English teaching in Bangladesh: the lived experiences of secondary teachers in the process of change and innovation

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April 2019
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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the University of Brighton for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
Declaration

I declare that the research work contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the author. This work has not been previously submitted to this or any other university and does not incorporate material already submitted for a degree.

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Date
Abstract

This study explores the impact of change and innovation in English teaching through the lived experiences of a small group of Bangladeshi non-government rural secondary teachers. The research occurred in Bangladesh, a post-colonial context, where teachers are implementing Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), switching from colonial originated Grammar Translation Method (GTM) as an outcome of policy decision-making. The research context is a traditional society dealing with issues of poverty and globalisation, while simultaneously attempting to create an education system that is responsive to changes in the economy and the needs and rights of its citizens. With the increasing importance of EFL teaching and learning in Bangladesh, the study focuses on the impact of the shift from GTM to CLT through the lived experiences of teachers. Through the lens of their beliefs, perceptions and teaching practices, this study explores their responses to change and innovation and considers how these have impacted upon their awareness of their own identity and perceptions of their own agency. The research has identified policy implications for managing change within the specific context, both locally and nationally.

The methodological approach adopted in this study is life history and includes personal interviews and case studies of 11 English teachers in Meherpur, a small district of Bangladesh. This research has four major findings: firstly, that many teachers find English teaching using the CLT approach difficult and have continued to rely upon GTM; secondly, that the teaching of English is carried out in an under-resourced context, which impacts upon the implementation of innovations such as CLT; thirdly, students as well as common people in the society have lost trust in education and in political systems due to frequent policy changes and political interference in the education system at macro and micro level; and, fourthly, that in this remote rural area teachers generally, and female teachers particularly, had limited agency in implementing the innovation and change and had identified the technology transfer as unsuitable for the context. The findings also revealed that political interference in the education system has hindered teachers’ professional development and the successful implementation of innovations in the context of Bangladeshi socio-cultural realities. The study offers recommendations for policy makers and implementers to develop a continuous professional development structure for teachers and a balanced education system for the nation.
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Acronyms & Glossary

AL  Awami League
BANBEIS  Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics
BBS  Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics
B.Ed.  Bachelor of Education
BNP  Bangladesh Nationalist Party
BSc  Bachelor of Science
CAL  Computer Aided Learning
CLT  Communicative Language Teaching
CMC  College management Committee
CPD  Continuous Professional Development
DfIDB  Department for International Development in Bangladesh
DSHE  Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education
DC  District Commissioner (district level head of the public administration)
DU  Dhaka University
EFL  English as a Foreign Language
ESL  English as a Second Language
ELTIP  English Language Teaching Improvement Project
FSSAP  Female Secondary School Assistance Project
GoB  Government of Bangladesh
GT  Grammar-Translation Method
HSC  Higher Secondary Certificate
IMF  International Monetary Fund
IMLD  International Mother Language Day
JU  Jahangirnagar University
L1  First Language (mother tongue)
L2  Second Language
MoE  Ministry of Education
NAEM  National Academy for Educational Management (Bangladesh)
NAPE  National Academy for Primary Education (Bangladesh)
NCTB  National Curriculum and Textbook Board
NGO  Non-Government Organisation
PTI  Primary Teacher Training Institute (Bangladesh)
SSC  Secondary School Certificate
SMC  School Management Committee
SEQAEP  Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project
TBL  Task Based Learning
TQI  Teachers Quality Improvement Project
TTC  Teacher Training College
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Setting the Scene

The conflict that Walcott expresses is an everyday experience for millions of people living in post-colonial communities. They locate themselves uncertainly between Western values and their indigenous cultures, between English and the vernacular. Paradoxically, however, with the passage of time, the option of choosing one or the other is no longer open to them: ‘the English language has become too deeply rooted in their soil, and in their consciousness, to be considered “alien”’ (Canagarajah, 1999).

This study is an exploration into the teaching of English from a colonial to a modern context through the lived experiences, and responses to change and innovation, of a small group of ‘non-government’ secondary English teachers in one district in Bangladesh. In Bangladesh, like many so-called third world countries, ‘two traditions mingle in the blood and flow through the veins of entire populations’, echoing Walcott’s experience. Of these colonised subjects, some have elected convenient, self-serving resolutions to this conflict, by understanding the complex interconnection between the two linguistic traditions. History overflows with examples of those who have ‘betrayed’ the claims of the vernacular for the advantages of English, the language of the erstwhile coloniser, and now feel a sense of being ‘outsiders’ in both Western and local communities. Others, ‘especially in the period since decolonisation, have rejected English lock, stock, and barrel, in order to be faithful to indigenous traditions – a choice which has deprived many of them of enriching interactions with multicultural communities and traditions through the English language’ (Canagarajah, 1999: p1).
In my view, Bangladesh falls into the second of the above groups, as English is still not in daily use by the mass population. Ordinary people in the context have not welcomed the use of the English language and few people, even in the capital city of Dhaka, can speak or communicate in English. In this study, I have explored the status of English teaching and learning through the lived experiences of secondary English teachers in the context and identified a number of reasons for the under-progressed status of English. I will first introduce the complex context of Bangladesh and gradually move to a discussion of how these complex issues and events have shaped the lived experiences of the ‘non-government’ secondary English teachers who are the subject of this study.

1.2. Overview of the Contextual issues

While investigating the teaching of English through the lived experiences of secondary teachers in the Bangladeshi context, a number of strongly linked issues have emerged from my study. These include the historical influences that I have already mentioned; poor socio-economic conditions, which place various constraints on teachers and especially rural secondary English teachers; the stagnant colonial-formatted English teaching-learning system; the political and the religious environments and the impact of these on ordinary people, and the existing education system. All of these are strongly linked to the issues of teachers’ agency and the status of women in the context.

Bangladeshi people have experienced ‘colonialism’ twice: first British and subsequently Pakistani. Memories of both colonisers have resulted in ordinary people feeling disdain towards them. I start with the history of the ‘Language Movement’, one important reason behind this dislike, and discuss this further in Chapter 2. The Language Movement started on 21st February 1952 when Bangladeshi (then East Pakistani) people protested against the West Pakistani attempt of language imposition, torture and exploitation that caused a 9 months war resulted in the independence of Bangladesh, imprinting a permanent identity on the nation.

In this context, religious and political conditions negatively impacted on the agency of low-income people and especially on the status of women. Agency or emancipation is still limited for women, specifically in rural areas where Islamic strictures still demand that women wear the ‘Burkha’ (a type of dress that covers a woman’s entire body, including face and head) and where they are prevented from working alongside men. Muslim society generally – and in rural areas especially – strongly believes that women
should stay inside the house doing domestic work and taking care of the family. Women have limited access to education, jobs and any decision-making activities, despite the ‘constitutional guarantee that disparities will be eliminated’, which, in reality, has not yet been realised (Hossen & Westhues, 2010). Although the impact of globalisation in recent years has brought in some winds of change, women still suffer limited agency compared to male members of society.

1.3 CLT and Bangladesh

In the context discussed above, CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) was introduced in 1997 as a shift away from the existing Grammar-Translation Method (GTM) for the teaching and learning of English. The government replaced the old English curriculum for classes VI, VII and VII with a new CLT-based curriculum in 1996 and subsequently, in 1997, the CLT-based new curriculum was extended to classes VIII, IX and X. In the new curriculum a large amount of new content was added, most of which was introduced from the higher classes to the lower classes.

It is essential to discuss here CLT and the major arguments that have evolved around this methodology. CLT emerged in Europe and the USA in the 1970s and, in the late twentieth century, became such a dominant paradigm within Western ELT and applied linguistics that ‘to admit to a disbelief in CLT would be regarded as “heresy”’ (Brown 2001; cf. Hall 2011, p93).

CLT appeared in a period when more people than ever before were crossing international borders for work that had immediate functional language needs (Hall, 2011; p 93). This might have been a driving factor for policy reformers to introduce CLT in the Bangladeshi context, as a considerable number of people had been taking overseas jobs, mainly in the Middle East and in some Asian countries. CLT promoters from BANA (Britain, Australia, North America) countries (Holliday, 1994) might have successfully convinced them to adopt CLT as an effective tool in addressing functional language needs. It is useful to mention here that the CLT methodology is oriented towards a learning group ideal, but it is also useful to note that CLT has already been criticised in different parts of the world for not taking into account the socio-cultural aspects of each context.
The origins of CLT generally outlined a changing view of language functions and communication. Philosophically, the focus on learners and their needs reflects a view of learners as individuals, which was common within previous methods, such as, ‘the direct method’ and ‘the Humanistic language teaching method’ (Crookes, 2009). Richards and Rodgers (2001) summarise the communicative view of language as:

- Language is a system for the expression of meaning,
- The primary function of language is to allow interaction and communication,
- The structure of language reflects its functional and communicative uses,
- The primary units of language are not merely its grammatical and structural features, but categories of functional and communicative meaning.

Savignon (2002) states that CLT derives from a multidisciplinary perspective that includes linguistics, psychology, philosophy, sociology and educational research, at the least. The focus has been the elaboration and implementation of programs and methodologies that promote the development of functional language ability through learners’ participation in communicative events. Central to CLT is the understanding of language learning as both an educational and a political issue. Language teaching is inextricably linked with language policy: ‘Viewed from a multicultural international as well as internal perspective, diverse socio-political contexts mandate not only a diverse set of language-learning goals but a diverse set of teaching strategies. Program design and implementation depend on negotiation between policy makers, linguists, researchers and teachers’ (Savignon, 2002; p 4). However, in the Bangladeshi context, I have noticed a lack of coordination between these sectors.

The introduction of CLT in the Bangladeshi context involves the teaching of English through the practice of four skills, namely speaking, listening, reading and writing and replaced the old GTM that taught explicit grammar and translation without any focus on the above four skills. CLT also discourages teacher-talking time in the classroom and puts more focus on learners’ engagement in communication activities through pair work, group work or choral drill. The basic principles of CLT, as introduced in the Bangladeshi context in 1997, are:

- Learners learn a language through using it to communicate;
- Learners are encouraged to use the four language skills in class activities;
• Learners learn through interacting and co-operating;
• Learners engage in meaningful, real-life activities.

(Arifa Rahman, 2006).

Particular attention has been given in recent times to the cultural appropriacy of CLT (Holliday 1994; Kramsch & Sullivan 1996) as its objectives and procedures have been introduced into non-western cultures. Hedge (2000) believes that ‘cultural appropriacy’ is a term, which is relevant to both institutions such as schools and the wider society, which forms their context’. Hedge (ibid) argues that according to studies of innovation, it is rarely successful unless a set of factors has carefully been addressed: for example, the degree of compatibility between the existing teaching philosophy and the innovation; teachers’ perception of its relevance to the students’ needs; the availability of resources for the innovation; the extent of agreement between the classroom procedures of the new approach and the existing way in which teachers conduct classroom activities, and the relative advantages of the innovation. To Hedge (2000), all of these factors will influence the extent to which a communicative approach is adopted by teachers and the ways in which it is adjusted. Considering these factors, I agree with Hedge’s argument and believe that CLT has been a mismatch in Bangladeshi context. I discuss my reasons in the following sections.

In Bangladesh, as in many parts of the world, teachers mostly fall into the ‘TESEP teachers’ (Holliday, 1994) category, i.e. working in state Tertiary, Secondary and Primary education implementing the national curriculum. At all levels, few of these teachers have received any pre or in-service training (even in traditional GT format) on the existing English curriculum. In the context, teacher trainings are provided by the public or private Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) so that these teachers could follow a set of centrally developed English textbooks under the national curriculum. After the introduction of CLT-based English textbooks, a small number of English teachers from the capital city of Dhaka and nearby areas received a short orientation (15-21 days) on CLT methodology, but this kind of CLT promotion between two branches of the profession is viewed as ‘technology transfer’ (Holliday 1994, p. 12), which is problematic because the educational environment within which BANA (Britain, Australia, North America) methodologies, e.g. CLT, are designed and implemented is very different from those of TESEP English language education contexts, and this is especially true in a context like Bangladesh where English has already been in a
disadvantageous position because of the sensitive history of the Language Movement. It is also apparent that a methodology such as CLT, developed in BANA countries and designed for situations within BANA countries, might not adapt to the Bangladeshi context because of differences in terms of language, culture, religion, ethnicity and so on (Holliday 1994, p. 12).

Another important concern about CLT implementation in the Bangladeshi context is that CLT prescribed facilities or ideal classroom environments are almost always absent in most rural ‘non-government’ (I explain this term in Chapter 2) secondary school settings. In fact, 98% of schools in the Bangladeshi context are rural ‘non-government’ secondary schools where teachers carry out English teaching without any prior CLT knowledge or the necessary teaching resources. It is important to note here that Bangladeshi English teachers, particularly secondary English teachers, have a long tradition of teaching English following the GT method that started in the colonial period. Like most other Asian countries, GTM dependent ‘English teaching in Bangladesh tends to mean teaching grammar, reading and translation’ (Islam and Bari, 2012). This situation has given GT an institutional structure and establishment, meaning that most of the secondary schools and colleges in the country are built and run with physical facilities suitable for the GT method only, such as, large classrooms, fixed seating arrangements, centrally prepared textbooks etc. In this strong GT environment, CLT has been a major challenge to those teachers without any prior knowledge. This has had a devastating impact, as researchers (Savignon, 2002) identify teacher training as the key to its success:

‘Considerable resources, both human and monetary, are being used around the world to respond to the need for language teaching that is appropriate for the communicative needs of learners. The key to success in this endeavour is the education of classroom teachers.’

The failure of Bangladeshi policy makers to design or develop a proper teacher training structure in the country has led to a situation where CLT cannot succeed, due to the majority of non-government secondary English teachers lacking the necessary knowledge and skills to properly do their job.

1.4 Islamism and Politics

Another important issue in the context is what I have termed ‘the Islamisation of Education’. It is important to note here that 90% of the country’s population are liberal
Muslims. I use the term ‘liberal’ to mean that they are religious-minded but not extremist, i.e. they enjoy practicing their own religion, but co-exist with other religions. However, some politicians have used this Muslim-majority status to divide the population on the basis of religion and extend the ‘madrasa’ education (Islamic education), thus giving vent to Islamic extremism. Western Governments and think tanks of European communities have also asserted the close ties between madrasas and Islamic militancy (Blanchard, 2005).

Madrasa education was formally and systematically initiated in Bengal at the beginning of the thirteenth century (1201/1203) when Ikhtyar Uddin Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji established Muslim rule in this area (Jadunath, 1973).

‘… in the politics of Bangladesh, Islam plays an important role especially in shaping the nature and content of public policies. Successive studies on “Islamism” in Bangladesh indicate that over the years Islamic principles and philosophies have gained an important status in deciding the content of public policy and the Islamic political parties have taken advantage of this important status of “Islamism”.’

(Hossain & Curtis, 2010; Riaz, 2010; Riaz & Fair, 2011; cited in Jahan & Shahan, 2014)

I have observed how some previous statesmen used Islamic sentiment to legitimise war criminals’ activities under one Islamic political party and created an anti-Indian trend making the political scenario more critical. These Islamic activists have been the cause of a number of terrorist incidents, trafficking of women, conflicting NGO activities, and the hindering of English learning in the context (as detailed in Chapter 2).

Now I want to examine the political context, as it has played a vital role in shaping people’s attitude towards English. As this study is looking at the teaching and learning of English in a post-colonial context, it would help to understand the political influence on the education system that has shaped policies in the context. Since independence in 1971, the political parties have constantly been involved in violence, corruption, and fostering Islamic fundamentalism instead of building the new nation,

‘The country’s beleaguered population faced the twin challenges of natural disasters and pervasive poverty. One of the key factors influencing trust in the government of Bangladesh is stability, which has been in short supply because of confrontational politics between the two largest parties and accompanying violence.’

Knox (2009)
Unrest, political hostilities and corruption have led the country to become a ‘lack of trust’ society. Currently the common people in the context have no faith in politicians and their activities, or in the public institutions, as reported by Askvik & Jamil (2013),

‘… in a culture of distrust, cooperation is seldom spontaneous and requires extensive legal apparatuses to control and sanction the implementation of formal contracts and public policies. Such apparatuses do not come without costs, and in a low trust society, the transaction costs may be considerably higher than in a society where individuals tend to trust each other.’

The politicians have created two different classes in society with the rich political elites becoming richer and the poor common people poorer. I have termed political elites as the ‘have’ group (who possess money, and power to make anything happen) and the common people as the ‘have-not’ group. Day by day the gap between the ‘haves’ and the ‘have-nots has increased, with public policies invariably benefitting the ‘have’ group. After independence, this ‘have’ group even developed a separate Euro-American curriculum based English medium education system for their children (urban based), while the ‘have-not’ children are left only with the option of going to the public or private (non-government) schools which are mostly situated in semi-urban or rural areas.

It is important to note here that some previous rulers’ intentions of spearheading extreme nationalistic sentiments by promoting 100% use of Bengali (mother tongue) in all official correspondence or documentation also resulted in the banishment of English language use in the context. Manzoor (2007) reports,

‘Historically, the region of Bengal was well-served by a system of education in which Bangla was the medium of primary and secondary education, with English introduced as a second language from grade three in primary school, continued through secondary school, and used as the medium of teaching at the tertiary level. All who went through secondary education became bilingual – capable of functioning in both Bangla and English. This advantage was lost when in the post-liberation era Bangla was made the medium of instruction in higher education. Not only was the incentive to learn English lost, but the supply of qualified English teachers for primary and high school also diminished. It became a vicious cycle and the English advantage that the educated people in South Asia continue to enjoy was lost to Bangladesh.’

(Manzoor, A. 2007)

Manzoor’s (ibid) statement establishes the fact that the politicians officially rejected English from the public or private use in the post-liberation era. As a result, unlike
India, Nigeria or many other countries with an ex-colonial identity, English remained far beyond the common ordinary life. Until recently, it would have been difficult to find anyone speaking English in the cities, let alone the rural or other parts of the country. For example, my British research supervisor struggled to find someone in Dhaka city who understood English and could help him to find transport to reach to his office during his last visit to Bangladesh in April 2014.

Manzoor reveals how political decisions have confined Bangladesh to a ‘monolingual state’ where Bengali is the only medium of communication for the majority of its people. It is ironic that politicians, while encouraging ordinary people to use the Bengali language and avoid English, have their own children educated in English-medium schools and send them to BANA countries for higher education, while the majority of secondary school children are educated by untrained, less-skilled non-government teachers. These untrained teachers mostly belong to the ‘have-not’ group too, living from hand to mouth, and enjoying limited agency. This study has investigated these teachers’ stories, exploring the numerous constraints they are under while teaching English in the context described.

Although English has been made compulsory in the national curriculum and textbooks, in reality the practice or use of this language has not extended beyond the boundaries of the classroom. This is because of the policy influence that is widespread in the existing education system, in teaching, among teacher training institutes, and in government institutes, and the determination of policy makers to maintain a historical and cultural identity through the use of ‘Bengali’ language and culture, which I will discuss later. Thus, the nation has always maintained a preference for Bengali language and culture in all its national and social manifestations, hindering the progress of English.

1.5 Corruption and its Impact on the Classroom Practice of English teachers

I have already discussed politics and corruption in the context, both of which have led the country to become a ‘lack of trust society’. In Chapter Two I include a detailed discussion of the political corruption that has caused a major problem in terms of influencing the classroom and the English teachers in the context, including: malpractice in the allocation of girls stipends; the practice of poorly-qualified or incompetent teachers buying teaching positions in non-government secondary schools
and colleges; the excessive political power exercised by school managers; rife private 
tuition and coaching centre based business {the education ministry has recently decided 
to close all the coaching centres in the country though the decision is changing 
randomly (The Daily star, 18 June, 2019)}, unprofessional marking in examinations, 
etc. All of these have contributed to the deterioration of the quality of education. I 
include below a brief recent report of an example of the type of political corruption that 
is prevalent, and which illustrates how this has gripped the government and impacted on 
the whole education system of the country.

Figure 1: Arrested members of a gang linked to the leaking of question papers.

The Daily Star reports:

‘They targeted all sorts of public exams and recruitment tests. In the last five 
to six years, this organised question paper leak gang struck numerous deals 
with job and admission seekers in exchange of hefty sums, and helped many 
to cheat their way into universities and jobs. Among the gang members are 
government officials and schoolteachers. Some others have been 
recommended for BCS jobs are waiting to be recruited. So far, they made over 
Tk 10 crore (1 million GBP) by leaking questions of different public 
examinations.’

(The Daily Star, 17 June 2019)

1.6 Globalisation and its Impact

From this limited status in the Bengali context, in last decade or so English has slowly 
started making progress mainly due to the boom in the garments industry, which 
globalisation has brought about. An increase in the common people’s interest in 
English has also developed because of the game of cricket. Both these sectors have 
benefitted most from advances in media and technology, through global
communication, and exposure via the Internet and TV channels and both have raised the English learning profile. Crystal (1997: 75, cf Kumaravadivelu 2012, p 6) acknowledges that because of its association with the global economy, English is deemed to be the ‘natural choice for progress’ for individuals as well as nations. Several scholars (Rahman, 2009, Salahuddin et al, 2013) also have suggested ‘this is high time we started to see the future development of English as a world language and took proper initiatives to develop our English language learners to a global standard in Bangladesh’. With these powerful stimuli, in recent times English has started being prioritised by the policy makers, as well as the next generation of learners.

In spite of this progress, English, unlike in neighbouring countries, has hardly been used as a tool for interpersonal communication, though a group of researchers claims that English has firmly established itself as an essential part of the country’s socio-cultural and economic life due to its extensive use for specific purposes in education and research, commerce, international communication and sports in recent times (Roshid 2014; Chowdhury & Farooqui 2011; Rahman 2010; Chowdhury & Le Ha 2008; Chowdhury 2003; Banu & Sussex 2001). However, in my experience, English use still remains limited to the educated elite class.

Now I would like to look at the global distribution of English, which is often described in terms of three different contexts, such as English as a Native Language (ENL), English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Thus, the dissemination of English throughout the world is seen in territories, namely, ENL territories, ESL territories and EFL territories (McArthur, 1996). Officially, although English has been accorded the status of second language in Bangladesh, this does not make Bangladesh an ‘ESL country’, because there exists a large non-Anglophone environment outside the English classrooms in the context. As discussed earlier, the colonial past of this sub-continent and the dominant historical events have been intertwined with political decisions that did not allow the progress of English in the context. From my childhood and through my professional life I have seen that rural people in the country mock those who speak English in public places, such as a tea-stall or a bus stop. A vast number of popular folk songs and traditional dramas based on those historical events are still composed, staged and enjoyed by people in public and private celebrations reminding the nation to recognise its own identity and contributing to the non-progress status of English.
In relation to identity, it appears to me that Bangladeshi policy makers are still confused about how to find a balance between maintaining a national cultural identity and supporting the learning of English with or without its global culture. They have felt the importance of the historical background on one hand but could not disregard the emerging need for English learning on the other, because of the progress in the garment industry, as well as in cricket. In such a confusing state of identity, I agree with Hinkel that ‘until learner’s first cultural identity is established; it might be harmful to learn about other cultures’ (Hinkel 1999, p. 206). Hutchinson and Waters (1987:72 cf. Hall 2011 p 181) also write about context and cultural identity, arguing that, ‘Learning can, and should, be seen in the context in which it takes place. Learning is not just a mental process; it is a process of negotiation between individuals and society.’ In the Bangladeshi context, where English is becoming a technological and commercial necessity day by day, learner needs have also identified the importance of developing communicative abilities in English to pursue the opportunities offered in the global marketplace. At this crucial moment, I believe that CLT promoters from BANA countries have successfully convinced Bangladeshi policy makers to import CLT and that Bangladeshi policy makers, without giving proper thought to the contextual differences between different countries, have unwittingly joined the BANA promotion:

‘In developing countries, where education has been expanding faster than its resources, and where English has become a technological and commercial necessity, the riches of the new BANA (Britain, Australia and North America) group have found a welcoming market’.

Holliday (1994, p 78)

I believe it was unwise for Bangladeshi policy makers to agree to the ‘technology transfer’ when they already knew the strengths and weaknesses of the context, and that the funds might run out. This has led me to research how these teachers are negotiating their reality with English teaching in the above context.

Many researchers (Hutchinson and Waters, 1987; Hinkel 1999) have encouraged the separability of language and culture in EFL arguing that young learners can learn English without learning about English-speaking cultures; but there are others who maintain that such separation is impossible if communicative competence is the goal (Byram 1989). It is significant to note here that BANA endorsed concept of ELT urges on a number of ‘fallacies’ in which it is assumed that learning other languages will inhibit English language learning; so ‘the mother tongue should not be allowed in the classroom’ (Phillipson 1991:27-8 cf. Holliday 1994, p 99). As a teacher trainer, I have
also had similar experience with ELTIP trainers (trained in BANA countries) who have promoted 100 percent use of English, thus overlooking contextual issues such as the teacher’s lack of skills and training, incompatible class size and environment, lack of materials and resources, and the use of local language in the secondary classroom. It would be a useful contribution to knowledge to know how teachers are managing the innovation in their classroom when they themselves are struggling with their own lack of skills to properly communicate in English, let alone their attitudes or any other issue. This is crucial information for this study if this imbalanced promotion has impacted on teachers’ reluctance or even resistance against CLT use in the classroom.

As discussed, English Learning in Bangladesh has gradually been given greater priority because of the growth of the garment industry and participation in cricket on an international stage. It has also emerged as crucial to better education and better jobs opportunities. Kumaravadivelu (2012) observes that the English language is of paramount importance in equipping students in so-called developing countries to meet the challenges of surviving and growing in the face of increasing globalisation,

‘As English is a language of globality and coloniality and in such a context, learner needs are also shifting towards the development of genuine communicative abilities required to exploit the unlimited possibilities that the global market has opened up’.

(p. 68)

Spurred on by BANA countries, it was with a view to aiding the teaching and learning of English that CLT came into the Bangladeshi context to replace the traditional GTM that had existed in the state-run education system until 1997. However, some native educationists (Mahbubul Alam, 2014) have strongly ratified GTM and have taken the view that CLT has been an innovation ‘drastically devaluing the principles of the long-practiced traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM)’. Alam (ibid) has identified CLT as impractical in the context and especially in the rural areas,

‘In English the performance of students is deplorable now in Bangladesh. It has been because our secondary and higher secondary level students are getting neither direct touch of grammar as proposed by GTM nor the fullest supposed advantages from CLT. As a result of both exiled condition of GTM and impracticality of CLT their situation is in between now. The students of rural areas are in more awful circumstance. So, it is high time we adopted a reasonable ELT method. To do so a comparative practical analysis of GTM and CLT is necessary...’

(p.1)
It would be useful to note that the GTM within ELT (and as a method for teaching other modern languages) ‘emerged from the teaching of classical languages such as Latin’ (Hall 2011). Traditionally GTM has been implemented in the language classrooms in the context of Bangladesh with different names from the colonial age (Alam, 2014). GTM was used for the purpose of helping students read and understand foreign language and literature earlier in the last century. Proponents of this method assert that learning a foreign language is achieved through the constant and fast translation of sentences from the target language to the learner’s first language and vice versa. The GTM splits the language into parts determined by the grammatical categories of the language, which has psycholinguistic validity, that is, the task of learning is made easier if one is exposed to one part of the grammatical system at a time (Brumfit and Johnson, 1979, p. 82; in Alam 2014). I have included an in-depth discussion on GTM in the literature review section [Chapter 3].

I have discussed earlier how – compared to other EFL countries – the CLT import to Bangladesh has not fitted in a context that has ‘centrally controlled, state-run education policies … with fewer resources’ (Karim, 2004; Holliday, 1994), and might turn out to be an alien concept to the teachers of Bangladesh because of the different context, culture and historical background. For this reason, I have focused on the lived experiences of a group of rural non-government secondary teachers to gain an authentic picture of English teaching and learning in the context – not from a top-down perspective, but from a bottom-up view, which can inform stakeholders in the introduction and evaluation of education innovation in the context. The reason I have given importance to their beliefs, identity and agency is because of the ‘close connection between teachers’ beliefs and teachers’ behaviour in the classroom activities’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p62). If teachers’ beliefs are different from the theories of the innovations, this will of course reflect in their classroom practices. A study by Basturkmen, Loewen & Ellis (2004) on teachers’ stated beliefs about the incidental focus on form (which requires primary attention to meaning rather than grammar) and their classroom practices clearly showed inconsistencies between what is believed and what is practiced.

I would now like to discuss another important factor behind this study: political practice after the Liberation War has leaned towards Islamism, therefore unsettling the religious harmony in the context. I have experienced how this type of political attitude has given
rise to Islamist activism, exerting control on peoples’ identity, freedom of thoughts and speech, and even religious rights. This is relevant to this study because this attitude has stood as an obstacle against the advancement of English in the context. This will be discussed in detail in Chapter 2.4.5.

As discussed earlier, on an individual level, Bangladeshi rural secondary teachers have experienced severe pulls and pressures from global, national, and social realities, leading to a constant struggle to exercise individual agency in determining a sense of Self. In order to choose and form identities in such a complex environment, individuals need critical knowledge. In the Bangladeshi context, especially in rural areas, teachers lack the opportunity to use an accessible knowledge base (via the internet etc. or any other alternative sources) and engage in critical self-reflection that could help them to evaluate their own and others’ cultural value systems in order to develop a global cultural consciousness which could be helpful to their day to day classroom practices (Kumaravadivelu, ibid). Alam (2014, p1) reflects,

‘English teachers at the rural level of Bangladesh may be less trained and enjoy less opportunity but their teaching experience is vast. In respect of the social, economic and cultural reality of this country they know well about the comparative effectiveness and practicality of the traditional GTM and recently innovated highly ambitious CLT project. In addition to it, rural teachers represent the major part of secondary high school teachers of Bangladesh’.

This view has helped me establish the rationale for this study, i.e. to grasp ‘real knowledge’ through the life histories of these rural secondary English teachers – their lived experiences in teaching English in this context, their beliefs and their responses towards the imposed changes and innovations, and how they carry out day-to-day teaching of English within those constraints. By ‘real knowledge’ I mean the authentic information expressed in these teachers’ voices, which is different from the knowledge in the national data on CLT provided by the public administrators of the region or any other research findings or success stories in the context. From the respondent teachers’ stories in this study, I have gained an in depth understanding of the teachers’ identities, beliefs, values, and practices that they themselves hold and bring into their classrooms and which greatly influence the desired outcome of teaching; as Kumaravadivelu (2012; p 68) argues, ‘achieving desirable goals in teaching depends on the kind of teaching Self teachers bring with them, and understanding the teaching Self is all about understanding one’s identities, beliefs, and values’. Thus, this study provides valuable insight for all acting players in the education system of the country.
I also agree with Kumaravadivelu (2012, p29-36), that teachers’ ‘professional (theories and practice of language, language learning and language teaching), personal (the teacher’s ‘thought processes sedimented through observations, experiences and interpretations that span a long period before, during and after formal teacher education programs) and procedural (knowing how to manage classroom learning and teaching by creating and sustaining a classroom environment in which desired learning outcomes are made possible) knowledge and their awareness of learners’ needs, motivation, and autonomy’ could be meaningful for English teachers. I have pursued in this study what kind of training have these rural teachers had to gain the required professional, personal and the procedural knowledge’. The effectivity of such knowledge and awareness depends largely on the teaching Self, i.e. the inner ‘Self’ that teachers bring with them to the practice of everyday teaching, as described by Kumaravadivelu (ibid). Kumaravadivelu (ibid) suggests that their ability and willingness to renew their teaching ‘Self’ is equally important. This is another important reason why this study has looked into the teacher’s inner self through their lived experiences to know how the innovations have been accepted in their inner self as practicing English teachers.

Because of these factors, my assumption is that CLT implementation in the context is still confusing for the rural teachers in Bangladesh who are geographically remote from facilities like teacher training, useful teaching aids, books, resources, computers and internet that are only available to some urban schools. To my knowledge, these rural teachers have extremely limited access to any type of professional development in their career path and seldom receive any organisational support to develop their personal and procedural knowledge and skills in relation to the teaching of English. In reality, CLT has been a foreign concept to them: something which they have had no prior knowledge of and which they have received no training to deliver. Added to that, there is no exposure to native speakers of English, which would assist in the development of these rural teachers. Their poor economic condition also restrains them from taking any personal initiative in this regard, as political and religious influences, pressure and violence, have constrained their agency, both as individuals and as teachers.

In the later part of my discussion, I have identified a number of issues that have determined these teachers’ position in society and influenced their beliefs and attitudes towards teaching and learning of English, such as the teaching and learning cultures which were a legacy of the colonial period, poor financial status, the import of
innovations without adequate teacher development facilities, deteriorating political delinquency and its influence on the education system, madrasa education giving rise to Islamist activism which is linked to the political system that limits their agency. All these factors play a crucial role in shaping teachers’ identity and their experience of the innovations in ELT in the social context of Bangladesh, which is the subject of this study. In addressing the theme of this study, the following research questions have been identified.

1.7 Research Questions

In relation to researching and understanding English teachers and teaching in the Bangladeshi context, I narrowed my focus to the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs and practices of secondary English teachers in relation to the teaching of English?

2. What are the perceptions of practicing teachers towards change and innovation?

3. What are the issues of agency and meaning making for English Language teachers?

4. What are the policy implications of these beliefs and practices in future decisions?

The first question focuses on the views and opinions of rural secondary teachers in regard to change and innovations and their beliefs about the teaching of English in the context. Borg (2001: p186) that belief is ‘a proposition which may be consciously or unconsciously held, is evaluative in that it is accepted as true by the individual… (and) serves as a guide to thought and behaviour’. It is certain that Bangladeshi rural secondary teachers are also guided by their own beliefs and values, as Harmer (2003: 288) maintains:

‘I cannot imagine how any teacher could operate without taking into [the ELT classroom] a set of understandings and beliefs not only about how languages can be and are learnt, but also about how and what teaching is all about.’

Bangladeshi English teachers have their own beliefs about what they are doing in their own classroom every day. Crookes (2009, p 47) argues that ‘it is impossible to act, as a teacher, without having theories (including values) that inform teaching actions, at least to some degree’. I have documented those personal theories and values that inform their teaching in the classroom, i.e. what they do, how they feel about themselves, how they
value what they do, and how they think others judge them. Each of these is vital to understanding who they are. By the first question I also have recognised and analysed their beliefs about ‘good teaching’ and their actual practices, although I assume the research might reach similar conclusions to Sue Garton (2008: 67) who observed two teachers who were regarded by their students to be highly effective although they followed two different methods of teaching. Garton concluded with an important remark,

‘This means that, as teachers, we will inevitably have different beliefs about teaching and learning and different approaches in the classroom. Concepts such as “best methods” and “good teaching” should therefore be abandoned in favour of the recognition of diversity in teachers and the idea that “good teaching” is “the individually best-step for each teacher.”


Garton’s observation also reduces the importance of CLT import in Bangladesh because her observations indicate that no single method can be the best prescription for any specific context. I agree with her that neither CLT nor GT formats make a good teacher; it is an individual’s best practice. Garton (ibid) also concludes that good teaching is the individual best practice of a teacher in every classroom, which is significant not only for Bangladeshi teachers but for all teachers around the world.

The second question focuses on the respondent teachers’ perceptions of the change and innovation introduced in the context for the teaching and learning of English. Expert and trained in the GT method, teachers are now implementing an imposed innovation called CLT through the state-run curriculum, without any training on this innovation. Here I agree with Hossen (2008) that ‘teachers’ ideas, beliefs, attitude and perception affect the way they teach Communicative Language Teaching in Bangladesh.’ Hall, G. (2011) also maintains, ‘What goes on in a classroom is inevitably much more than the logical and tidy application of theories and principle; it is localised, situation-specific, and therefore, diverse.’ In the Bangladesh context, I am concerned that the practicing teachers’ lack of knowledge and skills relating to CLT fall short of the required level. Oxford and Lee (2008: p 313) suggest – and this applies not only to teachers, but also to policy makers – that if learners are to be introduced to new behaviours (as in Bangladesh):

‘Instruction must take into account learners’ cultural expectations and beliefs; otherwise it will fail… the teacher must first think carefully whether such a
change in beliefs and strategies is necessary, worthwhile, culturally respectful, and linguistically appropriate. Only then should strategy instruction take place.’

(cited in Hall 2011, p 152)

It would really be worth seeing then how these cultural expectations have been met in classroom situations in a GT formatted context. Are they using 100% English as an instructional language or are they negotiating reality using their own judgment? These points have made me more interested in listening to those stories of rural teachers, who are well aware of their learners’ cultural expectations and their own cultural beliefs. Within all these complexities, I have sought to get a true picture of these rural English teachers’ perceptions of the innovations from one remotest district of the country.

The third question has helped me to acquire data relating to teachers’ agency in that specific context as already discussed. What meanings have they given to their personal and professional lives with all these social, religious or political bonds and boundaries that have structured their role as a teacher? What level of agency do these teachers have; what level of agency is enjoyed by female teachers in comparison to male teachers, and how they do carry out their role of a teacher in the given context?

The fourth question captures all the issues raised by the previous three questions in relation to the policy influences, which emerged from the respondent teachers’ views on their teaching practices and the implications of these research findings on the policy development of the country.

Bearing in mind the nature of the data that would be generated through this study, I selected a ‘life history approach’, which is by nature qualitative (Thomas and Znaniecki 1918- 1920: 1831-3). I intended to look not into a set of donor-prescribed rules imported by the government to impose on the English teachers for their classrooms, but to get a deep insight about the individual context and the individuality of teachers: what sort of people they are, their social positions with all the historical and political phenomenon as discussed above, and the work they do, their ‘Inner Self’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012 p.55) about their feelings that shove them up to do what they are doing and the agency they enjoy in their personal and professional life. This is not as simple as teachers being given a national textbook and receiving the target methodology to perform the role of teaching in the classroom, rather it is more critical because of all
those social, religious, political, financial impetus that are crucial in moulding their ‘Inner Self’ to perform their role as a teacher in the classroom. Hargreaves also accepts these influences from the outside reality,

‘We are beginning to recognise that, for teachers, what goes on inside the classroom is closely related to what goes on outside it. The quality range and flexibility of teachers’ classroom work are closely tied up with their professional growth - with the way that they develop as people and professionals. Teachers teach in the way they do not just because of the skills they have or have not learned. The ways they teach are also grounded in their backgrounds, their biographies, in the kinds of teachers they become.’

(Hargreaves, 1997, p xi).

It becomes clear that the backgrounds and biographies of these teachers are important to their professional growth and are key to understanding how the influences of the wider world are reflected in what they are doing in their classroom as an English teacher. In this study, I have upheld Hargreaves’ views while listening to the lived experiences of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers.

I selected a narrative approach because I realised that ‘the traditional empirical research methods might not appropriately address issues such as complexity, multiplicity of perspectives and human centredness which can be more adequately addressed by narrative inquiry’ (Webster & Patricie, 2007) and was convinced that a life history approach would be more effective in examining Bangladeshi secondary English teachers. This has already been a useful method in researching teaching and teacher education, as Carter states:

‘The special attractiveness of story in contemporary research on teaching and teacher education is grounded in the notion that story represents a way of knowing and thinking that is particularly suited to explicating the issues [teachers deal with].’

(Carter, 1993, p6)

Goodson (2013) also maintains,

‘Only if we deal with life stories as the starting point for our understanding, and as the beginning of a process of coming to know, will we begin to understand their meaning. If we use them as starting points, we come to see them as social constructions, which allow us to locate them in historical time and social space. In this way the life story that is told individualises and personalises. But beyond the life story, in the life history, the intention is to understand the pattern of social relations, interactions and historical constructions in which the lives of women and men are embedded.”
Elbaz (1990; cf Webster & Mertova 2007; p 32) has also specified six important reasons why life story is so useful in making teachers’ voices public:

- Story relies on tacit knowledge to be understood.
- It takes place in a meaningful context.
- It calls on storytelling traditions, which gives structure to expression.
- It always involves a moral lesson to be learnt.
- It can voice criticism in socially accepted ways.
- It reflects the inseparability of thought and action in storytelling - the dialogue between the teller and the audience.

Elbaz’s point of view has been pivotal in this study in terms of telling teachers’ stories through their lived experiences in order to obtain ‘tacit knowledge’ about English teaching in the specific context. As I wanted to record teachers’ unknown stories in Bangladeshi context, Elbaz has been a touchstone in this research. In terms of creating stories, this study has also been based on the key points noted by Yoder-Wise and Kowalski (2003) while interviewing teachers:

- Looking for recurring themes – what actions have occurred that represent one’s values, priorities concerns, interests and experiences;
- Looking for consequences - examining the cause and effect of choices that have been made;
- Looking for lessons - what was learned that influenced subsequent actions or behaviour;
- Looking for what worked - recall and reflection on personal and professional successes; what were the essential contributing factors (e.g. timing, resources, vision);
- Looking for vulnerability - identify any mistakes, failure to stimulate listeners to explore better approaches to problems;
- Building for future experiences – how to create scenarios for handling certain situations;
- Exploring other resources.

(cf. Webster & Mertova 2007; p 32)
The above guidelines have been useful in this research study to frame the real voice of teachers and guide me to realise how rural teachers have perceived the change and innovation which contrasts with their own beliefs and understanding about the traditional GT method, how they make sense of their own lives in their personal narratives that have a status as personal, as well as, to be valuable research data.

In this research, as already discussed, I have looked into the lived experiences of a small, selected group of Bangladeshi non-government secondary English teachers in order to gain ‘real knowledge’ about what they are doing in their real-life situations and in their classrooms in response to these changes around them. By ‘real knowledge’ I mean the teachers’ own stories, containing their values, beliefs and perceptions of the changes and innovation in the historical and cultural background of Bangladesh, which is different from the data provided by the public offices and institutions in the country. The discussion in the next chapters will detail the background and context of the research setting to give a clear picture about the place where these teachers live and perform their teaching and show the relevance of this information in this study.

1.8 My Researcher position and the Research Setting

It is worth reflecting here on my background and my position as a researcher, which might add some information about English language teaching and learning in the context. Atkinson (1990) wrote, ‘Indeed, since the 1980s, it has become common practice for qualitative researchers in general to “write themselves into” their research, on the grounds that personal background information will enhance the rigour of their work by making potential biases explicit.’ (cf. Goodson, 2001).

I was born in Meherpur, a small southwestern district in Bangladesh where I have situated this study. A number of reasons compelled me to select Meherpur as the research setting. Firstly, Meherpur has a colonial past and has a good link with the history of the Liberation War. One colonial establishment, a British ‘Bungalow’, still exists there and is seen as an emblem of colonial tyranny to the local people. People believe that the colonisers used this bungalow for ‘Neel’ (a Bengali term for ‘Indigo’, a kind of dyestuff), processing and marketing. The local natives (Bangladeshis) were forced to cultivate ‘Neel’, which was a major item of international trade from the 16th to the late 19th century, and the colonialists did good business from it, as reported by the ‘Financial Express of Bangladesh’,

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'The British ruled us for nearly 200 years until 1947, and still we find some marks of their tyranny at different places in our country. The ‘Neelkuthi’ at Hat Khalishpur (in Meherpur District) is such a place, which gives testimony of the repression of usurpers on our innocent civilians. Forced cultivation of indigo by our farmers was a part of the tyrannical attitude of the British here'.

(Published on 10 December 2014)

Secondly, missionary activities in the region might have been a good reason for the dislike of English, as stated by Rahman ET. Al (2010, p 118), ‘... at the time of independence there was a considerable presence of missionary schools and colleges in which the medium of instruction was English.’ A poor village still exists, known as ‘Ballavpur mission’ in Meherpur, where the missionaries converted all the villagers to Christianity. Edge (2003, p 704) observes, ‘that much of English language teaching during colonial times (as in Bangladesh) took the form of preaching Christianity’. These ‘missionary activities’ in the guise of development activities, as happened in many other countries in the world, aimed to convert people to Christianity. Such was the case in Meherpur and many other places in Bangladesh where missionaries converted all the villagers to Christianity to establish the ‘Kingdom of the Lord’ (Edge, ibid). Eventually the population came to realise this and developed a dislike for missionary-led development activities in the context, which subsequently has a negative impact on the spread of English. Thirdly, Meherpur is my birthplace. All of these points are linked to my theme and are important to the selection of Meherpur as the research setting.

In the post-liberation period, significant amounts of foreign donations and aid have entered the country, and some are still linked with development activities. A number of local NGOs (Non-Government Organisations) and international development agencies have been involved in development projects to supplement the government in almost every sector; i.e.- health, education, poverty alleviation and micro-finance, women’s empowerment etc. and might have similar missions as identified by Edge (2003). Some have even worked in the training of the ‘Imams’ (local Muslim leaders in charge of the Mosques) to alter their attitudes towards change and development. Religious-minded rural Muslim people have never accepted NGO activities, and this has resulted in major conflicts in some areas in the country. This has been a critical issue in the context, and is associated with the spread of Islamic extremism, which works against the advancement of English in the context. I have discussed this in detail in Chapter 2.
After my secondary (SSC) and higher secondary (HSC) education from the local public school and public college, I got the chance (after a difficult competitive admission test, which involved 2000 students fighting for one seat) to enrol into higher studies (undergraduate and master’s degrees in English Literature) in Jahangirnagar University (JU). At that time JU was one of only four national universities in the country, which was situated 20 miles away from the capital city. It is important to note here that better educational facilities have always been urban-centric and more specifically, Dhaka-centric. After doing my MA, I started work as a lecturer of English in a local college in Meherpur. Later, I worked as an English lecturer in a number of private colleges for nearly 8 years. During this whole time, I never had any pre or in-service training to improve my skills in English teaching. This is common with any ‘non-government’ teacher in the country. Later, I returned to Dhaka and worked in an NGO as the Education Project Coordinator for three years, before spending the following four years working as a Teacher Trainer in another NGO, training ‘non-government’ secondary English teachers. I have explained the term ‘non-government’ in Chapter 2.5.1 of this study to elucidate the existing education system including my personal journey as a non-government English teacher and my relationship with this type of school and teaching. As a Teacher Trainer, I received a number of short training courses on CLT facilitated by British experts.

From boyhood until adulthood, I saw how ordinary people perceived English as a ‘language of the invaders’, a sentiment which is still maintained amongst many of an older generation that has resisted the spread of English to the masses despite it becoming a powerful tool in the job market. In many countries English has already overpowered the local language though there are plenty of opposing responses to this subduing colonialist attitude of English all over the world. Kumaravadivelu (2012) has viewed this as ‘political economy of English language teaching.’ English teaching all over the world has always been associated with politics and multi-million dollar businesses and Kumaravadivelu (ibid) has raised a number of moral quandaries by associating it with the following:

- ‘that the teaching of English is being (mis)used for missionary purposes under the false pretence of promoting much needed development projects (Edge 2003, cf. Kumaravadivelu 2012);
- that ‘there are major commercial interests involved in the global English language industry’ (Phillipson 2003: 16);
• that there exists a dangerous liaison between the forces of globalisation, empire and TESOL, and, as a result, English teachers ‘knowingly or unknowingly, play a role in the service of global corporations and imperial powers.’ (Kumaravadivelu 2006:1)

• that the practices associated with English language testing conducted at the global level (e.g. IELTS – International English Language Testing System, TOEFL – Test of English as a Foreign Language) are “undemocratic and unethical” (Shohamy 1998: 340);

• that teachers of English ‘cooperate in their own marginalisation’ if they continue to see themselves only as language teachers without paying serious attention to social and political issues that impact on their everyday teaching (Gee 1994: 190).

My aim has been to discuss the relevance of these to the post-colonial Bangladeshi context where missionaries are still carrying on a number of development projects, where globalisation has created scope for the garments industry to expand making ‘technology transfer’ (CLT import) inevitable, where the British Council has already set up IELTS-related activities for the ‘commercial interests of the English Language industry’, and where English is gaining importance because the game of cricket uses Bangladesh as one of its international venues.

I again come back to my personal journey as a researcher. In my student and professional life, English learning mostly happened in a very ‘traditional’ way (GTM) where teachers generally lectured to the class, similar to the class in Paolo Freire’s (1970, p 53) ‘Banking concept of education’ - a system where students are ‘receptacles’ who are to be ‘filled’ with the ‘content of the teacher’s narration’; these receptacles are expected to regurgitate information in class by means of tests, quizzes, and anything that requires an answer that is ‘word for word’ what the teacher has said. In a ‘banking’ classroom the teacher is the authority and the students are oppressed. This Freirean-type teacher-student relationship is still continued in most of the rural secondary schools in Bangladesh.

In such a classroom, my education was greatly biased towards rote learning, where teaching and learning happened through ‘chalk and talk’. We had memorised English grammar rules, essays and compositions to be able to regurgitate them in the examination papers for better scores, as Freire (ibid; p53) described,

‘Education thus becomes an act of depositing, in which the students are depositories and the teacher is depositor. Instead of communicating, the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorise and repeat.’
As a ‘good student’ (social appreciation for top scorers), I had memorised 18 essays and 15 letters and applications (such as, ‘write a letter to your friend inviting him to your sister’s wedding’, and applications, ‘write an application to the head teacher asking for leave of absence’ etc.) - for the SSC examination. All our English teachers maintained a dominant personality and we never had any situation for English interaction between students in the classroom. As a result, we learnt the English language in silence, by memorising rules and structures.

Here I would like to discuss the English classroom in the context. As a student, like all other students of that time, I rarely had any chance to speak in the language class, neither Bengali nor English; we only were allowed to speak when the teacher asked us a question. ‘Pin drop silence’ was the standard for good classroom management and our English teachers maintained this by silencing our voices. Our parents, teachers and community all believed in this teaching motto and left no stone unturned to silence our students’ voices. We had to remain silent everywhere, always, as this was regarded as the sign of a ‘good student' and as a secondary student, nobody ever asked my opinion about my choice or study options. Thus, our elders silenced any inquisitiveness in our minds.

As a student, I rarely saw any of my teachers (in English or any other subjects) experience any form of pre or in-service training in their professional lives. To my knowledge, B.Ed. courses (subject-wise) were the only teacher training facility open to a few public school teachers, and B.Ed. for English was formatted in the traditional (GTM) format. I have detailed this discussion on teacher training structure in chapter 2.7. I understand that this status has a link to the colonialists because both the colonialists exploited the economy at every level, leaving very limited scope for the governments to develop the infrastructure of the country. This information is useful, as it will help to get a clear picture of the country’s education system and to compare the respondent teachers’ experiences to understand the change in the last 40 years.

In 1995, as an education project coordinator in an NGO, I observed a number of primary level English classes where the GT method was dominant in English teaching and learning. The teachers in these classes were replicating the Freirean ‘banking concept’ that still exists in the remotest schools in the country where students are regarded as ‘adaptable, manageable beings. The more students work at storing the
deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of the world (Freire 1970, p 54).’ This was certainly the case for my schoolmates and me, i.e. we had no scope to develop ‘critical consciousness.’

Later, I worked in another NGO as a ‘Teacher Trainer’ training non-government secondary English teachers on CLT before moving to the UK in 2006. During this time, I developed a number of CLT training materials relating to the four language skills, conducted training sessions, observed classes and provided feedback to teachers all over the country. These experiences as a teacher and teacher trainer worked as the trigger for this research. Like all other teachers in Bangladesh, I had no scope to receive any training to develop my knowledge, skills and attitudes as a non-government English teacher and later, as a teacher trainer, I witnessed how secondary teachers carried on their jobs for years without any training. For some of them this applied to their entire teaching career. These experiences inspired me to listen to the untold stories through the lived experiences of these rural teachers about English teaching in the context.

As a teacher trainer, I had many opportunities to listen to the views and opinions of these English teachers. Teachers talked about their experiences, their values and beliefs towards English teaching, the changes around them and their perception of CLT, their positions in schools, in society and in the broader context, i.e. the country. During this time, I also organised and attended a number of seminars, workshops and meetings with the secondary school teachers, head teachers, School Management Committee (SMC) members and government policy-makers where teachers and school authorities expressed their concerns about the changes and innovations and their constraints in implementing CLT in remote areas. Policy makers had made promises to discuss these in their central committee meetings, but this was seldom reflected in the national policies. I sustained a good relationship with English teachers and school authorities all the time and became keen to listen to these rural non-government secondary English teachers’ voices and hear how they experienced life as English teachers in remote rural schools in Bangladesh, how they dealt with all the changes around them and with the changing social needs; how they perceived the innovations; and how their values and beliefs conflicted with these events and innovations, and what they were doing in their real classrooms with all these crosscutting issues.
1.9 My Epistemological Position

My epistemological position in this study is based on the ‘constructivist’ theories that evolved from a variety of branches of cognitive science where it is believed that we build up our knowledge by having experience. When we integrate new experiences into our existing knowledge, new understandings are created, and learning occurs. It is quite opposite to the ‘objectivist’ theory that believes knowledge is ‘out there in the world, that it is real and exists independently of the human mind, that there is a body of knowledge and core skills that society needs to pass onto the next generation. The objectivist theory is grounded in ‘behaviourist’ psychology and information-processing strands of cognitive science (Haywood, S. & Hutchings, M. 2004; p 173). Using a ‘constructivist’ approach, I believe that teachers lived experiences will generate new knowledge about teaching of English language in the research context.

1.10 Structure of the Study

This study investigates the teaching of English through the lived experiences of a small group of non-government secondary English teachers in a post-colonial context. I would like to give a brief outline of this study here.

The first chapter of this study introduces the context with all its complexities that has set the rationale for this study. It also presents the research questions of this study with a brief discussion of the diverse socio-economic, political and religious influences on the education system, the introduction of innovations, such as CLT, in the post-colonial context, and the impact of historical events on English teaching. I have analysed the reasons behind the backwardness of English use in the common people’s life compared to other neighbouring and Asian countries.

The second chapter discusses the country’s background and context in more detail, showing how and why historical events are still so important and how they continue to influence the existing education system as well as ordinary people’s lives. All these social, political and religious contexts have impacted on the teaching and learning of English in the country, on the teacher training structures and the government institutions as well as on the identity and agency of the English teacher; side by side, poor socio-economic conditions have provided many constraints on teachers and especially rural secondary English teachers. It has also discussed the increased interest in English
learning in recent years, with the boost in the garments business sector causing rapid change in the society.

In the third chapter, I explore relevant literature to discuss the different views and opinions of other researchers in related field that are linked to my research theme. This has helped me to correlate my research results with earlier research conducted on similar topics. In relation to the theme of this research, I have considered the concepts and previous studies of the English teaching methodologies, such as GT, CLT, CAL and TBL. As this study has investigated issues with the agency of English teachers in the context, I have also looked into useful literature on this issue.

Chapter 4 sets out the methodology and includes the detailed discussion of the procedures I have applied in this research. It also includes information about the participants and the instruments used to elicit information for this study, along with a discussion on the biographical and life history approach as the research methodology for this research.

Chapter 5 includes the detailed discussion of individual textual locations of the schools. To get an idea about the type of the secondary schools in the context where the respondent teachers teach, I have discussed the existing education system, the existing number of secondary schools of different types and the success rate of these schools. Detailed descriptions of the schools, location, and available facilities are presented to make the concept of ‘non-government secondary schools’ clearer.

Chapter 6 presents the life stories of the of the respondent teachers in the form of individual portraits, to illustrate the English teachers’ day-to-day activities, beliefs and perceptions about the innovations and to provide an in-depth understanding of the English teaching and learning scenario in the specific context.

Chapter 7 presents major findings that emerge from the teachers’ interviews and life stories in this study. It also includes a detailed thematic analysis of the major findings. The discussions that I initiated in the teachers’ biographies from Chapter 6 have been analysed in detail with a link to the literature review.

Chapter 8 discusses the policy implications of this study. Here I have discussed the implications of the findings of this study that would be useful for the policy makers,
planners and curriculum designers, researchers and stakeholders nationally and internationally.

Chapter 9 includes a discussion on how this study makes a useful contribution to knowledge that would be a significant resource to the research community all over the world, as well as to everyone working in a similar field both within and outside Bangladesh. It also contains a useful discussion of the research findings, including my personal views and opinions on the findings to draw a conclusion of this study.

Chapter 10 assesses the future possibilities of further research that have emerged from the findings of this study. It discusses, and tries to reach a conclusion about, the further steps that can be taken after completion of this study.

Chapter 11 contains some important recommendations made on the basis of the major findings and my analysis of these, as well from my personal observations.

Chapter 12 includes a detailed discussion and the conclusion of the study.
Chapter 2: The Country’s Profile: History and Politics

In order to understand education, we need to place it within its complex context. The social-cultural-historical placement of teaching and learning within a society is important in that the ‘socio-cultural conditions always influence our cognitive activity, mediating how we perceive and interpret the world around us’ (Scollon, 1999; Canagarajah, 1999). In this section I discuss the geographical and complex socio-economic and political context of Bangladesh and the religious influence that affects these areas and makes things even more complex.

The geographical location, administrative division and historical background of Bangladesh are important in this study in terms of presenting a clear picture of the context that determines the character and cultural identity of the people involved; this is key to understanding their lives, especially those non-government secondary English teachers who have a ‘sound colonial education’. This is important in relation to my study because ‘every time we speak, we are negotiating and negotiating our sense of self in relation to the larger social world and reorganising that relationship across time and space’ (Norton, 2009: 1-2). Bourdieu (1990) echoes this, saying that ‘the value ascribed to speech cannot be understood apart from the person who speaks and the person who speaks cannot be understood apart from larger networks of social relationships’ (cited in Kim, 2003). I therefore discuss the country’s background and social context in the following sections.

2.1 Geographical Location

Bangladesh is a South Asian country of 55126 square miles, with a population of 158 million people. It is mainly plain land with a large marshy jungle coastline (known as The Sundarbans) of 580 km (360 miles) on the northern coast of the ‘Bay of Bengal’ (BBS 2015). The country is situated at the delta of three great rivers, the Padma...
(Ganges), the Meghna and the Jamuna (Brahmaputra), and is low lying and subject to natural disasters. A significant proportion of the population struggles with poverty caused by chronic environmental instability in the form of annual flooding of up to 80% of its land area, cyclones and other natural calamities. In northern Bangladesh, an annual period of unemployment and famine (‘monga’, to use the colloquial term) is experienced after the paddy (rice) planting (Seel, 2007).

These natural adversities have made the lives of ordinary people difficult and caused abject poverty in some parts of the country. These poor economic conditions, especially in the remote rural areas, have a big influence on the lives of rural people, including the rural teachers who are the subject of this study, and cause a number of constraints in their personal and professional lives. The poor economic status of most of these rural teachers has shaped their experiences and identities that determine their position in society, both as teachers and as social beings, and has formed the inner selves that they bring into the classroom, which is the subject of my investigations in this study.
2.2 The Population

The population of the country is mainly of Muslim majority with about 98% Bengali speakers; the remainder are ethnic minorities, most of whom live in the Chittagong Hill Tracts area bordering Myanmar, although some live in the districts of Barisal, Dinajpur and Sylhet and Mymensingh. By religion, Muslims account for nearly 90% of the population and Hindus 9%. The remaining 1% includes Buddhists, Christians and other religions (source: globalreligiousfutures.org). This Muslim-majority status has been an influential factor in the creation of vast number of madrasas and the rise of numerous Islamic activist groups spreading communal beliefs among the less educated or uneducated rural Muslim people in the context. It is useful to note here that the Islamic activists and these madrasa-educated people have always had a negative opinion of women’s education and the spread of English in the context.

2.3 Administrative Division

Administratively Bangladesh is divided into 7 Divisions - Dhaka, Mymensingh, Khulna, Barisal, Rajshahi, Sylhet and Chittagong- which are distributed into 64 Districts and 481 Upazilas (sub-districts). The majority of the population live in rural areas although the proportion is decreasing, from 76.4% in 2000 to 72% in 2009 (World development indicators) due to the urban-centric facilities, which is caused mainly by the lack of political initiatives to decentralise facilities. To find a better job, buy the latest technology or even to do any shopping, rural people usually go to the capital city of Dhaka. This has ultimately caused mass migration to the capital city, especially for the ‘have-not’ groups who go in search of work or improved opportunities. Thus, Dhaka has been occupied by a huge number of migrant, marginalised rural inhabitants who have moved to the slums (UNICEF, 2008). From the country’s birth, the rural population has fallen victim to grave policy discrimination causing a huge gap between urban and rural people. The rural respondent teachers of this study belong to this ‘have-not’ group and have no access to those better opportunities enjoyed by the city dwellers. I already have discussed that CLT implementation in these rural areas has been difficult for these teachers due to the lack of prior training, teaching resources, proper classroom environment, class size etc.
2.4 Historical Background

As discussed, the historical background has a strong influence on each component of the macro social context of the country - the population, culture, the government, national and local policies, the education system, and above all, the classroom.

The name of the country 'Bangladesh' is a combination of two words ‘Bangla’ (the language) and ‘desh’ (the country) – together forming ‘the country of Bengali speaking people’, aligning the nation’s identity with their language. The country’s history is still powerful and remembered in national remembrance days, such as, the ‘Pohela Boishakh’ (14th of April, the first day of Bengali New Year), the ‘Bhasha-Shaheed Dibosh’ (21st of February, ‘Language-Martyr Day’- remembering all the martyrs who laid down their lives in the Language Movement), the ‘Swadhinota Dibosh’ (26th of March, The Independence Day, when the war against the West Pakistan regime began), the ‘Bijoy Dibosh’ (16th December, Victory Day, which celebrates the victory against Pakistan after a 9-month long guerrilla war). This history is important in this study because unlike India, Nigeria or other countries with similar colonial backgrounds, the adoption of the English language has not improved or spread in the Bangladeshi context. Even in the capital city of Dhaka, very few English-speaking people can be found, which is presumably due to the influence of the country’s historical background.

I will now explore both the colonial influences in the context, i.e. the ‘British Raj’ and the ‘Pakistani domination’ and show their influence on the present state of English.

2.4.1 Dual Colonialism and its Impact

Historically the country experienced British colonialism as a part of undivided India till 1947. The British ruled over the Indian subcontinent for 190 years (1757-1947). Starting as a business, ‘The East India Company’ grew to account for half the world's trade, particularly in basic commodities, including cotton, silk, indigo dye, salt, saltpetre, tea and opium (Andrews, 1985). Here my focus is on the colonisers’ ‘Neel’ or ‘Indigo’ business because of its strong link to the history of Bangladesh. Indigo cultivation and the cruelty of the colonialists to the natives may well have been the most powerful hindrance to the spread of English in the context, and the impact of this remains alive today.
The colonialists mainly used the ‘East Bengal’ province of India (the area now known as Bangladesh) for the Neel cultivation part of its business. Indigo production was a labour demanding process and although it was commercially successful, in human terms it was a disaster. In an increasingly competitive global indigo market, the only way to make a profit was to keep the production costs low. This was only possible by employing cheap labour, and the British used cruel methods to make the native Indians cultivate indigo for them (source: arsenic.net). It is natural, therefore, for ordinary people to develop a dislike for the British.

![Figure 4: A British Indigo Dye Factory in Bengal, 1867 (Source: Wiki)](image)

The history of indigo production has had such a powerful effect on Bengali peoples’ minds that it has inspired the plots of a number of popular dramas and local plays, which present the torture and cruelty of the British towards the natives. ‘Neel Darpan’ or ‘The Indigo Planting Mirror’ by Dinabandhu Mitra (pseudonym of the author) is one such iconic play. Composed in 1858-1859, and first performed in Dhaka in 1860, it is still popular in the context. This play was inspired by ‘Nilbidraha’, the ‘indigo rebellion’, when farmers rebelled against the exploitation by the British Raj (Bhattacharya, 2014; revolvy.com). Because of its limited appeal to audiences outside of India due to language constraints, Mitra himself translated the play into English and gave his reason:

‘I PRESENT “The Indigo Planting Mirror” to the Indigo Planters’ hands; now, let every one of them, having observed his face, erase the freckle of the stain of selfishness from his forehead, and, in its stead, place on it the sandal powder of beneficence, then shall I think my labour success.’

(Source: archive.org)
A body of poetry and prose has been composed, either in mockery or in tragic form, to present the colonial oppression and tyranny and these are still popular and frequently performed during national and cultural celebrations. Indigo cultivation was not the only reason behind the dislike of the British; there was significant racial abuse and inhuman treatment towards the natives by the colonisers as can be illustrated by the following picture (published in a Bangladeshi daily newspaper ‘The Daily Star’, December 2016), which clearly exposes the brutal attitude of the colonisers towards the natives.

![Image](image_url)

Figure 5: A British Officer enjoying fresh air riding on a native aboriginal woman in Bangladesh

These historical issues are still behind anti-colonialist and anti-English sentiments in the context and are revisited every year with the anniversary celebrations discussed above, which can account for why the English language has still failed to infiltrate in the context even after so many years.

During Partition in 1947, the colonisers imposed their final injustice on the subcontinent with a ‘divide and rule’ policy. Divide and Rule (‘divide et impera’ in Latin) is an old strategy used in economics, politics and society and is used to divide the population into manageable chunks, so that the people do not join together to fight against the sovereign authority. When the British occupation of the territory ended in 1947, they made ‘East Bengal’ part of Pakistan, a neo-colonial state, in the name of the predominantly religious ‘Two-Nation theory’ that continued until 1971. These historic partitions were hurriedly done, overlooking the non-contiguous geographical setting (source: BBC) merging the ‘East Bengal’ part of India (East Pakistan) with West Pakistan, on religious
grounds while ignoring the geographical distance of nearly 2000 kilometres (Figure 5) between them.

![Geographical distance of East and West Pakistan](image)

Figure 6: The Geographical distance of East and West Pakistan

One Bangladeshi newspaper reports:

‘Pakistan, at the time of its birth, was a strange country with two wings separated by 1,200 miles of physical distance, established on the basis of a sole Muslim identity of the majority of the multicultural multilingual population. The centre of power lay in the west, with the civil-military axis dominated by the Punjabis, whereas the majority of the population was Bengalis of East Pakistan who had a rich tradition of their own language and culture, not to be overshadowed by religious identity.’

(Source: The Daily Star Archive).

Under the West Pakistani dominion between 1947 to 1970, the economic exploitation, rape, torture, looting and the horrific genocide (in the night of 25 March 1970) of East Pakistani (Bangladeshi) people reached such a level that the ordinary people revolted and began a war that resulted in Independent Bangladesh in 1971 (reported in *The Blood* Telegram authored on the 6th April 1971 by Archer, K. Blood, the Consul General of United States in Bangladesh; Garry J. Bass 2014). The colonial tyranny (both British and Pakistani) accentuated the fury against the colonialists and contributed to the ongoing resistance to the English language.

My next concern, which still continues in society, was also initiated by the colonialists: the creation of elites, class division and the rise of Islamic fundamentalism, which permeated and corrupted politics and public institutions,
‘… colonialism brought in its train the most hideous contradictions for the colonised: western scientific and liberal thought was introduced, but it also encouraged a religious revival in the colonies.

(Rahim, 2007).

Ordinary people have been so affected by these social and political crises that it has led to a ‘low trust society’. Jamil & Askvik (2013) report,

‘Bangladesh is often cited as a low trust society. Its institutions of governance have largely been hierarchic, elitist and exclusive; these traits reflect a long historical tradition, as most of the institutions were built during the British colonial period.’

During both British (1757-1947) and Pakistani rule (1947-1971), the education system of the nation remained a disputed space of uneven yet firm political interest. Macaulay’s infamous ‘Minutes of Education’, written in 1835, conveniently positioned English literature as superior to its oriental counterpart. The ‘Minute’, bureaucratically inspired and culturally patronising, allowed the colonisers to offer English education to create a class of obedient Indian administrators in the mould of British taste and attitudes.

After Partition, the first education conference in Karachi in 1947 aimed to reassess the colonial education system to realign it with Islamic religious ideology (Rahman et al. 2010). This allowed the Pakistani education system to continue as a means to gaining political interest, though in a different guise by using embedded and espoused Islamic sentiment. This reached a climax when ‘Urdu’ was imposed on the East Pakistani people despite Bengali being the mother tongue of 90% of its population. Thus, the colonisers have always used language as a useful tool to keep control of the natives. This language imposition caused the Language Movement of 1952.

2.4.2 The 1952 Language Movement and its Effects

I strongly believe that language plays a vital role in the development of an individual as well as of a nation. While language is seen as a source of empowerment, it can also be used – as it was by both the colonialists of the Bangladesh people – as a tool of exploitation (Hasan, 2009:43). Frantz Fanon (2008:8) has described this violent role of a dominant language in the shaping of identity and culture of the colonised people in his book ‘Black Skin, White Mask’:
‘The negro of the Antilles (that represents every colonised man) will be proportionately whiter – that is, he will come closer to being a real human being – in direct ratio to his mastery of the French language.’

A nation that possesses a language possesses the world, as knowledge and concepts are expressed and implied by that language. ‘Mastery of language affords remarkable power’ (Fanon, 2008:9) and for these reasons, both colonisers had attempted to maintain their mastery in the Indian and Bangladeshi context. I have discussed this to show how Bangladeshi people have been pushed towards the rejection of foreign languages and how this links to my study.

In 1948 when the West Pakistani rulers declared Urdu as the national language of East and West Pakistan, the East Pakistan Bengalis, who made up 54% of the total population, did not accept this. On the 21st February 1952, in Dhaka city, university students joined with ordinary people of all backgrounds to demonstrate against the decision. Armed police blocked the procession and killed eight people with gunfire on the spot. This cruelty agitated the East Pakistani people to revolt against West Pakistani brutality, torture and exploitation, which eventually climaxed in the Liberation War, which took place between 26th March and 16th December 1971.

In 2008, during its International Year of Languages, The United Nations General Assembly formally recognised 21st February – the anniversary of the Dhaka protest – as ‘International Mother Language Day’ (IMLD), after it was first announced by UNESCO on 17th November 1999. The aim of IMLD is to promote awareness of linguistic and cultural diversity and multilingualism. The IMLD has a strong influence on the people. As a result, English is rarely spoken even in the urban cities, making
Bangladesh different from other Asian countries. Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) comment,

‘Despite being nearly 80 years since the colonisers left, in current day Bangladesh the use, teaching and learning of English language and education still mark a conspicuous continuity with the colonial period, while at the same time sustained friction between English and a nationalistic fervour in favour of Bengali can be felt to often surface in popular rhetoric. Such friction has created almost irreconcilable fractures in formulating unproblematic language policies in the country.’

(p.2)

We find two distinct pictures from the above statement. Firstly, the existing education system still suffers from the legacy of colonial influence; and, secondly, continuous hostility between English and Bengali nationalistic attitudes has caused ‘irreconcilable fractures’ in formulating an effective education policy. As a result, learning and use of English has remained static, keeping the country in what I call a ‘monolingual’ state. This picture is the opposite of that seen in neighbouring India, which, despite having a similar colonial background, has fulfilled Macaulay’s intention:

‘Like any regional Indian language, English is now the first language of a cross-section of the Indian population, who are educated in this language, who use it on a daily basis not only in the outside world but also in their private spheres, and who are capable of literary production only in this language.’

(Lahiri, 2013, p 39)

On the contrary, Bangladeshi people have rejected both English and Urdu, as did Ngugi Wa Thiong’O (1986) an African anti-imperialist writer who believes that language has the power to imprison the souls of people and sees language as a means of spiritual suppression. In his book ‘Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature’, Wa Thiong’O recollects his experience in Kenya where the British Empire marginalised ethnic languages, and imposed English on the people of that country. In 1952 (the same year of the language movement in Bangladesh), Kenyan schools were taken over by the colonial regime and English became the language of formal education. Speaking ‘Gikuyu’ (an ethnic language) in Kenyan schools was forbidden and those who ignored this order received corporal punishment. In contrast, proficiency in English was rewarded by prize, prestige and applause. Literacy was determined by people’s knowledge of the English language. Wa Thiong’O (1986:12) asserts ‘thus language and literature [English] were taking us further from ourselves to other selves,
from our world to other worlds.’ Judging by the status of English in the context, it is possible that Bangladeshi people share the feelings of Wa Thiong’O, denouncing English and Urdu to stick to their vernacular ‘Bengali’ tongue.

A similar attitude was documented in 1982, when Education Ministers in Africa met in Harare, Zimbabwe, to discuss the use of African languages as languages of education. Their realisation is also important -

‘There is an urgent and pressing need for the use of African languages as languages of education. The urgency arises when one considers the total commitment of the states to development. Development in this respect consists of the development of national unity, cultural development, and economic and social development. Cultural development is basic to the other two... Language is a living instrument of culture, so that, from this point of view, language development is paramount. But language is also an instrument of communication, in fact the only complete and the most important instrument as such. Language usage therefore is of paramount importance also for social and economic development.’

(ED-82: 111)

The Language Movement has acquired a significant place in the history of Bangladesh and catalysed the assertion of a Bengali national identity for people who had to combat ‘language imperialism’ or ‘linguicism’ (Phillipson 1991, 1992; in Holliday, p 99) by the colonisers. Bangladeshis or Bengalis have historically been sub-ordinated and suppressed, firstly, as ‘East Bengal’ inhabitants in undivided India and as ‘East Pakistan’ population after 1947, despite being a majority population in terms of ethnicity, culture and language. The Language Movement offered a chance for the nation to live with its own identity, with its own language and culture, and can be seen as the forerunner to Bengali nationalist movements (spearheaded by Sheikh Mujibur Rahman or ‘Sheikh Mujib’, the founder of Awami league and later the father of the nation) which aimed to end the perceived exploitation by West Pakistani rulers and subsequently led to the Bangladesh Liberation War. The Language Movement organised the nation under a uniformed nationalist movement that identified them as a separate ethnicity and identity called ‘Bengali’ or ‘Bangladeshi’.

In Bangladesh, 21st February is still celebrated as a national holiday, observed with dignity and respect for the 1952 martyrs. Every year, just after midnight (12:01 am), millions of people come out in the streets bare-footed with a song on their lips which has become ‘an anthem of the event’ (BBC) – ‘Amar vayer roktae rangano EKushey
February...’ meaning ‘can I forget the 21st February, the day stained with my brother’s blood...’ They walk to the ‘Shaheed Minar’ (the national monument in memory of the martyrs) with bouquets of flowers, which they place on the altar there. It should not be under-estimated how powerful the influence of this historical event is on the nation.

It would be useful to note here that some post-Independence governments manipulated this nationalistic fervour to serve their own political purposes. For instance, President Ziaur Rahman once passed a rule to forbid English for any official use - (from record-keeping to internal communications) encouraging Bengali use everywhere and stimulating nationalistic fervour. Although the policy was amended following the change of government, its effect on common people is still widespread because of the powerful history and English has been side-lined in public offices and the education system for many years.

I will next briefly discuss the Pakistani education system to show how it has served largely the intention of the colonisers and given rise to Islamism and madrasa-based education, limiting the spread of English.

2.4.3 Discriminatory Education System of Pakistan

During the Pakistani dominion, a number of education commissions were formed to integrate the needs and diversity of both East and West Pakistani people. Unfortunately, these efforts ended in failure and gave rise to ‘high rate of unemployment among the educated youth and low academic standards, the promotion of a common set of cultural values based on the precepts of Islam’ (Rahman et. al. 2010, p 118). It seemed that the Pakistani rulers were more engaged in establishing a religious education system to
silence the East Pakistani people in the name of Islam and that developing a standard, non-biased scientific education system was never their intention. But Curle (1966) observes, ‘Pakistan’s education system was elitist and there was no apathy towards educating the masses during the ‘Ayub Khan’ regime (1958-1969)’. It is important to note here that the recent Islamic extremism in the country (2016) was initiated during the West Pakistani rule and is still active through the Madrasa education. It is also important to note here that the country’s education system, from the colonial period up to the present day, has always served the purpose of the elites, ignoring the needs of ‘have-nots’ or mass population. In this context, it is worth considering what change or innovation has meant to the ordinary people, and specifically to rural secondary teachers and students in the country.

The above discussion makes it clear that from the colonial age, the education system in the context made no useful contribution, other than giving rise to Islamism and terrorism and acting as a bar to the spread of English. I will now discuss the Independence War in 1971 and its influence on the people and the nation.

2.4.4 The Independence War

As discussed earlier, the Liberation War strongly influenced people’s attitudes towards language in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh Liberation War, also known as the ‘Bangladesh War of Independence’ or ‘the Civil War of Pakistan’ (Peter Moss, 2005) started with a revolution by Bengali speaking people, which was instigated by the Language Movement in 1952, and grew into armed conflict. The war commenced when the West Pakistani military junta instigated the systematic killing of nationalist Bengali civilians, religious minorities, students, intelligentsia, and armed personnel of East Pakistan in the name of ‘Operation Searchlight’ at midnight on 25th March 1971 (Garry, J. Bass, 2014). The junta also dissolved the results of the 1970 elections and arrested the Prime minister-designate, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman. Indira Gandhi (then Indian Prime Minister) expressed her views about this in a letter to Richard Nixon (then American President) on 15th December 1971:

‘All unprejudiced persons objectively surveying the grim events in Bangladesh since March 25 have recognised the revolt of 75 million people, a people who were forced to the conclusion that neither their life, nor their liberty, to say nothing of the possibility of the pursuit of happiness, was available to them.’

(David Reynolds, 2001)
The war ended on the 16th December 1971 with the surrender of West Pakistan’s army (Ayub & Subrahmanyam, 1972) and resulted in the independence of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. I include this history as it explains how events contributed to the lack of progress of English language in the context of my study compared to neighbouring countries. These historical events have played a dominant role in the nation’s education policy regarding English teaching and learning, as expressed in the national textbooks by the Chairman of NCTB:

‘… It also upholds the ideals, values, and inspirations of the great Liberation War. In addition, there are changes in teaching-learning activities, and ways of assessment.’

(Mostafa Kamaludin, in the National Curriculum for Secondary Education, 2012)

These historical events have also influenced the nine principles of the revised curriculum for secondary education in 2012:

- creating opportunities for nurturing patriotic feelings on the basis of the Language Movement, Liberation War, and secular values
- emphasising morality and human values
- increasing opportunities for inquisitiveness, creativity and innovation
- grooming learners as science minded and work oriented
- acquiring skills to use modern technology
- underlining scopes for realistic and applied education besides theoretical knowledge
- enhancing opportunities for life skills
- highlighting human rights with a view to removing all kinds of discriminations developing human resources as per the demand of the globalized world emphasise

(National Curriculum of Bangladesh, 2012)

Surprisingly, this historical influence on Bangladeshi people has been different from that of other countries with similar backgrounds. For example, Bangladeshi people have prioritised their mother tongue by hindering English or any other languages from
everyday use, whereas Nigeria, with its similar colonial background, has preferred the former colonial language to facilitate the cultural and linguistic unity of the country:

‘English is widely practiced and occupies a prominent function both at the workplace, in the media and as a medium of instruction in schools along with the three crucial indigenous languages as well.’

(Shaibu Danladi, 2013; p 6)

The ‘Chronology of Major Events’ (1947 to 2015) prepared by BBC on Bangladesh seems to be an accumulation of negative events, such as military coup, disputed execution of war-criminal causing bomb-attacks in public transport and deadlocking people’s mobility, mass-killings in political conflicts, political corruption, the rise of Islamic activism replacing secularism, kidnapings (hijacking people to demand a huge amount of money which ends with the murder of the victim in most cases), natural disasters (cyclone, flood), road-accidents and so on. Certainly, all these issues have impacted on teachers’ beliefs and the classroom since,

‘The classroom is a microcosm in the sense that what happens within the classroom reflects, affects and is affected by the complex of influences and interests within the host educational environment. In many ways, classroom interaction is an acting out of these influences and interests.’

Holliday (1994; p 16)

The political atmosphere of unrest has never allowed the country to settle or to organise its major public services (education, health or economy). On the contrary, day-by-day political practices have restrained the country’s progress by damaging people’s morality and honesty and bringing distress in mass common life. It can be assumed that in such a context, teachers had no better option than carrying on English teaching using the traditional Grammar-Translation method inherited from their teachers and forefathers. I believe that the sudden import of CLT in this situation, without any training or resources, has appeared as an alien concept to them and, as a result of this, GTM has remained embedded in classroom culture in the teaching of English.

I will now briefly look at the post-liberation background of the country to illustrate the deterioration of the education system caused by the power politics of the country.

2.4.5 Post-Liberation Political Culture

The post-liberation political situation is another important part of this study, as it has revealed how English has been neglected in the education system from the country’s
inception and deteriorated the quality of education by serving the political objectives. After the liberation, political turbulence and natural disasters did not allow the nation much time to stabilise a proper education system. In a war-torn country, the people had endured a difficult famine caused by a devastating flood in 1974, claiming 26,000-37,000 lives (Hugo, 1984; bdnews.com). It was never easy to settle as a new nation in such critical political situations, where two of the presidents, Sheikh Mujib in 1975 and Ziaur Rahman in 1981, were assassinated by military-coup, and the next one was overthrown by the Military forces. Rahaman (2007) states, ‘Confrontational politics and violence have become a serious threat to democracy and development in Bangladesh’ (p 101). In Bangladesh, Major Ziaur Rahman (1977-1981; the founder of BNP-Bangladesh Nationalist Party) was the seventh President of the country in just over five years (Urch, 2008). It was 2001 when Sheikh Hasina stepped down and handed power to a caretaker authority, becoming the first prime minister in the country's history to complete a five-year term. In the post-liberation era, these political ups and downs kept the country so busy in power politics that policy makers did not have enough time to pay attention to the education system.

After independence, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh, declared a general amnesty for all war criminals except those involved in four major crimes: murder, rape, loot and arson (Islam, 2012). After Sheikh Mujib’s brutal killing in 1975, Bangladesh underwent two military regimes (Rahman et. al, 2010). These two regimes, led by Maj. Gen. Ziaur Rahman between 1977-1981 and Lt. Gen. H.M. Ershad between 1982-1990, changed Bangladeshi identity politics from a secular and ethnic ‘Bengali’ identity to a state-based and pseudo-Islamic ‘Bangladeshi’ identity in an attempt to build political legitimacy and take Bangladesh out of India’s shadow. Education was used as a vehicle for promoting ‘Bangladeshi’ nationalism. The two regimes made constitutional changes to replace ‘secularism’ by ‘absolute trust and faith in Allah’ and made Islam the ‘State religion’ in 1979 and 1988 respectively. Therefore, during and after General Ershard’s rule there was an unplanned mushrooming of madrasas (religious schools) in Bangladesh. Religious education was used as a tool for attracting religious people's votes to beat the secular opposition in electoral politics. The ‘Ershad regime’ made Islamic studies compulsory up to secondary level amid strong opposition from secular and left-leaning parties (Gustavsson, 1991, cited in Rahman et. al 2010). It might sound bizarre that both the largest political parties have been involved in a never-ending struggle of rewriting the history of the Independence
war to establish their family-led political supremacy (both Awami league and BNP are family-led parties where family members run the parties).

Since independence, a major concern in the education system has been the development of madrasa education that has given rise to Islamic terrorism all over the country. Rahman et al (2010) have reported that it was the Pakistani regime that influenced the education system towards Islam, giving rise to a huge number of ‘madrasa institutions’ in the country. Since the independence of Bangladesh in 1971, the state under various governments continued to reform and re-contextualise the education system from a broader nationalistic perspective suggesting a range of conflicting rationales. Over the last 46 years, a total of seven national education commissions and committees have been set up by the different political and military governments of Bangladesh (Chowdhury, R. & Kabir, A., 2014).

Islamist politics have always played a critical role in the country and been catastrophic to some leaders (for example, in 1977, General Ziaur Rahman rehabilitated the war criminals in active politics and recruited them in supreme positions, such as ministers and Prime Minister; The Daily Star, Dec 15, 2007). By this empowerment, these war criminals (belong to ‘Jamaat-E-Islami’ party) later convinced President Zia to pass an Indemnity bill in the parliament postponing any trial attempt against the war criminals. Jahan and Shahan (2013) report,

‘After a military coup in 1975 an authoritarian government came into power, which made successive changes to the constitution to legitimise the unconstitutional military regime. The fifth amendment of the constitution incorporated all these changes and, as part of this, secularism was abolished and the ban on religion-based politics was lifted.’

(p. 427)

Most of the political decisions by President Zia were taken in favour of the banned political party, ‘Jamaat-e-Islami’, which helped increase terrorism in the country and worked as an obstacle against the country’s progress, as well as English learning in the context,

‘…in the politics of Bangladesh, Islam plays an important role especially in shaping the nature and content of public policies. Successive studies on “Islamism” in Bangladesh indicate that over the years Islamic principles and philosophies have gained an important status in deciding the content of public policy and the Islamic political parties have taken advantage of this important status of “Islamism”.’

(Hossain & Curtis, 2010; Riaz, 2010; Riaz & Fair, 2011).
In my view, President Zia ruled this ‘Islamisation of state’ for two major reasons: firstly, to divide the population into two distinct groups by creating an argument around national identity, i.e. whether the nation was ‘Bengali’ or ‘Bangladeshi’, in an attempt to rouse anti-Indian sentiment (‘Bangladeshi’ sentiment opposed to ‘Bengali’ sentiment), with those who identified themselves as ‘Bengali’ being regarded as ‘pro-Indian’ and not good Muslims. (This ‘divide and rule’ policy was first employed by the British Imperialists on Indian Muslims and Hindus.) President Zia was convinced by the war criminals that in a Muslim-majority country like Bangladesh, it would be easier for him to initiate and spread this anti-Islamic fervour for achieving his goal to settle the war criminals and control public agitation in the name of Islam. It would also help him to win a majority mandate in the general elections by showing this pro-Islamic attitude (Jahan & Shahan, 2014). This critical political game ended with the brutal killing of President Zia by his fellow defence officers in 1981.

Later, President Zia’s wife, who acted as Prime Minister for two terms (between 1991-1996 and 2001-2006), maintained a similar attitude in order to secure her power politics, causing a number of controversial issues and political unrest in the country for more than a decade. During her rule, fundamentalist and anti-independence Islamic activists increased in number and perpetrated problems by their ‘Jihadist’ activities, not only inside the country, but in the sub-continent as well. Unfortunately, this Islamist activism received state patronisation, directly led by the Prime Minister’s eldest son Tariq,

‘Tariq Rahman and several ex-BNP ministers directly patronised the outrageous operations of the JMB (Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh) in Rajshahi with the full knowledge of former Prime Minister Khaleda Zia, revealed an extensive The Daily Star investigation that was corroborated by top government officials in the region.’

(The Daily Star, June 21, 2007)

These Islamist activists have always regarded the learning of Arabic (as the language of the holy Quran) as more important and placed it above not only English but all other languages. They view English learning as ‘Haram’ (forbidden) and that is why they always acted against the spread of English in the context. These extremist Islamic groups have also acted strongly against girls’ education in the country, labelling it ‘non-
Islamic’. These Islamic activists have a stronghold on most of the mosques and madrasas in the country, from where they have planned and executed their ‘Jihadist’ activities. Unfortunately, both the major political parties (BNP an AL) have patronised these Islamist activists in order to secure supremacy in the election results. One daily newspaper reported:

‘Both the major political parties of the country have shown inertia in implementing policies that may be perceived as contrary to Islamic principles. This inertia has allowed the Islamic political parties to show adequate success in changing the content of the National Women Development Policy 2011 or blocking the government’s attempt to formulate a universal marriage act.’

(The Daily Prothom-Alo, 2012)

It is sad to observe that in spite of a deteriorating education system, culture and environment, political elites have continued their selfish competition, resulting in generations growing up in a vulnerable society where corruption, violence, hijacking, murder, distrust and dishonesty are rife. Bangladeshi politicians remind me of the famous saying, ‘Nero Fiddles while Rome Burns’” (The Roman Emperor Nero who ruled from 37 AD to 68 AD caused ruthless burning of Rome). Rahman et al (2010) describes,

‘The three and half decades since the country gained independence have been traumatic. Recurring political upheavals, natural disasters, dramatic social changes and economic convulsions contributed to the gloomy nature of the life of the common man. The bulk of the people live in abject poverty either in the run-down rural areas or in destitute urban slums.’

In the next section, I will examine how the growth of the garments industry has caused rapid economic progress in the country, causing a change in the language attitude of the new generations.

2.4.6 Economic Progress and its Impact

In the last decade or so, Bangladesh has become an important hub in the garment business sector, mainly because of cheap labour costs. This developing sector has gradually understood the need for a good command of English in order to compete in the global market. This is important to this research because economic growth has contributed towards the younger generation’s interest in learning English, which links with the topic of this study, which focuses on English teaching and learning in the post-
colonial Bangladeshi context, particularly drawing on the lived experiences of rural secondary English teachers. Hasan, M & Rahman, A. (2012) report this change in the context,

‘However, it is pitiful that in Bangladesh the scope for using Bangla is becoming narrower. In job sectors, multinational companies want their employees to be well versed in English. People are indirectly being discouraged to learn Bangla, for it does not bring any material benefit.’

(p. 15)

Jahurul & Bari (2012) have also emphasised the importance of English learning in changing conditions,

‘In countries like Thailand, which is one of the largest tourist attractions and a centre of business and trade in South East Asia, and Bangladesh where the international business has become a boom, the ability to communicate in foreign language, especially in English has become a must. The English language teachers and several educational institutions have tried several ways of using different methods and techniques to help their students to be able to communicate in English more effectively.’

(p. 88)

However, I believe this changing situation might have convinced Bangladeshi policy makers to look for some alternative method to address the issue in the English teaching system in the context, as Wedell (2009) says,

‘We are moving increasingly towards what as an interpretive and dynamic view of the educational process, with emphasis on teachers as supporters of learners in their learning, and away from a transmission-based view, which sees the teacher as an imparter of a pre-existing body of knowledge.’

Policy makers might have felt the importance of moving towards the ‘interpretive and dynamic view’ from the existing ‘transmission-based view’ where teachers are taken and respected as the ‘source of knowledge’ who impart knowledge to their learners. My assumption is that BANA (Britain, Australia and North America) countries have taken advantage of this changing context and took the opportunity to introduce the concept of CLT, as Hamid (2009) reports that historically the education policy and reform in the country are being largely dictated by international funding rather than expert opinion. Canagarajah (1999) also agrees to the fact by referring to Scheurich and Young (1997) that,
‘... contemporary education as a whole (not only ELT) is considerably influenced by the knowledge produced, disseminated, and defined by the materially developed centre communities. It is well known that Western centres of education, research, and publishing – whether funded by state or non-governmental agencies – provide financial backing, donate textbooks, share expertise, train teachers and scholars, and sometimes even run ELT enterprises in the periphery.’

I agree with them that CLT in the Bangladeshi context has been hurriedly imported without giving proper consideration of the socio-economic and cultural issues of the country.

2.4.7 Policy Catastrophe

The research community might also have influenced the import of CLT in the context. Rahman (2010) regrets that the country still confronts a dilemma on the language issue, i.e. whether the medium of instruction should be English or the mother tongue. Johanson (2000) also criticises the lack of a visionary plan and lack of policy in relation to English teaching and learning in Bangladesh and policy makers themselves acknowledge the deteriorating quality of education. The 2003 National Education Committee (NEC) admitted that this deterioration is due to the evident lack of a language policy for Bangladesh, which has brought the higher education sector to ‘the verge of a disaster’. They reported that higher education students generally remained poor in both Bengali and English (Chowdhury, R. & Kabir, A., 2014 in Rahman 2010, p. 93) and recommended that the government should take measures urgently in formulating a National Language Policy to overcome the confusion surrounding the issue of language, especially at higher education level, and took steps to ensure that the promotion of English did not compromise Bengali, as the government attempted to balance English and Bengali in national policies (Hamid 2009).

All the stories that I discuss here are intended to show their link to this study. From the above discussion, we have gained an insight into people’s distrust in politics and public institutions in the context. From the inception of the country, leaders from all parties have failed to build rapport with its citizens. The political parties, in their ceaseless hostility, have used the education system to establish their supremacy over other parties, giving rise to political corruption and Islamic extremism, vastly influencing society and the education system. For similar reasons, any program on women’s advancement or
English learning could not progress under these Islamist groups, as they were deemed ‘anti-Islamic’. Day by day, the gap between ordinary people, public institutions and political elites has widened to the extent that people have lost faith in political leaders and in the public institutions and led the context to become a ‘low-trust society’. In this context, I have situated my study to increase knowledge about how Bangladeshi teachers’ beliefs and values shape the teaching of English and affect their behaviour in the classroom. In other words, I have sought to understand the true situation from the bottom, rather than accept the success stories about these imported innovations, embroidered by the people sitting at the top.

2.5 Secondary Education in Bangladesh

In this section, I discuss the present secondary education system in Bangladesh, encompassing grade levels 6 to 12. In order to understand the role of ELT in Bangladesh, it is important to describe the secondary education system in place. It is important to be aware of this, as the respondent teachers in this study all belong to this larger group of non-government or private school teachers. (I will explain the term ‘Non-Government’ later.) It is important to note that the majority of these private or ‘Non-Government’ schools cannot achieve their expected level of performance due to the lack of proper training facilities, necessary resources and materials, and this is mainly due to policy discrimination.

![Number of Public and Private Schools in Bangladesh (as of 2016)](image)

Figure 9: The number of public and private secondary schools in the country

In Bangladesh, seven years of secondary schooling bridges primary and tertiary education. Secondary education is divided into three stages: junior secondary (grades VI-VIII), secondary (grades IX-X) and higher secondary (grades XI-XII). Higher
secondary schools can be upgraded to intermediate or degree colleges. A significant increase (16.4%) in the total number of secondary institutions occurred between 1995 and 1996, with secondary and higher secondary schools accounting for most of this increase (Hossain & Jahan, 1999:67), but although the number of schools has increased, there has been no change in the quality of education in the last 10 years (Safiqul, 2002, BANBEIS, 2016). At junior secondary level, there are two streams: general education and madrasa education. In spite of continued criticism and adverse reactions from all levels regarding the low performance of madrasas (Islamic education institutions), no government has yet risked addressing this sensitive issue by merging them with mainstream general education.

Vocational education is a part of general education at secondary level. In 2017, there were a total of 6,553 madrasas and 5,897 vocational schools in the country. Of the total students enrolled at secondary level, 74.98% were enrolled in the general education stream, 19.37% in madrasas and 5.64% in vocational schools. The first public examination is held at the end of year eight and is called the JSC (Junior School Certificate) and the second is held at the end of grade X, and is called ‘Secondary School Certificate (SSC)’ for general and vocational streams, and ‘Dakhil’ for the madrasa stream (BANBEIS 2016; Education Watch 2007).

2.5.1 Government and Non-Government Secondary Schools

The term ‘Non-Government’ has a strong link to the country’s post-colonial political culture and its influences on the education system. Since 1975 to the present day, the education sector of Bangladesh has always served the intention of the political elites (the list is long, starting with the President, Prime Minister, Ministers with or without portfolio, MPs, local political leaders and even their relatives) to win the peoples’ mandate in elections. From my childhood, I have seen political leaders disregarding the national education policy and declaring that they will set up new schools or colleges whenever they visit any place as part of their political campaigns. Local leaders from the ruling party, and sometimes their relatives, have taken advantage of the political culture to set up more schools or colleges in their own localities and this has brought dual benefits for them: firstly, they have recruited their relatives or party supporters by pressurising the school authorities; secondly, they win the people’s mandate by keeping their election campaign promise. Rahman et. al (2010) criticise, “emphasis is given on quantity by setting up unnecessary secondary education institutions to satisfy politicians
and their constituencies over the years’. These schools don’t have adequate facilities, qualified teachers and above all competent educational administrators” (GoB Report, Begum & Bhuyan, 2005).

Another important distinction between government and non-government teachers is that all public school teachers are university graduates who are recruited through a nationwide competitive selection process and enjoy a national pay scale. On the other hand, private school teachers are mostly of poor academic background (Rahman et. al. ibid), are locally recruited, receive the basic salary (of national pay scale) with a lower percentage of all other facilities (e.g. house rent, health costs) than that enjoyed by public school teachers. In recent times, these non-government institutions have received an allocation of one-off construction (school building) and logistics (chairs, tables, sitting benches etc.) support as well. Another important limitation of this type of non-government employment is their ‘non-transferability’, so while public teachers can transfer to different schools in different districts and to different public departments, private teachers have to stay in the same school for their lifetime.

Over time, the high number of non-government schools has exerted huge pressure on successive governments to affiliate them as public schools, ensuring equal facilities to those enjoyed by public school teachers. Until 1986, governments had no option other than to register and approve these schools or colleges in the national education framework as ‘non-government’. These types of schools and colleges are run and managed by a local authority SMC/CMC (School Management Committee/College Management Committee) chaired by the District Commissioner (DC), the head of the local government administration. The ‘Secretary’ is usually selected or elected from the local political elites and is a powerful position in the SMC hierarchy for two major reasons: firstly, this administrative role (which covers but is not limited to mobilising and handling of school/college funds, recruitment of teachers and office staff, liaison with local public administration and political leaders etc.) is jointly performed with the Head Teacher or the Principal in some cases; and secondly, political people mostly occupy the position. Unfortunately, this has led to these positions being occupied by politicians rather than educationists and has hindered the smooth running of the institutions and made teachers vulnerable in terms of lack of agency. To give a recent example, a local politician from the ruling party (AL) of ‘Saatgaon’ (a village in Nabinagar Thana under Brahmanbaria District) intended to be the Secretary of a
secondary school, but this was not approved by the Head Teacher of the school. As a result, the politician made a false accusation against the Head Teacher, resulting in his imprisonment. This incident was a major disappointment to the local teachers and common people and as a protest, the Teachers’ Association of the district initiated a ‘strike action’ (stopping all the regular school activities) in all 40 secondary schools, demanding the immediate release of the Head Teacher and punishment for the politician. Eventually, the Head Teacher was released following a negotiation with another influential leader (Source: ‘The Daily Jugantor’, 07 February 2015). This is one of thousands of incidents that typify the type of political influence and pressure that has made teachers’ agency vulnerable at all levels – from primary to tertiary.

I would now like to discuss the recruitment process of these schools and colleges. In most cases, teachers with a poor academic background (mostly BA pass, a non-university graduation degree) manage to obtain a job through nepotism, administrative bias or favouritism, or by negotiating with or bribing the school authority. Because of stiff competition in the job market, people with poor academic results often have no alternative than to get a teaching job by offering a ‘donation’. As an English lecturer in a local college in Meherpur, I observed the college authority demanding 50,000 BDT (nearly £500 GBP) or more from subject teachers in exchange for recruitment. Because of the unavailability of English teachers in the locality, I was not asked for a donation. This also reflects the high demand for, and better position of, English teachers in society. However, this ‘investment’ in a job is often a source of difficulties for applicants, for example, I have seen my colleagues selling their valuables (e.g. inherited lands or jewellery) in order to find enough money to secure a job.

In a developing country like Bangladesh, teachers with a poor economic background face further hardship after starting their new job when they come to the realisation that their salary is insufficient to compensate for their contributed donation. This impacts on the mental and social conditions of these teachers, which, in turn, impacts on their teaching. After recruitment, teachers with little prior subject knowledge and training face difficulties in their under-resourced rural classroom settings and the poor economic structure acts as a further constraint against any self-initiated personal development. For English teachers, (I have emphasized ‘English teachers’ implying they are particularly affected by lack of peer-sharing opportunities etc. though this is an issue not only for English teachers but also for teachers generally) the situation becomes more difficult.
when they find no place to discuss teaching or classroom related issues inside or outside the classroom, neither in the staff-room nor anywhere on or off-campus, let alone ‘peer-sharing’ of any innovation they might have experienced.

In these circumstances, the poor salary structure and consequent preoccupation with money worries is another nail in the coffin, limiting the teachers’ flexibility to think about anything beyond their daily needs. Frustration slowly creeps in and eventually any creative thoughts about teaching methods are abandoned, leading the teacher to take shelter in the traditional GT method: the method they inherited from their forefathers, which they have more confidence in teaching. The innovation of CLT without training or material support adds to their nervousness and frustration. Thus, political influences, corruption, and policy makers’ negligence have brought the teaching profession to a less privileged position and led to a deterioration in the quality of education, particularly in the non-government education sector.

2.5.2 The Secondary English Teacher

It is useful to remember here that this study is looking at the teaching of English in a post-colonial context through the lived experiences of a small group of rural non-government secondary English teachers in Bangladesh. ‘In the context, teaching as a profession is given the least preference in the professional hierarchy. Teaching in non-government schools is rarely considered a desirable career because of the poor salary structure and poor service conditions, even when compared to primary schools’ (Safiqul, 2002). As I have experienced, private tuition is widespread in mostly urban areas, especially for three major subjects: English, Mathematics and Science. Because of the growing market value of these subjects, teaching them earns more incentives in comparison to other subjects (e.g. history, religious studies, geography etc.) in the private tuition market and this is one of the major reasons behind widespread nepotism in the teacher recruitment process for those subjects. Even people with a poor academic background have managed to be recruited to teach English, Mathematics and Science, either because of nepotism or because cash payments have been made to the SMC, and this has resulted in the poor quality of education (Islam, S. 2002) discussed earlier. Because of their own lack of adequate subject knowledge and skills, most teachers lack confidence in their ability to prepare lesson plans or devise classroom assessment tools for their learners and consequently rely on external people or bodies to carry out their assessment, which, in turn, leads to poor motivation in teaching (McKay, 2006:142).
Due to lack of skills and expertise, a number of schools get their English examination papers prepared by external people.

At present, a total of 243,880 teachers work in secondary schools teaching 10,330,695 students every year around the country (BANBEIS 2017). Because of factors including disputed secondary education policy, continued political influences, weak management of schools, and the huge number of untrained and unskilled teachers, the whole education system is compromised. Limited public support for non-government schools and teachers, and the existing disparity between government and non-government institutions in terms of facilities and wages, has made the situation even more critical.

At this stage, I want to look how English has been treated in the context from the colonial period.

2.6 Status of the English Language

During the British Raj, the colonisers espoused their own education system in order to extend their domination and ensure the spread of English into the context (Altbach, 2008). This influence has continued in the country’s education system till date. Chowdhury & Kabir (2014) report,

‘Despite being nearly 80 years since the colonisers left, in current day in Bangladesh, the use, teaching and learning of English language and education still mark a conspicuous continuity with the colonial period, while at the same time sustained friction between English and a nationalistic fervour in favour of Bengali can be felt to often surface in popular rhetoric’.

Later on, the Pakistani rulers prioritised Islamic education and increased the number of ‘madrasahs’, which downgraded the education system over the course of time. To my understanding, West Pakistani rulers’ focus was mainly on the exploitation of East Pakistan economy in the name of religion and silencing Bengali (East Pakistani) peoples voice by imposing Islamic rules. The situation worsened when they attempted to establish Urdu as the national language in a Bengali majority country, eventually causing a revolution and creating a new country for the Bengali-speaking people named Bangladesh.

In the post-liberation period, the colonial influence existed both in the education system and among the people, but Bangladeshi politicians made the context more difficult,
which made English language less accessible for the common people, as I have already discussed. I believe it was not only anti-colonialist attitudes, but also a strong pro-Islamic, anti-Indian sentiment among the common people (ignited by politicians) that affected English teaching and learning in the context. Many researchers have voiced concerns about this English backwardness affecting the competence of students and adults to communicate effectively in English (Chowdhury and Ha 2008; Hamid and Baldauf 2008, Hamid, Sussex and Khan 2009 cf. Solly & Clare 2012). My personal experience was quite similar as a learner as well as a teacher of English in the context.

In Bangladesh, as in most other Asian countries, the curriculum is developed centrally and is only understood by teachers and students as a set of books to be followed throughout the year and culminating with a terminal examination. ‘Teacher Guides’ are also available in some schools, but rarely followed by teachers. Under the uniform national curriculum, English is taught as a compulsory subject for 12 years in both state-run and private schools and colleges (BANBEIS, 2016). Although English is a compulsory subject from class (grade) 3 at primary level, secondary school learners have continued to remain poor in speaking and listening skills (Hossain and Jahan, 1999:67). This is also true of secondary English teachers as well. Two reasons have been identified behind this weakness: use of the traditional GT method, in which there is no provision for language skills practice, and the existing testing system (BANBEIS 2016), where, despite the introduction of the CLT method, no provision has been created for testing the listening and speaking skills in public examinations (SSC & HSC). I believe the shift from GT to CLT does not bring any change to improve this situation for English learners and teachers.

2.6.1 CLT in Bangladesh

In 1998, CLT was introduced in Bangladesh by ELTIP, the English Language Teaching Improvement Project, a foreign-aided teacher development project jointly launched with the TTIs, and jointly funded by the Bangladeshi and British governments, with seven British consultants working with about 50 local trainers and support staff (The Guardian, 2000). After the introduction of CLT, ELTIP provided a short CLT training period to a small number of secondary teachers, as I have discussed earlier, but ELTIP closed down after the funding ran out, as happens to similar projects in many East-European and African countries (Bolitho, 2012). As a result, it did not take long for teachers to go back to their traditional GTM:
‘…there has been a degree of regression to ‘old’ ways of teaching, preparing teachers, designing curricula, and preparing examinations. The impetus and incentives to maintain the level and speed of change were often simply lost in the battle for day-to-day survival which many teachers in these regions continue to face.’

(Bolitho, 2012, p33)

ELTIP was axed after the foreign funding had finished, leaving the majority of secondary English teachers untrained. Tom Hunter, ELTIP team leader documented the lessons learned:

‘In a volatile society such as Bangladesh, where political dissent, demonstrations and national strikes are a way of life, no official can ignore these intense feelings. The lesson from ELTIP is that the development of a strong grassroots sense of ownership in a project is at least as important as developing "official" relationships - perhaps even more important.’

(Source: The Guardian, 2000)

I have already discussed the political influences that have impeded the education system, but here Hunter identifies another important area that has hindered the project. I believe this type of CLT import has been disastrous, due to insufficient thought being given to contextual trends and influences and ELTIP closing down before the majority of secondary English teachers had any kind of orientation on CLT. It is also ironic that CLT implementers, as Bolitho (2012, p 34) states, while executing a learner-centred and communicative approach, maintained a centralised top-down management structure due to ‘being driven by and accountable to donors’ (another colonial policy). Phillipson (1991) views this kind of CLT promotion as ‘Linguicism’, which is actually another form of racism that works for the legitimisation and effectuation of the colonial power,

‘Ideological structures and practices, which are used to legitimate, effectuate and reproduce unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups, which are defined on the basis of language. Linguicism is affirmed in similar ways to racism. In linguicist discourse the dominant language is glorified, dominated languages are stigmatised.’


Phillipson’s argument that ‘linguicism’ is carried out at the macro level in postcolonial societies where ‘IMF structural adjustment policies involve a continued emphasis on the former colonial language’ is precisely reflected in the Bangladeshi context. Phillipson (ibid: 27) asserts that English linguicism is a part of cultural imperialism which involves
the ‘establishment and continuous reconstitution of structural and cultural inequalities between English and other languages’ through Anglo-centric professional and technical training. The ELTIP Project has been an intense example of this, where a group of local ELTIP trainers have enjoyed opportunities to train in BANA countries bringing benefits to themselves and their establishments without making any potential contribution to the vast number of non-government secondary teachers.

Phillipson (ibid.) argues that ‘linguicism’ at the micro level, is aided by ‘the tenets which served as pillars of the rising ELT profession.’ Referring to the ‘Makerere Conference’ in Uganda in 1961, Phillipson (ibid. 27-8) comments that the ELT profession is based upon five fallacies: ‘the monolingual and subtractive fallacies, that the mother tongue should not be allowed in the classroom, and the learning of other languages will inhibit English language learning; the native speaker fallacy, that non-native speakers cannot be effective teachers; the early start and maximum exposure fallacies, that effective learning must start at an early age and involve maximum exposure’ to English (Phillipson 27-8, cf. Holliday, p 99). Phillipson’s views are relatable to the Bangladeshi context where teachers are strongly discouraged from using their mother tongue in the CLT classroom. I have experienced a similar attitude from British CLT experts who were formulating CLT based textbooks and teacher-training materials under the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh (NCTB) and believe this must have an adverse impact on learners and is catastrophic when proper attention is not given to the context, local beliefs and cultural sensibilities.

Holliday (1994) also raised similar issue of appropriacy of CLT in a different context from its country of origin and we can see this in Bangladesh, where historical and social influences, including the colonial past, the Language Movement, existing socio-economic, religious and political situations, have strongly impacted on teachers’ lives as well as on the classroom. In such a context, an important question arises in terms of whether the Western-originated CLT has been an appropriate choice.

Phillipson (1992) asserts that the spread of ELT is a kind of post-colonial enterprise and that ELT has been re-strengthened in the post-colonial period, partly as an instrument of Euro-and Anglo-centric hegemony that has become ‘integral to the functioning of the contemporary world order in order to maintain the ‘hegemony of the Euro and Anglo-centric functioning of the world order’ (cf. Hunter 2009; p. 318). I agree with Phillipson and Holliday to emphasise that CLT has not been the right choice for the Bangladeshi
context and it is difficult to implement without a proper teacher development structure. The policy makers should have prioritised the contextualisation of CLT, as well as the restructuring of the existing teacher development system, before incorporating the innovations. With all these criticalities in mind, the objective of this study has been to listen to and analyse the rural non-government secondary English teachers’ lived experiences, capturing their beliefs and practices in relation to the import of CLT.

It is important to note here that teacher knowledge and skills is key to increasing the school capacity where Bangladesh has a big gap, as I have experienced as a Bangladeshi student and English teacher in the context. Fullan, M. (2007) has suggested five interrelated components as essential for building school capacity, which are equally applicable to the Bangladeshi context. They are (1) teacher’s knowledge, skills, and dispositions; (2) professional community; (3) program coherence; (4) technical resources; and (5) principal leadership. I posit here with Fullan (ibid) to argue that all these above components should work interconnectedly if we are to expect increased school capacity where ‘the role of the Principal is to cause the previous four factors to get better and better in concert’ (p 164).

In relation to this, Vygotsky (1978) puts strong emphasis on the critical role of the teacher, which is quite opposite to the reality of the Bangladeshi context. In his ‘sociocultural theory’, the teacher is regarded as an active, communicative participant in the learning process. The teacher acts as a support to help the student until the time comes when he or she is able to operate independently. In his well-known theory of ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), Vygotsky (ibid) says that learners benefit most from tasks that are just beyond their individual capabilities. Learners are not able to complete such tasks on their own, but with the help of a more knowledgeable and experienced individual they are able to accomplish them. Thus, the role of a teacher is to help learners overcome the gap between what they can do alone and what they can manage with the help of others. Here we can identify the importance of the knowledge and experience of a teacher, which could be ensured through the national CPD structure in Bangladesh. But in my previous discussions, I have already shown that these non-government rural secondary English teachers are not yet ready to perform the ‘critical role’ of teacher.

I would like to urge Bangladeshi policy makers to take necessary steps immediately to strengthen the existing teacher training facilities so that we can see improved student
performance. Simultaneously we have to make a careful selection of methods that attune cultural, religious, social, economic and political issues in order to attain the bigger goal. Research in language acquisition and cognitive development confirms that a thorough grounding in one’s first language and culture enhances the ability to acquire other languages, literacies, and knowledge (Canagarajah, 1999).

The above discussion exposes the fact that Bangladeshi CLT importers not only failed to equip these rural teachers with proper skills and knowledge and resources to handle the innovation (BANBEIS, 2016) but also failed to recognise the fact that we are still entrenched in the primary community of socialisation that enables us to negotiate or appropriate other languages (and cultures) effectively. I have therefore focused on how these teachers are accomplishing their task as ‘active, communicative participants’ in the learning process, and what they are doing in their everyday teaching in the real classroom. Thus, the rationale of this study has been to investigate these teachers’ lived experience in order to determine the facts about their day-to-day professional practices, which will be a useful contribution to knowledge.

2.7 Teacher Training in Bangladesh

I would start this section with a BANBEIS (2016) report where policy makers have admitted the truth about the existing inefficient teacher training mechanism in the country:

‘Only around 12% of the English teachers received basic subject in-service training for more than 1 month. Around 37% English teachers received in-service training for 1 month and lesser period. 25% of them received training for 15 days and less. It is evident that the in service training for the English teachers is quite inadequate to make them conversant on the subject.’

It is evident here that the poor quality of English teachers is linked to inadequate teacher training, as mentioned in my earlier discussion. Furthermore, the existing teacher training facilities in Bangladesh are still carrying a legacy from the colonial period. I want to know how CLT has been disseminated to teachers and how English teachers have improved their knowledge and skills on CLT.

At present, there are six types of teacher training institutes in the country: Primary Teacher Trainings Institutes (PTIs), Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), Vocational Teacher Training Institutes (VTTIs), Physical Education Colleges (PECs), Higher
Secondary Teacher Training Institutes (HSTTIs) and Bangladesh Madrasah Teacher Training Institutes (BMTTIs). A BANBEIS (2016) report reveals that the growth of this sector is very slow. The total number of institutions was 129 in 2000, 143 in 2003, and reached 215 in 2015. Of these 215 institutions, 39% are public and 61% are privately managed. Among them 54% are TTCs, 27% PTIs, 14% PECs and 8% other institutions and, of these, more than 29% are located in Dhaka city, 17.67% in Chittagong, 17% in Khulna, 15% in Rajshahi and 20% in the other three divisions.

In the secondary sub-sector, there are 14 public and 118 private teacher-training institutes (Figure 9) (BANBEIS, 2016). The B.Ed. courses offered by most of these public and private institutes are still structured around the traditional methods of teaching English. As a result, what teachers bring in to the English classroom is something close to the traditional ‘chalk and talk’ method. There are provisions in some private universities for B.Ed programme for non-trained teachers. The Institute of Education and Research (IER) under Dhaka University has a four-year B.Ed (Honours) programme, which was conducted as a three-year course until 2001 (BANBEIS 2008) which was, in fact, another sequence of the GTM. Developed in the colonial format, the country’s education system has been carrying the legacy of colonial influence with little or no change. Academics or educationists who work in the formulation of the country’s education policies also belong to a generation shaped by the colonial system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Institute</th>
<th>Public</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% of Female</th>
<th>Private</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>% of Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% of Female</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>% of Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary Training Institute (PTI)</td>
<td>56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers Training College (TTC)</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical Teacher Training Institute (TTIC)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocational Teacher Training Institute (VTTI)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education College</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Higher Secondary Teacher Training Institute (HSTTI)</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madrasah Teacher Training Institute</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 10: Number of Teacher Training Institutions by type, Gender and Management (source: BANBEIS)
The following chart shows the different teacher training courses offered by TTCs:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Offered Courses</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Nature of Training</th>
<th>Awarding Body</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Education (B-Ed)</td>
<td>01 Year</td>
<td>Full time academic course as pre-service of the teacher or in-service for the teachers.</td>
<td>National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor in Education (B-Ed) Honors</td>
<td>04 Years</td>
<td>Full time academic course as pre-service of the teacher</td>
<td>National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters of Education (M-Ed)</td>
<td>01 Year</td>
<td>Full time academic course as pre-service of the teacher or in-service for the teachers.</td>
<td>National University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short Term Training Programs</td>
<td>1week/2 weeks / 3 weeks/ 4 weeks</td>
<td>In service training for continuous professional development CPD, LSBE, Digital Content Development, Creative Questions, Refreshers etc.</td>
<td>Various projects under Ministry of Education (MoE)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 11: Courses offered in Teacher Training Institutes

As discussed before, the existing teacher training facilities in the national structure in the country still carry on the legacy of colonialism, which sees grammar teaching as an important part in the teaching of English. This is important in this study, as it will help us to understand teachers’ motivation and attitudinal factors towards change and innovation. Solly & Clare (2012) report, ‘Bangladesh has had a very traditional approach to English language teaching, focusing on teaching about the language rather than how to use it effectively.’ Oliveira (2007:101 in Solly & Clare, 2012) also agree with this:

‘In general, teacher training is confined to situations in which teachers are exposed to theories about teaching, abstract discussion about general issues, or are being directly taught. Seldom do they have the opportunity to watch and interact with their peers – a fundamental tool for the creation of a learning community.’

(Oliveira 2007: 101)

In the country, the existing teacher training methodologies applied by the national teacher training colleges (TTCs) are mostly based on the traditional GTM concept before the import of CLT in 1998. Some useful suggestions came from a BANBEIS study (2016):

‘It shows that there is room for improving quality of education (student performance) by providing adequate teacher training. The results of this study are indicative of the national scenario and can help in giving policy suggestions. The study observed that in some cases teachers lacked requisite
qualification and training and there is need for upgrading the teaching and training strength of these teachers. Due to rapid change in education training, support services and more involvement of new institutions and rapid changes of curriculum, further study at bigger scale will give a clear and more dependable picture of the whole scenario.

Teacher Training Colleges run in-service training courses known as B.Ed. (Bachelors of Education) accredited by the National University to equip secondary school teachers with the knowledge, skills, attitude and behaviour required to perform their task in the classroom, school and wider community. This course runs for one year and covers five learning fields: 1) professional studies; 2) educational studies; 3) teaching studies; 4) technology and research studies; and 5) teaching practice. Admission starts from the month of May and classes start from 1st July each year (pub no. 391, BANBEIS). During ‘practice teaching’ under the B.Ed. training course, a teacher has to conduct 90 lessons with prepared lesson plans in a secondary school for 12 weeks. During the course, teachers are tested twice: first in October or November, and then in March or April. The TTC subject teachers mark the answer scripts before the final results are sent to the National University for publishing (pub no. 391, BANBEIS). Studies (pub. 39, BANBEIS) have shown that not all private TTCs have their own building, adequate numbers of classrooms (only 7 in comparison to 72 of public TTC), ample books (having 2,466 books only against public TTCs having 9,493), necessary education materials (only 14% in comparison to public TTC’s 83%). To my knowledge, the pedagogic culture of these institutions is still continuing the legacy of the colonial format of GT, which may contribute to the resistance towards change and innovations. In this context, it would be worth seeing how Bangladeshi secondary school teachers’ beliefs and practices are guided by the innovations.

It would be useful to discuss here how current research on teacher development focuses on teachers’ beliefs in relation to practices rather than on the teaching skills mandated by educators or policy makers (Clark and Yinger, 1977; Carte, 1990; Richardson, 1994; Borg, 2006). It is their view that the thinking and behaviour of teachers are guided by a set of organised beliefs and that those often operate unconsciously. Pajares (1992) reviewed research on beliefs and argued ‘teachers’ beliefs can and should become an important focus of educational inquiry’ (307). He claims that beliefs are inflexible and basically unchanging. Referring to Rokeach (1968), he argues that ‘beliefs differ in
intensity and power; beliefs vary along a central-peripheral dimension; and the more central a belief, the more it will resist change’ (Pajares 1992, 318). A number of researchers consider that teacher development requires teachers to develop their beliefs and practices (Foss and Kleinsasser 1996; Sato and Kleinsasser 1999a; Flores 2001), which can be a useful note for Bangladeshi policy makers. It is, therefore, worth finding out what secondary English teachers’ beliefs and practices are in reality, and how these have impacted both on their acceptance of the innovations and on their practices in relation to the implementation of CLT.

In the above discussions, I have tried to encompass a detailed picture of the English teaching-learning scenario, teachers’ position and their agency in relation to politics and power, and teachers’ beliefs and practices that have shaped their identity in the specific context. As already mentioned, the people of Bangladesh have struggled to establish their identity since the colonial period, but after 1971 Bangladeshi political leaders added another twist by shifting the ‘Bengali’ identity to a ‘Bangladeshi’ identity to legitimise war criminals and their activities in the country. This West Pakistani collaborators’ group has tried to re-write the real history of the war by creating confusion about the nation’s identity and history (the Daily Star, 2007). This critical political game has held back the growth of the nation as well English advancement for decades and ordinary people have always been the victim of this game.

I will now introduce the research setting where I conducted my research.

2.8 The Primary Setting of the Study

Meherpur is the primary research setting, a small district situated at 23.75°N 88.70°E, nearly 240 miles southwest of the capital city of Dhaka in Bangladesh. People believe it was named after a famous Muslim preacher ‘Meher Ali’. I have situated this research study at Meherpur for a number of reasons. Firstly, this is my birthplace; secondly, Meherpur has experienced both British and Pakistani colonialism and some of its villages still bear the signs colonialism, for example, the ‘NeelKuthi’ (Figure 11), a place used by the British for ‘Neel’ cultivation, as discussed earlier.

During the reign of Mughal Emperor Shahjahan (5 January 1592 – 22 January 1666), a river port was developed in this district. Although the British East India Company made
extensive use of the port, it was not until indigo planters and traders settled here that the township began to grow.

![Figure 12: The ‘Neelkuthi’ (The Bungalow used for indigo cultivation by the colonisers)](image)

Missionary activities are still carried on in one village, ‘Ballavpur’, in Mujibnagar Upazila which might have a link to the poor status of English in the context, as already discussed; a church set up by the missionaries is still running a lower secondary school named ‘Ballavpur Mission lower secondary school’ here. Mujibnagar (named after the father of nation) is one of the 3 Upazilas (sub-districts) under Meherpur district. The first provisional government of Bangladesh was formed here under the leadership of Tajuddin Ahmed, the first Prime Minister of Bangladesh (11th April 1971-12th January 1972). On the 17th of April 1971, the declaration of independent Bangladesh was solemnly done at the village of ‘Baidyanaththola’ (now Mujibnagar) of this district (Shajahan Miah, 2012) and since then, Meherpur has been known as the first capital of Bangladesh and a national memorial was erected there to commemorate the event. On 18th April 1971, the Pakistani army killed 8 people at Amjhupi, where the British Bungalow is situated. All of these historic influences are still visible here, which exerts a strong influence on the teaching and learning of English in the context, which is the focus of this study. Considering all these personal and historical associations, I selected Meherpur as an ideal place for this research study.
Area: The area of Meherpur is 751.62 Sq. km situated under Khulna Division with two municipalities - Meherpur and Mujibnagar. Meherpur comprises three Upazilas (sub districts) – Meherpur Sadar, Gangni and Mujibnagar, containing 18 Unions, 180 Mauzas and 274 Villages.

Population: The total population of Meherpur district is 655,392 comprising 324,634 males and 330,758 females (sex ratio 98:100). The population density is 872/Sq. Km and annual growth rate is 1.02%.

Literacy: The Literacy Rate of Meherpur district is 46.30% (46.90% male and 45.70% female) and the school attendance rate is 53.60% for 5 to 14 years age group (source: ‘aboutbangladesh’ website). At present, there are 16 Colleges, 120 Secondary schools, 26 Madrasas and 7 Technical Institutes in the district. (Source: Meherpur District Education Office, 2013).

The number of SSC completing students was only 25.07% in comparison to that of the capital city of Dhaka (74.79%), whereas the drop-out rate is high at 74.79% compared to 25.31% in Dhaka city (Figure 14: BANBEIS report, 2016).
The above information is important for this study, as it illustrates the current achievement status of these schools and highlights the disparities between the capital city of Dhaka and Meherpur and Sherpur districts in terms of SSC completion and dropout rates in the years 2008 and 2009. It is quite reasonable to assume that poor education policy, poor teacher training facilities, and the unavailability of teaching aids and resources have impacted on the poor performance of these schools, as reflected in the completion and drop-out rates shown in Figures 14 and 15 and that schools are performing better in Dhaka because of the availability of those facilities.

The data collection for this study took place in Meherpur district town and nearby village areas where a total of 11 teachers from five non-government secondary schools were interviewed following a purposeful selection process.

In the following chapter, I will look into the literature relevant to the field of my study.
Chapter 3: Literature Review

This study explores the teaching of English in a post-colonial context through the lived experiences of a small number of Bangladeshi rural non-government secondary English teachers, where the policy makers have shifted the English teaching-learning methodology from the traditional GT (Grammar Translation) methods to a CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) approach. Some private organisations have also initiated similar innovations, such as CAL (Computer Aided Learning) or TBL (Task Based Learning) in some urban schools in the country. For reasons I have discussed earlier, I believe this shift has been a mismatch in this context. I will now explore some research literature that is significant and pertinent to the aims and objectives of the thesis.

3.1 The Grammar Translation (GT) Method

The Grammar-translation (GT) method in the field of ELT and as a method for teaching other modern languages emerged from the teaching of classical languages, such as Latin. Stern (1983, cf. Hall, 2011) affirms that the focus on grammar and translation in language teaching existed through the ages, but the idea of Grammar-translation as a defined approach to language teaching emerged only in the late eighteenth century, and was afterwards referred to as “the Prussian Method” (much of the original grammar-translation literature emerged from Germany), the Grammar method, the Classical method or the Traditional method’ (Weihua, 2004a: p 250; in Hall 2001, p 81).

The GT method was devised and developed for use in secondary schools in Europe and its originators were trying to develop a simple approach appropriate for school children. Before 1800 most modern language learners were individual scholars trying to gain a reading knowledge of the language by studying the grammar and applying this knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. This kind of scholastic method was well suited to the capabilities of younger school pupils but was a self-study method, which was inappropriate for group teaching in classrooms. These types of schools were called ‘grammar schools’ in the UK. (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004).

Grammar-translation requires learners to focus on individual grammar points, which are taught deductively. Example sentences are then translated both from and to the second
language. An example of grammar-translation material is presented in Figure 16 below and shows how this method focuses on accuracy and written language, rather than spoken language, with language broken down and analyzed at the level of words, phrases, and individual sentences in the first instance; longer texts may be drawn upon dependent on the ability of the learners (Hall, 2011).

![Figure 17: An example of grammar-translation materials (Source: Extract from Teach Yourself Polish (Corbridge-Patkaniowska, 1992), first printed in 1948; cf. Hall, 2011).](image)

The grammar-translation method was adopted in schools in an attempt to adapt the above stated traditions. It used the basic framework of grammar and translation because these were already familiar to both teachers and pupils from their classical studies. Howatt & Widdowson (2004) state that the principle aims of GT, ‘ironically enough of what to happen later, was to make language learning easier’ (p 152). The earliest grammar-translation course for the teaching of English was written in 1793 by Johann Christian Fick (1763-1821) and was published in Erlangen in Germany. However, one important point here to note here is that the word ‘practical’ appears again and again in nineteenth century language courses. ‘Practical’ is more or less a synonym for ‘useful’ nowadays, but in the nineteenth century a practical course was one that required ‘practice’. That means it comprised exercises of various kinds, ‘typically sentences for translation into and out of the foreign language, which were another novel feature of the grammar-translation method’ (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p. 152).
Although the GT method appeared to be a simple approach, it was grossly distorted by
the collision of interests between the classicists and their modern language rivals
grammar-translation ‘does not directly teach people to use the language for some
external purpose outside the classroom’. Richards and Rodgers (2001) suggest that
languages are studied in order to develop learners’ intellectual abilities, and the study of
grammar itself becomes the purpose of learning. That is why many recent studies
suggest that grammar-translation leaves learners unable to communicate in the language
being learnt. Thus, it would seem to stop some way short of current views of what
language learning is for, leading Richards and Rodgers (2001: p 7) to argue that ‘… it
has no advocates. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or
that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or education theory. And
yet, GT method has survived and being is used in many parts of the world today, of
course in different modified forms,’ (Bangladesh is a case in point). ‘Teachers and
students continue to believe that grammar-translation will help them while many other
methods do not focus on grammar explicitly’ (V. Cook, 2008; p 239; cf. Hall 2011).

However, I would agree with Tudor (2001: 104) who asserts that in addition to their
physical (or virtual) location and pedagogic function, classrooms are also social
environments and that language lessons can therefore be understood as social events
based upon social relationships and social interaction (Erikson, 1986; Allwright, 1989).
I also agree that teachers need to focus on language as a medium for encouraging social
relationships and social interactions. Hall (2011) similarly argued that the beliefs and
expectations of parents, institutional managers and governmental agencies beyond the
classroom and the relationships between the participants in the classroom (i.e. teachers
and learners) affect classroom practices and behaviour. Thus:

‘The classroom is not a world unto itself. The participants … arrive at the
event with certain ideas as to what is a “proper” lesson, and in their actions
and interaction they will strive to implement these ideas. In addition, the
society at large and the institution the classroom is part of have certain
expectations and demands which exert influence on the way the classroom
turns out.’

(Van Lier, 1988a: 179 in Hall, G. 2011)

Therefore ‘diversity’ and ‘complexity’ are fundamental elements of language teaching
and learning, and of language classrooms (Tudor 2001 in Hall, G. 2011).
I believe that teachers need to focus on neither GT nor CLT but a methodology that makes learning easier. Of course, this will also affect the role teachers assume in the classroom. In the Bangladeshi context teaching is conceptualised as the transmission of knowledge from teachers to learners, or as the provision of opportunities for learners to discover and construct knowledge for themselves (Hall, 2011: p 7). The attraction of GT epistemologically is that it is about language as content rather than use, which appeals to cultures in which knowledge is seen as important and of status in a didactic education system. And this has been the case for the context of Bangladesh, as Chowdhury & Ha (2008) report:

‘At all levels of education, the grammar translation is still the norm of ELT in Bangladesh and considerable friction between policy-level expectations and actual practice can be felt by practitioners […] Such practice involves a heavy emphasis on grammatical rules and translation of (mostly decontextualized) sentences. English lessons are conducted solely in Bangla or Bengali, with little use of English. Until recently, the secondary English textbook was mainly a collection of “prose” and “poetry”, with a supplementary grammar book in which grammar items were presented structurally with almost no interactive exercises. The only activities involved writing paragraphs, essays, personal letters and job applications.’

(Chowdhury and Ha 2008)

Now I will explore the literature on Communicative Language teaching (CLT) for a better understanding of the concept.

3.2 Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

The idea at the heart of the ‘communicative movement’ in applied linguistics and language pedagogy was the opinion that language teaching should take greater account of the way in which language works in the real world and try to be more responsive to the needs of learners in their efforts to acquire it. The central theoretical concept in CLT is ‘communicative competence’, a term brought into discussions of language use and second and foreign language learning in the early 1970s (Habermas 1970; Savignon 1971). There were many influences, which contributed to the strength of this opinion, some practical, others more theoretical, and others still that derived from the general ‘zeitgeist’ of the late 1960s. From 1970 onwards, there is a list of scholars (such as Zellig Harris 1952; Chomsky 1957,1959,1965, 1966; Hymes 1968; Labov 1966, 1969; Halliday 1961, 73, 78, 85; cf. Howatt & Widdowson, 2004) who made useful
contribution in many ways to the concept of ‘Communicative Language Teaching’ (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004: 326-331).

I will now characterise what the communicative movement means in linguistic terms. The key concept is that in communicative contexts language is viewed as a unified event of: ‘utterances, texts, conversations, discourses and so on’ (Howatt and Widdowson, 2004: p 330). CLT aims to develop the ability of learners to use language in real communication (Ellis 2003) and has become a term that frames competence in terms of social interaction, and views the learner as a partner in the process:

‘Drawing on current understanding of language use as social behaviour, purposeful, and always in context, proponents of communicative language teaching offer a view of the language learner as a partner in learning; they encourage learner participation in communicative events and self-assessment processes.’

(Savignon 1991, p. 273)

CLT refers to both processes and goals in classroom learning. Competence is defined in terms of the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in second language acquisition (SLA) research to comprise its development (Sauvignon 1972, 1997).

3.2.1 The Western superiority and Cultural politics of CLT

CLT is a product that has been prescribed as ‘the best’ and ‘the way to teach’ (Bax, 2003) which has been linked with the cultural politics of English and ELT and the discourses of colonialism (Pennycook, 1994, 1998), with the marketisation and commercialisation of TESOL and ELT worldwide (Andersson, 2005; Chowdhury, 2006; Pennycook, 1994), ‘Anglocentricity’ (Phillipson, 1992) and ‘the Native speaker fallacy’ (Canagarajah, 1999). These are some of the factors that have caused the promotion of CLT to be seen as a manifestation of Western superiority in the domain of the ELT industry. CLT is a concept created and exported by BANA (Britain, Australian and North American) countries (Holliday 1994) ‘condemning tried and tested traditional methods still popular in many other parts of the world’ (Liu, 1998; p 4).

CLT prioritises developing learners’ ability to use language in real life communication. Brown and Yule (1983) describe communication as involving two general purposes - the interactional function, where language is used to establish and maintain contact, and
the transactional function, where language is used referentially to exchange information. Therefore, CLT is directed at enabling learners to function interactionally and transactionally in an L2 situation. The goal of CLT then is not very different from that of earlier methods, such as the audio-lingual or the oral-situational method, which also declared its aim to develop the ability to use language communicatively. Ellis (2003) argues that CLT, however, drew on very different models of language. Whereas the earlier methods were based upon a view of language as a set of linguistic systems (phonological, lexical and grammatical), CLT drew on a functional model of language (Halliday, 1986) and a theory of communicative competence (Hymes, 1971).

Widdowson (1978) maintains that structural approaches to teaching focus on ‘usage’, which denotes the ability to use language correctly, while CLT concentrates on ‘use’, which means the ability to use language meaningfully and appropriately in the construction of a discourse (Ellis 2003).

3.2.2 Cultural Incompatibility and the Conflict of Values

CLT faces another argument, which is that this methodology is based upon Western-orientated assumptions and beliefs that may not be universally applicable or appropriate. McKay (2003) and others (e.g. Ellis, 1996), for example, maintain that the adoption of CLT in the classroom often means that the teacher has to introduce a new ‘culture of learning’, which may clash with the learners’ existing culture of learning. Furedi (2002) notes that TESOL education, ironically, is disseminated through pedagogic styles, such as CLT, designed to complement students who are no longer expected to study but to learn; and since complex ideas are not learnt but studied, the intellectual horizon of the learner is restricted to the assimilation of information and acquisition of skills (Furedi, 2002; cf. Anderson, 2005). This is an important argument that is useful for Bangladeshi planners as well as the international research community when considering whether we should restrict the intellectual horizon of the learner in the process of inculcating information and skills acquisition as done through CLT.

Historically there has been a more critical European (and North American) focus in communicative language teaching, going back to the 1970s (Candlin, 1989), while in England and Europe, the ‘notional-functional approach’ has preceded CLT, a communicative approach to language teaching associated most often with the Canale and Swain (1980) framework (Breen and Candlin, 1980). While these approaches have had a profound effect on language teaching internationally, it is interesting that their
limitations have achieved greatest attention in countries outside the North American/European context (Norton, B. 2000). Norton (1989) noted in South African context that innovations in language teaching have called into question dominant curriculum frameworks. The South African scholar Gardiner (1987) argued:

‘People’s English cannot construct itself upon the implementation of the English as a Second/Foreign Language principles generated so industriously and marketed so assiduously by British Universities, publishers and agents of its Foreign Office. That would be tantamount to changing names of the actors but retaining the same old play. Not only should future syllabi be reconceptualised; they must proceed from a different set of principles.’

(p. 60)

The thrust of Gardiner’s words is evident in the work of Janks (1997), Ndebele (1987) and Stein (1998), who are more critical of CLT. In CLT, the emphasis on meaning rather than form, process rather than product, fluency rather than accuracy can be a source of unhappiness or a feeling of frustration among learners who grew up in a culture that values the mastery of grammatical skills and other linguistic forms (Ellis, 1996). The English teaching-learning context of Bangladesh is an example of this type of culture and secondary school teachers who have used the traditional style of teaching English for many years might carry similar feelings to those mentioned by Ellis (1996).

CLT has been criticised most for its failure to take account of local conditions and needs. Holliday (1994) raises the issue of whether techniques, pioneered in largely western contexts to address the needs of local learners, should be exported uncritically to other learning-teaching contexts. Phan Le Ha (2008) asserts that in CLT, the academic is encouraged to play the role of facilitator rather than generator of knowledge, which contradicts the socially expected and felt image of the professional self of the teacher in many countries, as in Vietnam. The cause of this mismatch of expectations, as Phan Le Ha (ibid.) explains:

‘…is the difference between students’ concept of learning and teachers’ perception of teaching, in which students see learning as a serious process when solid knowledge is introduced by teachers, while many native English teachers think that communicative activities including fun and relaxing ones are best.’

(p. 92)
Stephen Bax (2003) argues that although CLT has served the language teaching profession well for many years, there is now an urgent need to consider solutions to learner needs that take account of other factors, such as, ‘the culture, the students, and so on, other than methodology’ (p. 284). Bax (ibid) shows CLT as an approach rooted in the methodology-obsessed mindset of the professional past. He suggests it is ‘now time to place methodology and Communicative Language Teaching where they belong - in second place - and recognise that the learning context, including learner variables, is the key factor in successful language learning’ (p. 286). This is an important note for the policy makers in Bangladesh who imported CLT as a solution to the traditional GT method. Here Macedo (1994: 8) has provided an important suggestion by referring to the persistent call by general educationists for ‘an antimethods pedagogy that refuses to be enslaved by the rigidity of models and methodological paradigms’ (cf. Kumaravadivelu 2012). They view methods as the main cause ‘that sustains the dichotomy between theory and practice, between production and consumption of knowledge’ (Kumaravadivelu 2012: p9). Cochran-Smith and Zeichner (2005: 15 in Kumaravadivelu 2012: p9) suggest that methods courses must be ‘seen as complex and unique sites in which instructors work simultaneously with prospective teachers’ beliefs, teaching practices, and creation of identities.’ Kumaravadivelu (1994) also refers to a post-method condition by arguing,

‘Language teaching methods are based on idealised concepts geared towards idealised contexts. Since language learning and teaching needs, wants and situations are unpredictably numerous, no idealised method can visualize all the variables in advance in order to provide situation-specific suggestions that practicing teachers need to tackle the challenges they confront in the practice of their everyday teaching. As a predominantly top-down exercise, the conception and construction of methods have been largely guided by a one-size-fits-all-cookie-cutter approach that assumes a common clientele with common goals.’

I agree with Kumaravadivelu that introducing CLT into the Bangladeshi context might have been based on similar assumptions of a ‘one-size-fits-all-cookie-cutter’ approach without giving proper consideration to the critical issues I have discussed in Chapters 1 & 2.

Over the past thirty years or so, CLT importers in Bangladesh should have considered the feasibility of CLT application in EFL contexts and given importance to the significance of local needs, the conditions of the particular EFL context, and the
benefits of the traditional methods of language teaching regardless of the seeming popularity of CLT (Bax, 2003; Harvey, 1984; Incecay & Incecay, 2009). Some others have taken a strong position for adopting CLT in Asian countries (Li, 1998; Liao, 2004; Maley, 1984). Alongside the growing popularity of CLT in most EFL countries, a number of studies have attempted to examine the feasibility of CLT innovation and potential problems in its use in EFL contexts such as China, Greece, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, Turkey, Vietnam and possibly Bangladesh as well. For instance, while examining the suitability of the communicative approach in the Vietnamese context, Ellis (1994) noted that CLT did not operate well in the Asian context, but particularly in Vietnam because of the country’s ‘collectivist’ social structure, which is different from the Western ‘individualistic’ society where CLT originated. Ellis (ibid) found that one of the main problems in using a communicative approach in Vietnam was that teachers were dependent on the inherent traditional teaching practices. He also stated that the product-orientation in Vietnam conflicted with the process-oriented Western pedagogy that emphasised communicative competence. This is similar to the Bangladeshi context where teachers are mostly reliant upon the traditional GT Method. In a similar study, Karavas-Doukas (1996) investigated teachers’ attitudes towards the use of a communicative approach in Greece, and it was observed that although the English curriculum in Greece was based upon communicative language teaching, teachers showed a tendency to carry on with a traditional teacher-oriented instruction style. The findings of this study suggested that teachers either did not understand, or were unable to see, the practical implications of the CLT principles.

In another significant study, Li (1998) researched Korean teachers' perceptions of the implementation of CLT. The results of Li’s study confirmed that the teachers encountered a number of difficulties in using CLT in their classes. The difficulties reported by the Korean teachers can be divided into four main categories: (a) difficulties caused by teachers (identified issues were, deficiency in spoken English, deficiency in strategic and sociolinguistic competence, lack of training in CLT, few opportunities for retraining in CLT, misconceptions about CLT, little time for and expertise in material development); (b) difficulties caused by students: (encompassing issues like low English proficiency, little motivation for communicative competence, resistance to class participation; (c) difficulties caused by the educational system: (including large classes, grammar-based examinations, insufficient funding, lack of support etc. and (d) difficulties caused by CLT itself (including CLT’s inadequate account of EFL teaching
and lack of effective and efficient assessment instruments (p 687). Li (ibid) reported that teachers were reluctant to implement CLT in their language classrooms due to the above problems and claimed that in order for teachers to be willing to make use of CLT in EFL contexts, adjustments should be made.

Criticism of CLT in the Chinese context stems from a different source than that of South African critiques. Burnaby and Sun (1989) indicate that Chinese teachers have mixed reactions to CLT methods because of the purposes for which English is used in the country. They believe communicative methods are appropriate for students who plan to study in an English-speaking country but are not appropriate for students living in China and who use English primarily for reading and translation. Furthermore, teachers claim that communicative methods call for resources that are not readily available in China, and that some teachers lack confidence in their ability to teach communicatively. One teacher said, ‘I can only teach English to some extent. If I am asked to give more explanations on the language and cultural differences, it’s impossible for me’ (Burnaby and Sun, 1989, p. 228, cf. Norton, B. 2000). This is similar to the Bangladeshi context insofar as a lack in fluency, as well as accuracy in speaking English, causes teachers’ lack of confidence, so that teachers are afraid of giving instruction in English or applying CLT in their classroom. We will find similar responses in the major findings section of this study.

Bonny Norton (2000) identifies another limitation of CLT, which is that many teachers do not actively seek to engage the identities of language learners in the language teaching process. Even in dialogue journal writing, which is arguably a classic communicative teaching method, students are discouraged from writing about issues that directly engage their sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus, Peyton and Reed’s (1990) handbook, ‘Dialogue Journal Writing with Non-native English Speakers’ while claiming to ‘individualise language and content learning’ (P.18), simultaneously offers advice on how the teacher can prevent writing from becoming too personal:

‘Some teachers are afraid that leaving the choice of topics entirely open to students encourages them to write about very personal topics or family matters that the teacher is not prepared to deal with, and that the writing can turn into a counselling session. This does occur at times. However, it need not continue. Teachers can gently point out that they are not comfortable discussing that topic and introduce another one.’

(p. 67)
Following the information discussed above, we need to consider that a communicative approach opens up a wider perspective on language and language teaching. It makes us think about language not only in terms of its structures (grammar and vocabulary), but also in terms of the communicative functions it performs, as Littlewood (1981; p10) explains,

‘We begin to look not only at language forms, but also at what people do with these forms when they want to communicate with each other. For example, the form ‘why don’t you close the door?’ might be used for a number of communicative purposes, such as asking a question, making a suggestion or issuing an order.’

Littlewood (ibid) suggests that we can combine ‘the newer functional view of language’ with the traditional structural view in which grammar is acquired and use this to achieve a more communicative purpose. We therefore need to think how we can provide learners with ample opportunities to use language themselves for communicative purposes. I agree with Littlewood (ibid) that ‘we are ultimately concerned with developing the learners’ ability to take part in the process of communicating through language, rather than their perfect mastery of individual structures (though this may still be a useful step towards the broader goal)’ (p 11). It would be advantageous if Bangladeshi policy makers gave consideration to this when planning an innovation for the context. I would also like to add one more suggestion by Holliday (1994), which is that an appropriate methodology needs to be culturally sensitive and such cultural-sensitivity needs to be realised through ethnographic research. This in turn needs to inform curriculum policy-making and language curriculum development.

3.3 Task Based Language Teaching and Learning (TBLT)

Task Based Language Teaching was, initially, a proposal for refining pedagogy with a foundation in empirical research into the SLA processes. Ascending from the pedagogic proposals for a greater emphasis on communicative activities in language teaching (Brumfit & Johnson, 1979; Skehan, 2003; Valdman, 1978, 1980; Widdowson, 1978, for reviews; cited in Robinson, 2011), TBLT places the construct of ‘task’ at the centre of curricular planning. As Cook (2010) recently noted, TBLT ‘sees second language learning as arising from particular tasks that students carry out in the classroom […] In a sense it reconceptualises communicative language teaching as tasks rather than the
language or cognition-based syllabuses of communicative language teaching,’ and TBLT is the approach to language teaching ‘that has attracted most attention in the past decade’ (p. 512). Ellis refers to Stern (1992) who offers a comprehensive classification of ‘communicative activities’ that includes field experiences, classroom management activities, inviting guest speakers, talking on topics related to the students’ private life and on substantive topics drawn from other subjects on the school curriculum (as in immersion programs) and ‘communicative exercises’, i.e. tasks. These are arranged in descending order with those closest to communicative reality at the top and those furthest from it at the bottom. Ellis (ibid) points out that a strong version of CLT can be realised clearly in a number of ways, not just by tasks. Ellis asserts that in many FL situations, particularly in contexts where authentic communicative opportunities are few, tasks can function as a useful tool for planning a communicative curriculum (Ellis, R. 2003, p 30). Therefore, to my understanding, TBL or TBLT is no different from CLT in serving as a working device to create an authentic communicative curriculum as well as a communicative environment in the classroom. But, in my opinion, it would be more useful in the Bangladeshi context, in ‘toning down’ a strong CLT approach by adopting a ‘middle’ position between GT and CLT.

3.4 Computer Aided/Assisted Learning (CAL)

CAL in the Bangladeshi context might have taken its root from the much-discussed CALL (Computer Assisted Language Learning). We now know that CALL has come a long way since the first computers came into use for language learning in the 1950s, when it was very much limited to researchers on university campuses only. These approaches initially created particular organisational problems as learners had to leave the classroom and travel to a computer or at least to a computer terminal for instruction. A lack of processing power also meant that there were no class sets of computer terminals. The high cost of these early machines and demands upon them for pure research meant that time allocated for teaching and learning was limited (Beatty 2010).

In the developed world now, the range of communication technologies in use provides a good example of how technology (both hardware and software) has diversified and evolved in recent years (Levy & Stockwell, 2006). ‘Aside from face-to-face communication, we might choose to communicate with our family, friends, or colleagues via phone (mobile or landline; voice, text or images), or via e-mail or chat, either one to one or as part of a group (such as tele- or videoconference).’ Levy &
Stockwell (ibid.) also suggest that these developments internationally have gradually entered use in educational institutions after some delay.

Levy and Stockwell (ibid, p 2) maintain that language teachers and learners have an increasing number of possible options, although the use of any particular tool for teaching or learning requires a clear sense of its strengths and limitations, and an understanding of how to match the qualities of the tool with the appropriate language learning skills of the users. When developing or using any kind of CALL or CAL materials in the context of Bangladesh, it is important for policy-makers to take account of the teachers, as they are the people who take the concept into the classroom. I would stress this point and, in the next chapter, will show how innovation and change has failed to give proper attention to important contextual factors in many countries.

However, at this stage it is worth discussing the theory-base for the development of CALL. Neuman (2003) states:

‘Theory frames how we look at and think about a topic. It gives us concepts, provides basic assumptions, directs us to the important questions, and suggests ways for us to make sense of data. Theory enables us to connect a single study to the immense base of knowledge to which other researchers contribute. To use an analogy, theory helps a researcher’s awareness of interconnections and the broader significance of data.’

(p. 65; cf. Levy & Stockwell, 2006)

Thus, we can see that theory ‘inevitably includes and excludes, promotes and demotes’ factors to a greater or lesser extent. Levy & Stokwell (ibid) argue that every theory brings certain ideas, issues, or constructs into the foreground and pushes others into the background. For example, among learning theories, cognitive theory places a strong focus on the learning processes of the individual, whereas sociocultural theory brings the social aspects of language learning to the foreground. I am not suggesting that cognitive theory denies the role of the social, nor sociocultural theory the role of the individual in learning, but what is important is to understand where the priorities are made, and the areas over which a theory may be effectively applied (Levy & Stockwell, 2006; p 111). Such is the nature of policy development and policy making in education and I will return to this in the conclusion of this study.

In developing CALL, the ‘Interactionist Account (IA)’ and its pedagogic manifestation, Instructed SLA, has had a major influence on SLA theory development and on the
direction of the research agenda in the field (Ellis, 1994; Sharwood-Smith, 1993; Spada, 1997). The interactionist account emphasises the role of face-to-face interaction in second language development (Long, 1996). ‘Negotiation of meaning’ is central to this process in which the learner and the interlocutor(s) engage in an ongoing process of interactional adjustments (Pica, 1991). These adjustments assist in highlighting particular linguistic and non-linguistic features in the discourse that make the input comprehensible. This input can then be transformed by the learner into ‘intake’, which is the basis for proficiency development in second language learning. A number of CALL researchers have argued for IA as an appropriate foundation for CALL research too.

3.5 Innovation and Change

Innovation and change in English language teaching, either on its own or as part of a programme of larger curriculum reform (as happened in the Bangladeshi context), has become increasingly pervasive in a number of countries, such as Russia, China, South Korea, Bangladesh (Maria et. al 2017; Li & Edwards 2013; Waters & Vilches, 2005). David Hayes (2012; cf. Christopher Tribble (ed.) 2012) informs us that ‘Governments of some countries have made significant investments in programmes and projects designed to improve the teaching and learning of English in state schools across the age range, with the focus usually being on implementing Learner-Centred Education (LCE) through Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approaches.’ All these projects, founded on beliefs about the necessity for English, are backed up by research which shows that in some countries proficiency in English has been demonstrated to correlate positively with increased earning power for individuals (Posel and Casale 2011). For example, in their ‘Education for Knowledge Society Project’ in Sri Lanka, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) stated that:

‘Given the major emphasis of the Project on improving English language and ICT skills, secondary and tertiary graduates will be more readily employable as their skills will more closely match labour demand in private sector.

(Asian Development Bank 2007: 57).’

A significant amount of literature on the subject (e.g. Li 1998; Karavas-Doukas 1996; Carless 1998, 2002; Bruton 2002a and b; Nunan 2003; cf. Waters & Vilches, 2005), indicates that innovation projects of this kind have not always succeeded as hoped.
Waters and Vilches (2005) believe that a chief underlying cause of this problem has been the failure to employ appropriate innovation implementation strategies. To them, innovations appear too often to have been conceived of in idealised rather than localised terms, and the primary focus has tended to be on the design of the innovation product rather than the management of the implementation process. In other words, there seems to have been something of a failure in such projects to learn and successfully apply the lessons of innovation theory and practice, both from outside the ELT field (Fullan 2001; cf. Waters & Vilches, 2005) and from within it (Markee 1997; cf. Waters & Vilches, 2005).

Drawing on his extensive experience of implementing a number of educational projects and programmes for change and innovation in Europe, Central and South Asia, Rod Bolitho (2012; in Christopher Tribble (ed.) 2012) comments that far too many ELT projects have either been left incomplete, have failed to reach target audiences, or have been managed in an over-centralised or top-down way, despite their apparent espousal of democratic, open values. Despite the changes in the contexts for project development, Bolitho (2012) still thinks that the starting points for change initiatives in education have not altered. These are: the curriculum, methodology, assessment, and materials. He has subjected these to close scrutiny, arguing strongly that the essential foundation for success in a project is research that always takes into account the intercultural issues, which can make or break a change initiative.

In a case study in the Malaysian context, which has some similarities to the Bangladeshi context, Mina Patel (2012; in Christopher Tribble (ed.) 2012) reported an issue when a major policy to introduce English as a medium of instruction for mainstream subjects (mathematics and science) was introduced in 2003 without sufficient preparation time. This study shows how major problems were caused when experienced teachers, who had been teaching their subject in Bahasa Malaysia for over 20 years and were close to retirement, were being asked to go on English courses. On the other side of the continuum, younger teachers, who had been taught through Bahasa Malaysia at their schools, struggled with the concept of suddenly having to teach through another language. Patel reports that the problem further intensified in 2008, when the decision was made that all examinations should be solely delivered through English. Unfortunately, this change in language policy coincided with a new ICT (information and computing technology) strategy for the teaching of mathematics and science. Mina
(ibid) reports that mathematics and science teachers were given laptops, and CDs containing complete mathematics and science lessons in English were provided to complement and supplement existing classroom teaching and resources. Although this was welcomed by some teachers, most others were afraid of it simply because they had no previous experience of using technology in the classroom. Others relied on it too heavily to make up for their own lack of language and pedagogy to teach their subjects through English. The combination of inherent contradictions in the policy and its implementation led to poor outcomes for students and the eventual official reversal of the policy.

Another study by Simpson (2012; in Christopher Tribble (ed.) 2012) in a Rwandan context shows how a national government faced major challenges in enabling all teachers and learners to become proficient in English with the sector-wide establishment of English-medium education. A policy prioritising English as the medium of education led to a new configuration of the roles and relations of three languages, with Kinyarwanda forming the foundation for initial literacy, English being used as the main language of learning, and French as an additional language. But those attempting to implement this policy encountered significant problems, including the need for teachers to develop their own language skills and abilities in order to teach effectively in English; the lack of pupils’ exposure to English, particularly in rural areas; a shortage of learning materials in English; and the language level of some textbooks being above the pupils’ existing competence. Although there existed a clear vision and sense of urgency for national development, Simpson comments on how these reforms may have been risked because of the lack of capacity and funds to implement numerous large-scale changes concurrently in a skills-deficit, resource-constrained context. This is an important for Bangladeshi policy makers to note: without addressing these types of issues, CLT implementation would be challenging in the Bangladeshi context as well.

Thus, “the drive to ELT reform as a means of helping to achieve a government’s goal of fostering regional integration, including harmonisation of education systems and economic development, may have outshined the desirability of giving due weight to pedagogic considerations in policy formation, in particular to an understanding of the role of the first language in promoting early literacy and learning” (Simpson, ibid) which is equally relatable to Bangladeshi context. Simpson (ibid) suggests that during
policy formation, if the pedagogic stream had been given fuller attention, later reversals of policy might have been avoided.

On the other hand, a number of studies have reported the success of change and innovation projects. A case study by Scholey (2012; in Christopher Tribble (ed.) 2012) in Turkey demonstrates how the best way to ‘change the system’ was to do it from within the classroom by means of a bottom-up approach, in a way that teachers could see and understand (i.e. what was changing and why). By focusing upon new materials, policy makers were able to have an immediate impact on classroom teaching, encouraging teachers to reflect on the innovation, and to shape their methodology and content with the change. Alongside the new teaching materials, specialist vocational teacher training in methodology was provided, so that they could develop themselves as the key agents of change and emerge as a core group of properly trained and committed English language teachers-cum-materials developers. Thus, real curricular and methodological innovation was achieved through the production and piloting of high-quality vocational language learning materials, written by Turkish teachers, in Turkey, about Turkey, for Turkey. But, on the other hand, this kind of change policy is never helpful if the import of innovations turns out to be a ‘pedagogic imposition’, as exposed in a recent blog by the head of the Department of Economics at the University of Papua New Guinea (2011; in Hayes, p 49; in Tribble (ed) 2012):

‘When the Australian consultants came in with their PhDs and Masters degrees and earning their K200,000 salary packages, the local curriculum officers were quite overwhelmed and did not feel confident to question or challenge them.

CRIP consultants took advantage of this situation to push the project through quickly and soon started producing policy documents like the National Curriculum Statement and Assessment Policy, which they claimed were written “by Papua New Guineans for Papua New Guineans”.

But it didn’t ring true.

From what I saw, the new OBE [Outcomes-based Education] curriculum documents seemed to be largely drafted by the Australian consultants with token input from subject advisory committees, then rubber stamped by Curriculum Unit, and printed with everybody’s names inside to make it look like they were written by the Papua New Guineans.

But they weren’t. I know, because I was there.’

(Kora, 2011)
This might be the case not only in Papua New Guinea but also in many other countries around the globe, and to my knowledge, in Bangladesh particularly. This is, of course, a kind of ‘Linguistic Imperialism’ that can bring little or no change to any country’s specific context if proper attention or importance is not given to local and contextual factors. Bolitho (2012, p) says,

‘Whether in learners, teachers, or managers, resistance is always a likely response, especially in the early stages of a change initiative and most frequently among the more experienced and long-serving members of a teaching community. If the proposed changes seem to be imposed, rather than negotiated, and if they threaten or are incompatible with beliefs, values, status, or any other deep-seated factors in those involved, the change will be stalled and, in extreme cases, rejected outright.’

In light of the above discussion, I agree with Bolitho (2012, p; in Tribble, 2012) that for any educational change to succeed, four main points must be addressed equally. These are: 1) curriculum, 2) methodology, 3) textbooks and materials, and 4) examinations. The most crucial of these is examinations (Bolitho, ibid). There is ample evidence from around the world that it is extremely difficult to implement change in any of the other three areas, if examination reform is neglected, or even delayed behind other changes. Unfortunately, the CLT curriculum in Bangladesh has only been able to make provisions for testing two language skills: reading and writing. Testing for the other two important skills, listening and speaking, have not yet been devised in the national curriculum, whereas Bolitho (ibid) suggests that curriculum reform must be underpinned by the provision of teaching and learning materials, the establishment of Professional Development Centres, the provision of training courses based on training packages produced within the project (CLT in the context of Bangladesh), and, significantly, a renovation of assessment procedures. I agree with Bolitho (ibid, p41) again to conclude that,

‘Change, then… will never succeed, if it focuses simply on behaviour. Classroom teaching, textbook and curriculum writing, and examination procedures are in one very important sense a manifestation of the values, attitudes, beliefs, theories, and experience of those who design and deliver these behaviours and artefacts. This is the “deep culture” of any educational system, and some of it goes back a long way in history, in some cases to medieval times and even beyond. If a change project does not penetrate into these deeper layers, it cannot succeed in the long term.’
3.6 Agency

Another important focus of this study is the issues of agency and meaning-making for the English language teachers in the context. The idea of agency, as Biesta and Tedder (2006) report, has been central to educational thinking and practice at least since the ‘Enlightenment’, which Kant, who saw tutelage as ‘man’s inability to make use of his understanding without direction from another’ defined as ‘Man’s release from his self-incurred tutelage’ (Kant (1992 [1784], p 90). Kant asserted that Enlightenment was ‘having courage to exercise your own understanding’ (ibid) and he clearly connected this to education. He saw the propensity and vocation for free thinking by human beings as the ‘ultimate destination’ and the ‘aim of his existence’ that could only be brought about through education. He also argued that human beings could only become human through education (Kant 1982 [1803] p 699).

The idea that education is the process through which human beings develop their rational faculties so that they become capable of independent judgment which, in turn forms the basis for autonomous action, has had a profound impact on modern educational theory and practice. There are direct lines from Kant to the work of Piaget and Kohlberg, who both see the highest stages of cognitive and moral development in terms of (rational) autonomy. The idea of ‘rational autonomy’ is also a guiding principle in liberal education and is central to discussions about critical thinking as an educational ideal (McPeck 1981; Siegel 1988; Thayer-Bacon 2000; Biesta and Stams 2001 cited in Biesta 2006). Through the influence of (Neo-) Marxism, it has also become a leading idea in critical and emancipatory approaches to education, both in Europe and North America (Biesta 1998). Some even argue that rational autonomy is not simply an educational aim, but is the only aim of education (Siegel 1998; Hirst and Peters 1970) and this not only holds for the education of children: there is also a strong tradition that sees adult education as a lever for empowerment and emancipation (Fieldhouse 1996; Welton 2005; English 2005).

Not only in the tradition of liberal education, but also in continental traditions such as ‘Geisteswissenschaftliche Padagogik’ and the ‘Bildungs’ tradition, empowerment and emancipation are basically understood in individualistic terms, i.e. in terms of individual development and growth. Critical tradition stresses that there can be no individual emancipation without societal emancipation (Mollenhauer 1983), thus
reinforcing the view that agency is not exclusively an individual achievement but is connected to contextual structural factors.

It is important to note here that in this tradition the link between agency and education is predominantly understood in ‘normative’ terms. The idea here is that education should have a positive impact on the individual’s ability to exert control over his or her life and should result in emancipation and autonomy. Agency, therefore, is seen as an educational aim and educational ideal, and as a desired outcome of educational processes. This explains why agency primarily figures as a justification of particular educational arrangements and interventions. Whether education does actually have a positive impact on agency and thus results in empowerment and emancipation is entirely an empirical matter, although it should not be forgotten that what counts as evidence for success crucially depends on how agency is defined and understood (Biesta in press [b].

Agency is not only a central concept in modern educational theory and practice but is also a key notion and issue in contemporary social theory, particularly in sociology, economics and political science. The question in social theory is first and foremost about the empirical conditions of agency, i.e. the question how and when agency is possible, and about ways in which the phenomenon of agency can be conceptualised and theorised. This does not preclude, of course, the idea that research on agency might be motivated by the conviction that agency is basically ‘a good thing’ (Emirbayer and Mische 1998, p 973).

Within sociology, ‘the term agency is usually juxtaposed to structure and is often no more than a synonym for action, emphasising implicitly the undetermined nature of human action, as opposed to the alleged determinism of structural theories’ (Marshall 1998). If it has a wider meaning, ‘it is to draw attention to the psychological and social psychological make-up of the actor, and to imply the capacity of willed (voluntary) action’ (ibid.). This echoes with the general definition of agency as ‘the capacity for autonomous social action’ (Callhoun 2002) and more specifically as ‘the ability of the actors to operate independently of the determining constraints of social structure’ (ibid.). A more situated definition is specified by Emirbayer and Mische (1998, p 971) who see agency as ‘the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations’. In the Dictionary of Social Sciences, it is suggested that ‘the origins of the term agency lie in the legal and commercial distinction between principal
and agent, in which the latter is granted the capacity to act autonomously on behalf of the form’ (Calhoun 2002).

There are a good number of discussions that oppose agency to social structure. The ‘structure-agency debate’ first started in the 1970s and 1980s ‘in the context of increased attention to practice or action and an increased concern for the analysis of power relations and conflict’ (Calhoun 2002). It can even be argued that the structure-agency debate has become one of the defining discussions of modern sociology. This can be seen in the fact that sociological theories are often characterised according to the relative emphasis they place on agency or structure (Marshall 1998; Evans 2002). More recently, as we can see in Bourdieu (1977; 1990), sociologists have made attempts to overcome the structure-agency conflict through the idea of ‘habitus’ and the theory of structuration (Giddens 1984). However, this remains an open question if the above discussion moves forward by asking new questions about structure and agency or if it results in a situation where structure and agency are presented as closely intertwined so that ‘it becomes impossible to examine their interplay’ (Archer 1988; 2000).

However, the above discussion might be helpful in understanding and identifying issues of agency in the lives of the Bangladeshi rural non-government secondary English teachers and how they manage issues of agency in their everyday lives, how they make meaning of the things around them, such as social and religious factors and government policies from the colonial period until the present day, and, of course, at a higher structural level, how agency is advanced to empower teachers in their work by government and other bodies.
Chapter 4: Research Methodology

It would be useful here to remember that this study looks into the teaching of English in a post-colonial context through the lived experiences of a small group of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers’ in response to change and innovations. In this small-scale research, I focused on four research questions, which were:

- What are the beliefs, and practices of the secondary English teachers in relation to teaching of English?
- What are the perceptions of the practicing teachers towards change and innovation?
- What are the issues of agency and meaning making for English Language teachers?
- What are the policy implications of these beliefs and practices in future decisions?

As discussed before, I spent some time on the study of dominant research paradigms to decide whether to use a qualitative or quantitative research method. I was cautious about what constitutes ‘proper’, ‘valid’ and ‘worthwhile’ research because of the strong and pervasive influence of the positivist scientist paradigm,

‘There is a view which is already entrenched and circulating widely in the populist circles… that qualitative research is subjective, value-laden and, therefore, unscientific and invalid, in contrast to quantitative research, which meets the criteria of being objective, value-free, scientific and therefore valid.’

(Troyna, 1994)

While I was investigating different methodologies and the complex social context where the institutions and individuals of my research are located, I came across a powerful insight from Goodson (2001) that persuaded me to adopt a life history approach for this study,

‘If research aims to demand ‘objectivity’, experiments and statistical proofs, there is a problem with this requirement … educational institutions and the individuals who are involved in and with them are a heterogeneous bunch with different attributes, abilities, aptitudes, aims, values, perspectives, needs and so on. These institutions and individuals are located within complex social contexts with all the implications and influences that this entails.’
As the goal of this research was to gain an understanding of secondary English teachers’ perceptions and attitudes towards change and innovation through their lived experience of English teaching in the context, I realised that an in-depth discussion with teachers would be required in order to produce the valuable data that Goodson (ibid) refers to. Goodson (2013) articulates my intentions in a subtler way—

‘… life history research is more likely to appeal to the incurably curious who are interested in, and fascinated by, the minutiae of others' lives, and particularly in how people make sense of their experiences and of the world around them’

(Goodson 2013).

Therefore, the life history approach appeared to me to be the most effective tool to apply in this study. I will now explain in brief the Biographical research and the life history approach.

4.1 Biographical Research

At this stage, I would like to discuss my enquiry into biographical research and the life history approach, as my study is based on these methodological approaches. This research is a form of biographical research as it looks at the lived experiences of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers in order to understand their beliefs and experiences of teaching English following the introduction of CLT. Here, it would be worth looking into the origins and concepts around these methodological approaches.

The ‘biographical turn’ emerged as a reaction against theories of learning and other forms of social behaviour recognised as largely determined processes in which notions of agency and meaning-making were dismissed as inconsequential (Chamberlayne et al. 2000; Bertaux 1981; Rosenthal 1995). They became a ‘turn’ (with its connotation of a major movement) with a development of a range of methods for collecting ‘data’ in the form of (narrative) autobiographical interviews, an approach which was followed in this study. A life history approach assumes that the individual subject is constituted in a social context. Bron (2003) identifies the interaction between ‘I’ (the subject, in a very intimate embodied sense) and ‘me’ (the subject in relation to and shaped by society) to underline the extent to which the source of individuality and self can be found in communication between people.
In education, biographical research has combined with more humanistic ways of theorising learning and education and pedagogical practices focusing on personal development and growth. A large body of research illustrates this trend (Goodson 1985). The historic neglect of the subject as actor and his/her role in shaping phenomena in more conventional educational research, under the influence of behaviourism, is fundamentally challenged. It was Habermas (1972) who expressed concern about how social science was increasingly led by the language of prediction and control, alongside objectification of social processes. The Enlightenment derided the hegemony of instrumental reason as a way of orientating research and a corresponding neglect of hermeneutic and critical knowledge perspective. Hermeneutic perspectives were guided by the human need to build shared, practical understanding of the everyday world. Both hermeneutic and critical approaches to knowledge found lively expression in the biographical turn, which emancipated people from relations of dependence shaped by the powerful ideologies that persuaded them that social relationships, however repressive, were in some sense ‘normal’ (Crotty 1998: 140-147).

Though Instrumentalist pressures remain strong in the study of education, with associated demands for certitude, measurement and generalisability, biography and life history, influenced by Habermas and others, is more focused on understanding learning and empowering learners, rather than measurement: learning is conceived as a subjective process realised in specific historical and cultural contexts. Bringing subjects, their agency and whole context into the frame challenges simplistic, linear cause and effect analysis, as does ‘sociology’ and ‘psychology’ to reduce human experience (West et al. 2007). Here I agree with Lerner Gerda (1997) in that ‘all humans are historians.’ Gerda (1997) maintains, ‘we live our lives: we tell our stories. It is as natural as breathing.’ I have therefore captured the ‘natural breathing’ of Bangladeshi rural secondary English teachers as stories ‘by listening to what they have to say about their own lives’ (Andrews 1991), rather than examining a collection of official data about the achievements of CLT.

4.2 Life History Approach

Instead of taking a general qualitative approach, I chose a life history approach as the research methodology for this study. The motivation for selecting this methodology was driven by Goodson (2013):
‘When the focus of enquiry is … something like why someone becomes a teacher, or how they cope with imposed change, or why they adopt a particular pedagogical style, or how being a teacher fits in with other aspects of a person's life such as parenthood, or what it means to be a gay or lesbian teacher, or a teacher from an ethnic minority group, the potential of life history is enormous.’

This directly links to my study, which investigates similar issues in the Bangladeshi context, i.e. focusing on English teachers’ beliefs and perceptions towards change and innovations. The main landmark in the life history method was initiated by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-1920) in 1920 through ‘The Polish Peasant in Europe and America’:

‘In analysing the experience and attitude of an individual, we always reach data and elementary facts which are exclusively limited to this individual’s personality but can be treated as mere incidences of more or less general clauses of data or facts and can thus be used for the determination of law of social becoming. Whether we draw our materials for sociological analysis from detailed life records of concrete individuals or from the observation of mass phenomena, the problems of sociological analysis are the same. But even when we are searching for abstract laws, life records, as complete as possible, constitute the perfect type of sociological material, and if social science has to use other materials at all it is only because of the practical difficulty of obtaining at the moment a sufficient number of such records to cover the totality of sociological problems, and of the enormous amount of work demanded for an adequate analysis of all the personal materials necessary to characterise the life of a social group. If we are forced to use mass phenomena as material, or any kind of happenings taken without regard to the life histories of the individuals who participated, it is a defect, not an advantage, of our present sociological method.’

(Thomas and Znaniecki 1918- 1920: 1831-3)

It was Thomas and Znaniecki’s pioneering work that established life history as a bona fide research device. But the highpoint was reached in the 1930s through Clifford Shaw’s account of a mugger in ‘The Jack Roller’ (Shaw, 1930), and Edwin Sutherland’s ‘The Professional Thief’ (Cornwell and Sutherland, 1937). Becker’s (1970) comments on Shaw’s study underline one of the major strengths of the life history method:

‘By providing this kind of voice from a culture and situation that are ordinarily not known to intellectuals generally and to sociologists in particular, The Jack Roller enables us to improve our theories at the most profound level: by putting ourselves in Stanley’s skin, we can feel and become aware of the deep biases about such people that ordinarily permeate our thinking and shape the kinds of problems we investigate. By truly entering into Stanley’s life, we can begin to see what we take for granted (and ought not to) in designing our research – what kinds of assumptions about delinquents, slums and Poles are embedded in the way we set the questions we study.’

Becker’s argument goes to the heart of the appeal of life history methods: life history data unsettles the normal assumptions of what is ‘known’ by intellectuals in general, and sociologists in particular. In his statement about ‘putting ourselves in Stanley's skin’, Becker asserts that Stanley's story offers the possibility ‘to begin to ask questions about delinquency from the point of view of the delinquent’ (ibid: 71), so that it follows that questions will be asked not from the point of view of the powerful actors but from the perspective of those who are ‘acted upon’ in professional transactions. By asking about the lives of rural English teachers in the context of Bangladesh, we can learn the real answers from those who are involved in implementing CLT in real classrooms, not what is described by the CLT importers or the policy makers of the country being studied (Becker 1970:71) and this might unsettle the usual assumptions of policy makers and the BANA group about teaching English in the context of Bangladesh.

While following a life history approach, there are some core philosophical questions, such as what have you got when you have got a life story? And what happens when you turn it into a life history? What are the connections between a life story as told, the life that it concerns as lived ‘reality’, and written accounts of life history research? These are, as Griffith (1998: 35) maintains, about the relationship between epistemology and methodology, between what knowledge is considered to be and the means by which it is obtained, recognised and deemed to relate to ‘truth’. To understand a life story properly, it has to be read against the backdrop of the historical context, which privileges certain storylines, ‘Life story work concentrates, then, on personal stories, but life histories try to understand stories alongside their historical and cultural backgrounds’ (Goodson, 2013). To do this well, we have to move beyond life story collection to life history construction, whereby the historical context is interrogated and elaborated.

In the early 1990s, Goodson (2013) got the opportunity to explore a much broader vision of how research could aid our understanding of public affairs. Goodson had adopted a life history approach in a research study that collected a series of life histories and life stories of teachers who were immigrants to Canada and part of racial and ethno-cultural minorities. Goodson (2013) commented, ‘This was a study which helped me to understand the cultural context of life story work. It is extremely important that life histories focus not just on the narrative of action but also on the historical background, or what I have called “the genealogy of context”’. So, the study was a particular
example of a relationship between social structure and story, and how social structures at particular historical times provide available scripts or scripted resources from which people can construct their life stories. Goodson (2013) suggests that the study also served to underwrite and support a particular moment in history and a particular vision of social opportunity and social structure.

Life historians, as Goodson (ibid.) argues, are not, inevitably, postmodernists, poststructuralist, feminists or relativist. However, it would be unusual if those using the approach did not subscribe to the epistemological view that ‘the social world is an interpreted world’ (Altheide and Johnson 1994: 489), and that different interpreters who have had different life experiences are likely to make different interpretations which will, therefore, result in the description of different realities. Goodson (2013) points out that very little attention has been paid so far to stories. He explains the reasons behind his ‘enduring fascination for the life history approach’ and his ‘increasing curiosity’ about people’s life stories. An abiding question was: what role do stories play in our life work, in our formulating of plans, dreams, plots, missions, purposes? In short, how efficacious is storying in meaning making? What ways of knowing are involved in ‘storying’? How are ‘life stories’ implicated in identity, agency and learning? All these arguments are relevant to my study and led me to select the life history approach. Goodson (ibid.) explains, ‘Life historians examine how individuals talk about and story their experiences and perceptions of the social contexts they inhabit’. He offers a clear view of the tasks of life historians:

‘Life historians are concerned with inviting their informants to consider and articulate answers to questions like: Who are you? What are you? Why do you think, believe, do, make sense of the world and the things happened to you? Why has your life taken the course that it has? Where is it likely to go? What is your total experience like in relation to the experiences to other people? What are the differences and similarities? How does your life articulate with those of others within the various social worlds you inhabit? What are the influences on your life and influence and impact do you have? What is the meaning of life? How do you story your life? Why do you story it in this way? What resources do you employ in assembling your life story?’

(Goodson and Sikes 2001)

These are questions to which there are unlikely to be easy or straightforward answers. Goodson and Sikes (2001) explain that these questions deal with the essence of identity, of our place in the world, and with the purpose and meaning of it all, and it is possible that some answers may be unflattering to our sense of self and, at worst, ‘lead to despair.
alienation and anomie’. On the other hand, there may be no answers in a definitive sense. In any case, our answers are dependent upon our faith and belief in the validity and power of whatever fundamental theories of social life and explanations of human action/behaviour we may subscribe to – in other words, ‘upon our ontological and epistemological positions and assumptions’ (Goodson & Sikes, ibid).

Using the life history approach in this study, I have attempted to encompass the processes of knowing and skills acquisition of rural secondary English teachers in Bangladesh through their lived experiences. Starting with the life stories of teachers, I intended to understand the ‘social relations, interactions and historical constructions’ of these teachers’ ‘affective transformation and experiential learning beyond the walls of schools, colleges and universities’ (West et al., 2007). I have included in this study informal, tacit and emotional learning, alongside cognitive processes and encounters with more formal bodies of knowledge. Having decided on my research methodology for this study, I performed the following steps to collect the necessary data in this regard.

4.3 Methods

Here I would like to discuss the methods that I followed to achieve the aim of this study. I agree with Goodson that ‘the key reason for using any method has to be that it is the most appropriate one, the one most likely to produce data which address, answer or otherwise meet and fulfil the questions, aims and purpose of a specific enquiry (2001)’. I was aware also that by making a wrong selection of methods or technique, the research might turn out to be unsuccessful. Furthermore, a ‘method led’ research can be uneconomical, inappropriate and excessively biased (Robson, 1993).

The methods I applied for the data collection of this study included: in-depth one-to-one interviews, case studies, my own field notes from observations, autobiographical reflections, and consulting secondary data. The data collection also included discussions with school authorities and ordinary local people, reflections from the notebook, my personal diary as well as teachers’ diaries (only one teacher kept diary), the district education journals, magazines and other publications from the local district commissioner’s office and district education office. Besides these, I collected copies of teachers’ personal writings and diaries for further analysis. During the field study, I also took detailed personal notes in my diary.

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4.3.1 Interviews

Interviews were used as an important data collection tool in this research study. The use of interviews in the field of research allows ‘a move away from seeing human subjects as simply manipulable and data as somehow external to individuals, and towards regarding knowledge as generated between humans through conversations’ (Kvale, 1996:11). Kvale (ibid: 14) describes the interview as an inter-view, an interchange of views between two or more people on a topic of mutual interest, sees the centrality of human interaction for knowledge production, and emphasises the social situatedness of research data. Laing (1967, 53) says ‘knowledge should be seen as constructed between participants generating data rather than capta. As such, the interview is not exclusively either subjective or objective, it is intersubjective (Laing, 1967, p 53-66; cf. Cohen et.al, 2011). Interviews enable participants – be they interviewers or interviewees – to discuss their interpretations of the world in which they live, and to express how they regard situations from their own point of view. In investigating the lived experiences of Bangladeshi secondary English teachers, the ‘interview’ appeared to me to be the most suitable method for listening to the personal stories of the participants in relation to their teaching of English.

Prior to interviewing the participant teachers in this study, I prepared a semi-structured interview plan in my diary, which I followed through the interview sessions, albeit in an informal way. Goodson & Sikes (2001) guided me to prepare the following prompts to help my discussion with each teacher:

- Teacher’s family background, birthplace and date;
- Parents’ occupation during his/her life, general characters and interests;
- Brothers and sisters, their occupations, school locations and interests;
- Extended family, occupations and characters;
- Informant’s childhood, description of home and general discussion of experiences;
- Community and context: character and general status and ‘feel’;
- Education: pre-school experience, school experience, courses taken, subjects favoured, credentials achieved;
- General characters of school experience: peer relations, teachers, ‘good’ and ‘bad’ experiences;
- Occupation, general work history, changes of job, types of school, and types of position; trainings received, attempts at any further training;
- Marriage and own family: dates and locations;
• Other interests and pursuits;
• Future ambitions and aspirations.

Here I would like to explain how the above areas relate to my research themes. As my research questions investigate change and innovation in English language teaching through the lived experiences of teachers, these areas are important in terms of uncovering the truth about their lives and getting to know how they make sense of the issues discussed earlier in my thesis. Goodson & Sikes (2001) also consider these areas to be important in similar research.

4.3.2 The Case Study

I have employed case study as another useful tool for the data collection of this research. Nisbet and Watt (1984: 72, cf. Cohen et al., 2011) have identified case study as a specific instance that is frequently designed to illustrate a more general principle, which is ‘the study of an instance in action’ (Adelman et al., 1980). Hitchcock and Hughes (1995: 322) suggest that the case study approach is particularly valuable when the researcher has little control over events. They consider (p. 317) that a case study has several hallmarks:

• It is concerned with a rich and vivid description of events relevant to the case.
• It provides a chronological narrative of events relevant to the case.
• It blends a description of events with the analysis of them.
• It focuses on individual actors or groups of actors and seeks to understand their perceptions of events.
• It highlights specific events that are relevant to the case.

The reason behind my selection of case study is linked to the nature of my research because case studies strive to portray ‘what it is like’ to be in a particular situation, to capture the close up reality and ‘thick description’ (Geertz 1973b) of participants’ lived experiences of, thoughts about, and feelings for a situation. They involve looking at a case or phenomenon in its real-life context, usually employing many types of data (Robson 2002: 178). They are descriptive and detailed, with a narrow focus, combining subjective and objective data (Dyer 1995: 48–9). The researcher is integrally involved in the case. An attempt is made to portray the richness of the case in writing up the report. However, in this research, case study takes the form of life history in order to
examine the beliefs, perceptions and practices of rural secondary English teachers in the Bangladeshi context. Zina O’Leary (2014) was a helpful guide to this research:

‘A case study is all about depth; it requires you to dig, and to dig deep. You need to delve into detail, dig into context, and really get a handle on the rich experiences of the individual, event, community group or organisation you want to explore. The goal is to get underneath what is generally possible in, for example, large-scale survey research.’

4.3.3 Context of the Field Work

Due to the volatile political situation in Bangladesh during my fieldwork (between 10th December 2013 and 14th January 2014) I could not follow my data collection plan, which included an initial focus group discussion (FGD) with public and private secondary English teachers with a view to introducing my research and myself to them before the individual interviews and case study. Unfortunately, however, the whole country was in political turmoil due to the upcoming parliamentary election. The leading political parties, The Awami League and BNP, were involved in a major conflict related to the handover of power to a neutral care-taker government during the election period and this led to violence throughout the country. The crisis deepened further due to the disputed trial of the war criminals mentioned earlier. On the day of my arrival, one of the war criminals, the Secretary General of ‘Jamaat-E-Islam’, was due to be executed. Three of their other leaders were in the throes of a trial and, in an attempt to save them, Jamaat had allied with BNP and were causing damage to public and private assets, blocking roads, uprooting train lines and killing ordinary people by throwing petrol bombs or setting fire to public transport. The international community, including the UN, became involved in an attempt to resolve the situation by holding discussions with all the parties. In this volatile situation, I found myself stranded in Dhaka, virtually housebound. However, a week after my arrival, I was finally able to escape safely and travel to Meherpur, the research setting of my study.

4.3.4 Meeting the Local Authorities

After reaching Meherpur, I first met the District Commissioner (DC) to seek his permission. This was an important step in the research plan because the DC is the official chair of all the school committees in Meherpur district. The intention of this meeting was to confirm my access to the schools and to ensure the permission and
cooperation of the head teachers and the school authorities of all the schools. Necessary letters were prepared beforehand in this regard (Appendix 1).

4.3.5 Meeting the Respondent Teachers

According to my research plan, I first intended to carry out a focus group discussion (FGD) to introduce myself to the respondent teachers. The purpose of this was to get to know each other informally and give them a clear idea about my research following a question-answer session that would allow them to understand my study. Unfortunately, the volatile political situation during my stay in the field did not allow me to do this. Head teachers of both the public schools changed their decision to allow me talk to the English teachers, despite the approval of the DC. I therefore changed my plan and interviewed the non-government secondary teachers instead and these individual in-depth interviews provided me with some rich qualitative data for this research.

As I was aware of the importance of rapport-building with the research participants beforehand (Sikes et al, 1996:43), I met each teacher individually before interviewing them, introducing myself and explaining my intentions with this study and explaining his or her role in this research. I also explained to each respondent teacher where and how I would use the interview data. I won their trust by assuring them that the data would only be used in serving the purpose of this study, which created a friendly and easy environment and encouraged them to talk freely in the interview. At this initial meeting, we agreed on a date for the one-to-one interview with the teachers kindly granting me enough time to carry out ‘individualistic and personal interviews’ that would address my research questions. Focusing on 'intensely idiosyncratic personal dynamics' is crucial for life history methodology (Sikes et al. 1996: 43). As Goodson (2013) suggests,

‘A useful way to start life history research is by inviting respondents to construct a time-line of key events in their life with, if appropriate, an emphasis on those experiences, which relate to any focus the project may have. This can be done prior to the interview and is useful in prompting memories and concentrating attention. ' 

4.3.6 Video Recording

It is important to mention here that in this research I video-recorded all the interview sessions so that I could analyse them in more detail afterwards. I did not apply it as a
method but acknowledge that ‘in an age in which visual imagery is challenging the
authority of written text in a range of domains, from youth culture to news reporting,
video has become a type of *nexus*, a connection point between researchers that straddles
methodologies and disciplines, from the academic to the applied’ (Featherstone, 1995;
McRobbie 2000, cited in Kaye & Hadfield, 2011). In this specific modality, as viewed
by Kaye & Hadfield (2011), ‘raw video footage is constructed as data, the video camera
as a data collection tool, and the edited and analysed video a means of illustrating and
communicating any findings.’

Anthropologists Margaret Mead and Gregory Bateson pioneered the use of film for
ethnographic research. They first used cameras - both still and motion picture - in their
work in Bali (1936-1938). They used film to record the ‘types of non-verbal
behaviour for which there existed neither vocabulary nor conceptualised methods of
observation’ (de Brigard, 1995:26; cf. Ulewicz & Beatty (eds), 2001). I also intended to
capture those ‘nonverbal interactions’ of the respondent teachers by way of my video.
Kaye & Hadfield (ibid, p 26) also agree that video ‘contains more information than
could be captured by even the most detailed observation sheet’, maintaining that,

‘… video data… can operate at different levels of granularity, so that video
can capture a broad sweep of interactions over several days and contexts, and
it can capture minute facial movements within a single utterance. The ability
to layer differing levels of video data is potentially one of the most powerful
analytical tools available to a researcher, as each layer can add meaning to the
next.’

(p 146)

Kaye and Hadfield (ibid) have identified five different types of modalities that can serve
different purposes: extraction, reflection, provocation, participation and articulation (pp.
142-143). I have applied the ‘extraction’ modality (using video to record a specific
interaction so that it can be studied in more depth by the researcher) in recording the
interviews of the participant teachers. Kaye & Hadfield (ibid) explain that in this mode,
video is treated as a form of data and therefore works as a means of data generation.
With similar aims in mind, I used video for more in-depth study during and after the
transcription of the interviews.

However, the video recording has some limitations as well,
'Video […] can be treated as inferior to direct observation by a researcher. For example, as a means of generating understanding of complex social interaction, the camera can provide only a limited field of vision and struggles to convey all of the nuances and emotions that give specific meaning to an interaction.'

(Kaye & Hadfield, 2011; p 26)

I therefore took detailed notes in my diary about the meetings, interviews and participants, alongside any other useful details that I thought might be important for further analysis. Having taken into consideration both the positive and negative sides of video, I decided to video all eleven interviews and have used it again and again for further analysis.

4.4 Sample Size

While deciding on my participants, I did not go for ‘random sampling’ as I knew what specific data was required for this study. I agreed with Cohen et al. (2011) that random sampling would bring little benefit ‘when most of the random sample may be largely ignorant of particular issues and unable to comment on matters of interest to the researcher’. I therefore decided on ‘purposive sampling’ because ‘in purposive sampling, … researchers hand-pick the cases to be included in the sample on the basis of their judgment of their typicality or possession of the particular characteristics being sought’ (Cohen et. al. 2011).

I selected a mixed group of private secondary English teachers through ‘purposive sampling’ involving male and female respondents, from highly experienced to newly joined teachers. In this study, my purpose was firstly to listen to a group of teachers who are familiar with the teaching of English in the context and have knowledge on the issues I have focused on. Ball (1990) justifies my decision,

‘In many cases purposive sampling is used in order to access ‘knowledgeable people’, those who have in-depth knowledge about particular issues, maybe by virtue of their professional role, power, access to networks, expertise and experience.’

(Ball, 1990; cited in Cohen et al. p. 157)

As I was looking into the issue of agency in the context, my second purpose was to capture the stories of female teachers, as I understood their disadvantaged position in society compared to male teachers. I categorised the respondent teachers in this study
into the following groups - 1) teachers with over 5 years of experience; 2) teachers with 1-2 years of experience; and 3) freshly joined teachers.

I mentioned earlier that I had to change my respondents due to the volatile political situations in the country (in 2013) and in consultation with my supervisors reduced my sample size. I eventually interviewed 11 non-government secondary English teachers (9 male and 2 female) from 5 non-government secondary schools from Meherpur town and surrounding Union Councils of Meherpur district. This change, however, did not affect my study because I knew that,

‘Research samples for life history research are usually quite small. Interviewing, transcription and analysis are time consuming and expensive activities. When there is only one researcher, working on a personal, unfunded project, the resources to interview large numbers of people are rarely available – and this is often the case, because one of the difficulties with life history is persuading funders of its appropriateness.’

(Goodson & Sikes, 2001)

My small sample size is justified because I am the only researcher on this ‘personal unfunded project’ and had to collect my research-data in a turbulent political situation when the actual target samples were non-cooperative. The small sample size might raise a question about generalisability of the findings, but I have already explained that my focus was on getting in-depth qualitative data from these teachers, rather than looking for representativeness and therefore I focused on ‘rich understanding that may come from the few rather than the many’ (Goodson & Sikes, ibid):

‘…the in-depth nature of qualitative data will generally limit sample size; you simply cannot collect that type of data from thousands. But fortunately, you don’t have to. Qualitative data analysis strategies are not generally dependent on large numbers.’

(Zina O’Leary 2014, p 185)

All these views have heightened my motivation in doing what I have done in this study. The strongest side of this study was the positive attitude of all responding teachers, who were very cooperative and allowed me enough time for in-depth discussions during the interview sessions. The respondent teachers discussed in detail their experiences as lived, their social positions, their perceptions of the innovations and their feelings about teaching of English.
4.5 Ethical Issues and Guidelines:

Research by itself, as Goodson (2001) states, ‘is an inherently political activity in that it has a bearing on how human beings make sense of their world’. Subsequently, because it impacts upon people, all research hypothetically involves ethical issues and considerations. The implications of this, for anyone affected in any way by any particular research project, vary tremendously, from the trivial to the life changing. Moreover, the domain of influence of research can range from the personal and local to the global. Everyone alive has been impacted in some way, however indirectly, by research projects with which they have had no personal involvement, for example, spin-offs from space programme research or, work on genetically modified foods or in the field of gender studies. Furthermore, ‘findings’ and varying theoretical explanations and understandings about ‘differences’ between men and women's experiences, perceptions and motivations (for example) can have after effects that extend far beyond the local situations in which they were formulated. This is because, learnt by particular understandings produced by the research, people will interpret women and men in very different local situations in this light. These views may ‘come to have concrete, and therefore ethical, consequences for people's lives if policy and practice are affected by them’ (Goodson, 2001).

There are, however, conflicting views about the importance and nature of ethical issues in the context of social and educational research, and about how they should be dealt with. One view, which might be described as an ethicist and Machiavellian position, is that the people being researched should be given considerable control over the research process (Benjamin, 1999). Others believe that all social research, or research of a particular kind, for example research dealing with children, ought to be carried out ‘with’ not ‘on’ people, involving them as more or less full participants in research decisions (Kellett, 2005). During my study, I was conscious that ethical issues arise at different stages of research, e.g. when planning the research, when seeking access to organisations and individuals, and when collecting, analysing and reporting the data (Bryman 2007). I think that the consideration of ethical issues is embedded in the whole process of this research and is reflected in the moral stance taken by me as a researcher (Newby, 2010). As a researcher, I have abided by the ‘key responsibilities to the participants’ as set out in the ‘Code of Good Practice in Research’ published by the University of Brighton (2012) and in BERA (2011) guidelines. (2011). My main
concern is with the possible implications for informants and I have therefore concentrated on three areas, without intending to suggest that these are the only areas where ethical issues occur:

- Research design and conduct.
- The nature of the topics that life historians tend to study, allied with the nature of the methodology.
- Claims that life history research can be emancipatory and empowering.

Before moving on to considering each of these separately, I need to explain my understanding of ethics and the ethical issues and concerns that may arise in this study. In the research context, ethical issues and concerns are generally assumed to be associated:

- with what constitutes a 'legitimate' focus/ topic of research;
- with the conduct of (all stages and aspects of) the research;
- with the behaviour of researchers;
- with standards and/or codes of practice; in short, with 'acceptable' ways of doing things;
- with broad issues of 'voice', values and validity.

(Goodson, 2001).

Goodson (ibid.) explains that the key ethical consideration is how the research affects the people whose experiences, perceptions, behaviours, attitudes, or whatever, are the focus of the study and who are the designated ‘research population’, or, in the case of life history, the ‘informants’. Compared with participants in other types of research, life history informants are required to make a considerable commitment in terms of time and intimacy of involvement. Depending on the specific study, the exact amount of involvement would vary, but even in the cases where there is only one, relatively brief, interview session, the informant has to be, actively and consciously, a collaborating participant. This does, however, mean that questions around whether it is ethical for research to be conducted secretly, without the knowledge of the research population, are unlikely to arise, or, more precisely, are unlikely to arise in the same way, as they might, for instance, in observational ethnographic studies. On the other hand, the level of intimacy involved in life history research does, in itself, increase the potential for harm and, therefore, poses a different range of ethical questions. For this reason, blanket
ethical research codes do have their limitations. Therefore, each instance needs to be considered in its own light, as recommended by Goodson & Sikes (2001).

4.5.1 Voluntary Informed Consent

Prior to the research getting underway, I obtained voluntary informed consent from the participant teachers where they understood and agreed to their participation without any compulsion. I explained the process of this study, including why their participation was necessary, how the data would be used and whom it would be reported to. I assured them, with my utmost sincerity and authenticity, that I would only use the information for this research study. I was also aware that while conducting this research, sensitive ethical issues might arise regarding the age, culture, race, gender, sexuality, socio-economic standing or religion of the respondents and was particularly careful to maintain neutrality in those areas and clarify my position as an independent researcher who had no connection with government inspectors, or any other bodies linked to them.

4.5.2 Openness and Disclosure:

To avoid any perception of deception or subterfuge in this study, I explained to all participant teachers the aims of this study, the process and use of data collected, and where it would be used or preserved. I also received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Brighton. Videos of the interview sessions in this study were made with the knowledge and permission of the respondent teachers and the school authorities. As mentioned earlier, videoing the responses of the teachers would be helpful for this study because the body language of the participants, including attitudes and gestures (verbal and non-verbal) might reveal important data for this research. The original interviews were recorded in Bengali and transcribed into English later on for purposes of analysis.

4.5.3 Right to Withdraw

As a researcher, I was careful to ensure that participants were aware that they had the right to withdraw from the research for any or even no reason at any time. Fortunately, everything went well for the study, apart from the political situations in the country that sometimes endangered my movements as a researcher both inside and outside of Meherpur.
4.5.4 Privacy

In this study, I have maintained the utmost privacy, confidentiality and anonymity of the participants in all respects, as outlined in the BERA guidance (2011).

I acknowledge here that sound judgments about what is best to do cannot always be made simply by following instructions or applying rules within research. ‘In this respect, and others, research is a form of praxis; in other words, it is an activity in which there must be continual attention to methodological, ethical, and prudential principles, what they might mean in the particular circumstances faced, and how best to act in those circumstances as a researcher’ (Hammerslely & Traianou, 2012). I have therefore maintained a continued attention to these areas while conducting my research.

4.6 Transcribing Data

After the data collection stage, the next step was to transcribe data for analysis. I did the transcription of the data from Bengali into English by myself, which not only saved the costs of having it done by a third party, but also provided me with a deep insight into the collected data by listening to it again and again:

‘Researchers should listen to the tape and follow the script to ensure that there are as few errors as possible. Such close listening is important because intent and meaning are conveyed as much through how things are said as through the actual words that are used. Annotations concerning tone of voice (and, if they can be remembered, or if a note has been made, body language and gestures) can add considerably to subsequent readings and interpretations.’

(Goodson, 2013)

Repeated listening helped me to get a deep analysis of ‘the tone of voice’ and making a proper interpretation of the data in terms of what is actually being said. For ethical reasons, I used a pseudonym for each participant in this research.

4.7 Data Analysis:

‘Analysis is about making sense of, or interpreting, the information and evidence that the researcher has decided to consider as data’ (Goodson, 2013). In doing the analysis, I found the following very useful,

‘Indeed, it is hard to imagine that anyone would even consider using life history if they did not have some sympathy with the concept of multiple realities and did not, therefore, see informants and researchers as being each engaged in interpreting the world from their own various perspectives.’
I have also attempted here to interpret the world of the informants (the story-teller) with my own (the life-historian/researcher) understanding of the problem in the context. But I also admit here that,

‘It can never be possible to tell, capture or present an actual life: any attempt will be mediated by language and by the interpretative frames through which it is both presented and made sense of. In other words, because of my personal experiences, perceptions, beliefs, social positioning, historical and geographical location and so on, I will make sense of a life hi/story in (at least) a slightly different way from you. This is the case, whoever “you” and “I” happen to be.’

(Goodson, 2013)

While analysing the life stories of the informants, I also explored the Bangladeshi national database (BANBEIS, BBS), online reports (on secondary education) and journals on similar issues (e.g. achievements and drop-out rates in education for Meherpur district) for triangulation. I have based the analysis on the following six useful steps:

• Analysis of biographical data (data of events);
• Text and thematic field analysis (sequential analysis of textual segments from the self-presentation in the interview);
• Reconstruction of the case history (life as lived);
• Detailed analysis of individual textual locations;
• Contrasting the life story as narrated with life as lived;
• Formation of types.

(Rosenthal and Fischer, 2004)

In the next three chapters, the data analysis is presented as follows:

Chapter 5 contains a detailed description of individual locations, i.e. the location of the schools, number of students and the type of school in which each teacher works. BANBEIS data on children’s achievements (national and local) are included to show the performance of these types of schools and charts present the course completion rate and drop-out rates of students.
Chapter 6 presents teachers’ biographies as portraits. Here I have portrayed their personal journey to what they are today: the selective stories from their childhood until present time reveals a picture of their reality and this is supported by an analysis of their individual statements in relation to teaching, innovation and changes. I have ended this chapter with a comparison of the commonalities and differences of the major findings of this research.

Chapter 7 includes an in depth analysis, where I have clustered finding by type-formation. Here I have included a thematic analysis of participant teachers’ feelings, attitudes, responses, and experiences against my research questions in order to understand the data in the light of their discourse. This has helped me draw out the further implications of this study for Bangladeshi policy makers, as well as for the global research community.
Chapter 5: Individual Contextual Locations

As mentioned earlier, this study took place in a post-colonial context, in a small Bangladeshi district called Meherpur. A life history approach was used as the methodology for this research, involving in-depth interviews and case studies in order to understand the lived experiences of eleven non-government rural secondary English teachers in relation to the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs and practices of secondary English teachers in relation to the teaching of English?

2. What are the perceptions of practicing teachers towards change and innovation?

3. What are the issues of agency and meaning-making for English Language teachers?

4. What are the policy implications of these beliefs and practices in future decisions?

In this section, I will describe the individual schools where these respondent teachers carry out their day-to-day teaching, including the physical structure of the schools, their distance from the district town, available facilities, number of students and teachers, achievement status per year in terms of students’ course completion, and drop-out rate etc. I have already explained that these are non-government (private) secondary schools and how they differ from the government (public) schools (section 2.6.1). Each of the schools I visited is ‘typical’ of non-government schools in the context, by which I mean that they are equipped with similar facilities to other non-government schools in the country.

Three different types of secondary institutions operate in the country at present, namely 1) junior secondary schools, 2) secondary schools and 3) secondary school and colleges. Junior secondary schools serve pupils up to year 8, whereas secondary schools have the capacity to run classes up to year 10, ending with a public examination called Secondary School Certificate (SSC). Lately, some of the secondary schools have been allowed to run up to year 12 and end with another public examination called HSC (Higher Secondary Certificate). The following chart (BANBEIS 2016) shows the existing number of secondary schools (public and private), number of teachers and number of students in the country.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Management</th>
<th>Number of Institutions</th>
<th>Number of Teachers</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Girls Institutions</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior Secondary</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>2412</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>18618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2412</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>18618</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary School</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>16003</td>
<td>2431</td>
<td>186761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>147</td>
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<td>Total</td>
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<tr>
<td>School &amp; College</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>942</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>19405</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>953</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>19940</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All School</td>
<td>Private</td>
<td>19357</td>
<td>3137</td>
<td>224784</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Public</td>
<td>327</td>
<td>150</td>
<td>8210</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>19684</td>
<td>3287</td>
<td>232994</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 18: Number of Secondary Institutions, Student and Teacher by Type (source: BANBEIS, Bangladesh 2016)

We can see here that only 2% of the secondary institutions are public, compared with 98% that are run and managed privately, and that 8,879,731 students enrolled in private schools in 2016, compared with 280,634 who enrolled in public schools. This shows that the majority of secondary students continue their education in high numbers of
under-facilitated, poorly managed and politically biased institutions due to policy discrimination. All the researched schools in this study fall in the second category, i.e. non-government secondary schools.

5.1 The Schools Researched

The schools researched were a) Kabi Nazrul Shikkha Manzil; b) Govipur Secondary School; c) Gopalpur Lower Secondary School; d) Kamdevpur Secondary School; and e) Dariapur Secondary High School. It would be useful here to have a look at the following chart, which shows the number of primary education completers each year in the country.

If we look at the achievement status of these schools by students’ performance in the primary examinations each year, it is noticeable that a good number of students are absent from the final examination, indicating that they are dropping out from primary education. This means a huge number of children do not enrol in secondary education.

Unfortunately, it was not possible to obtain data on completion/drop-out rates for the schools where the participant teachers worked.

5.1.1 Kabi Nazrul Shikkha Manjil

This was the first secondary school I visited during the data collection for this study. It is a non-government, boys-only secondary school, situated in the heart of Meherpur town. The school was established in 1967 and named after the national poet, Kazi Nazrul Islam. It is useful to note here that because of Islamic religious values, there are
number of single-sex schools across the country, including girls-only schools and girls-only madrasahs. Mr. Mike has been working as the English teacher in this school since 2013, although he started his teaching career in 1988 as a replacement teacher in a secondary school in his home village.

![Image: ‘Kabi Nazrul Shikkha Manzil’: One of the researched schools](image)

Every year this school caters for between three and six hundred students. It is half-a-mile distant from the only public secondary boys’ school of the town. There are two secondary girls’ schools in the town: one is public and situated in the city centre; the other is private and is situated a stone’s throw from Kabi Nazrul School. It is important to note here that public secondary schools only admit a limited number of top scoring students, and the choice of students is determined by the results of the public examination held at the end of primary education and by way of admission tests. The rest of the students go to non-government schools.

5.1.2 Gopalpur Lower Secondary School

Gopalpur is a non-government secondary school that was established in 1996 in the Gopalpur union under the Meherpur Upazilla in the Meherpur district. It is about 3 miles distant from the city centre and has similar facilities to other non-government secondary schools in the country. The present Head teacher is a former high school mate and fellow college student who informed me about his contributions towards setting up this school, as discussed in section 2.6.1, which described why and how local elites make donations for setting up these schools. The head teacher is a B.A, B.Ed. who had donated the land required for this school as a pre-condition to working there. I have already discussed how local elites occupy positions in the school governing body (SMC) and recruit their own people as teachers and staff and how this leads to major
decisions about these schools lying in the hands of these elites and how teachers – even those with a poor academic background – buy recruitment for large donations, either cash or in kind, to the school authority. However, even after recruitment, these teachers remain in thrall to the local elites and school committees and enjoy very limited agency in terms of making decisions for their students or for themselves. Furthermore, as I have seen first-hand, they are unable to move institutions, despite suffering humiliation by the school authority or being put under political pressure, as their jobs are non-transferable.

The school building (shown in figure 20) was constructed in 2002. Gopalpur School had almost 300 students at the time of my visit in December 2013. Steve, Dean and Pat, the respondent teachers in this study, are working here as English teachers.

5.1.3 Govipur Secondary School

This Secondary School is situated in Govipur union under Meherpur Upazila and is situated within a 2 miles radius of the district town. The school was established in 1970. Standing by the river “Bhoirab’, this is a co-educational school (girls and boys) with non-government status. About 600 students study in this school each year. The school has a nice playground in front and seemed, in my experience, to have a good management team. Four English teachers work in this school and I interviewed all of them for this study. For ethical reasons, I have used pseudonyms for them: Bill, Nick, Ella and Kate. All of the teachers, except Kate, are experienced and have been working in this school for a long time.
5.1.4 Kamdevpur Secondary School (1992)

Kamdevpur secondary school was established in 1992 and is situated in Kamdevpur union under the sadar (main) Upazila (sub district) in Meherpur district. This is a co-education school and in 2013 185 of its 393 students were girls. Compared to Govipur School, this school was visibly poorly maintained in terms of the school building, classroom conditions, cleanliness and resources. I visited the school on a weekend and some teachers came in casual dresses to talk to me. The Head teacher, who lives near to the school, reported that most of his teachers also lived nearby, i.e. within walking distance.

Two English teachers worked at this school and I managed to interview both of them (Sam and Andy) for this study. Both were experienced and had worked there for a long time.
5.1.5  Dariapur Secondary High School

Dariapur secondary high school is the oldest of all the researched schools I visited for this study and is situated in the Dariapur bazaar area. Dariapur is one of the biggest unions at Mujibnagar Upazilla under Meherpur district in Khulna Division in Bangladesh. Dariapur secondary high school is one of the 16 secondary schools under Mujibnagar Upazilla. There are three colleges and four Madrasahs under Mujibnagar Upazilla (named after ‘Sheikh Mujibur Rahman’, the father of nation). I have mentioned that there is also another historical establishment in Dariapur Union, a missionary school set up during the colonial age. Dariapur School is also a non-government school and was established in the year 1946, although the existing school building was constructed in 1995. It is another co-educational non-government school that caters for nearly 500 boys and girls every year.

This school appeared to be bigger, both in terms of its structure and the number of students, and better managed than Kamdevpur School. Three English teachers work in this school, but I could only talk to one of them; the rest were absent due to training. Mr. Martin, who was the only teacher available for interview, has been working in the school since 2011. At present, he is the Assistant Head Teacher but works as the senior English teacher as well. He started his teaching career in a ‘madrasah’ (an Islamic secondary school) and has more than 25 years’ teaching experience.
Chapter 6: Portraits of the teachers

It is useful to remember here that this study investigates the lived experiences of a small group of Bangladeshi secondary teachers in a post-colonial context, with a view to exploring their attitudes and responses towards change and innovation. I will now discuss the profiles of the eleven respondent teachers who were interviewed during the data collection stage. I must mention here that I received cooperation from the head teachers and SMC members of those schools, who kindly permitted me to conduct the interviews in their offices or a spare room in the school and helped me in every possible way. All the informant teachers allowed me plenty of time for a detailed interview, some of which continued for as long as two to three hours.

6.1 Outline

In this chapter I will present the respondent teachers’ experiences and reflections from the interviews and case studies in the form of life stories, with my own analysis side-by-side. A total of eleven teachers’ experiences, beliefs and practices and their views about the changes and innovations are included here in the form of ‘portraits’.

In the interviews, teachers freely shared their emotions, beliefs and practices towards the teaching of English and their perceptions of changes and innovations in the post-colonial context. With the permission of the respective authorities and the respondent teachers, I videoed each interview session so that I wouldn’t miss any attitudes, emotions, or even facial expressions that might add to this study. The language used in the interviews was Bengali, and I later transcribed these into English myself. For ethical reasons, I used pseudonyms for the informant teachers in this study. I have used the following names in the analysis - 1) Mike, 2) Bill, 3) Ella, 4) Nick, 5) Kate, 6) Steve, 7) Pat, 8) Andy, 9) Sam, 10) Dean and 11) Martin.

During this study it emerged that in spite of having little or no education, the mothers of these respondent teachers played a vital role in educating them. As Napoleon Bonaparte (1804-1814), the French Emperor, said, 'give me an educated mother, I shall promise you the birth of a civilised, educated nation.' In Bangladesh, I believe strongly in the importance of educating girls, both to help in the building of a nation and to facilitate their emancipation. Biesta {in press (b)} also argued that agency, autonomy and emancipation come through education.

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I will now present the stories of participants in this study as ‘portraits.’

### 6.1.1 Mike

Mike is now 49, although he looks much younger than his age. He was born and brought up in a village close to Meherpur district town. He comes from a large, poor family of 6 brothers and 3 sisters. His father was a farmer and his mother was a housewife with very little education. In this study, Mike informed me how his mother had encouraged him and his siblings to gain an education and revealed how education had benefitted him through better jobs and social establishment.

In 1993 Mike gained a Masters Degree in Political Science from one of the National Universities (Rajshahi) in the country. Mike has had a diverse professional career. In 1988, while he was still a college student, he started teaching at the local secondary school in his own village. He continued his personal education alongside his professional life as a teacher. After graduation he undertook a B.Ed. After this, he served the same school for one and a half years, before working in a clerical position in a Bank for seven years. He moved to Korea and lived there for nearly eight years, working in a textile factory there, despite not knowing the Korean language well. He always had an interest in English and spent most of his time learning it. Although English is not widely spoken in Korea, he managed to speak broken English with the Koreans and gradually developed speaking, reading and writing skills in the Korean language. He told me that English had received greater priority in Korea since 2002, but before that, students in the Korean schools did not learn English until class eight. Later, English was made a compulsory subject from class six. Mike told a story about a big turn in his life in Korea, brought about by his knowledge of English:

‘My boss (the owner of the textile company) had business with other countries. He knew that I have a good command in English and followed me reading English newspapers sometimes. One day he called me to his office and told me, “You know, I am so weak in English that I can’t talk properly to the foreigners. If you could help me improving my English that would be a good favour to me.” From that time, I started working as an interpreter for him and sometimes helped him to improve English.’

In terms of the colonial influence of English, the Bangladeshi context is quite similar to this Korean context, reminding us that:
‘... there exists a dangerous liaison between the forces of globalisation, empire and TESOL, and, as a result, English teachers “knowingly or unknowingly, play a role in the service of global corporations and imperial powers.”’

(Kumaravadivelu 2006:1)

Mike had also – unknowingly – served the ‘global corporation’ as an English teacher, to establish the forces of globalisation in Korea. After eight years, Mike returned to Bangladesh to marry and settled there permanently. He explained that it was not only marriage that brought him back, but also a desire to serve his own country, as he’d always carried a bad feeling in his heart that he could not do anything for his country,

‘It always pinched in my mind that even if I could work as a teacher in Bangladesh, my country would have benefitted. So, when I found that I have been able to accomplish a minimum financial background, I decided to come back to serve the honourable profession of a teacher in my own country.’

After his return from Korea, Mike started working as an English teacher in a local private school where he has remained for the last eleven years.

In relation to my fourth question, Mike informed me that existing education policy put more priority on English. Mike explained that previously in the BA (pass) course 100 marks English was a compulsory subject for all, with another optional English subject of 200 marks, but 300 marks English had now been made a compulsory subject for all students. Mike compared the change in English learning between the past and the present time, ‘When I was a student, we learnt through grammar and translation. We had to memorise lots of sentences, essays, etcetera, but in the communicative method nowadays, there is no scope for memorisation.’ Mike believed that CLT was more useful in helping students learn English and, as a CLT teacher, his role has become participatory,

‘The teacher can play a vital role now because teaching has been more participatory; as a teacher, I now assign tasks to different groups of students to discuss themselves while I listen to them. Students prepare the answer themselves and I listen to their answers. Thus, teachers’ workload has come down. But I think the teachers’ role is important here to make the session effective - s/he has to explain the task to students and form groups. But in our times, teachers only gave lectures to us, especially in English classes. Nobody dared to say anything in front of the teacher. We only listened to teacher’s lectures with very minimum scope to speak; but now students are getting more scope to speak in English class. Now they themselves are solving a problem through group discussion to reach their own decisions.’
Mike’s story reminded me of my own experiences of English learning, which took place in a similar ‘chalk and talk’ context. Although Mike spoke in favour of a communicative classroom, I got the impression from his discussion that what he said was not what he did in his classroom. It appeared to me that he said these things so as not to lose face in front of me, an outsider researcher. Mike showed a positive attitude towards training:

‘When I first joined teaching, we didn’t know much about this method and that year our school’s pass rate came down to a very low level - only 20%; it was due to the failure in English. The pass rate improved after our CLT training.’

Mike informed me that he had received 21 days CLT training under the TQI (Teachers’ Quality Improvement) project where he learnt a number of useful things, such as how to make the class participatory, why and how to minimise teacher lectures and how to create student interaction opportunities; he identified ‘brain-storming’ as a good tool where learners could use their brains to sort out a problem. He also learnt how group-work, pair-work or chain-drill helped to engage students in activities.

In relation to my second question, Mike talked about the reality of his own classroom where CLT was quite a mismatch,

‘[…] because of large class - 140 students in one class! Another problem is the benches that are fixed to the ground and immovable. So, I cannot apply any of the ideas that I received from the training. Last time when Jessore TTC trainers came here, we raised this issue. They replied that initially it would be a problem, but we would manage it. They suggested us to divide the class in two sections and take the second class for the second section next day. It is still problematic because even if we divide class in two sections, it will be 70 students in a class which I think is still quite difficult.’

In relation to this, I recollected one of my own experiences of secondary class observation at Manikganj district, which is 60 miles distant from Dhaka, the capital city. On the day of my observation, I found 105 students present in one class. The teacher was lecturing at the highest level of his voice and had no control over his class. Some of the students were loitering at the back because there was insufficient seating in the classroom. I realised that no methodology could help a teacher in this situation. Forget CLT; all attempts by the teacher would end in mess and failure! This is a very important
issue that should have been prioritised by policy makers when implementing CLT in the context.

Mike identified another important issue related to his colleagues’ uncooperative attitude towards CLT:

‘… Especially older teachers were against this concept and they commented that CLT wouldn’t work in Bangladesh. Students need to memorise otherwise they can’t get good results.’

This relates to my second research question that addresses teachers’ perceptions of change and innovation. Mike’s views appeared to be contradictory, ‘I personally think that there should be a provision for grammar teaching in CLT: a minimum part, at least the basics,’ although he thought that grammar teaching would be difficult through CLT. He had found his own solution to this problem by using the traditional GT method for teaching grammar. Here, I felt again that the teacher is the method, because whatever methodology is given to him/her, s/he is the decision-maker in terms of how s/he will teach their class. This also related my first research question, as I realised that what Mike was saying came from his beliefs and that these beliefs had influenced his practice in the classroom. I would like to put a note here for the policy makers, which is that consideration should be given to which methodology might be more appropriate in the specific context, rather than unquestioningly introducing CLT as the best methodology or ‘ideal’. What Mike is doing in his class is borne out by Crookes (2003, 47), ‘it is impossible to act, as a teacher, without having theories (including values) that inform teaching actions, at least to some degree.’

Mike found some CLT-based activities useful for his learners, such as ‘seen/unseen passages’, ‘fill in the blanks’ etc. Mike personally felt that teachers should be provided with continuous training so that they could discuss recent issues or problems and find solutions; he suggested that a local resource person could be of great help to teachers in his region. Mike informed me that his Head teacher was an English MA and a knowledgeable person, but he was not always available to help. Mike also told me that the Head teacher sometimes sought help from the Board office on their behalf.

Mike shared one of his experiences in this regard,

‘Once I went to Mr. Akram (a well-known retired English teacher of GT method, Bill’s father) but he could not come to any help about this new
methodology of CLT. Later we found a lady who works as a teacher trainer on CLT. She provided me some books and materials to look into and I could somehow manage the problem for that time.’

Mike said that although they had been instructed to use a hundred percent English in the classroom, they could not do so. He said, ‘Sometimes it so happens in teaching the class, we speak out some common Bengali words instead of English. We are so used to this practice that we cannot control ourselves from speaking Bengali.’ He admitted that he used no more than fifty percent English in his class and that when he used English, his students rarely understood what he said: ‘In most cases, they don’t. When I look at their faces and see that they don’t understand what I’m saying, Bengali automatically comes out. I then explain it in Bengali.’ However, Mike showed a positive attitude towards CLT:

‘As I have already entered into a process, I want to go with this new method for the rest of my teaching life. I have grown up with the traditional way of teaching; I have a great fascination for this GT method. I am more confident with this method. But in the new method (CLT), we have to prepare the content first and then apply where I have less experience; so, it appears sometimes difficult. Yet I think the new method is better and I want to stick to this new method. In this new method, students are getting more scope to work on a problem, discuss among themselves or brainstorm on a topic and think out a solution, which we did not get in the traditional method. They are getting a more interactive class and increased brain work where we mostly depended on rote learning in the traditional method.’

In relation to my fourth question, Mike informed me that they did not have any access to anyone at government policy level, but he thought it would be better if teachers were involved in policy-making before any new methodology was introduced. Mike commented on the success of the innovations, ‘I don’t think CLT is a 100% success. It has been able to work in one side – communication – but the other side – grammar – is left out. So CLT needs a balance of both sides to become successful.’ Mike said that he had no idea about or had never heard anything of other innovations, such as CAL or TBL. Mike told me that he used pictures in his lessons, either hand drawn or brought in, that he brought in models or materials or used miming/acting to present new vocabularies. However, his next statement contradicted this when he told me that he only prepared a lesson plan or necessary materials for teaching when the Head Teacher, District Education Officer or Officers from the Education Board observed his classes, but, in most cases, he did not prepare. When lessons were not prepared, he used ‘mixed-methods’ (grammar with some communication) in teaching. Mike spoke about his
aspirations, ‘I long heart and soul for any training or support from anywhere to become a very good teacher of English. Had there been any scope for that, I would have tried to access it not for my students only, but for my own kids as well.’ Mike also said that, ‘only 15 or 18 days training can bring no better change in this practice. We need longer training or more diverse support in this regard.’ This should also be noted by policymakers.

6.1.2 Bill

Bill is a 35-year-old English teacher in a nearby secondary school in the town of Meherpur. Like Mike, Bill was positive about the CLT method although he also emphasised the importance of teaching English grammar. It is possible that his interest in grammar teaching came from his father, who was an expert GT English teacher. Bill had two older brothers and two older sisters. His mother was a housewife who only studied up to level five. Influenced by his father, Bill became an English teacher in his present school in 2007. Bill liked to be ‘punctual’ as this characterised his father’s professional life; his father used to get up in the morning, prepare for school and finish at five in the afternoon. Bill was greatly influenced by his father’s professional life, a life which gave him plenty of time for his family after school. Bill believed no other profession was as dignified and honest as teaching and that unlike other professions where people adopt unfair means on situational pressure shortly after joining (this is a common picture in the public offices in the country that has led to the ‘lack of trust society’), a teacher could live on honest earnings alone. Honesty was a common attribute of teachers in the context. Bill told me that he had a number of cousins in the English teaching profession although his own brothers were not working.

When talking about his own language learning, Bill said that his father had been his guide, but that he was always afraid of his fury, as his father was ill-tempered when teaching and inflicted punishment on him for any mistakes. He remembered how his father created nightmares for him by pushing him to memorise big chunks of English, for example essays, letters/application writing, in the hope that he would get good examination results. This had also influenced his attitude as an English teacher. He recalled:

‘Memorising an essay “A Village Market” was my home task one day. When asked, I could say half of it smoothly but then I failed to remember the rest. My father became so disappointed that he grabbed my ear and slapped me
twice. But now in my teaching I avoid giving my students big memorisation tasks; instead, I assign them some writing task in the class. My class duration is 50 minutes and I always try to check their writing and provide feedback. Students feel better in that.’

Unlike Mike, Bill was a strong supporter of GT method as he commented,

‘I think the Government should keep the grammar in the curriculum because when a person sits for a job interview or test, they face a number of grammatical terms. The Government is now trying to improve English through dialogue or free-hand writing. But when a student sits for a competitive test for a job or so, he can’t survive if s/he doesn’t know the grammatical rules, such as narration change, voice change or transformation of sentences. I think there is a big gap between the education policy and the national job policies or the testing system in the job market in Bangladesh. There needs to be coordination in these sectors.’

Here we have a useful policy implication that policy makers could focus on. Bill was critical of the introduction of CLT in the context and surprised me by unknowingly revealing the research debates around CLT,

‘It might sound bizarre that this idea is completely imposed on us by foreigners. They are thinking that a 9-10 pass kid can somehow communicate in English with this method as it has been reported that the Bangladeshi workers in foreign countries cannot communicate properly and there has been a communication gap between them and the employers. Through the techniques applied in the textbook, the students at least can communicate without knowing any grammar. Now they have introduced dialogue practice and many other exercises for improving speaking; for example, instead of saying ‘please give me a glass of water’ (which maintains grammatical rules), they say ‘water please’. It is also a spoken form and I’ll manage to get a glass of water wherever I say this. It appears to me that the government is trying to provide these skills for the workers as foreign employers are looking for this kind of labour who at least can communicate; to get better value in the world labour market, I think it is important as well.’

Bill said that apart from six days training from SEQAEP, he had not received any other training on CLT. His aunt, a SEQAEP trainer, had observed his class and provided useful suggestions and feedback while she was staying in their house for a year. Bill admitted that whenever his aunt visited his school, he and the other teachers tried to use a hundred percent English as the instruction language, but this was difficult for teachers to maintain because of poor speaking skills. ‘It is because we mainly focus on the grammatical side and are very weak in spoken English.’ Barman, et. al (2012) have also noted this inefficiency of ELT practitioners. Bill said he had somehow managed to
improve his spoken English and now felt confident to speak in class. He thought environment played a big role in teacher development, for example he said, ‘if a teacher speaks English in their regular conversation, I can attempt speaking English then, at least, to prove my quality to all other fellow teachers.’

In relation to class size, Bill informed me that his class size ranged from 30 to 70 students. During class time, he changed the seating arrangement to a U-shape for the textbook activities, although this was not possible in lower classes, 6 or 7. This is something that also needs consideration by policy makers: how can the issue of large class size be addressed and how can CLT fit into this contextual reality? Another policy implication is highlighted by Bill’s assertion that corporal punishment is an appropriate way of dealing with students who did not prepare for their lessons. During our conversation, he criticised the new rule that prohibited teachers from inflicting corporal punishment on their students:

‘We must get a bad impact of it - maybe not in a year or two, but after five years, of course. I’ve found in the locality very little number of conscious guardians is there to help their kids in their studies. In the non-government schools like ours, I’ll say all the non-government schools, especially those situated in the rural areas, are facing the same problem. Due to illiteracy, the guardians do not pay sufficient attention to their children’s education.’

In this relation, Breen (2001a, cf. G. Hall, 2011) comments that individual language classrooms develop their own specific character and culture. ‘Spare the rod and spoil the child’ is an established classroom culture of Bangladeshi teachers, as revealed by Bill above, and as a child in Bangladesh, I experienced a similar culture. Referring to the cultural context of the country and comparing it with the practices of neighbouring countries, Bill criticises the policy,

‘Even if we follow the CLT guidelines 100%, it won’t make results any better. The main cause is our atmosphere, I mean the surrounding practice is running through “Bengali method,” after the class, when the child goes to his/her family, they speak in Bengali; in some Indian (neighbouring country) TV channels, as I have seen, the language of advertising is English. But in Bangladesh, there is no scope like that to improve your English knowledge. If we want to establish English as a second language, what I believe we need is to engage our children step by step in different small activities in English without any pressure. For example, the advertisements on the TV channels could use a little English, or cartoon programmes could use some simple English, as children like cartoons. They can easily pick out and learn English from these programmes. In every walk, there must be a touch of English; it can go side by side of Bengali so that they can easily understand. Of course, environment plays a vital role.’
Here Bill provides some useful suggestions for Bangladeshi policy makers in relation to improving English speaking in the context. Bill accepts the colonial legacy by admitting that there is no alternative for English and we need to learn English to maintain good communication with other countries, but he identifies environment as an important factor in the implementation of CLT; for example, the learning environment in Dhaka (capital city) is quite different from that of Meherpur and therefore what is possible in Dhaka, particularly with conscientious parents is quite difficult in a remote rural place in Meherpur.

Bill’s statement highlighted another important issue in CLT implementation in the country. He believed that peer sharing was as important as training – ‘sharing means we need to discuss with other colleagues what we know, and we should share any new ideas among our colleagues’. Some of his colleagues thought training were troublesome but Bill thought they could learn many things from training. Bill reported that he was still struggling with the new textbook and said teachers required more time to familiarise themselves with new concepts. He said that to his knowledge, no teacher had received any sort of training on the new textbook. He also commented on how teachers had suffered from too many changes over the course of the year:

‘At the start of the year, we received one syllabus and after three or four months, we received another one. And after some days, we received another changed syllabus. It was not a complete change but every time, there was some inclusion or exclusion of some grammatical things. For example, first they introduced “correction of sentences” which was replaced by “prefix and suffix”. And then “prefix and suffix” was excluded for another new thing to come in. Most of the teachers failed to understand when to teach what from the syllabus.’

Bill revealed another weakness in government policy in relation to an FSSP project for girls’ empowerment where teachers are under local political pressure to pass their girl students so that they can receive the stipend money:

‘This is still an existing practice in the schools where the girls who receive this project based stipend money must be given pass marks at any cost, forget the rest. Very recently Government have introduced another rule that we have to pass every student. You can verify this when you talk with other teachers from different schools. I recently went to a photocopy shop and somebody told me, “you don’t need to teach your students nowadays, just give them pass marks to get the money.”’
6.1.3 Ella

Ella is one of the female respondent teachers in this study. She comes from a well-educated Muslim family. Ella is the daughter of a primary school Head teacher, and is the youngest of five sisters and two brothers. She is now 35 years old. All her brothers and sisters were educated and have completed BA or MA degrees. Like Bill, Ella was inspired by her father to become a teacher: ‘My father always suggested to us that teaching is the best profession for a woman beside their responsibilities in the family.’ This is a common viewpoint in a male-dominated Islamic society like Bangladesh where women still have restricted access to all professions, although in recent times it is noticeable that things are changing with global influence and women are gradually getting more access to diverse professions; for example, the Bangladesh women cricket team has defeated the Indian team in Asia Cup Cricket.

Ella belongs to a ‘Hazi’ family where religious rules are strictly maintained. (The ‘Hazz’ is a religious pilgrimage for Muslims and people completing Hazz are respected as ‘Hazi’). Ella told me that her mother had been married at the age of 13 or 14, like all other girls in her society, and said that this was still common practice among the rural uneducated society, even though the official age for girls’ marriage is 18. Ella reported that rural people still don’t believe in girls’ education or freedom:

‘Although the environment is improving, the mentality of parents is not helpful. I have seen, parents forcefully wed their daughters at a minor age of 5-7, even at class six. We are trying our best to motivate guardians of the issue; our cautious Head teacher is always discussing this issue with parents in every parents meeting, but to no effect.’

Ella said that her mother’s educational potential, in spite of being meritorious, was ended by her early marriage. This reveals that social culture and practices that have stood as a bar to women’s education for a considerable time. Ella said family pressure had influenced her decisions about her future: ‘I wanted to become a banker but had to change my decision because of family pressure and came to the teaching profession.’ Ella had been subjected to similar pressure to marry: ‘My father and my granddad are rural people and had a similar mentality to the other villagers. After passing the HSC, they put a lot of pressure on me to agree to an arranged marriage.’ This relates to my third research question, where we can see how issues of agency impact on vulnerable rural women like Ella in the context and how she has fought back to reshape it: ‘It was
my personal fight that brought me where I am now.’ Here we can see a reflection of Emirbayer and Mishce (1998, p 971) who see agency as ‘the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations’. Ella has shaped the problematic situation by her own responsiveness and can be seen as an example for the ‘postmodernists’ in terms of how she made independent decisions that formed her identity. Kumaravadivelu (2008: 144) defines ‘postmodernism’:

‘Identity formation is conditioned not merely by inherited traditions such as culture, or by external factors such as history, or by ideological constructs such as power, but also by the individual’s ability and willingness to exercise agency and to make independent decisions.’

Ella believed that every girl in her society should receive an education and talked about social changes that have occurred over the course of time,

‘Most of the girls from the place I live in might be influenced by us and are now receiving education- in their first, second or final year of honours degree or some even have completed their study. The situation has changed now, and girls have advanced a lot.’

Ella started teaching at her present school in 2011. She holds a Masters Degree in Political Science and reported that she teaches every subject except Mathematics. She is the class teacher for year six and teaches English. Ella said that the first period of each day in class six starts with English. Ella reported her feelings about teaching English in her class,

‘In fact, we all are excessively afraid of English. I don’t know how much I can give to my students. Many people like you come here to visit us - they observe our classes. We try to use our materials while teaching; we try to teach “word meanings” and give them a little knowledge every day from the beginning. For example, this is the admission time and new students are coming in. From the very first class, I try to introduce English by saying “Hi”, “hello” kind of words, or teach our lesson in English to their level. I tell my students on the very first day to practice English from the next day. I taught them whenever any teacher comes to your class, you should offer “Salam” (Muslim way of greeting each other) and say, “good morning.” Teachers will be pleased with you and they will speak in English with you; then you can say another word in response.’

However, Ella’s way of using the greeting words ‘Salam’ and ‘Good-morning’ was a little confusing, as when we say ‘assalamu alaikum’ (Salam), we do not say ‘good morning’ because both denote nearly same expression. Ella reported her own experiences of learning English, ‘In our time, we started translation and grammatical
items from class seven; I mean special stress was given from class seven. But now I see a child learns about “word” or “sentence” at nursery or class one level. We missed the learning environment what are availed by today’s kids.” She recommended the stress on English as a good practice but failed to identify which one was better – GT or CLT, saying, ‘In fact, it is difficult to say which one is better; I must say the present one is a good practice. I want to say that parents are more conscientious now than in our time; they plan their children’s future even better. At an early stage of pregnancy, they eat and maintain healthy food and health consciousness which was absent in our time.’ In relation to her CLT skills, she informed me that she had received only ‘one hour’ training from an old teacher of a local madrasah. She said that she had learnt from the teacher how an alphabet could be used to build a number of words. Talking about the textbooks, she said that the textbooks were more activity-oriented nowadays

‘When I first joined as a teacher in 2001, the textbook was similar to the book we studied in our student life- traditional style with some stories. But nowadays, especially from last year as I’ve noticed in the English textbook for class six- it is divided into activities. Even if the teacher does not have any idea about the book, s/he can get an idea from the book how s/he can follow these activities step by step. Everything is clearly mentioned in the book one after one how to work on the activities.’

6.1.4 Martin

Martin is the most senior of all respondent teachers in this study. Since 2011, he has been Assistant Head Teacher of his school, which is located in a local ‘bazaar’ in a semi-urban area, three miles distant from Meherpur town. Although he joined this school relatively recently, he has more than 25 years’ experience as an English teacher, starting his teaching career in a ‘madrasa’. He also belongs to a teaching family where his father, uncle, brother, sister, wife and sister-in-law have either worked or continue to work in a variety of schools. I have been taught by both Martin’s father and uncle, either as schoolteachers or private tutors and found both were knowledgeable English teachers using the GT method.

At present Martin lives with his wife and two children in a rented place near his school. He grew up in hardship, as he came from a big family of eleven members, including six brothers and three sisters. His father was an English teacher at a local high school and his mother was a housewife. As the only member of the family who was earning, Martin’s father had to work hard to maintain his family, doing lots of private tuition
both before and after the school day. Martin said, ‘Because of our poor financial position, we did not get the opportunity for better higher education. Financial problems were a great issue for our family. So, we received our education locally.’ (As mentioned earlier, in Bangladesh the better educational facilities are mostly capital city-centred and are therefore out of the reach of most ordinary people). Martin told me that his teaching career started in a Madrasa in 1989. Unfortunately, his ambition to become a science teacher was put to an end following a bad incident, ‘I was a student of science; but, unfortunately, I couldn’t complete B.Sc. When the examination was due to start a big clash occurred between the police and the students; the police opened fire on the crowd of students and the examination was suspended. All my preparation went astray, and I could not pass B.Sc.’ This reflects the reality of the political atmosphere in the country and reminds us that the external world has a big influence on what happens inside the classroom (Ellis, 1994). Martin gives an account of his own learning of English grammar,

‘We studied functional English Grammar- the names of our English grammar books were, “English Grammar, Translation & Composition” and “Functional English Grammar, Translation & Composition”. We believed that without knowing grammatical rules, no one can learn English correctly. From class six, as far I could remember, we used to learn about number, person, gender, sentence structure. We learnt tense in year 8, and then voice change, narration (direct and indirect speech). It was studied in class nine and ten.’

Martin emphasises the importance of learning English and is positive about CLT. ‘As English is an international language, it helps a person to get better job, to go abroad. Communicative English is helpful for that purpose. I agree with this concept.’ He criticises the government policy at the same time, ‘But there are some problems. As a teacher, I must say that we have not been trained how to teach English to our students in communicative way. We need enough training for the teachers in how to teach our students. We also need helpful books on this method.’ Martin compared the CLT method with previous methods, ‘a student now learns how to make a sentence with some given jumbled words in class four which we studied at degree (BA) level. I don’t like it. We learned English step by step in my childhood. There was a sequence, a chronology of topics. We learnt the use of “shall/will”, we studied them at a certain stage, which was class 8. We learnt things in order, starting with sentence, then tense, then moved to “voice change” and “narration change”, then we learnt the use of “shall/will”. All these were in order. I think making words from jumbled alphabets (for
example, book from ‘o-b-o-k’) is enough for these level students at class four. Think - Class four and degree level can’t be the same! It must be very difficult for a class four level student!’

In his discussion, Martin raised an important issue in relation to the existing madrasah education system, which addresses my fourth question relating to policy implications. Begum Umme Salma (1993) also identifies this gap between students from madrasah education and those of general education,

‘The difference between these two groups of people can be observed not only in their orientation and thinking but also in all aspects of life ranging from style of dressing to commitment towards politics. Those coming out of the general education system dominate educated society and the national development process, while those who receive education through the madrasah system usually live on religious activities and rituals and its teaching. Hence their contribution towards national development is hardly visible.’

(Source: Durham e-thesis online)

Martin thinks people have lost faith in and respect for madrasah education because of its degraded quality of education and suggests that it needs to be merged with general education for the sake of the country’s progress. Over the course of time, the deteriorating quality of madrasah education in the context has become a significant challenge for the country, as reported by researchers (Begum, 1993; Umar, 1970) and also by Martin (in this study), yet no government since the liberation period has taken any steps to merge the religion-based educational institutions (madrasah) into the general education system.

This is an important discussion point in this study because this specific Islamic education system acts against progressive activities relating to female empowerment, English education, the wearing of western dress or adoption of Western ideas, cultural (local or international) performances, etcetera, by labelling them as ‘anti-Islamic’. On many occasions, this has created awkward situations for the ruling government. T.J. Banyan reports in ‘The Economist’ (2015),

‘It is important to examine the link between religious education and support for Islamic parties or militancy. The assumption amongst many Bangladeshis is that Islamisation of the education system – both mainstream and informal – is part of a creeping cultural revolution gradually undermining secularism. Bangladesh has a mainstream education system where Islamic subjects have increased over recent years in the curriculum. It also has a parallel madrasa
education system that’s been growing. One Awami League sympathiser complained democracy had failed in Bangladesh and the country’s education system was pushing Islam forward as the solution.’

I would suggest here that the policy makers, along with the Government, should sit down with all other political parties to look for solutions in this regard. It is a cause for optimism that the existing government has adopted a strict policy regarding the control of Islamic activists in the country, but the issue requires a deeper investigation of the madrasah education system.

6.1.5 Kate

Kate came into teaching in May 2012 and is a new teacher compared to the other respondent teachers in this study. She is a B.A. B.Ed. and joined as a computer teacher, although she also works as an English teacher in lower classes (6 and 7). Like Martin, Kate comes from a large family of eight members. Kate’s husband is also a secondary teacher. She has two daughters; one has just completed primary education, and the second has just started school. Kate made the observation that ‘my daughters are more educated than my uncles or my father.’ Kate commented on the poor status of English in the context and asserted that greater priority should be given to English language learning. While recollecting her own school life, Kate shared a strange story about her teacher,

‘When I entered in class three my English teacher, who was also was from my own village- he’s now working in a primary school in Gangni Upazilla (a nearby sub-district), didn’t give me any mark on my English exam paper in the annual examination although I didn’t make any mistake in the test. When I asked him the reason why I didn’t receive any mark, he asked me to re-sit the exam. After the exam, he told me that he was mistaken about me. He thought that either someone had helped me, or I copied from someone.’

This reveals the quality of education in the context and shows how distrust permeates society, even to the extent that teachers have no trust in learners. It also indicates how copying in examinations has been rife in remote schools, a situation which planners and policy makers of the country would do well to address. Kate reveals her own experience of learning English:

‘I learnt English by completely memorising, whether I understood or not, as there were available notebooks and I memorised word for word from these. That time we didn’t have very good teachers and I personally was poor in socialisation; I rarely came out of my house to seek help from friends. I
memorised sentence structure, although I did have some private coaching and private tuition. So, I had some help from them, and some help I received from the class. As we had a large class, teachers usually wrote something on the board and told us to memorise it. And we memorised it word for word.’

Kate reflects Freire’s ‘banking concept’ where students mostly depend on memorisation for regurgitating in the examinations. It reveals the poor education structure of the country where teachers like Kate with such poor background can easily get recruited by political influence or donations in the non-government secondary schools (I already have discussed in Chapter 2); but this raises a vital question at the same time: how far can policy makers implement CLT with these teachers?

Kate herself identified her lack of experience as a new teacher and admitted she was not confident in her abilities when doing the job and had to seek help from senior colleagues, ‘there are senior teachers who might know better than me. I always seek help from them whenever I don’t understand anything. Other teachers also cooperate me well.’ In relation to speaking English in the class, Kate reports, ‘when I speak in English, the students cannot keep up – they try to guess a word or two, but don’t understand completely. So, I ask my superiors for suggestions about how to teach an activity or a specific lesson as I have no training or any idea on how to teach English in proper way.’ It was clear from her statement that she was struggling to conduct her lessons in the English classroom. She understood her role in the CLT classroom as follows: ‘I first speak in English and then break it in smallest words and give them the meaning of that word; then I make them repeat them with me. For example, if I say, “What class do you read in?” - I give them the meaning of every word and finally I make them repeat it again.’ Kate informed me that she could use no more than 20% English as classroom instruction. Kate described her perception of CLT,

‘In fact, we learnt in a teacher-centred education system in our time whereas now we see a learner-centred education system. In our time, we regurgitated what the teacher taught us the previous day; but now it’s a new method of eliciting information from students with the help of computers, multimedia and projectors. Students visualise and then we elicit. But in our time, we learnt like blind and followed the book only. Of course, this method is better than the one we were taught by.’

Kate was a less confident teacher, as she did not have any training in CLT and, as she had been recruited as a computer teacher, had no chance of receiving this training, as government policy is that only subject teachers could receive it. Kate said that her
dream was to become a good teacher, overcoming any current deficiencies through acquiring knowledge and training, although she was not sure how this could be achieved. As an IT teacher, she believed computers could work as a good tool in learning English because English is the language of the computer as well. If we want to search for anything, we have to do so via English in any case. She therefore encouraged her students to use computers as much as possible.

6.1.6 Steve

Steve is now in his mid-forties. He joined Gopalpur Secondary High school as an English Teacher in 1997. He has an MA in English, which is unusual in rural schools in the context, as teachers with an English academic background tend not to work in these remote areas. Steve achieved his Masters degree through a distance-learning programme from ‘Darr-ul-Ihsan University’ at its Meherpur Campus. He comes from a family of ten, comprising his parents, five brothers and three sisters. They all have their own families now; all three sisters are now living with their husbands and his parents are still alive and living with their youngest son.

Steve told me that his father became a farmer just after his primary education and his mother is a housewife with no education. His elder brother studied up to class five, his immediate junior brother studied up to year eight; the youngest one completed HSC level and works for the police. All his sisters studied up to year five when they were married. Again, a picture emerged of girls’ early marriage (at the age of 8 or 9), which is quite common in these rural cultures. Steve said that his keen interest in English from an early age helped him to attain the MA degree in English. His story identifies a major gap in the education system. Steve ardently desired to speak in English but despite his English MA degree, his language skills are extremely limited and despite knowing how to, he could speak ‘one or two sentences in broken-English’ and now in his class, he speaks a little English. Steve said that from primary education he had learnt English through the grammar-translation method, ‘a traditional method where teachers gave us a lesson as home task, and we prepared for the next day word-by-word translation of the text.’ Steve received help in his studies from one of his uncles, who had passed his SSC and was the only person in his family who was educated enough to be able to provide help. In relation to the English speaking environment, Steve confirmed the monolingual state of the country, ‘there was no environment at all, and the situation is still the same. Other than the school compound, we speak English nowhere!’ Steve was keen to see a
change to this situation, which he believed would enhance not only his personal development, but also that of the wider society and the country as a whole. Unlike Kate, Steve had attended a number of CLT trainings from HTTI (Higher Secondary Teacher Training Institute) at Barisal, from NAEM, from CPD (Continuous Professional Development), although he believed the HTTI training he’d had in 2006 was not much help to him, because of the subsequent change in teaching method. However, he thought that NAEM provided some useful and up to date information. Steve highlighted some useful policy implications relating to CLT use in the classroom. His perception was, ‘We are told about the participatory method, but we cannot apply this everywhere. Sometimes we have to apply traditional methods as well.’ Steve explained his own belief about the learning of English,

‘I have already told that English can be learnt without grammar like Bangla - for example, when we watch a football match, we hear a lot of English words, such as “handball”, “head”, “corner”, “goal”, “pass”, “kick” etc. which all the people can easily understand just by hearing from others without reading any book or learning grammar. There was a time when people didn’t know what a mobile phone was or the related words such as, “message”, “receive”, “outgoing” or “incoming”. People didn’t know and even if they were taught, they couldn’t realise or remember. But now they’ve got mobile phones in their hand and easily understand the word “call” or other mobile phone-related words, such as “flexi”, “top-up” etc. I feel myself that if the listening environment is created, things will improve gradually.’

I believe this is a good point for policy makers to note.

6.1.7 Pat

Pat had joined Gopalpur Secondary High school as Assistant Head Teacher, even though he’d never planned to enter the teaching profession. He had wanted to settle somewhere outside the country and, with this in mind, he went to South Korea, Hong Kong, India and Nepal. He was planning to go outside again when the existing Head teacher brought him to the school. He considered teaching a noble profession and had abandoned his plan for settling outside. He is an MSS and did his B.Ed. at the National University. Pat had to do a compulsory English course as part of his B.Ed., although this has now been removed from the B.Ed. structure. Instead, 300 marks optional English has been introduced and this is only a requirement for English teachers. Pat had not received any training beyond the B.Ed. He taught English (1st paper) in year eight, History in classes nine and ten, Science in class six and Maths in class seven, although class seven had now been given to a new teacher. Pat commented that the new CLT-
based books had been developed around modern concepts and their topics were more relevant to modern life. Pat discussed his teaching style, which was still GT-based, ‘Students find interest when I read a story and translate it into Bengali for them. They listen to it carefully.’ In a typical English class, Pat teaches in the following method, which is a mixture of CLT and GTM,

‘After giving the translation of the text, I ask them some of the word-meanings; if they fail, I give them the meanings of those words in Bengali. I also help the students to summarise the story. Sometimes I call them to write something on the board; sometimes I call two of them in front of the class and help them to practice dialogues (from the textbook), such as, “Doctor-Patient” or “Teacher-Student” role-play.’

Pat explained his technique for helping weaker students:

‘I read the stories from the textbook and do different activities, like fill in the gaps, corrections and short questions on the text etc. There are seen and unseen passages. Seen passages are from the textbook whereas unseen passages can be from anywhere outside of the text. Marks distribution in the examination question paper is as follows: 40 marks on the seen text, 20 marks on the unseen text and 40 marks on writing (composition and letter/application) - altogether 100 marks. I always aim to prepare my students in such a way that they can score at least the pass mark. The top seven or eight students can do it easily, but I focus on the weak students so that all can pass.’”

Pat said his future plan was to be a good teacher in order to develop the school and his own career and to help his students work towards better results in the examinations. Pat was willing to go to any training offered by the government or by any organisation like BRAC. He had already received 22 days’ Science training from BRAC and intended to go to any training they might offer in the future. Pat addressed the major issue, which I have already identified, i.e. that they did not receive any prior training on CLT and questioned how CLT could function when teachers like him were working without any training. Pat expressed pride in his position in the society, which he described as honourable, but reported feeling ashamed when people in social gatherings ridiculed teachers for their poor salaries. He wanted to equip himself with modern technologies, such as a computer, Internet, Facebook, which he believed would improve his English.

6.1.8 Andy

Andy joined his present school in 1994 and was still working there. He had completed B.A. and B.Ed. training successfully. Andy came from a large family of 14, which
included eight boys and four girls. Andy was now in his fifties; his mother had died 3 years earlier but his father, a former farmer, was still alive and was over 100 years old. Andy told me that neither of his parents had received any education at all. Two of his brothers died at a young age, and the rest of the children received very little or no education. Some of his brothers worked in farming and some were in business. Andy reported that none of his brothers had any interest in education despite their parents’ encouragement, but, unlike them, Andy had had a strong desire for education from childhood. He described the difficulties of growing up in poor financial conditions:

‘[…] We had lived in such hardship that we had to stay half-fed or without food most of the days. Good food was a dream only and most of the time we received only one meal or less in a whole day! I never had the ability to buy any book; I always borrowed books from senior students and returned them after completion. Some important things I used to jot down in my writing book that I followed for further studies. Thus, I passed SSC in second division in 1982 from Govt. High School.’

This was an excellent illustration of the life of a teacher in the context, as most of the secondary school teachers in rural Bangladesh come from a similar financial background. Andy’s story reminded me of the life of Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar (1820-1891), a renowned scholar, philosopher and reformer at the time of undivided Bengal (under British rule) and an important contributor to Bengali literature. Vidyasagar lived in similar hardship during his early life but later made a huge contribution to Bengali language and society. This resonates with my question about whether policy makers gave enough thought to these issues before importing CLT into this specific context. Was the innovation of CLT the right choice for the Bangladeshi context considering its poor economic background, limited resources and materials? If not, what alternatives or provisions could be introduced into national policy to address the issue? I believe this kind of Western methodology import and its rushed introduction into the national education system without appropriate consideration of the context and culture has been unwise and is not helpful to teachers if the requirements identified in this study are unfulfilled.

6.1.9 Sam

Sam was in his mid-forties and came from a similar background to Andy, having grown up in a family of eight, including five brothers and one sister. Sam was the youngest in his family. All his brothers were now farmers and his sister was a housewife. Sam said
that one of his brothers had studied up to class eight, and that this brother had encouraged Sam to carry on his own studies and provided various kinds of support for him. He joined as an English teacher in 1996 in the same school as Andy, although he had started his career as a development worker in an NGO called SODAP (Social Development and Agnitran Project). Sam worked there for seven years in micro-finance where his role was small ‘group formation’ of villagers (this is a strategy taken by the NGOs in the context where NGO staff form a group of 25-30 people and train each individual on a specific business and provide loan). The NGO job was poorly paid, and he realised that he had no future there, ‘It was a goal-less project where I didn’t want to spoil my whole life.’

Sam’s father was also a farmer and his mother a housewife, and neither had an educational background. Sam had taken science at SSC level but realised he found the subject difficult, so moved to the Arts group. Although he was interested in English from SSC, he didn’t have any scope to learn the language properly. His interest in the language continues still and he reads any book or magazine that he can get hold of. Sam talked about his own way of learning English: ‘I initially used a wordbook (to learn vocabulary) - I didn’t use a dictionary at primary level nor at high school, or even at college level. I didn’t get proper guidance from my family. The teacher sometimes suggested getting a dictionary, but my family’s financial condition didn’t allow this.’ Sam said that he learnt the rules for narration change, voice change, articles, sentence and tense at high school level and in the college, he also dealt with a little grammar though most of their grammar rules were learnt at secondary levels. Sam said they had no scope for practicing speaking skills because they learnt through the GT method, which was,

‘… mainly translation-based and we had to do translation to English from Bengali or vice versa. But we never had any separate skill-based practice class or course on speaking, reading or listening skills. They used a traditional method of teaching- for example, the teacher told us to read one page in English at home; we used to read and came back to the next class. We didn’t have any language laboratory kind of things for practicing English speaking.’

Sam said that he had never had any advice from his teachers, guardians or anyone else in terms of the importance of learning English. His statements illustrate the ways in which remote areas of the country remain in a monolingual state because English cannot penetrate far. As an English teacher, Sam had participated in a number of training
sessions, e.g. in TTC under ELTIP, from FSSP, NAEM, and training under BRAC (Module 1 & 2). Sam said the reality was that about 70% of the training, at best, could be implemented in the classroom. For him, one of the biggest challenges in implementing training was the students’ weakness in the language. Nevertheless, he was positive about the importance of English:

‘I feel it realistic and we all – students and teachers, need it. It is necessary as we call the world a global village because of the Internet and computer technology, and we need English for communication in every sector - trade and commerce or business. As English is an international language, it is very important in every sector of work.’

In teaching English, Sam did not identify grammar as so important. His view was quite the opposite to that of Bill or Martin. Sam said,

‘I feel that the language is necessary first and then grammar; even when we speak in Bangla, we do not speak sentences in that organised way; yet we can communicate. I am of the same opinion as my trainers that grammar teaching is not that essential. My trainers suggested to us that in the answer script, if a learner, in spite of huge mistakes in punctuation, sentence structure or spelling, can communicate with the teacher, they can get 70-80% marks. It shows us that communication is more important than grammar.’

I agree here with Sam and would like to note here that the rules for ‘information processing’ and ‘automatisation’ models might help teachers in this regard that accounts language items to be noticed before they can be employed automatically by learners, and noticing requires learners to utilise their cognitive resources, though it is also useful to remember that there is a limit to the amount of information learners can attend to and engage with at any particular time. For example, at the beginner level, when learners are introduced to language for the first time, they may concentrate on understanding meaning and not be able to pay attention to producing accurate language forms. Over time, as they process the new information, understanding meaning becomes more automatic, and cognitive resources are then freed to deal with form and accuracy (Johnson 2008: 102, cf. Hall 2011, p 114). This way ‘automatisation’ involves moving from controlled cognitive processes, where tasks require a significant degree of control and processing capacity, to automatic cognitive processes where little attention is required and the mind can manage all the necessary information with little cognitive effort. When this move occurs, controlled processes are freed to deal with more complex language and skills (McLaughlin 1987, cf. Hall, p 114).
6.1.10 Dean

Dean has an MA in English that he completed through a distance-learning programme under Dar-ul-Ihsan University, Dhaka, Bangladesh. He joined his school as an English teacher in April 2000. Dean comes from a family of six, including his parents, a brother and two sisters. His father had very little education and died in 2009. His mother is still alive and spent most of her life as a housewife. She also had very little education. Dean’s elder brother has an MA and is the head teacher of a registered primary school; Dean’s elder sister died, leaving one son who is now a practicing doctor in the capital city of Dhaka. Dean’s younger sister is a housewife and was married while still attending school, i.e. during class eight.

Dean noted that the lack of an appropriate environment for practicing speaking meant this was the skill they had least exposure to and confidence in; he also believed the teachers lacked the mentality for practicing. He noted that there were three English teachers working in his school and said, ‘if we all make the time, one or two days to discuss our problems or to practice English to improve our skills, we could make a difference. You can blame the environment or whatever, but I feel we lack that mentality!’ Dean reported that shyness was an obstacle to improving their English and that senior teachers thought that if they spoke incorrect English in front of junior colleagues, it would be shameful. On the other hand, if they spoke English in the wider community other people would criticise, saying, ‘Carrying Bengali blood, how does he dare to speak in a foreign language.’ For all these reasons, Dean errs on the side of caution, saying, ‘Suspend English speaking and keep on good terms with the community.’ Dean reported that he had noticed a big change in attitude towards the learning of English among students of the present time compared to his own childhood and thanked the government for this change and for the advancement of English learning. He believed ‘It was not have been possible if the curriculum had not changed.’

Dean had been involved in a number of training sessions, such as CPD1 & 2 and NAEM trainings (21 days and 12 days). Although most of this training discussed CLT, he had not received any CLT-focused training. Rather, the training placed an emphasis on vocabulary and speaking fluency. Dean believed that in spite of problems with the environment or large class sizes, if students could work in groups or pairs, and the CLT method continued to be implemented, things might improve. Dean reported that for his English classes, he changed the seating arrangement to a V-shape or sometimes two
rows with a gap in the middle. He said he used 40 - 50% English in his classroom instructions but he ‘has to give or say the Bengali term or translation side by side so that student don’t say that they didn’t understand anything what the teacher taught.’

Like Bill, Dean also criticised the government policy on corporeal punishment, saying, ‘This new rule about students’ punishment is undoubtedly bringing no good in the long run. We are already at a disadvantage in the question of respecting teachers. We sometimes feel that a reformed version of the traditional method of controlling students could be more effective.’ Dean said that all his future ambitions, dreams and plans were to establish his only son. In the meantime, he accepted his family’s social position and poor economic conditions and said he was happy that, ‘in fact we can thank the Government that we are getting the salary monthly and the amount is reasonable (13000 BDT equals to £112 GBP per month).’

6.1.11 Nick

Nick had been working in his present school since 15th May 2011. He had an MA in Political Science but was employed to teach English to classes six to nine and Mathematics to classes six and seven. I have already mentioned that in secondary schools English is taught by many different subject teachers, but English training was restricted to subject teachers only. In order to improve the status of English in the context, I believe that policy makers should acknowledge the reality and re-consider the decision to restrict English training to English teachers only and think about whether this training could be extended to all other teachers considering the contextual need.

Nick said he felt more confident with English when he had the chance to learn something new. Like Dean and Bill, Nick admitted that he mainly followed the GT method, as he had not received any training on CLT. Nick’s father was an HSC graduate and Nick feels that his father is more knowledgeable and competent than him. I think this is a useful indicator of the deterioration of the existing education system compared with the past.

Nick has one brother and two sisters. He became sad while speaking about his younger brother’s death from liver and kidney problems at the age of 14. He described how his family had faced financial hardship, as his father suffered redundancy at the time of his brother’s sickness and had no other option than to sell all their land to pay for his brother’s treatment, causing further hardship to the family. Unlike the UK or Europe,
the Bangladeshi public health framework does not provide free treatment; payment depends solely on the patient’s family’s ability to pay. Like most other rural girls, Nick’s sister was married after SSC to an NGO worker. In Bangladesh, 66 per cent of girls are married before the age of 18 (Unicef). Nick said that it was his father’s wish that he came into teaching and that his father had been a member of the managing committee of the school for more than 16 years. Nick also ran a private kindergarten school in the locality, looking after the administration while an appointed Principal took care of the educational side. Nick had intended to join the army but was not tall enough. He completed his BA at Meherpur Government College and achieved an MA from Kushtia Government College. His B.Ed. was under the Darul Ihsan University, (distant learning programme, Meherpur Campus). While talking about the English learning context, Nick criticised Government policy,

‘When we were students, we learnt English through GT method. We learnt a foreign language; so, we had to go through a system of learning it, which is through grammatical structure. But the present context is different. Grammar exists in the text only, there is no scope for separate grammar teaching. Now the government wants students to speak in English at least- right or wrong. I guess it is the intention of Government that as Bangladeshis, we can at least make foreigners understand in business, job or any other sector.’

Nick’s statement made it clear that teachers like him had no other option than to follow the traditional way of teaching through GT method, firstly because his own experience of learning was through that method, and secondly because they had no familiarity with or exposure to any other teaching methodology except the GT method. The winds of change had not touched them; CLT was no more than an alien concept. Without training or prior knowledge, the introduction of CLT had been frustrating to Nick. Some of the teachers did not even understand how to use the textbook for different classroom activities. Furthermore, the national teacher training structure did not help, as these teachers are not accommodated in English training, or given any scope to learn about CLT, as the policy makers did not fully consider how to bridge the gap between the old and the new methodology. It is therefore not difficult to see why teachers like Nick feel more confident with the familiar GT method than they do with CLT or why they speak in favour of the GT method.

Nick identifies ‘syntax’ and ‘word order’ as major causes of students’ weakness in English,
‘Students face problems, as they don’t know which word sits after which word; if they know the grammar and learn the structure, it would be better. When we speak Bengali, this is quite different; we can speak our mother tongue spontaneously, in colloquial tone or in the ‘bookish form’! We don’t face any problem there. But when we speak English - what I feel, we follow the grammatical rules. As a Bangla speaker, I believe that it should be like this - go with grammar or it would create problem. From my two and half years’ experience, I believe this is necessary or the students don’t learn anything.’

Referring to Oxford and Lee (2008: p 313), I have already discussed (in Chapter 1) that teachers’ instructions must take into account students’ ‘cultural expectations and beliefs; otherwise it will fail...’. This is reflected in the things Nick said during his interview and this is an important point for policy makers to note in relation to the implementation of CLT.

Nick admitted that he had not received any training on CLT or been invited to attend a CLT training course. To work with the CLT based textbook, he had sought help from senior colleagues as well as external experts. Nick thought that there was no end to learning and said that he learnt something new every time he taught his own class. Nick did not want to lose face when talking about the one hundred percent use of English in the classroom imposed by the CLT promoters. ‘I use eighty percent English - no, I won’t say eighty percent, I try to use easy English in the class.’ In order to help his students understand the foreign language, he gave students the Bengali meaning side by side. This is an important point to be noted by policy makers in terms of how teachers perceive CLT in the context and I would urge the policy makers to heed this.

Nick tried his best to help students by providing extra study-support, as he understood that parents were unable to offer this themselves because of their uneducated status,

‘I visit a number of students’ houses in evening time to check if they are in their studies or not. I feel it from my own life experience that students need help. Till my SSC pass, I had no problem from any side- my dad has provided me every kind of support even in a rural place.’

This might be a good example that other teachers could try; but I am not sure if this practice is possible for every teacher in the context. In other words, Nick’s practice might be an idealised teacher’s role, but the same practice would not be acceptable to all other teachers in the context, particularly because of their socio-economic conditions.
Finally, Nick said that his dream was to own a house by the riverside in his village where he would have a personal library as a useful resource not for him only but for all in the community.

6.2 Summary of Commonalities and Differences

From the above portraits, I have set out below a chart showing the commonalities and differences of the respondent teachers’ views and opinions as the major findings of this study.

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<th>Commonalities</th>
<th>Differences</th>
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<td><strong>Teacher Training:</strong> All of the 11 teachers reported that they lacked proper training on CLT. Some reported that they had received very brief training (sometimes only a single day) on how to teach vocabulary or how to engage students in group/pair work.</td>
<td><strong>Lack of knowledge, skills and favourable environment:</strong> It was revealed that most of the English teachers lacked the necessary knowledge and skills for doing the job. Major issues included the absence of a favourable environment for English practice, peoples’ attitudes etc. In relation to professional development and communication improvement, the teachers believed that if all English teachers of a school sat together on a certain time every day to practice speaking English and discuss their problems, it wouldn’t take long to improve. But teachers identified their own shyness and hesitant attitudes as barriers to this. In particular, senior teachers were found to be afraid of losing face as they thought junior teachers would judge them poorly if they made mistakes in speaking English. Because of this, they don’t come out of their cocoon and their spoken English never improves.</td>
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<td><strong>Teachers mostly inclined to Grammar:</strong> English teaching happened through a strong grammar-based method. This emerged from the interviews of almost all the respondent teachers, who maintained a strong grammar based method for teaching English and emphasised the importance of grammar in the teaching and learning of English.</td>
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<td><strong>English training for subject teachers only:</strong> Most of the teachers reported that they could be selected to attend English training in the B.Ed. only if they were recruited as English Teachers in the school, but in reality, a number of teachers from different academic backgrounds are teaching English without any training in CLT or any other method. They had no scope to speak to English speakers, which might help them improve and, as a result, they followed the traditional method learnt from earlier generations, e.g. their parents or teachers.</td>
<td><strong>Malfunctioning FSSP project:</strong> One of the teachers (Bill) reported how the government’s Female Secondary Stipend Program (FSSP), intended to improve female empowerment, was being misused and that teachers were forced to give higher marks to children of political elites in order to qualify them for the stipend money.</td>
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<td><strong>Girls’ education difficult for retention:</strong> All the teachers’ family portraits gave a clear view of girls’</td>
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education: in a male-dominated society; girls have little or no access to education. Most of the respondent teachers’ mothers had little or no primary level education at best and the situation had not changed much in the rural areas of the country. Girls are admitted to school and are allowed to continue education only up to the start of secondary education but drop out to get married or because of other family pressures. This is a very common attitude of the parents in rural areas in the country.

Time/Money/resources: Most of the respondents reported that they came from poor or medium financial backgrounds and that this continued to be true because of their poor salaries. Teachers also said they lacked the necessary teaching materials/resources for teaching of English.

Inappropriacy of CLT in the context: Almost all the respondent teachers reported that although they had received CLT training, in reality it was not appropriate for their classroom. There were a number of issues and difficulties in implementing CLT, such as large class sizes, fixed seating arrangements and students’ weakness in English vocabulary. Most of the students’ English was not up to the level required for a CLT classroom.

The new generation of learners was more advanced: all the respondent teachers admitted that today’s students were more advanced than previous generations in spoken English, communication, and speaking style.

Poor English vocabulary stock of learners: Almost all the respondent teachers agreed that even if they used English as the instruction language, they always had to translate their instruction into Bengali because the students’ poor vocabulary stock led to a poor understanding of English.

CLT is Useful: One of the teachers spoke in favour of CLT. He said, ‘I have already said that English can be learnt without grammar like Bangla - for example, when we watch a football match, we hear a lot of English words, such as “handball”, “head”, “corner”, “goal”, “pass”, “kick” etc. which all the people can easily understand just by hearing from others, without reading any book or learning grammar. There was a time when people didn’t know what a mobile phone was or the related words such as, “message”, “receive”, “outgoing” or “incoming.”. People didn’t know and even if they were taught, they couldn’t realise or remember. But now they’ve got mobile phones in their hand and easily understand the word “call” or other mobile phone-related words, such as “flexi”, “top-up” etc. I feel myself that if the listening environment can be created, things will improve gradually.’

Comparison between the old and present time: One of the respondents thought that the present time was more advanced in spoken English compared to the previous generations; and he was thankful to the government, as the government’s effort had made this possible. He believed this would not have happened if the curriculum had not changed.

Faulty B.Ed. course: One of the respondents (Pat) said that he had the opportunity to take compulsory English of 50 marks under his B.Ed. course, but this had now been changed. Now there was an optional English course of 300 marks but no compulsory English. Thus, English was now limited to subject teachers only and was not compulsory for any subject teacher other than English.

Quality of the transfer of the innovation: almost all the teachers’ discussions gave an indication of the poor quality of the transfer of the innovation for
| **Mismatch between what teachers’ say and actual classroom practice:** Most of the respondent teachers admitted that they used the new method of CLT only if a visitor came to the school. The rest of their English classes and teaching actually followed the GT method.

All the respondent teachers admitted that they found a big difference between their own time as pupils/students and the present time in terms of teaching and learning of English.  

**Policy Changes:** All the respondent teachers agreed that frequent policy changes (three times last year) significantly affected the quality of education, as well as students’ performance.  

| a number of reasons, e.g. lack of proper training, lack of proper knowledge, lack of available resources, poor economic conditions.  

**Authoritarian nature of the research:** One of the teachers tried to show that he was very much motivated with the concept of CLT, but his statements were not in line with what he said. I understood that he didn’t want to lose face in front of an outsider researcher like me. In fact, this is one of the limitations of this or any study, as teachers (or any respondents) don’t feel quite free to talk about what they do or feel inside. |
Chapter 7: The Teachers’ Life Histories: Thematic Analysis

In this chapter I have conducted a thematic analysis of the major research findings from the data collected in the field study in Meherpur district, Bangladesh.

It is useful here to remember the research questions of this study, which are:

1. What are the beliefs and practices of secondary English teachers in relation to the teaching of English?
2. What are the perceptions of practicing teachers towards change and innovation?
3. What are the issues of agency and meaning making for English Language teachers?
4. What are the policy implications of these beliefs and practices in future decisions?

From the major findings of this study, I have identified four main areas:

- Many teachers find teaching English using the CLT approach difficult and have continued to rely upon GTM;
- The teaching of English is carried out in an under-resourced context and this has impacted upon the implementation of innovations such as CLT;
- Frequent policy changes due to unrest and political interference in the education system at macro and micro level have created a lack of trust, not only among students, but also in the wider society;
- In remote rural areas teachers generally, and female teachers particularly, enjoy limited agency in implementing the innovations and changes and identified the CLT method as unsuitable for the context.

In the following section, I will elaborate on my analysis and discuss these four points further.
7.1 Many teachers find teaching English using the CLT approach difficult and have continued to rely upon GTM

As mentioned previously, this study is based in a post-colonial context where the CLT method has been introduced to secondary English teachers as a replacement for the traditional GT method previously in place. To facilitate this shift in the education system, with the help of experts from BANA countries CLT based textbooks have been produced to replace the GT based textbooks. A limited number of teachers (mostly urban and capital city-centred) received a short (15 days) training on CLT and how to exploit the newly developed textbooks in their classrooms. However, the majority of teachers are teaching the new curriculum in their classrooms without any CLT training. These huge numbers of untrained teachers have become frustrated, as they have no idea how to best use the new textbook in the classroom. The few teachers who have undertaken short training sessions and have some first-hand knowledge of CLT can neither meet the needs of their classes, nor go back to the old GT method.

The findings from my study have revealed a shared strong tendency towards grammar teaching for reasons already discussed. Mike, one of the informants of this study, reported that he learnt many good techniques related to CLT but could not apply them in lower classes (6,7,8) because of the large numbers of students. In such situations, teachers are unable to find any immediate, local solutions, as there is no-one with the authority to advise them and no useful local resources. Consequently, they have resorted to using their GT knowledge to handle the CLT curriculum. Mike also reported that suggestions were occasionally made by CLT trainers from Jessore Board, which is geographically distant from them, but that these were unrealistic or unhelpful. For example, he was told that ‘Initially CLT will be a problem, but you’ll manage it slowly,’ and ‘Divide the class into two sections and take the class for the second section the next day.’ However, what is really required are more teacher appointments, but this is an issue that can only be resolved at policy level.

Most of the respondent teachers in this study belonged to that vast untrained group who carry on their daily routine work of English teaching using their prior knowledge of working in the GT method. Martin, another respondent teacher, found CLT useful, but recommended GT as a better choice in the context:
‘But I add again, we still need grammar. My idea is – from the beginner classes, learners work in communicative English is fine; but in higher classes, if grammar lesson can be mixed up with CLT, it would make student’s base complete in learning of English and they will feel the learning process as close to Bengali.’

Another teacher, Steve, talked about the inadequate education system that barely helped him improve his spoken English. He reported having a keen interest in English since his schooldays and had completed an MA in English, but despite this, in reality, he could speak only ‘one or two sentences in broken-English’ in his class. This situation reflects the argument by V. Cook (2008: p239; cf. Hall 2011) that grammar-translation ‘does not directly teach people to use the language for some external purpose outside the classroom’. Steve was a case in point, having made clear that his learning of English through the GT method had not helped him to use English in his communications. I agree with Tudor (2001, p17 cf. Hall 2011) that,

‘Teachers should not be viewed as skilled technicians who dutifully realise a given set of teaching procedures in accordance with the directives of a more or less distant authority’.

Rather, teachers should be viewed as

‘… active participants in the creation of classroom realities, and they act in the light of their own beliefs, attitudes, and perceptions of the relevant teaching situation… we need to be aware of “the unique contribution which each individual brings to the learning situation.”’


It is difficult to see how the effective implementation of CLT is possible when teachers have such a poor level of English or how teachers can assist students with their English communication when they themselves lack confidence in speaking English.

Similar issues around the use of CLT were highlighted by Bill, one of the other informants in this study. Bill emphasised the importance of building rapport between teacher and students for effective learning and made insightful remarks about teachers’ beliefs, which he identified as being influenced by a range of sources, including colleagues, teacher-trainers, educators, academic research and researchers. This reflects Pajares’ (1992) view that there is a two-way relationship between beliefs and practice, with beliefs informing (but not determining) practice and practice informing what an
individual may believe. Kumaravadivelu (2012) argues that the types of characteristics that constitute a loosely-knit teacher belief system are highly relevant to and influential in shaping specific pedagogic decisions that teachers make as part of their practice of everyday teaching. I have found this reflected in almost all the informant teachers’ practices, insofar as they have decided to stick to GTM ignoring CLT. I noted similar attitudes in Nick and Mike, whose teaching practices were shaped by their own beliefs that students don’t learn without grammar. Nick claimed,

‘Students face problems, as they don’t know which word sits after which word; it would be better if they know the grammar and learn the structure ... From my two and half years’ experience, I believe that grammar is necessary, or students don’t learn anything.’

Nick believed that CLT was a good method for teaching English, despite admitting that he had no prior knowledge of how to teach English through CLT. Nick strongly supported grammar teaching. He believed that CLT could be a useful methodology for communication but was also aware of the learning culture in the context,

‘It is good, I think, as it will help people to communicate in business or jobs in foreign countries. The government wants that. I also think like that; but the grammar should be kept side by side to build the base. We don’t live in England or New Zealand or Australia where the local language is English; but here we do not get the communication opportunities like them. We are learning English in Bangladesh as a foreign language and this is not our local language. So, if we are learning a foreign language, we need to learn the grammar.’

Here Nick hits on a key issue that has been a shared concern of both applied linguistic theory and ELT practice, i.e. ‘what is the place of grammar and grammar teaching in the ELT classroom?’ Nick mainly emphasised the ‘focus on forms’, although I differ from Nick in relation to the debate about ‘what form might grammar instruction take?’ Should it focus on the grammar that emerges from the language features around the classroom that occur naturally within the activities in the class, or should the class be structured around a form-based syllabus, as is the case in Bangladesh? My own point of view is that in addition to ‘grammar’, instruction also concentrates on language features beyond tenses, articles and modality and includes other areas such as discourse, pronunciation and vocabulary. Attending to language items in the ELT class does not have to mean teachers and students focus on explanations of individual grammar (and language) points in a predetermined arrangement, which is known as ‘focus on forms’,
although it could look like this. In contrast, the other view (focus on form) suggests that attention to language can happen at any point in a lesson or series of lessons. It can occur either way – teacher directed or through learner activity. The linguistic forms focused upon emerge as a consequence of learners’ engagement in meaningful communication (Hall, G. p 70-71). V. Cook (2008) provides some useful suggestions in this regard that might help teachers in Bangladesh, suggesting that there are several ways of drawing learners’ attention to grammar without explaining it explicitly, such as using pauses in speech or italics in writing. This is similar to Schmidt’s (1990) concept of ‘noticing’ in practice. Schmidt (1990) argues that second language learners can only learn a language feature or the gap between their own performance and the target language when they have paid conscious attention to it, that is, when they have noticed it. Classroom activities that might help learners to ‘notice’ could include comparing their own recorded or written language against a model or example, or drilling and repetition, where forms are highlighted. It would be useful for Bangladeshi planners as well as teachers to bear in mind Hall (2011), who maintains, ‘explicit attention to grammar may only be effective if learners are ready to learn that particular feature’. Harmer (2007:54; cf. Hall, G. 2011) argues,

‘Students acquire language best when they have focused on it either because they need it or have come across it in a meaning-focused communication task, or because in some other way they have noticed language which is relevant to them at a particular time.’

Nick has highlighted an important argument on the contextual differences of Bangladesh and that of CLT originator countries, as noted by Holliday (1994) and discussed earlier in this thesis, i.e. that CLT might be an effective methodology in the countries where it originated (BANA countries) because of their mother tongue being English, but the Bangladeshi context, where local children have no prior knowledge of English grammar and no stock of English vocabulary, is very different, particularly as there are many syntactical differences between Bengali and English.

Nick thought that CLT was an imposed methodology and commented on another important issue relating to subject teacher appointment, which has an important policy implication,

‘We are applying a new method without any sort of training! I feel myself that at secondary level, our government should appoint more subject teachers. This is a crying need. There are not enough subject teachers at secondary level.'
Social science teachers can teach every subject, whether it is Bengali, English, Maths or any other subject! I don’t think it right. If we want to improve the quality of education, subject teacher recruitment is a must.’

Dean, another participant in this study, also admitted to applying a strong grammar-based methodology with limited communication practice. Unlike Sam, Dean pointed to the importance of grammar teaching, referring to the national curriculum that already has permitted this,

‘According to the curriculum, we have to teach students - right form of verbs, article, preposition, phrases, transformation of sentences, completing sentences, tag questions - for classes nine and ten; for classes six to eight, we have to do different exercises and activities on different parts of speech. Alongside this, we do writing composition, letter, application, paragraph etc.’

He said that students had scope for speaking but were shy and not confident enough to speak in English in case they made mistakes. Dean said that English was not their mother tongue and that teachers needed more practice to improve their own skills in English. For this reason, they needed to practice speaking amongst themselves. He had tried to convince the other three English teachers in his school, but said they lacked the mentality: ‘if we all make time once or twice every week to discuss our problems or to practice English, it could make a difference in improving our skills, but we all lack that mentality. Instead we blame the environment or whatever, I feel it’s the lack of our mentality.’ Dean identifies shyness as a further obstacle for English speaking practice, ‘senior teachers think if they speak wrong English in front of junior colleagues, it might discredit them’ Furthermore, if they spoke English amongst the wider community, people would make it an issue, saying, ‘how could they, being Bengali descendants, speak in a language that we don’t understand?’ For these reasons, teachers remained cautious: ‘we try to avoid English speaking to keep on good terms with the community.’ I have already highlighted this in Chapter 2, where I stated that the attitude of the general population was one of the major reasons behind the English backwardness in the context.

Bill’s story about his teacher father and ‘rote learning’ culture reminds us of the ‘banking concept of education’ by Paolo Freire. My experience is that the teacher in any classroom in Bangladesh is regarded as the ‘authority’ and the students are ‘oppressed’ (Paulo Freire, 1970). Bill remembered his memorisation experiences and told me how his father had inflicted corporal punishment on him for forgetting half of an essay.
Punishing students has been a common culture in the schools of Bangladesh since the colonial age. Freire describes this memorising culture as a ‘banking concept’, where students are always under pressure to memorise big chunks of the lesson and deliver these in another lesson or in an examination.

I agree with Hall (2011: p 5) that ‘establishing what teachers actually believe is extremely challenging, involving, as it does, issues of consciousness (e.g., have I ever consciously thought about a topic before? Do I really know what I think about it?), the ways in which peoples’ ideas change over time, how articulate a person is at expressing their beliefs, and social pressures and expectations on speakers that cause them to modify what they may reveal.’ Several researchers have found mismatches between what teachers say they believe and what their actual classroom practices seem to demonstrate (Phipps and Borg, 2009). Mike and Nick both illustrated this in their interviews and I believe most non-government English teachers are involved in similar practices in their own classrooms, i.e. they make a show of following CLT in their teaching in presence of external officers or people visiting their class, but the rest of the time they stick to their own method, which is GT.

Here, I think, we need to acknowledge the potential role that contextual and institutional factors play in affecting and constraining teachers’ behaviour. At some level, as Hall (2011, p. 5) maintains, ‘teachers’ classroom practices are informed by their personal theories in areas as broad as “what is teaching?” and “what role should the teachers and learners take in the classroom?” through to the more specific “how should learners be organised and seated in classroom activities?” and “how should language be elicited … and corrected?”’ Sometimes, this happens through deliberate and explicit thought and reflection; sometimes it happens through implicit, taken-for-granted assumptions, or beliefs that were previously instilled on teacher training programmes and which is now routine (and routinised) teaching practices. But in the Bangladeshi context, the real question is, have the training programmes been able to reach teachers in the remotest part of the country?

Regarding English use in the context, Martin mentioned that a colonial legacy remained, as evidenced through the use of the ‘addressing vocabularies’ (words such as, ‘hi’, ‘hello’, ‘good-morning’ or ‘good-bye’) in everyday conversations, but the lack of progress in the overall spread of English could be attributed to the impact of the
Language Movement. Nick’s perception is similar to previous teachers in regard to English teaching and learning,

‘Students face problems, as they don’t know which word sits after which word; if they knew the grammar and learnt the structure, it would be better. When we speak Bengali, this is quite different. We can speak our mother tongue spontaneously - in colloquial tone or in the ‘bookish form’. We don’t face any problem there. But when we speak English - what I feel, we need to follow the grammatical rules. As a Bangla speaker, I believe that it should be like this - go with grammar or it would create problem! From my two and half years’ experience, I believe that it is necessary, otherwise the students don’t learn anything.’

As mentioned in my Literature Review (Chapter 3), McKay (2003) and others (e.g. Ellis, 1996) have noted that the adoption of CLT in the classroom often means that the teacher has to introduce a new ‘culture of learning’, which may clash with the learners’ existing culture of learning. Nick’s views run parallel to McKay’s and Ellis’s, insofar as CLT represents a new culture of learning to his students, who are used to the GT culture. Nick’s statement also reminds us of what Ellis (1998:12, cf. Hall 2011, p 104) says:

‘Teachers, in fact, do not just take a theory or research off the shelf… Rather they are selective consumers, buying from what is on offer in accordance with their particular needs and purposes. Teachers filter what they are told about language learning through the schemata they have developed from their own experience of classrooms as learners and as teachers. The idea that research can in some way tell teachers what to do is in fact naïve and hopelessly mistaken. All it can ever do is to offer… ‘provisional specifications’ which teachers may choose to act on or not in accordance with their own theories of learning.’

Nick explained his own perception of English teaching in the context where he believed that CLT concepts did not work for the teaching of English. He rejected the idea of CLT in accordance with his own theories of learning English, as noted by Ellis (ibid). Here we can see the reflection of Hall’s views in Nick’s firm belief that grammar is essential for learning English in the Bangladeshi context, ‘the degree to which attention to grammar takes place will also vary widely according to the belief, practices and norms of teachers and learners (which will, in turn, be influenced by the wider institutional and social context)’ (Hall, 2011). Nick realised that CLT was not deliverable in his own classroom by highlighting the contextual differences between Bangladesh and BANA countries and pointing out that in a country like Bangladesh, where English still has second language status, it must be taught through grammar. Thus, by highlighting the
contextual differences between the countries, he also has highlighted the contextual issues around CLT, which have been noted by Holliday (1994, p 93).

One of the other study participants, Bill, observed that when a child returned to his/her family after school, they start communicating again in Bengali. In order to improve the advancement of English, Bill suggested, ‘TV channels, like Indian TV channels, can play a big role, where even the language of advertisements is English, which would create more exposure to English for learners in Bangladesh.’ Here Bill identified the external world outside the classroom as having a role to play in learning English. Bill also suggested,

‘If we want to establish English as a second language, we should engage our children with different small activities step by step in all spheres of life and without any pressure. For example, the advertisements on the TV channels can use a little English, or cartoon programmes could use some simple English; as children like cartoons, these can help children to learn English from these programmes, in every walk of life, there must be a touch of English; it can go side by side of Bengali so that they can easily understand.’

Here, Bill has made some positive points about the ways in which private and public education sectors could work together to improve the situation. Bill’s theories remind me of Crookes who writes, ‘it is impossible to act, as a teacher, without having theories (including values) that inform teaching actions, at least to some degree (2003; p 47).’

Bill has identified the learning environment in the context, where the surrounding culture is run in the Bengali medium, as a bar to practicing English and said, ‘even if we follow the CLT guidelines a hundred percent, it won’t bring any better results.’ The core beliefs of the planners, the teachers, the students and the community were, it appeared to him, deeply biased towards the GT method and CLT had little space to penetrate. This echoed Pajares’ (1992, p 318) view that, ‘the more central a belief, the more it will resist change.’

Indeed, the GT method in Bangladeshi context focused more on language structures, text and reading/writing because the purpose of language learning was considered to be cultural and educational rather than communicative; and this was often reinforced by the nature of the examination system, up to university entrance. What I find interesting, however, is the philosophical shift in the west and the political and commercial promotion of CLT as ‘ideal’ in the context. In my view, this has been problematic because of the nature of teaching and learning/teacher beliefs etc. in Bangladesh. In
such a context, the policy makers should have given priority to a method that suited the cultural needs and teachers’ existing practice, particularly as CLT facilities, funds and resources are limited, rather than introducing a method without taking account of the above considerations.

7.2. The teaching of English is carried out in an under-resourced context and this has impacted upon the implementation of innovations such as CLT

From my discussions with the participant teachers in this study, it is clear there is a demand for continuous training facilities and proper teaching aids. Martin reported that the transition from GT to CLT was struggling because they needed better training, improved facilities and more knowledge about the concept of CLT before the innovation could be properly implemented in real classrooms. If policy maker really wanted CLT to serve its communicative purpose in the context, it is my belief that training is the most essential and immediate need to be addressed so that teachers improve their knowledge and skills,

One of the things that have emerged from the life stories of the participating English teachers is that they have suffered, or were still suffering, from financial difficulties. Andy or Nick both related stories of hardship that were common amongst rural teachers in the context. It was clear from what they said that these challenges had impacted on their roles as teachers, as well as on their social positions in the context. While talking to me, Martin had let out a big sigh,

‘… we are nine brothers and sisters- […] My father was the only earning member of the family. He had to manage all the costs of the family members in hardship. Because of our poor financial position, we did not get the opportunity for better higher education. Financial hardship was a great problem for our family. So, we received our education locally.’

It is a matter of regret that 98% of secondary teachers in the country suffer this poor economic status that I already discussed, and consequently teachers after the school time need to do many other activities (i.e.- tuition) to enhance their income. This reality was reflected by Andy,

‘… I had to go through very hard times in receiving education, in fact, we lived in such hardship that we had to stay half-fed or without food most of the days. Good food was a dream only and most of the time we received only one meal or less even for the whole day. I never had the ability to buy any book; I always borrowed books from senior students and returned them after
Because of poverty, neither teachers nor the wider community have the capacity to take on any financial burden in the process of CLT implementation in the country. The policy makers need to think what measures are viable to justify CLT in such a poor socio-economic condition, where teachers are underpaid and have to seek additional earnings, which in most cases comes from offering private tuition (Sultana & Basu, 2007; p 83).

In spite of his traumatic childhood experiences, Bill agreed that there was no alternative for English learning in the context, to carry on communications with other countries to serve their own needs. Bill had identified the context as an important factor for English teaching and learning and believed that educated parents and the environment were important factors for ensuring quality of education.

Bill’s interview also revealed that he considered teaching aids to be important to the success of CLT and he highlighted the difference between provision in Dhaka (capital city), and Meherpur in terms of educational materials, availability of qualified teachers and continuous professional development opportunities. Coupled with the benefits of students having educated and qualified parents or guardians, he believed that the chances of an innovation like CLT succeeding was much higher in the capital city or other urban areas than it was in a location like Meherpur.

7.3 Frequent policy changes due to unrest and political interference in the education system at macro and micro level have created a lack of trust, not only among students, but also in the wider society

All the respondent teachers in this study complained about the frequent changes to the national syllabus and reported that they had struggled to adjust to these in their day-to-day teaching. The teachers also described the adverse reactions of the community, where any extra expenses for books or education materials was an additional financial burden on the parents. In one such incident, a parent had challenged Bill (informant),

‘Why are you telling my son to buy new books every now and then? Do you ever think how difficult it is for us to buy another book?’
Bill expressed frustration at the loss of face experienced by teachers when their exam preparation recommendations to students turned out to be useless because of frequent policy changes. He reported that the latest change in the English second paper syllabus for classes 6-7 came just a couple of months before the final examination. He did not have the courage to ask his students to buy another new book again and admitted, ‘all I did was to explain the new things to the students in the best possible way and suggested they practice free hand writing as much as they could. I calmed them by saying that I would mark their papers liberally.’ I believe that if the policy makers had considered these issues before importing CLT to the Bangladeshi context, teachers might not face so many problems. I also believe that these frequent changes at policy level contribute to the ‘lack of trust society’ that I mentioned in Chapter 1. I would urge policy makers to take immediate measures to make necessary CLT books and resources available in every school library for the benefit of both teachers and students.

Bill described another incident that showed how the country had transformed into a ‘lack of trust society’. He talked about the misappropriation of public funds through different public projects, particularly the FSSAP (Female Secondary Study Assistance Project), where the system was serving the local political elites causing a negative impact on the quality of education. Bill said,

‘One day my father gave me some exam papers and said, “could you recheck these papers which I’ve already marked; I need to mark them up to pass (Pass mark is 33 out of 100) anyway.” I curiously took the papers and looked into one student’s answer paper (for example, roll number five) and I found she has attained 40 marks. But when I checked the paper, I was surprised to see that the paper didn’t even qualify for 10 marks another paper (first girl who was marked down and got only pass marks (33) whereas she deserved 60 marks! I was traumatised but didn’t ask anything to my father. But now after joining as a teacher in this school, I have been clear about that strange marking system.”

Bill explained that FSSAP was a public project promoting women’s empowerment through girls’ education and offered stipends to poor, clever girls. In order to qualify for the FSSP stipend money, a student had to obtain a certain level of marks. But in reality, Bill maintained,

‘After the exam results are published, parents of poor scorers (local elites with strong political link) come to fight with the subject teachers, asking why they have failed them. No matter whether their children performed good or bad, teachers have to pass them. This is very insulting and demoralising for me as a teacher to mark this unfair way. What I feel, if the government offered the
stipend on the basis of the merit list, it could rouse competition among other students to qualify for the stipend. But now they know that their parental influence will bring them stipend money anyway; they don’t need to study. Thus, students get used to the “auto-pass/auto-promotion” year after year. Finally, these “auto-promoted” students appear in the test exam (a mock-test before the public exam SSC) creating more trouble for us. Parents start arguing, “My daughter/son passed all the previous exams smoothly, so why did you fail them this time?” This is a very difficult situation for us, as parents don’t accept our answer. I know all the other schools running this project suffer equally. Very recently we received another instruction from the Government that teachers must give pass mark to every student. You can check this with other teachers from another school. I recently went to a photocopy shop and somebody pinched me saying, “Now you don’t need to teach your students, just give them pass marks in the final exam to confirm the stipend money.”

Bill’s experience offers a deep insight into the mis-management of public projects that have placed teachers in an unsafe and vulnerable position because of the political elites. Teachers’ agency is at risk because of these unethical practices. We can only feel the pain, sorrows and the challenges of teachers like Bill by ‘putting ourselves in [their] skins’ (Jack Roller in page 102).

This type of corruption also contributes towards the country becoming a ‘low trust society’, where political malpractice has demoralised the general population. Bill has exposed one such example of malpractice where teachers are pressurised into altering marks to ensure that particular students ‘fulfil the stipend criteria’ or risk jeopardising their personal safety or living. It would be interesting to investigate how many students have benefitted from this project and what their present status is, and to study the retention rate of these FSSSP graduates. It would also be beneficial if policy makers were to undertake proper consultation with teachers in the field to ensure the proper planning, devising implementation of these kinds of projects, and put in place a proper monitoring system to avoid the corruption reported by Bill.

7.4 In remote rural areas teachers generally, and female teachers particularly, enjoy limited agency in implementing the innovations and changes and identified the CLT method as unsuitable for the context

The issue of agency that relates to my third research question came out vividly in Ella’s story, which exposes the state of women, their education and their struggle for identity in Bangladesh. Through Ella’s story, we can see a male-dominated, reserved Muslim society where people marry off their girl children at the age of nine or ten. We can only
imagine the perilous journey that Ella had to undertake in order to reach in her position today, particularly in the face of her family’s pressure to marry. Ella described the limited agency of girls’ – especially those from Muslim families) – in rural areas where they have little or no access to higher education, even in this present time. In most cases, girls end their education as early as class six (generally between the ages of eight to ten) because of family imposed early marriage.

Scholars, such as Kant (p. 95) considered education to be a top priority and argued that human beings could only become human through education (Kant 1982 [1803] p 699). Scholars have asserted that adult education is a lever for empowerment and emancipation (Fieldhouse 1996; Welton 2005; English 2005; p. 91). To encourage girls like Ella and ensure their empowerment and emancipation, Bangladeshi policy makers need to realise that, ‘[…] empowerment and emancipation are basically understood in individualistic terms, i.e. in terms of individual development and growth; critical tradition emphasise that there can be no individual emancipation without societal emancipation’ (Mollenhauer, 1983). I introduce this here to highlight that agency is not exclusively an individual achievement but is connected to contextual structural factors. Until societies like Ella’s change their mentality about girls’ marriage or education, it is difficult for girls like Ella to advance with education and freedom.

The above statements are equally true of these rural, non-government teachers whose agency is restricted by local politics and the difficulty of trying to do their job with inadequate training, teaching aids and resources. It is true that few girls in a society like Ella’s have the courage to stand against their family or social pressure and I wonder how many Ellas have been deprived of, and are still being deprived of, their right to an education because of social strictures? How far are government agencies willing to go to create a safe environment for girls and set them free from this type of family or social practice? Ella’s story also reflects Emirbayer and Mishue (1998, p 971), as discussed in the Literature Review (Chapter 3), who view agency as ‘the capacity of actors to critically shape their own responsiveness to problematic situations’. I am optimistic that the policy makers will take effective steps to ensure girls’ education in the context.
Chapter 8: Policy Implications of the Major Findings

This chapter addresses my fourth research question. In it, I will explore the major findings of this study to identify the policy implications that emerged from the informant teachers’ stories.

In their interviews, the respondent teachers highlighted several government policies that had directly or indirectly influenced – or had a negative impact on – either their own teaching or the education system as a whole.

One of the major issues raised in the study was that most of the secondary English teachers had not received any training on CLT. A few had received a short, one-off training session on the CLT method, but had resorted to the previous (GT) method because of the numerous issues with CLT. The findings revealed that of the 11 respondent teachers, only two had received relevant training at the time data collection for this study took place. Martin reported:

‘[...] as a teacher, I must say that we have not been trained how to teach English to our students in a communicative way. We need enough training for the teachers on how to teach our students. We also need more helpful books on this method.’

This is a desperate need, not only for Martin but for all other English teachers in the context. Pat, another informant in the study, also reported that he had not received any prior training on CLT and questioned how the concept could function when teachers were working without appropriate training.

In relation to the training and professional development of teachers, most respondent teachers agreed they needed adequate training on the innovation as they had little or no knowledge of it. Nick reported that he had not received any training on CLT nor invitation to attend a CLT training course. He had sought help from senior colleagues and external experts to work with the CLT based textbook. Nick did not want to lose
face while talking about the hundred percent English use in the classroom as suggested by the CLT promoters. ‘I use eighty percent English - no, I won’t say eighty percent, I try to use easy English in the class.’ In order to help his students understand the foreign language, he gave students the Bengali meaning side by side. This is an important point to be noted by policy makers in terms of how teachers perceive CLT in the context and I would urge the policy makers to heed this.

Mike, one of the participant teachers in this study, felt that teachers should be provided with continuous training so they could discuss issues or problems that arose and find solutions to them. Mike suggested that it would be useful if someone was appointed locally, as support was not available nearby. He said that their Head Teacher was an English MA and a knowledgeable person but was busy with his administrative duties and not always available to help them, although he sometimes sought help from the Board office on the teachers’ behalf.

In these circumstances, questions arise concerning the quality of teaching. For example, are these teachers capable of performing their crucial role as ‘an active, communicative participant in the learning process’ (Vygotsky, 1978), where the teacher supports or helps the student ‘until the time comes when he or she is able to operate independently’? Are they informed and capable of applying ‘professional and procedural knowledge’ (Kumaravadivelu, 2012, p29-36)? The policy makers need to investigate this in relation to ensuring quality education all over the country, but particularly in those schools in rural and remote areas. In my opinion, in order to address the above issue in-service teacher training should be provided at regular intervals, either on the school premises or elsewhere in the locality. This should be an immediate action, but it is also important that a central teacher training structure be developed throughout the country.

Sam reported that in spite of receiving training, at best it was only possible to implement around 70% of this in the classroom. For him, the biggest challenge in implementing training was his students’ weakness in the language. Sam finds the usefulness of English:

‘I feel it realistic and we all – students and teachers, need it. It is necessary as we call the world a global village because of the Internet and computer technology, and we need English for communication in every sector - trade and commerce or business. As English is an international language, it is very important in every sector of work.’
Another important issue that was raised by most of the respondent teachers was the frequent changes in education policy that affected everyone in the system. In 2013, as the teachers described, the English syllabus underwent three or four changes in a year. Martin commented that frequent alterations to the syllabus were frustrating for teachers because they lost face to their students, as sudden changes made it difficult for them to adequately support and prepare students for upcoming examinations. Bill reported that one of the changes had come just a couple of months before the final examination, which had affected the students’ performances. Parents, especially those with poor financial backgrounds, were disappointed too, because of financial pressures caused by the expectation that they should purchase books several times for their children. Bill described how this financial burden had caused parents to challenge teachers not to recommend any new book purchases. In this respect, I would like to ask Bangladeshi CLT importers if they had this information before and, if so, what measures were taken to allow for this before importing CLT into the context. Policy makers certainly should have taken this into consideration and made provision for making the necessary books and resources available to each and every secondary school in the country to help both teachers and students in improving their knowledge and to mitigate against these problems.

Martin also criticised the current order of topics in the English syllabus as inappropriate, comparing the present system to the one used when he was a student,

‘We learnt things in order- we first started with “sentence”, then “tense”, then “voice change” and “narration change”, then “use of shall/will.” All these were in order. But now we see students have to rearrange a sentence from some jumbled words, which used to be taught at BA level and now at class four! I think if students were told to make a word from some jumbled letters, it would be ok for them at class four. Think - where class four is and where degree level is- they can’t be the same! It must be very difficult for a class four level student. One more thing that I have noticed, the use of am/is/are- this a critical topic!’

It came out from this study that all respondent teachers were still following the rules of GT method in their own different ways. In relation to this, Dean pointed out the importance of grammar teaching, which was also approved in the national syllabus and the English textbooks,

‘According to the curriculum, we have to teach students for classes nine and ten - right form of verbs, article, preposition, phrases, transformation of
sentences, completing sentences, tag questions; for classes six to eight, we have to do different exercises and activities on different parts of speech. Side by side we have to teach writing composition, letter, application, paragraph etc.’

In this situation, it is questionable how teachers will grow their motivation to teach English by less-focusing on forms or individual grammar teaching when the curriculum itself is encouraging and approving grammar teaching instead of preparing teachers in CLT. It might be more critical and confusing when teachers themselves carry on deep belief in the usefulness of the GT format. This belief in grammar teaching will become set in their minds and teachers will never accept CLT or other changes because ‘the more central a belief, the more it will resist change’ (Pajares, 1992, 318). To my understanding, this type of policy is not only confusing for teachers but has also negatively affected the implementation of the innovation of CLT in the context. Eventually, it would scratch a negative impact on the attitude of teachers about CLT. This is an important note for Bangladeshi policy makers to give proper attention to it. I believe it is important to develop a national strategy for bringing in all the existing English teachers under a uniform continuous professional development structure.

Mike mentioned that he did not have access to anyone at government policy level but thought it would be better if teachers from all levels were involved in policy-decisions before the introduction of any new methodology. On the success of the innovations, Mike commented, ‘I don’t think it (CLT) is a hundred percent successful. It is effective on one side (communication) but the other side (grammar) is disregarded. To become successful, CLT should balance both sides.’ It is clear from Mike’s statement that teachers, especially those living in remote rural areas of the country have a huge lack of knowledge about modern concepts and technologies available in teaching. They are helpless in using the innovation in an effective way because they do not have ample knowledge of new ideas or methodologies. As a result, they do not have any alternative other than to depend on the traditional GT method.

Policy makers need to focus on developing more training centres for teachers’ continuous professional development, as well as appointing more subject teachers, as noted by Nick,

‘We are applying a new method without any sort of training! I feel myself that at secondary level, the government should appoint more subject teachers. This is a crying need. There are not enough subject teachers at secondary level.

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Social science teachers can teach every subject, whether it is Bengali, English, Maths or any other subject! I don’t think it right. If we want to improve the quality of education, subject teacher recruitment is a must.’

Continuing this discussion, Martin informed me about his disagreement with the recent statement by the Chairman of the Education Board. In a speech, while commenting on the role of CLT, the Board Chairman said that only 25% of the students who enrolled in school succeeded in passing the ‘SSC’ level, which indicates that 75% of students did not pass their first public test (the SSC examination). The Chairman explained that Communicative English has been introduced for these unsuccessful 75% students. Martin did not agree with the Chairman and argued:

‘What he (the board Chairman) said is partially true. The CLT based English that these 75% dropouts are receiving for a job in foreign countries is not sufficient enough. Here I disagree with the Board Chairman and want to ask him, ok, if this communicative English is for those 75% drop out children only, have we got any other book or methodology for those better 25% students? Or, can we separate children from class 6, 7 or 8 that these 25% will pass and that 75% won’t pass? If the answer is no, then don’t you think it’s a big problem?’

As a researcher, what I feel emerges from this discussion is that there should be uniformity in the curriculum, which addresses the needs of students of all abilities. It should meet the needs of weaker students but there should also be ample scope for engaging the stronger students as well, otherwise it might fail to keep the attention of a class of students with mixed abilities. Bangladeshi policy makers need to realise the importance of Martin’s argument and take proper action in this regard. Kumaravadivelu (2012) suggests that the curriculum should focus on learner needs, learner motivation and learner autonomy. In the field of L2 learning and teaching, the three principles proposed by David Little (2009) might be useful in this regard and might contribute to the promotion of learner motivation and autonomy. These are: the principle of learner involvement, which requires teachers to engage learners fully in planning, monitoring, and evaluating their own learning; the principle of learner reflection, which necessitates teachers to help learners to reflect continuously on the process and content of their learning and to involve them in regular-assessment; and the principle of target language use, which needs teachers to ensure that the target language is the medium as well as the goal of learning (cf. Kumaravadivelu, 2012).
Martin raised another important issue regarding the Madrasah (Islamic religious institutions) education system in the country and invites the government to take the necessary steps to remove the disparity in the education system and to ensure quality education,

‘… it may be taken as a fault in our education system that the madrasa education is given a lower value in the society. As an ex-madrasa teacher, I would say that if the government could run one single stream of education, teachers could have greater status in the society. I am not supporting English-based education nor degrading the Arabic education. The term ‘Madrasa’ is an Arabic term for school so why don’t we take one single name for it? It is not like this that these Madrasas are religious institutions, and then the rest of are non-religious institutions? The Government has to take steps to remove this disparity between these two different types of education.’

As already discussed, the Madrasah education system has always been criticised by educationists for never coming up to the level of mainstream general education. This education system has continued for about five centuries and is regarded by many as the ‘Golden Period’ for Islamic education in the context (Ali 1983; in Begum Umme Salma 1993). On the other hand, Rahman et al (2010) claim that historically madrasah education had its roots in the Pakistani era when Pakistani rulers planned, ‘Madrasa education would be brought into the fold of formal school education. In addition to formal education at the elementary level, other areas for the promotion of Islamic education were taken into account in keeping with the ideology of the new independent state’ (Rahman et al 2010). But eventually these institutions did not show the expected outcome and lost credibility, gaining ‘lower value in the society’ as stated by Martin above. The reformation of these types of educational institutions is necessary and has been proposed by a number of education commissions but has still not materialised.

Martin also criticised the existing pedagogy and didn’t agree with the introduction of projectors in the classroom, citing this as another example where policy did not match with the reality. Martin thought that projectors should be made available in every classroom of a school, not be locked in one classroom only, which leads to an increase in the teacher’s workload,

‘Projectors can be used in the class as a teaching aid. Teachers can use it in their class not for English only but for all other subjects. …. A teacher has to prepare the content first and then can bring it in a pen-drive (flash drive) in the class to display on the projector machine. But I have lots of arguments in this regard. We’ve already got the scheme, but this can be useful for managing one class whereas we’ve got five classes each day… it is quite difficult to manage
with our existing schedule. It should be fixed in the classroom and we need to have some strong doors and windows so that the projector does not get stolen. We also need to have some extra projectors as well. Teachers should be less burdened with class. The way we take classes and as per our existing class routine every day, it is impossible to maintain all the classes with the projector. Without preparing the content the previous day, I cannot take the class next day with projector. So, I need to do homework, or it won’t happen.’

It is clear from Martin’s statement that in spite of having many useful qualities as a teaching aid, projectors have had a negative impact on Bangladeshi teachers in the context and this is due to lack of availability rather than the newness of the technology. Bangladeshi policy makers need to think about Martin’s suggestions. While ‘one projector, one school’ policy has not helped these teachers, ‘one projector, one classroom’ could turn out to be a success. The crucial point is that policy makers need to study the context more deeply before introducing new technology to rural classrooms in Bangladesh and this applies regardless of what type of technology is being introduced. I would therefore recommend to policy makers that a complete package of resources and materials should be made available to schools, especially rural ones, so that effective lessons can be delivered by the teachers. In the absence of resources and materials teachers become frustrated and believe that innovations cannot work in their classroom, eventually losing interest in applying the technology in their class or in their teaching. This belief would gradually solidify and, as Pajares (1992, p 318) asserts, ‘the more central a belief, the more it will resist change.’ If teachers like Martin will only make a show of using the projector, for example, it will never be able to bring any positive impact into the teaching-learning environment.

Another teacher (Bill) identified a big gap between the existing national education policy and the employment market,

‘… the Government should keep the grammar in the text because when a person sits for a job interview or test, they face a number of grammatical terms. The Government is now trying to improve English through dialogue or free-hand writing. But when a student sits for a competitive test for a job or so, he can’t survive if s/he doesn’t know the grammatical rules for narration change, voice change or transformation of sentences. I think there is a big gap between the education system and the national job policies or the testing system in the job market in Bangladesh. There must be coordination in these sectors.’

Here Bill identified a need for uniformity at policy level and coordination between policy makers and employers, so that learners do not get frustrated when competing in
the job market. I believe the Bangladeshi employers will look for people with good English communication skills rather than grammatical knowledge and that in time this might help reduce teachers’ attachment to grammar teaching methods. Here I agree with Richards and Rodgers (2001) that languages are studied in order to develop learners’ intellectual abilities, and the study of grammar itself becomes the purpose of learning, which is why many recent studies suggest that grammar-translation method leaves learners unable to communicate.

Bill talked about how projects with public funds are misused in the hands of local political elites, contributing to the deteriorating quality of education. It is does not bode well for the country’s future if policy reformers fail to take necessary steps in this regard. This faulty system has frustrated teachers like Bill and encouraged dishonesty and reluctance to work hard, causing a negative impact on the education system. Policy makers need to analyse whether this type of financial incentive is making any real contribution to girls’ education in the country. I believe that developing a transparent monitoring system could improve the situation and serve the actual project goal.

Dean, another participant in this study, also admitted to applying a strong grammar-based methodology with limited communication practice. Unlike Sam, Dean pointed to the importance of grammar teaching, referring to the national curriculum that already has permitted this,

‘According to the curriculum, we have to teach students - right form of verbs, article, preposition, phrases, transformation of sentences, completing sentences, tag questions - for classes nine and ten; for classes six to eight, we have to do different exercises and activities on different parts of speech. Alongside this, we do writing composition, letter, application, paragraph etc.’

Another respondent teacher, Pat, addressed one major issue that policy makers needed to focus on, which is that in all non-government secondary schools, English was taught not only by English teachers but all other teachers (whoever had English grammar skills). The B.Ed. trainings were theoretically restricted to subject-teachers, but, in reality, even geography or art teachers were teaching English. School authorities had fulfilled their role by appointing an English teacher, but these teachers had no access to English training from the TTCs because of the restriction. Previously all other subject teachers could take 100 marks general English under the B.Ed. courses, but this had now been changed to 300 marks English and was for English teachers only. In reality,
most secondary teachers were teaching English in the class without any prior knowledge of CLT, or even ELT. A question therefore arises, which is how have these vast numbers of teachers around the country been managing English teaching with the innovation of CLT? Do the policy makers have a plan to address this issue? Who will take the responsibility of bridging the gap between the theory and the practicality in the context?
Chapter 9: Contribution to Knowledge

This small-scale research makes five significant contributions to knowledge.

Firstly, the teacher’s life stories have revealed a number of important issues in the field of teacher training and development. This study has identified that existing TTI based training is faulty and revealed that CLT implementation in the context has been difficult because of inadequate teacher preparation facilities, not only in CLT training, but also in the longer-term continual professional development structure. Teachers informed that B.Ed. training courses, particularly in English, are offered to subject teachers only, while in reality teachers from other disciplines were teaching English in almost all the private schools in the country. Lack of CLT knowledge meant the teachers were not confident, which led to them sticking to, or returning to, the traditional GT method for teaching English. There were further issues that had made CLT implementation difficult, such as large class sizes, non-availability of materials and resources, and poor economic conditions. Teachers in the study criticised a number of policies that had added more difficulties to their existing situations, for example, frequent changes in the curriculum.

Secondly, this study reveals issues connected to the fact that there are two separate streams of education in the existing system in the context: general education and madrasa education, and that the latter system is generally deemed poorer in terms of both competency and performance. This study raises an important question for policy makers, which is whether they should focus on the strongly Islamist education system or on modern scientific education. The secondary teachers in the study made useful observations that the general education system could be strengthened by merging these two different streams. I believe also that policy makers need to acknowledge the current issues around the rise of Islamic activism, both within the country and outside its borders, and take the necessary steps to minimise the terror. Respondent teachers in this study also believed merging both systems would provide a potential solution to this issue.

Thirdly, this study makes a useful contribution to knowledge because of its methodological approach. To my knowledge, this is the first time a life history approach has been applied in the field of education research in the Bangladeshi context. As discussed before, this method, pioneered by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918-20), has been
adopted by a number of researchers (Anderson, 1923; Thrasher, 1928; Zorbaugh, 1929; Shaw, 1930; Cornwell & Sutherland 1937; cf. Goodson, 1980). Peter Davies (2006) also applied this approach in studying poverty dynamics in the Bangladeshi context. It is hoped that my use of this methodology will encourage other researchers to do similar qualitative studies in the country.

Fourthly, the responses of these participant teachers have created an important argument around the policy of adopting the CLT method in the country, which is another useful contribution to knowledge. The traditional GT method focuses on language structures, text reading and writing, as the purpose of language learning was considered to be cultural and educational rather than communicative, and this is reinforced by the nature of the examinations for university entrance or in the job market. Considering these issues, I believe it is not a question of which methodology is ‘best’, but which is more appropriate for social needs in the context. The philosophical shift in the West and the political and commercial promotion of CLT as ‘ideal’ has been problematic in the context, because of the nature of teaching and learning, the existing/available facilities, teacher beliefs, socio-economic, political and cultural background, and the historical influences on education in Bangladesh. In spite of its positive strengths, (e.g. CLT prioritises developing learners’ ability to use language in real life communication (Brown & Yule, 1983), CLT refers to both processes and goals in classroom leaning, CLT defines competence in the expression, interpretation and negotiation of meaning and looks to both psycholinguistic and sociocultural perspectives in SLA research to comprise its development (Sauvignon 1972, 1997)), it is also true that certain facilities are necessary for the effective implementation of the innovation (e.g. suitable classroom size and environment, teacher training, available materials and resources, appropriate testing) and these are mostly absent in the specific context of Bangladesh. These are important issues that Bangladeshi policy makers should have focussed on when implementing, or before introducing, CLT.

Last but not least, this study has made a very important contribution to my personal knowledge through my journey as a researcher. It has equipped me with useful methodologies, research tools and techniques, knowledge and experience and provided me with deep insights into doing this type of qualitative study. It has also helped me build my own confidence, improved my ‘critical eye’, and taught me a good deal about using a systematic approach when conducting research in any specific context. It has
guided me towards my future aim of undertaking a large-scale research project in the same context with funding from international donor agencies (e.g. The World Bank, DfID etc.).
Chapter 10: Scope for Future Research

This study explored the lived experiences of a small number of secondary school teachers teaching English following the introduction of CLT in post-colonial Bangladesh. On the basis of the analysis, discussion, and interpretations of this research, several recommendations can be considered for further work.

A more critical investigation could be carried out on the impact of the innovation by drawing on the experiences of a mixed group of secondary English teachers from both the private and public sectors, i.e. by using a larger sample group throughout the country. This study has raised a number of critical questions that need more investigation and open up scope for further research. These are:

a) Has CLT been an appropriate choice for the Bangladeshi context?

b) To what extent has CLT penetrated following the teachers’ implementation of the innovation in their classrooms?

c) What effective measures can be taken to make CLT succeed in the remote rural classroom?

d) What are the impacts of political conflict and volatility on society and the education system, and on the formation of a new generation of citizens?

e) Is there potential to merge madrasa schools into the mainstream education of the country, or could other realistic steps be taken to improve the quality of madrasahs?

After my discussions with the participant teachers in this study, it was clear that most lacked pedagogical knowledge of CLT or understood how to exploit CLT based national textbooks. This was due to insufficient teacher training facilities and the lack of a balanced Continuous Professional Development structure in the country. A field-based investigation, listening to these teachers’ stories and involving them in policy planning could help to determine and devise effective actions in this regard.
Chapter 11: Recommendations:

I would like to make the following recommendations in view of my research findings:

1) The Bangladeshi government needs to appoint more subject teachers (especially English) and restructure the national teacher training system so that changes and innovations have a better chance of succeeding within the context.

2) Policy makers should make English training facilities in TTCs available to all subject teachers, not just English subject teachers, as the reality is that many are expected to teach English in the country.

3) Policy makers should take the necessary steps to provide CLT based books and resources to secondary schools, with a special focus on remote rural non-government schools in the country.

4) Policy makers should appoint district-based CLT experts who can act as a local resource person for English teachers.

5) School-based incentives could be created in order to motivate teachers to provide extra support to poor and weaker students.
Chapter 12: Discussion and Conclusion

Ipellie’s composition reflects the catastrophic status of many countries in this globalised world where English has acquired such widespread status that the invader’s language has the potential to ‘swallow up’ languages and cultures. In the Bangladeshi context the ‘two opposite cultures’, Bengali and English, have emerged as ‘unable to integrate’, as is the case in many other countries. Until now, the majority of people have lived in a status where English has been kept out of daily use for a long time. A few western-educated urban elites with modern values and opportunities have embraced English, but the vast majority of rural poor communities place no value on English and prioritise their own language, social and cultural values, and cultural identity, above Western language and cultures. But globalisation has slowly created a need for English in the context and, I believe, the ‘technology transfer’ may eventually swallow the vernacular language and culture over the course of time.

This study took place in a small district of Meherpur in Bangladesh where people live far from the availability of modern technologies and facilities, such as, computers, the internet, etc. In previous chapters, I have explained that Meherpur is a place where resentment towards English is still alive and where people still remember colonialism, the ‘Neel-Kuthi’ and missionary activities. Meherpur is one of 64 districts of Bangladesh and is no different from any other place in the country in terms of the complexities and issues it faces in relation to educational establishments, government facilities or political influences. Therefore, I assume that the issues identified in this study are likely to be prevalent in many other districts in the country.

This study revealed four important findings – firstly, that many teachers find teaching English using the CLT approach difficult and have continued to rely upon GTM;
secondly, that the teaching of English is carried out in a under-resourced context which impacts upon the implementation of the innovation, namely CLT; thirdly, frequent policy changes, unrest and political interference in the education system at both macro and micro level, have created a lack of trust in government institutions among students and ordinary people; and fourthly, that in remote rural areas of the country teachers generally, and female teachers particularly, enjoy limited agency while implementing innovation and change and, as a result, identified the technology transfer as unsuitable for the context. After a careful analysis of the major findings that emerged from the stories of the respondent teachers, it is possible to identify ‘an accumulation of frustration’. Without exception, the participant teachers were utterly frustrated with their position as English Teachers in the rural setting of Meherpur district of Bangladesh. The findings have revealed a situation where English teachers remain heavily dependent on the GT method and this can be attributed to a variety of factors. Firstly, CLT was introduced hurriedly into a context where most teachers came from a poor academic background themselves because of their poor financial status. These teachers carried out their professional duty with very little pre or in-service training, which hindered their professional development. English teaching became more difficult when they received a new and unfamiliar English textbook and the absence of any national initiative to provide all English teachers with CLT training exacerbated this difficult situation. Added to that, the vast majority of private secondary schools (98%) lacked the necessary CLT materials and resources that might have helped to bridge the gap in the teachers’ CLT knowledge and skills. In these circumstances, unable to pluck skills, knowledge and resources from the air, all they could do was depend on the familiar GT method inherited from their forebears.

This lack of any prior knowledge about CLT is one of the main reasons behind teachers’ unwillingness to use this method and their continuing dependence on the GT method. As already discussed, teachers had few other options, due to what Alam (2014) describes as the ‘exiled condition of GTM and impracticality of CLT’. (see Chapter 1.5). Although CLT had replaced the traditional GTM, teachers still felt safer using the old method because of their lack of knowledge and skills, lack of proper in-service training and support, and because they did not want to lose face to their students. It is unfortunate that the lack of effective training or an appropriate CPD structure has kept these teachers in a situation in which ‘traditional and not modern ELT is the norm’ (Chowdhury & Phan Le HA, 2008). The poor economic condition and lack of material
resources has also made the situation worse, as has the teachers’ lack of confidence in how to properly exploit the CLT textbooks. Things become even more difficult when the concept of CLT is taken into a large class of 80 to 100 students with fixed seating arrangements. A Russian Professor of Education, speaking at a conference on methodology and textbooks, commented on a similar situation: ‘We manage to forget, to cut off, the best things ever existing in our system of education and adopt the worst things from the West’ (cf. Bolitho 2012, p 40). Bangladeshi policy makers need to think again whether this Western import was really the ‘best’ for teachers with a strong GT background.

In the literature review section (Chapter 3.1) I stated that in spite of its Western origin, CLT could serve as a useful methodology in the Bangladeshi context if a number of pre-conditions were ensured e.g. teachers’ prior knowledge and skills on the innovation, availability of necessary teaching and learning materials, classroom conditions and smaller class size, appropriate teacher training facilities, learner quality (this is an argument brought in by the respondent teachers as well as researchers) (Brown, 2001) but that without any previous knowledge or vocabulary of English language, teachers could not properly use English as the language of instruction. On the other hand, teachers complained that students did not have the necessary stock of words, even at a minimum level, that could help them communicate with teachers and for this reason, teachers had to issue Bengali instructions alongside their English instructions.

Some of the teachers argued that the context of Bangladesh was quite different from BANA countries, and that was why they needed to carry on with the GT method, and this underlines the argument that policy makers need to think about what is effective and manageable in the cultural context of the country and what measures should be adopted if they wanted to continue with CLT.

At this stage, I believe Bangladeshi policy makers could take two decisive steps with respect to CLT. Firstly, considering the investment already made and the real challenges that teachers are facing, they could influence donors to help organise professional development courses locally, particularly for these 98% non-government, rural ELT professionals. During these courses, teachers could be asked to share those practices that had been effective in their teaching contexts and could be encouraged to express concerns about their teaching and make suggestions for improvement. The policy makers would need to take care of the arrangements and provide the necessary staff and
material resources for these training courses. Secondly, a proper CPD structure could be developed using funds from a private-public-donor partnership. It should be the eventual goal of the policy makers to seek a positive outcome to the investment and efforts that have already been made (e.g. CLT import, ELTIP etc.) to the development of English teaching and learning in the context. One important point the policy makers need to remember is that the majority of secondary school students in Bangladesh attend non-government schools run and managed by the private sector; so when introducing change nationally the major focus of any policy reform should be targeted towards these private, non-government schools, which represent 97% of the provision, rather than the 3% of public schools only. This should be quite possible for the policy makers in Bangladeshi context, as these schools are still run under government control and follow the national curriculum.

In the previous sections of this study, I discussed the poor economic conditions of teachers and of the country in general. These poor conditions mean that teachers need to be cautious about their expenditure. The participant teachers said that they could not afford any costs for their personal development and reported being unable to buy or even pay to photocopy useful teaching materials. Some said they would like to buy a computer, both for classroom use and their own personal development, but could not place further financial pressure on their families. It is therefore necessary to address students’ and teachers’ needs in the context and make proper teaching and learning materials available in ELT classrooms. I have already said that policy makers should make training their main priority, particularly for non-government school teachers in remote rural areas, and would make the point that effective training will not only improve teacher capacity and confidence but would also give them some autonomy in terms of selecting and developing useful materials for their own classrooms. These training sessions could demonstrate how teachers could prepare or select low-cost/no-cost educational materials from locally available resources and help teachers and learners to practice English at little or no cost. If this were supplemented by government or donor funding, policy makers could equip school libraries with helpful and relevant CLT-related books and other materials and resources for both teachers and students. The more access teachers and learners had to these books and resources, the more they could improve their knowledge of CLT. If international funding made it possible, policy makers could even provide computers and internet facilities gradually, which would give teachers an opportunity to improve self-development by browsing helpful
materials, useful websites, or joining online communities of ELT professionals around the globe.

The third of my findings relates to peoples’ attitude towards politics or state-run institutions. Speaking from experience, I can say that the lack of trust among people towards politicians, as well as the education system, did not happen overnight. From the inception of the country, public institutions and politicians have ignored people’s needs and interests in every sector. This inattention by policy makers and central and local public institutions (District Commissioner, Chairman of Education Board, etc.) towards public service has declined to such a level that common people have been pushed to seek alternative solutions to bridge the gaps in health, education and every other sector.

This is one of the reasons why so many NGOs are now working in education, health and economic sectors alongside the government. Common people today have little or no faith in the speeches of political leaders or the commitments they make, and the government’s frequent attempts to impose policy change to suit their political ideology can be seen as having directly contributed to the deterioration of the education system, as I have previously discussed. In this study, participating teachers reported that in 2013 curriculum changes occurred three times in a single year, causing frustration in teachers, students, parents and the wider society. These rapid changes could suggest that the import of CLT may also have been decided hurriedly and introduced without ample time and thought being given to all the above issues. Taking account of these findings and suggestions, it would be wise for policy makers to carefully think again and take any necessary steps to contextualise CLT in the Bangladeshi setting. This is important because it involves the future of a country and is not just a short term issue that ends when the project-based funding runs out, as happened with ELTIP (Bolitho 2012, P 37).

To ensure the success of an educational change, such as CLT, I would propose Bolitho’s (2012) recommendations on the Bangladeshi context. With his vast experience of working with change projects in Bangladesh and many other countries, Bolitho (2012) suggests that an effective change process demands a concerted effort in all of the following four key areas simultaneously: curriculum, methodology, materials and textbooks, and examinations. If all four areas were not addressed in the change process, it could delay the change or even bring negative effects to the education system, as happened with the ELTIP project in Bangladesh:
‘Although the project also wrote two influential course books (for grades 9 to 12), these and the revolution in methodology were, and are, doomed to slow progress without the reforms in national examinations. The oldest story in TEFL!’

Former Project Team Leader, Bangladesh, in a personal communication

(in Bolitho, 2012; p 38)

In relation to Bolitho’s (ibid) views, I would refer to the respondent teachers’ stories where they reveal that after years of exposure to grammar teaching and learning, they still lacked confidence in speaking English. The problem, I think, lies in the education policy itself, which only tests reading and writing skills. The omission of testing for listening and speaking skills, implies that these are of lower priority. It is very important that policy makers acknowledge this issue and bring in the necessary changes to the existing examination system to incorporate listening and speaking tests immediately. If this does not happen, it is likely that the implementation of CLT will continue to be a struggle, teachers and students will find no motivation for practicing listening and speaking, and the teaching and learning of English will continue to be carried on through practicing reading and writing skills only, which will never bring any change to the status of English. In relation to this, I suggest the setting up of district-wide ‘regional resource centres’ where teachers from all the schools in the district can seek solutions to any issues around the teaching of English. These centres should be well equipped with the facilities necessary to run speaking and listening tests and provide practice facilities for teachers of that district. These centres would encourage the practice of speaking and listening skills, which would develop learner interaction, which would serve the goals of CLT (and ELT in general) to ‘encourage learner participation in communicative events and self-assessment process’ (Savignon 1991, p. 273).

In recent times, some academics (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; Widdowson, 1990; Crabbe, 2003) are even advocating for the post-method stage that ‘signifies a search for an alternative to method rather than an alternative method’. Kumaravadivelu (2012) argues that as there is no best method, searching for one will only push us to repeatedly recycle and repackage the same old ideas. One more positive thing about the ‘post-method’ condition, as Kumaravadivelu (ibid) suggests, is that it signifies teacher autonomy.

All these perspectives are presented here to provide policy makers with insights into designing comprehensive teacher development programmes. There is no denying the fact that the challenges in the particular context of Bangladesh may be acute and that
teachers and teacher educators have little incentive or motivation to embark on a critical and continual examination of issues big and small. In such an environment, there is very little space for bottom-up deliberation and decision-making. Besides, in many cases, change can produce an unbearable anxiety particularly if it upsets the applecart, or if the desired outcome is not readily available or rapidly achieved (Kumaravadivelu, 2012; p 129).

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Appendices:

Appendix-A:

Letter to Head Teachers seeking permission for conducting this Study

(This letter will be translated into Bengali for the respondents’ better understanding)

(Department Letterhead)

Doctoral College of Education

University of Brighton

Dear (participant’s name):

Name of School & address

This is for your kind information that I am conducting a research study on the secondary school English teachers as part of my PhD degree in Education from the Doctoral College at the University of Brighton under the supervision of Professor Stephen David and Dr. Angela Pickering. This letter is an application seeking permission to conduct a research in your school. I would be grateful if you kindly give me permission to conduct this study in your school.

The primary focus of this study is on teachers’ lived experience about their beliefs and practices in teaching English in the context of Bangladesh. As you might have already known that in Bangladesh, the teaching methodology for English has been changed through the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Secondary English teachers have received a short training on CLT. But simultaneously some more innovations, like CAL (Computer Aided Learning), TBL (Task Based Learning) etc. are introduced in some secondary schools in the country. At the same time, the social context is changing rapidly with a number of influences, namely, the expansion of garment business sector, use of computers etc. Eventually English is getting more priority, specifically, with the expansion of garment industry business for greater access in the global market. In this context, my concern is how English teachers are dealing with teaching of English with their values and beliefs side by side these innovations. I would be interested to know how they shape their practices in the classroom reality. I also intend to gather data through observing some of their classes to get to know the reality with all these changes (teaching methodology, political and historical background, context, etc.).
Therefore, I would like to include your organization as one of several organizations to be involved in my study. I believe that you will understand the importance of this study and allow me to interview some of your teachers, observe some of the classes which will take place in your school.

Kind regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Md. Saidur Rahman

PhD Student

Doctoral College of Education

University of Brighton, UK.
Appendix-B:

Invitation letter to English Teachers to be a Participant for this Study

(This letter will be translated into Bengali for the respondents’” better understanding)

(Department Letterhead)

Doctoral College of Education
University of Brighton

Date

Dear (participant’s name):

This letter is an invitation to consider participating in a study I am conducting as part of my PhD degree in Education under the Doctoral College at the University of Brighton under the supervision of Professor Stephen David and Dr. Angela Pickering. I would like to provide you with more information about this project and what your involvement would entail if you decide to take part.

The primary focus of this study is on teachers’ lived experience about their beliefs and practices in teaching English in the context of Bangladesh. As you might have already known that in Bangladesh, the teaching methodology for English has been changed through the introduction of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). Secondary English teachers have received a short training on CLT. But simultaneously some more innovations, like CAL (Computer Aided Learning), TBL (Task Based Learning) etc. are introduced in some secondary schools in the country. At the same time, the social context is changing rapidly with a number of influences, namely, the expansion of garment business sector, use of computers etc. Eventually English is getting more priority, specifically, with the expansion of garment industry business for greater access in the global market. In this context, my concern is how you as a teacher are dealing with teaching of English with your values and beliefs side by side to these innovations. I would be interested to know how you shape your practices in real classroom. I also intend to gather data through observing some of your classes to get to know the reality with all these changes (teaching methodology, political and historical background, context, etc.).

Participation in this study is voluntary. It will involve an interview of approximately (one and half an hour) in length to take place in a mutually agreed upon location. You may decline to answer any of the interview questions if you so wish. Further, you may
decide to withdraw from this study at any time without any negative consequences by advising the researcher. With your permission, the interview will be video recorded to facilitate collection of information, and later transcribed for analysis. Shortly after the interview has been completed, I will send you a copy of the transcript to give you an opportunity to confirm the accuracy of our conversation and to add or clarify any points that you wish. All information you provide is considered completely confidential. Your name will not appear in any thesis or report resulting from this study; however, with your permission anonymous quotations may be used. Data collected during this study will be retained for (one year) in a locked office in my supervisor's lab. Only researchers associated with this project will have access. There are no known or anticipated risks to you as a participant in this study.

If you have any questions regarding this study, or would like additional information to assist you in reaching a decision about participation, please contact me at (+88-07460232235) or by email at (S.Rahman@brighton.ac.uk). You can also contact my supervisors, (Professor Stephen Davies) or (Dr Angela Pickering) at …………… ext. …………… or email (…………………………).

I would like to assure you that this study has been reviewed and received ethical approval from the Research Ethics Committee of University of Brighton. However, the final decision about participation is yours. If you have any comments or concerns resulting from your participation in this study, please contact me any time at my above contact details.

I hope that the results of my study will be beneficial to those organizations directly involved in the study, other organizations in similar field not directly involved in the study, as well as to the broader research community.

I very much look forward to speaking with you and thank you in advance for your assistance in this project.

Yours Sincerely,

Md. Saidur Rahman
Appendix-C:

A sample Interview (transcribed)

Respondent: Mr. Martin

Me: Assalamu Alaikum. Your name Please-

Martin: I am S M Abdur Razzak, Asst. Head Teacher, Mujibnagar Secondary High School, Meherpur District, Bangladesh.

Me: Your educational qualification please -

Martin: I have passed simple BA B ED.

Me: When did you join this school?

Martin: I joined here on 9th June 2011.

Me: Please say something about your family background-

Martin: Sure, I come off a teaching family - my father was also an English teacher of a government high school; not only that my uncle who was 16 years older than my father and was my father’s teacher as well, was also an English teacher. My uncle was also the Head teacher of this school where I am working now. Later on, he joined in a Government High school in Jhenaidah (a nearby district from Meherpur. SR) district. My father was brought up by my uncle and my father was a student of this school once. Later on my father also acted as the Secretary and the President of this school committee. You can call it a continuity of this that I was a student of this school and now working as a teacher in here. My teaching career started in 1989 in a Madrasahh. To speak about my education, it is worth mentioning here that I was student of science; but unfortunately I couldn’t pass B.Sc. There was a great trouble when I was due to start the examination- there was a big fight between the police and the students, the police fired into the crowd of students and then the examination was suspended. All preparation had been spoiled and that’s why I could not pass B.Sc. Later I passed B.A. and received B.Ed. degree from Khulna teachers training college (TTC). But one thing that matters – I was a student of Mathematics. It was also a very interesting subject to me. I studied physics, Chemistry and Biology but Maths was my favourite subject. And that’s why, when I joined a Madrasahh, I joined as a teacher of Maths. The position was called ISC Maths Teacher. When I received B.Ed degree, - and, erm, being a son of an
English Teacher, English was also a favourite subject to all the members of my family and me.

Me: What about your mother?

Martin: My mother was a little educated lady and a housewife. My mother was very fortunate woman because she had given birth to nine children- 6 brothers and 3 sisters. All her children have crossed a minimum education level – Intermediate degree. All my sisters are graduate and they all are teachers.

Me: That’s amazing! How many of them are teaching English?

Martin: They all are English teachers.

Me: Wow, it’s really a great achievement!

Martin: I’ve got 6 brothers- my elder brother is working in an NGO (Non-Government Organisation); he is not in teaching. I am the second son. The third one works as a Wire Inspector in REB (Rural Electrification Board). Fourth one is an Assistant Professor in Government College. Fifth one is an ATEO (Assistant Thana Education Officer) and staying in Chuadanga district. My youngest brother is at home here involved in business and he passed Intermediate level of education.

Me: So, I see, all your family has a good interest in English- learning and teaching-what do you say?

Martin: I think, in the villages, we are very familiar to all the people of the village as member of English family.

Me: Could you now tell about your childhood- how did you learn and especially English?

Martin: I said before, we are 9 brothers and sisters- my family was a poor family. I was a student of this school and all my brothers were students in here. My father was the only earning member of the family. He had to manage all the costs of the family members in hardship. Because of poor financial position, we did not get the opportunity for better higher education. Financial problem was a great problem for our family. So we received our education locally (In Bangladesh, most of the good educational opportunities are available in the capital city which are very costly as well- SR). But two of my brothers could manage to go to the Universities.
Me: Could you please now say something about your learning of English in your childhood?

Martin: When I was a student, we studied functional English Grammar- the name of our English grammar book was ‘English Grammar, Translation & Composition’ and ‘Functional English Grammar, Translation & Composition’. But now a days, it has been changed. I think now it is Communicative English, yes CLT.

Me: What did you learn that time?

Martin: We thought without knowing grammatical rules, no one can know English correctly. But now a days, we see that English is an international language. It helps a person to get better job, to go abroad. To know communicative English is helpful for that purpose. I agree with this concept. But there are some problems- being a teacher, I must say that it has not been trained how to teach English to our students in communicative way. We need enough training for the teachers- how teach our students. We also need extra helpful books on this method.

Me: Could you now tell us about your own learning of English in childhood- was it communicative or some other method?

Martin: No, no, no. We learnt English in traditional method- functional English.

Me: Do you remember some of the lessons or topics?

Martin: Of course. From class six, as far I could remember, we used to learn about number, person, gender, sentence structure. We learnt Tense in year 8, and then Voice change, Narration (Direct and Indirect Speech). It was studied in class nine and ten. But I can add here that, in class four, student has to make a sentence with some given words- jumble words.

Me: was it in your time?

Martin: No, it’s now. But this similar question was then used at degree (BA) level. I cannot like it. We learned English step by step in my childhood. There was a sequence, a chronology of topics. We learnt the use of ‘shall, will’- we studied them at certain level when necessary-

Me: When did you study that?

Martin: In class 8; we learnt things in order- first started with sentence, then tense, then voice change and narration change, then use of shall/will. All these were in order. But now we see- students have to rearrange a sentence from some jumble words- these are...
taught at Degree level and now at class four! I think if students were told to make a word from some jumbled letters, it would be ok for them at class four. Think - where Class four and where degree level is- they can’t be the same! It must be very difficult for a class four level student. One more thing that I have noticed, the use of ‘am/is/are’- this is a critical topic! Recently the Chairman of Jessore Education Board was telling that only 25% of the students who enrolled in class one succeed passing the SSC level- that means 75% fail to pass SSC. And this Communicative English is for these 75% dropouts. But I cannot accept his words though what he said is partially true. The language through CLT that these 75% dropouts are receiving for getting a job in foreign countries is not sufficient enough. There are people who know many English words without knowing their meaning or proper use of them in appropriate place. Our mothers or grandmothers know a lot of English words (e.g. - fan, switch, TV, light, screen etc.) and use them unknowingly. If you go to a bike shop, you’ll see the mechanic knows a number of English names of the different parts of a bike. They know many adjectives but they don’t know verbs (how to use verbs). That is a problem and that’s why we need some helping groups. I get back to the problem of ordering of lessons again as I come across them again and again. Here I want to mention one point- this year the English book has been changed three times in a year- regarding marking, addition of a lesson or crossing out a lesson, which caused us a very big trouble with the syllabus. The most surprising thing is- this year the English syllabus is same for class 6, 7 & 8. In relation to grammar teaching, I remember one training on CLT at Gazipur (neighbouring district to Dhaka- Capital city. SR). It was 27 days residential training. We had to do practice teaching. The instruction language was in English as the trainer told us, ‘being an English teacher, you cannot speak in Bengali in the English classes. All should try to speak in English’. We all agreed to that and found it difficult to use 100% English as our instruction language. We found that writing was easier than speaking as we all have very minimum scope to speak English fluently. Now we are encouraged to practice speaking fluently first, then we need to practice accuracy. In the practice class, I noticed that some of our colleagues using this type of English, “Students, now I’m question, you are answer”. My point is if they keep on saying this type of English, they’ll get used to it. But if they were told that structures with proper grammatical rules, they would have been practicing the right English. If we depend only on this type of communicative English, then one day we even won’t get any knowledgeable teacher on grammar rules. That’s why I’m of different opinion from the Board Chairman and want to ask him, “ok, if this communicative English is for those 75% drop out children, have
we got any other book or methodology for the rest 25%? Or, can we separate children from class 6, 7 or 8 that these 25% will pass and that 75% won’t pass? If the answer is no, then don’t you think it’s a big problem? I always admit that Communicative English is helpful for going abroad, for business purpose or for getting better job, but it is also important to keep grammar side by side CLT as we always known that to learn a language properly, we must know the grammar. Here I want to say something (though I’m a bit scared anybody might overhear us and we might get into trouble) about a common tendency in us to over mark a student to let him pass (e.g. - O a Bengali boy/girl have put so many English words in his paper, it’s more than enough to give her a pass mark; teacher never even verifies if the student could put the right or part of what was asked for in his/her paper.) When we talk to someone or studied communicative with other foreigners, mistakes are fine as long as communication is done. But when we are writing, it should be correct and for that we need teachers with good grammar base who can teach the language properly. It’s good that we can communicate with other countries through English as an international language, but it is true also that we need grammar for proper writing, for better correspondence with them.

Me: Do you feel that CLT has been a kind of imposed thing on us?

Martin: Even if it is imposed on us, I don’t find any bad impact. But what I feel is to keep a touch of grammar side by side. I want to refer to our historical background again, in Bangladesh, English learning culture was initiated from that colonial age. It is true that it was not Bangladesh that time, it was a part of Indian sub-continent; but the culture we still carry on saying, ‘goodnight, bye-bye, thank you, hello, hi’ are all from that British culture. But what we see, now-a-days these terms are formally taught to the school-starters. Now dialogue practice are introduced in class four that was from intermediate level in our time. Now if you ask a child her name, she won’t say, ‘My name is X; rather she would say only, ‘X’; in answer to, ‘how are you’, no need saying, ‘I’m fine,’ rather say, ‘Fine’ as it is enough. All these are possible for this communicative concept. Now if I say ‘thank you’ to a small child, he promptly says, ‘welcome’, which is from CLT as well. As a teacher, I’ve seen another big change among students - communicative method has removed the fear from students’ hearts towards learning English. But I add again we still need grammar. My idea is- from the beginning classes, learners work in communicative English is fine; but in higher classes, if grammar lesson can be mixed up with it, it will make student’s base complete in learning of English and they will feel it close to Bengali.
Me: Do you like to say something about teacher training? Have you received any? What are they?

Martin: Yes. I did my B.Ed. from Khulna (Meherpur falls in this division - SR) Teachers’ Training College (TTC). Teachers were selected on the basis of subjects - for example, an English teacher must take English as a compulsory subject. There were 5 compulsory subjects (National development, Psychology, educational assessment, History of education,------), which were compulsory for all teachers. English is an optional subject of 100 marks. In our batch, more than hundred teachers wanted to take English, but the English trainer of the college took a test on us and only 40 passed and this 40 were accepted in the English course. A total number of 613 trainees were enrolled with us in all subjects. This also portrays the status of English in the country. I went to another 6 days training to SEQAEP (Secondary Education Enhancement Project) at Gangni (a nearby Upazila to Meherpur District. SR). SEQAEP is covering some schools training need on English in this region. At the final assessment of the training, I stood second unfortunately among the teachers from Gangni and Meherpur Upazilas. (Unfortunately, as I was told by the Instructor of the training program after the certificate distribution that I was supposed to be the first in the final assessment; but another teacher was to be declared first who actually copied everything at the time of the assessment. The trainer several times tried to warn the teacher but it didn’t work). However, I attended another training of 27 days by BMTTI (Bangladesh Madrasah Teachers Training Institute), which is run by Madrasahh board. It is also subject based training and I received training on English. There were 40 participants from 40 districts. At the post-training test of teachers, only one teacher had scored A+ and that was I.

Me: Was there any other subject dealt in this training?

Martin: No, it was only English.

Me: Was it on CLT?

Martin: No, it was on traditional way of teaching English, I mean Grammar teaching.

Me: Do you find any difference in teaching methodology from CLT?

Martin: No they are almost same. But now a days, we are encouraged to use projector in the classroom though it has not yet started everywhere.

Me: You mean teachers can use projector as a tool in the class? Is it for English only? Could you please explain this?
Martin: Yes, projector can be used in the class as a teaching aid. It is not for English only but all others subject teachers can use it in their class. We also have received a projector from the Government. A teacher has to prepare the content first and then can bring it in a pen-drive (flash drive) in the class to display through the projector machine. But I have a lot of argument in this regard. We already got the scheme but this is for managing one class whereas we’ve got five classes. As far I’ve understood, it is quite difficult to manage with our existing schedule. It should be fixed in the classroom and we need to have some strong doors and windows so that the projector does not get stolen. We also need to have some extra projectors as well. Teachers should be less burdened with class. The way we take classes and as per our existing class routine every day, it is impossible to do the classes with the projector. Without preparing the content the previous day, I cannot take the class next day with projector. So I need to do homework. Or it won’t happen.

Me: How many classes a teacher has to take each day?

Martin: at least 5. And if I have to maintain that, it won’t be possible to take a projector class with that. Because I’ve to prepare a lesson plan beforehand and it has to be in digital format; so I must have a desktop/laptop of my own. But in reality most of the teachers don’t have that. The school has only one laptop and it always stays to the Head teacher because he needs to keep continuous connection with the board for different official matters. Though it was given for all of us to use and Head teacher also agrees to that; but we see that he needs it for his workload. SO we don’t disturb him for the laptop.

Me: Do you want to buy a laptop of your own?

Martin: I am thinking of that though majority of teachers (especially Non-Govt. Teachers) don’t have that financial capacity (as it is the main problem for teachers) to buy a laptop of their own. It’s not only buying a laptop, it requires internet connection (we need to buy a modem as well), a flash drive, electricity support, update and modification- all these are costly and I think, more than 50% of the teachers can’t afford it. I think if Government came forward and provided teachers laptops (for example, in a training we were told that each participant will receive a laptop), teachers could afford to maintain the other costs required for it.

Me: Yes, even if you were given a flash drive, you could have prepared the lesson at least. Is there any other computer in the school? Can you use them in the class?
Martin: Yes, but it is used in the computer room and for the students only.

Me: How many English teachers are working in this school?

Martin: Two. Me and another lady.

Me: Can you say something about you inter-colleague relationship in the school?

Martin: Yes it is very good. The lady teacher always comes to me for help and anything happens, she shares with me and gives much importance. I didn’t have to seek any help yet from my colleagues yet. It does mean that I don’t face any problem regarding education matters, but so far I could sort out my problems from dictionaries or grammar books. But I am happy to say that our inter-colleagues understanding and sharing is good and strong.

Me: Could you tell me about a very good experience in your teaching career that you still remember?

Martin: So many experiences- ok I remember one – you might have known that I started career as a teacher after passing Intermediate level of my education. On the way to my school, an old man with white beard and white hair was crossing me riding on a bike. I was only 23 that time. The man got down from his bike and gave me salam (traditional way of greetings. SR). It appeared to me that any of that man’s relations might be my student and the man showed me respect as a teacher. It made me feel proud that I won’t get that honour if I didn’t come this profession. It might turn sarcastic to the financial position of non-government teachers in this country as I once told my students that the number of ‘salam’ are offered to me each day, if it were money, teachers would be the richest person in the country. It is a matter of pride to us that how we the teachers get respect from our students and the society in spite of the poor financial status. People come to us in any problem to get counselling. But one important thing I want to share with you- it may be taken as a fault in our education system that the madrasahh education is getting a lower value in the society. As a madrasahh teacher, I would say that if the government could run one single stream of education, teachers could get more status in the society. I am not supporting English-based education nor degrading the Arabic education. The term ‘Madrasahh’ is an Arabic term for school- so why don’t we take one single name for it? It is not like this that these Madrasahhs are religious institutions, then the rest of are non-religious institutions? The Government has to take step to remove this disparity between these two different types of education. However, maybe we have somehow entered into a different discussion.
Me: No, it’s ok. Would you now like to say something about your personal life?

Martin: Ok. I got married on the 16th June of 1995. My wife was a student of Higher Secondary class (Intermediate level). My first son was born after one year and 4 months. He is now a student of Intermediate level. I have one more daughter who is 5 years now and started school recently. It might be relevant here to say that I also bore all the expenses for my wife’s education. She is now a primary school teacher as well. It is also useful to say that teaching is a favourite profession in our family. It can be added here that my uncle’s children are mostly in teaching profession. From the very childhood, I remember that I had great desire to be a doctor. I used to play with mock syringe and different colour bottles as medicines. I studied science also to fulfil that cherished desire. But being a son of a large, poor family, it didn’t happen to be. I also remember some of boyhood memories – I used to see my father examining students’ paper, putting number on sheets, red marks for those who did not pass, pen, paper, books…. all these things created an educational environment that have put a long lasting effect in my mind. My father had to stay very busy and could not manage time for us. He used to go to school from here on his bike every day and it was 4-5 miles. After school, he had to do some private tuition. And when he came back, he looked so exhausted that it was not possible for him to give us some more time for education. We used get angry with him because he always scolded us if we made bad results in our exams. But now we realize after coming to this profession that it was actually not possible for him after so much hard work. However, we could manage to complete our study with hardship. It is worth mentioning that syllabus didn’t change so frequently that time, so one grammar book, one geometry box was enough for so many brothers and sisters! As it passed onto us after our seniors moved to higher classed. Though the same treatment doesn’t work on our children. What we could make possible in so big hardship, they cannot make in plenty! I can cite one example regarding a school picnic- dad cannot afford to pay for all my brothers- only one is allowed, the elder one! However, I am trying my best to educate my children now. I have not yet been able to buy own house as all my savings I spent on the education of one of my relatives. She was my sister-in-law. She was in class nine when she came to my family. She finally passed BA, B.Ed. and joined in a primary school. She was under my guidance for 12 years, I educated her all through this time. She was my student as well. She used to cite an example to others that she will marry someone like her brother-in-law (me) as she never noticed any argument or shouting with my wife (her sister). I was a man of
character to her and she took me as a role model. So as I told you, every action of teachers are followed and respected not inside the class and by the students only, but in bigger space- in the society and in the nation and thus they become a role model. My sister-in-law wanted to be a teacher and requested me to settle her marriage with a teacher. Maybe you don’t have riches but you have peace. However, she is now a teacher and her husband is also a teacher.

Me: Please tell about your hobby.

Martin: I had three things to own as my hobby from my boyhood though I don’t have any of them now. They were: a harmonium (as I was fond of music); an air gun (to prey birds) and a motorbike to travel around. None of them could I own yet. I started a Deposit Pension Scheme (a kind of saving money to the Bank. SR) which I had to cash to support my sister-in-law for paying her B.Ed. fees because I believe, we should not discriminate between a boy and a girl. All can perform equally with proper support.

Me: Any future ambition?

Martin: At this stage, already have passed a long time of my age. More 11-12 years of time I have in this job before retirement. I hope to see my children complete their education come to a better position in their life. I think my daughter is much brighter than my son and she would do better in her education. I inherited a small piece of land from my father; it’s already containing a 8 roomed house but you know, I have a number of brothers and sisters and that house is not big enough to accommodate them all; I now dream to make a better living place for us. I already told that I have educated my wife, her sister and still continuing educating people. The school my wife is working at the moment is completely established by us. My father was the founder President of the school. There are four teachers working in the school and all four teachers contributed to purchase the land for setting up the school. You might have known well that in a country like Bangladesh, any government officer means a king; his wills are the rules for the department- those who move within government offices know it well. With all the adversities, if you yet want to set up a school, you will need a government affiliation, then you will need recognition and primary approval from the Government, and then you need registration- all these jobs have cost each of these teacher’s family more than one lakh taka (nearly £1000 GBP. SR). Then we could start the teachers’ salary. There is a government rule- when a school is registered, it will automatically be included in the M.P.O (Monthly Payment Order- a Govt. rule for the monthly wages for the teachers of Non-Govt. schools. SR). But the rule has an
additional clause that no school can be registered within two years of the primary approval. However, after a long weary way, the school started getting teachers’ salary from 1st January 2010 and now it is in the process of being a government school-already declared, only waiting for the government salary structure. So with both of our joint income, initially we are dreaming of a house at the moment as our daughter is still young (denotes that he won’t have to think about the expenses for her education yet as large scale. SR). My son is at the Intermediate level and I am trying to help him improve his HSC result. If he can do that, I will try to admit him to send to higher studies outside (some other better place outside Meherpur. SR)

Me: A lot of thanks to you for your valuable time and information. Hope to see you again in future.

Martin: Same to you as well. Walai-kumus Salam. (a traditional Muslim way of saying ‘good-bye’- meaning ‘Be God’s peace upon you. SR)