?

So if the curriculum says that the teachers need to plan and implement two projects or at least one project half yearly and annually, is it possible for them, and if possible, what would it require to help them

P: Firstly, I should say that it is possible with our teachers. I have seen that the teachers who participated in the training by the British Council came to stay for 3 to 4 days there, and it was face-to-face. So they were grossly engaged in training activities. Accordingly, they are dedicated to doing the things they are made to do.

The problem I should say is that sometimes the teacher selection is not good, and they wanted English Teachers, but the school sent a science teacher or Maths teachers, or Religion teachers. So they fail to adapt as the modules are designed the English teachers. Here we see a variation in the case of receiving the training. The way I could perceive the training, my other colleagues may not. If the science or other subject teachers are given PBL training individually, they might be able to get the core of it and might implement it in the classroom. I think there is a kind of gap in the teaching and learning process for the trainees. So when they are placed in the wrong place, they can't understand and may not have the required motivation,

Then again, I think if the training on PBL can be arranged focusing on the individual subject they teach, if there is a time frame to implement one Project in the classroom for three months, and if they are called again after three months for a one-day follow-up training, there can be a tangible outcome. If they are asked, okay, what is the result of PBL they are doing in the class, and if there are any lacking, they can be helped with the specific issues. Thus if we can prepare one batch, analyze the success rate of their outcomes, and measure their presentation, then if you can provide incentives to the best three of four schools by visiting and measuring their success, if the teachers are appreciated with the prize, if the children are encouraged and the head teachers are encouraged, I think it will work. The more we can disseminate at the root level, the more it will work.

Day 2

R: As you mentioned before, when there was a call for training, one mismanagement was that the teachers of other subjects like Maths, science, religion, etc., were sent. But as projects are interdisciplinary, other subject teachers can be included and can prove useful ... you also mentioned that projects are integrated with other subjects like Maths, Science, history, literature, etc.

P: Yes

R: As you work on the New Curriculum 2023, could you please share how the new curriculum includes PBL for language learning?

P: There is always a section in an English textbook that is only a project. Project activities are always in the English curriculum. And here is a correction that I did not do any work in new curriculum. I study the new curriculum to understand what the new curriculum wants really so that my thesis gets a little bit updated, so I

studied it and collected some resources on it. But actually PBL is incorporated or not I am not aware of it.

R: Do you think if the curriculum and the exam system don't demand it, the teacher will do it of their own accord? As I have seen that the government also wanted to introduce the same kind of activities in a project like "Bangabandhu and muktijuddoke ke Jani" (Let's know Bangabandhu and freedom fighters), and another was planting a tree in tub and writing in a diary about its growth during the pandemic.

P: The process of the project (Planting trees in tubs) is so lengthy that I don't think it will be successful if we take it as PBL. Again, if we talk about "Bangabandhu and muktijuddoke Jani" (Let's know Bangabandhu and freedom fighters), the activity we did in our school, I have seen that there is no information for students and they are not properly informed. They are only told, "You will visit a freedom fighter and ask these questions". It was like staging a drama with students. They were only guided to act, and they were not even told the purpose of the activity. Even the teachers were unable to understand the real purpose of the activity. It was our failure. The person who dealt it he thought that the government wanted it... so just connect a freedom fighter and make a short video clip .... Submit it. The same thing happens in our school and our head teacher.... I want to disclose something here ...subject teacher and head teacher... the head teacher must understand first .... Then he/she will make the subject teacher understand... because if the head teacher gets it, he/ she can make the subject teacher get it. But if the head teacher doesn't understand, the subject teacher can't make the head teacher understand it... because it will hurt his ego to learn from the subordinate. He will not take anything from the junior. Actually, they don't normally take. This is a great drawback. So I think... the activity was done in my school .... They have made a good video, but it was not made by our children, but edited by a professional body from outside, not even by the teacher. How did our children benefit from this?

R: I was quite excited about the project by the government, but for the first time, I can realize that, no, actually, our children could not benefit in any way. They were not engaged in any thinking process. In my institution, the same thing happened.

P: Maximum school did the same thing. They thought that they had to uphold an image of the school in front of the government, so they did it. But they could not materialize the actual purpose of the project.

R: Okay, so you have finished the connecting projects successfully. Share if you have done any project after that, and how are you motivated to continue it?

P: Yes, I have done projects afterward also because I have seen that doing a project on the environment, my students have become habituated not to throw litter here and there. I even saw that when I offered them to take chocolates in class, the boys put the plastic wrappers of the chocolates in their pockets, and the girls put the wrappers in the bag. When I first did the projects for the Award, I thought that I would normally do this. Now I have to do this in an organized way so that I can present them. After winning the award, I continued doing the projects as I saw a big, tangible positive change in the habits of my students; they have become conscious of environmental preservation. So I continue doing the projects in my lesson where it is required.

R: I see that you are a highly motivated teacher and would like to plan a project it is needed or instructed in the EFT textbooks. What about other teachers ... how do you think they can be motivated ... one, you said training is a must. What else can the government do to make teachers, especially new teachers, acquainted with this method?

P: Yes, training is a must, and at the same time, different steps can be taken, like new teachers can be taken to visit schools that are running projects in different classes as field trips. But there are some barriers too, as they rush to complete the syllabus... a head teacher is a great barrier for enthusiastic teachers who want to run a project for the betterment of the students. They need to convince him sometimes why the project should be done. Because in the new curriculum even it is not emphasized to run the project for continuous assessments, as there are many options for that purpose, like homework, assignments, etc.

I want to share one of my experience ... I wanted to do project on money management in class 9 and 10 ...it is like I said to the students, "you have to pay 50 tk each and you will make a group of 10, so it will be 500tk in total for each group and with this 500 tk, think what you can do from your level and context...

But I didn't have permission from my head teacher. You know those who live in the rural side, the students there can buy the chickens with the money, and they can earn money rearing and breeding more, selling eggs.

Another group can do other different things. I thought that since ours is an agricultural country, students can all have a small nursery to grow plants and sell it for the collected 500 taka. We teachers can buy the seedlings, as many of us are fond of gardening in tubs. Or the school could buy those grown seedlings from the students. Others can brainstorm what other business ideas there can be. This way of thinking, how many business ideas could have been generated?

But I could not get the permission of the head teacher. You think how productive the project could be to teach students the value of money, and at the same time the rural side students could get some financial benefits.

So here I would say the head teacher can be a barrier for enthusiastic teachers.

I could not make him realize the productivity of the project... There could be a guardian meeting to obtain consent from them. But he opposed it, hearing nothing.

R: As you said, that head may create a big issue .....

P: That is why when there is any training, the head teacher might get first trained, and if they understand, they can transfer it to the subject teacher, and then the subject teachers can be brought under specific subject training. The head teacher then eagerly sent the teachers .... The reliable one who can handle projects,

R: What else might come you think in doing PBL in the English class?

P. Yes, I think giving time for PBL can be a problem .... Suppose we have a tradition for private tuition ..... Science...Maths...English .... ICT.... In good and well known school sometimes, students take private tuitions for all subjects... since the teacher has to give a substantial time for running a project, Suppose you want make your students write about different occasions going on in neighbourhood,... now you want to give them a field trip to a boishakhi mela or trade fair or book fair.... you want to give an idea about local market or village fair .because you want to write their experience connected to their real life ..... but the specific teacher don't have time for that and in school hour it may create some difficulties as he has classes with other grades on that day.....again he has private tuition.

The rigid mindset of the teachers.... That we did not do any project work in our days ... didn't I learn anything? ..... Our children even did a board stand without this project work. There is a mentality from the teacher not to bring any change .....

R: There is always resistance from the teacher's side,

P: Even we teachers don't understand that making our students adaptable to changing situations is a must. So I think that it is necessary to take the pedagogy

acceptable to all first. The ones who don't work must also understand that it is inevitable. Then we can apply for it.

R: please share what do think if the PBLT is not included in assessment process, the teachers including stakeholders would like to take the initiative for PBLT.

P: Project work is a kind of homework. Formative assessment evaluates collaboration, presentation skills, leadership skills, and other soft skills, and this is only possible through homework. HW can be an assignment, any project, or a reflection writing. Now, if we think that we want to evaluate the skills of students, we can give them a small project... if it is fixed, any homework will be project work. If it is fixed, then the teacher may take initiative otherwise, the teacher will evaluate taking the help of other options, so the PBLT will be avoided.

But the teacher can take initiative for small projects avoiding the big ones,,,,, recently my students did a project ...I told them to find a suitable mobile brand in 40k .... They bring information with features each brand offers and there was even debate among them why their one is the best.

R. Many experienced and untrained teachers in the urban and rural areas cannot plan projects suitable for their students. What steps can be taken for them?

P: When there will be cluster training on the new curriculum, there must be a sorting of the teachers who could understand the pedagogy better and create lessons based on it. In the training, there must be activities for Ideation by the teachers so that the teachers in the training can make plans for PBLT according to their level of students and needs keeping their own context in mind.

That's how, training will be another way to pick the teachers who can generate ideas for the PBLT if we can make a pool of well-acquainted teachers who can generate ideas or do Ideation and if we can get some project plans created by them ..... We can collect some plans which will be of our local Bangladeshi context and we can help other teachers providing the plans ....

Then the teachers who got training can be asked to implement the project in their class according to their own choice .... From that training, if we can make a project bank like a question bank it will be a great addition and a great assistance for all teachers may be....

R: That's a unique idea. We have come to the end of the interview. Anything to add?

P: And there must be another thing I would like to add - the project must be fun and attention-catching for the students otherwise if they don't get interested, it may not be successful .... So the teacher must choose a topic so that it can arouse the interest of the students...

R: Thank you for your time.

P: It's always a pleasure talking to you.

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