

English Speaking Competency: A Study on Primary Teachers in Bangladesh

Dipa Adhikari

Instructor, Primary Teachers Training Institute (PTI), Mymensingh, Bangladesh.

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ABSTRACT

This study is concerned with English language teaching that the teachers of primary school unable to express their opinions in English. Sometimes they lose their attention and confidence and feel nervous while speaking English in the English classroom. Even they can't use simple command, instructions in English properly. It is essential to make the classroom communicative the teachers should use English more and more in English classroom. The more the teachers speak English, the more the students hear and learn English. Because for a numbers students school is the only place where they can listen and learn something in English. But in reality, there is no practice and reflection of this skill inside the classroom. They always use Bangla and also give commands and instructions in Bangla while conducting the English Class. There is no initiative to develop speaking competency in English and they initially ignore it. In this study, the researcher used systematic random sampling to select primary school teacher for data collection are questionnaire for interview and for oral test qualitative data will be used. The researcher has used both book review and article review for literature review. This paper explores the enhancement of speaking ability in English of primary teachers in Bangladesh and gives some strategies and techniques and recommendation to develop speaking competency of primary teachers in English.

Keywords: Diploma in Primary Education (DPED), English Language Teaching, GPS, EFT

INTRODUCTION

At present our primary education has acquired a remarkable progression with the proper step of Government's epoch-making procedure and its effective implementation in field level. To raise overall level of competency in English language, the Government of Bangladesh made changes in its education policy. The main aim of this policy is to support teaching and learning of English with a methodology that will encourage students to acquire communicative competency in English through regular practice of speaking skill in the classroom. And this responsibility depends on teachers to carry out them in the classroom. In Bangladesh, English language teaching and learning has followed the traditional Grammar Translation Method (GTM) in primary school still now. Classes are taken by using native language Bangla, have little use of English. On the other hand, the teachers sometimes feel nervous and lose their attention and confidence while speaking English. The main purpose of this study is to explore the enhancement of speaking ability in English of primary teachers in Bangladesh and gives some strategies and techniques and recommendation to develop speaking competency of primary teachers in English.

Rationale of the Research

The text book and curriculum have been revised and developed to attain competencies with all four language skills in English through meaningful and enjoyable activities. Speaking plans and activities to develop students this skill has been presented in a systematic way. But in reality, the teachers can't express their opinions in English and sometimes feel nervous, shy and lose their attention and confidence while speaking in English. This research paper was designed to improve speaking competency in English with various activities of the teachers. For that the teachers themselves motivate and try to speak English as per as possible and carry out those in their real classroom, they can take part to improve their students' speaking ability in primary school.

Objectives:

The main purpose of this study is to explore the enhancement of speaking ability in English of primary teachers in Bangladesh and the role of English as the EFL (English as a foreign language) in the classroom. To satisfy or fulfill this aim, we will further explore three different areas:

1. Teaching and learning activities on speaking skills are suggested in the primary training program in English.
2. The teachers' attitude towards teaching and learning English as speaking.
3. The actual method used to enhance and develop speaking skill in English and create fluency in English.

Research Questions:

To fulfill our aim, here are the main questions which we explore and answer in the present report.

- How do teachers currently practice speaking on English in the classroom?
- What are the major problems for Primary teachers to practice speaking in English?
- What kinds of activities are suggested to enhance speaking skill in English for training program?
- What kinds of activities and strategies should be recommended to enhance and develop speaking skill?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Historical background of speaking English in Bangladesh

English is now an important part for Bangladeshi people covering from daily life to the education and profession. English teaching in Bangladesh has had many ups and downs. The purpose of studying English in the British period was to create subordinate. Those so-called servants were taught only the reading and writing skills in English. But, gradually the situation has been changed. To enable our students to speak English in real life, the Communicative Approach or the CLT has been introduced in the year 1998-1999 in Bangladesh. But, this innovation was not received warmly by our English teachers. Selim and Tasneem (2011) have criticized these ELT teachers by saying that "When CLT came to Bangladesh the traditional English teachers vehemently opposed it because they were not ready for something new (p. 141)". The teachers hardly felt the necessity of teaching spoken and listening skill as they were quite successful neglecting two other important skills of language learning through listening and speaking (ibid).

However, though many days and years have gone by and the ELT has passed many steps, but the situation in Bangladesh has not changed much. Still the teachers are comfortable with the traditional materials and methods of teaching English. Umme Sharmin Kabir (2014) has cited that English For Today (EFT) is still used as the main source of teaching English in Bangladesh and EFT is a great source of teaching and learning spoken English that the book help to make students communicatively competent. The National Primary English Curriculum-2021 is also focused on communicative competence (NCTB).

Salahuddin et al. (2013) have conducted a study and wanted to know how the teachers conduct their English class. According to the teachers, they do not use any other teaching technique to teach their students (p. 46). They had said that the NCTB book EFT is the one and only source to teach English in most of the cases. In this situation, how can make the teachers communicative competence in English?

General idea of Language skills:

Language is used in four different ways by listening, speaking, reading and writing. These are called the basic language skills (English Book C-IN-ED-2002, NAPE, DPE)

The basic 4 language skills are-

1. Listening
2. Speaking
3. Reading
4. Writing

There are two sub-skills of the basic language skills: Receptive and productive skills

- * The receptive skills: Listening and Reading
- * The productive skills: Speaking and Writing

Different kinds of speaking skills:

Based on Brown (2001), there are four suggested speaking skills namely fluency, accuracy, pronunciation and vocabulary.

Fluency: Fluency means to speak fluently or smoothly. In that case teachers should not worry about accurate pronunciation and grammatical terms. Freer activities help students to develop fluency.

Accuracy: Accuracy is the ability to produce correct sentences using correct grammar and vocabulary. It means achieving accuracy by allowing the speaker to focus on grammatical, phonological elements. For that teachers can provide controlled activities for students to develop accuracy.

Pronunciation: Pronunciation is a way for students to make language clearer when they are speaking. That means students can communicate with good pronunciation and intonation, they have limited vocabulary and grammar.

Vocabulary: Vocabulary is one of the important elements of learning a foreign language. Vocabulary is important to convey ideas or opinions with others. Without sufficient vocabulary, someone cannot communicate effectively. Proper communication depends on the power of vocabulary.

Strategies of speaking skills:

O'Malley and Chamot (1990, p. 44-45) also divide language learning strategies into three types, namely: metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, and socio-affective strategies. By metacognitive strategies, O'Malley and Chamot (1990) mean strategies applied to plan for learning and thinking about the learning process, monitoring production and comprehension as well as evaluation after the completion of an activity. Cognitive strategies involve the direct manipulation of learning techniques, e.g. repetition, translation, deduction, etc. The final group of strategies involves socio-affective strategies which deal with social transactions and social activities.

Gani et al. (2015) has given a sort of speaking strategies -

1. Practice making sentences in English.
2. Apply new words in daily life.
3. Ask friends to speak in English.
4. Often listen to audio, talks, songs etc. in English.
5. Read loud in English.
6. Use gestures in English.
7. Speak more slowly in English.
8. Use simple words in English.

Problems of teachers on the previous research in Bangladesh:

There is a huge scarcity of competent teachers in teaching English. In fact, “Bangladesh is one of the few countries of the world where teachers can start teaching without any formal training (Siddique, 2004).

Hoque et al. (2011) has cited the problems that English teachers face are as follows:

1. **Curricula:** The curricula that the teachers all over the country of 170 million people teach are developed centrally by people who often have little or no knowledge of the ground reality of English teaching in the mainstream schools, colleges and madrasas. But they are ones who have to implement the curricula. Most often, they do not get any training to do so. Even if they do, it is often inadequate and untimely
2. **Lack of Support Materials:** Most public and semi-public academic institutions in Bangladesh lack needed support materials such as books, supplies, audio-visuals and classroom setting for effective language teaching.
3. **Lack of ELT Training:** Most English teachers in Bangladesh have no access to effective ELT training. Many do have general teachers training like PTI, B.Ed. or M.Ed after undergraduate courses in English but the training institutes are not equipped to teach ELT to student teachers
4. **Inefficient Culture of Teaching:** Sadly, English teachers are part of the general teachers community and inefficiency resulting from poor knowledge, poor training, poor monitoring or insincerity is so common in the teachers rooms that English teachers often do not put in the extra effort that is needed to teach a foreign language.

Analysis of speaking activities on English Training book (DPED English Book -2012, NAPE):

DPED book: The DPED program (2012) was established to develop teacher’s professional development, knowledge, skills, communicative competence and also to improve teaching learning approaches in field level. DPED English book was designed to ensure communicative competence of teaching learning activities on English. The DPED English book was divided into two parts- English Subject Knowledge (SK) and English Pedagogical Knowledge (PK). English Subject Knowledge is what is it we have to teach and English Pedagogical Knowledge is how to teach of this subject.

English Subject Knowledge (SK):

In English Subject Knowledge, there are 12 units and 28 sessions. Different activities on four language skills- listening, speaking, reading are incorporate in English Subject knowledge. In part of speaking skills various activities like- getting to know, introducing yourself, social expression, asking and answering questions, vocabulary and speaking, talking about obligation, Practice pronunciation, stress and intonation practice, read and say, speaking about the picture, speaking questionnaires, describing events, talking about a topic, speaking and language focus etc. All those activities mainly focused on speaking skills. The teachers have got a concept on speaking activities and how to teach speaking activities and also to improve speaking ability to practice speaking with the students in real situation.

English Pedagogical Knowledge (PK): In English Pedagogical Knowledge, there are 13 units and 35 sessions. Unit -6 (Lessons-1,2,3) is mainly focused on speaking skills with different teaching learning on speaking activities. This unit reflects on speaking activities and pedagogy, how to teach speaking activities in real situation. Matrix on speaking activities according to unit-6, lesson -1, 2, 3 are given below:

Unit	Lesson	Learning outcomes	Lesson Activities	Techniques and methods	Materials
Unit 6: Speaking Skill	Lesson-1 Speaking: Controlled	<input type="checkbox"/> reflect on the speaking practice <input type="checkbox"/> explain the	Activity A: Reflection Activity B:	Pair Work, Group Work,	Resourcepaper,

	and free speaking practice	importance of speaking activities in primary English books <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> describe the stages of controlled to free speaking practice <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> identify some differences between controlled and free speaking activities	Importance of speaking practice in primary school Activity C: Stages of controlled to free speaking activity Activity D: Differences between controlled and free speaking activity	Whole Class Work	PPT
Unit 6: Speaking Skill	Lesson 2 Speaking tasks in EFT	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> describe a variety of ways that teachers can include speaking practice in the classroom <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> use some techniques for using repetition with primary students <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> identify more speaking activities (from EFT) <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> explore the stages of a speaking activity and their purpose	Activity A: Matching Activity B: Repetition practice Activity C: More speaking activities Activity D: Stages/procedures of a speaking activity and their purpose	Pair Work, Group Work, Whole Class Work, Video/Demonstration	Resourcepaper, PPT, Poster paper, EFT
Unit 6: Speaking Skill	Lesson 3 Problems Bangladesh i speakers face in speaking English	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> list benefits of pair and group work to improve speaking skills <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> identify challenges of pair work and group work <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> explore the principles of arranging pair work and group work <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> analyze the problems Bangladesh speakers face in speaking problems <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> facilitate speaking sessions minimizing the challenges	Activity A: Benefits of pair and group works Activity B: Features and challenges of pair and group work Activity C: Problems of Bangladeshi speakers face in speaking English	Pair Work, Group Work,	PPT, Poster paper,

METHODOLOGY

The sample for the study is determined systematically through a step-down procedure.

- Selection of teachers: At first step, 15 GPS teachers are selected from sadar/town (MymensinghSadar, Haluaghat, Gouripur, Gofargoanupazilla) Of Mymensingh Division by lottery.

- At second step, 15 teachers are selected from rural area are selected from Dhubaora, Haluaghat, Gofargoan of Mymensingh Division by lottery.
- The research Tools/Instruments:

Two research questionnaires are developed after tried out in the field for their accuracy. The questionnaires are:

1. Questionnaire/script for interview of the Teacher.
2. Standardized questionnaire of Oral Test for the teachers

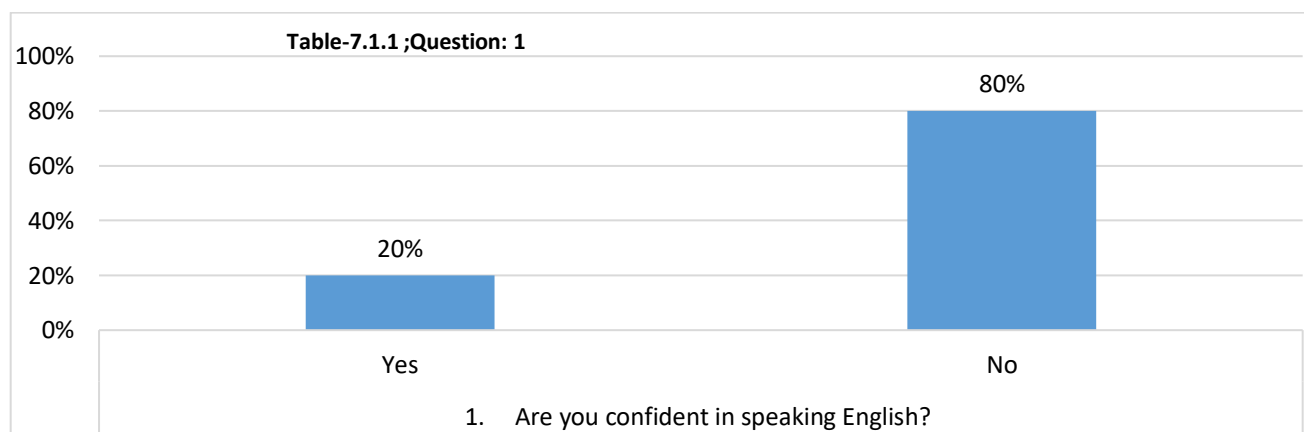
Data analysis and findings:

Data collection procedure:

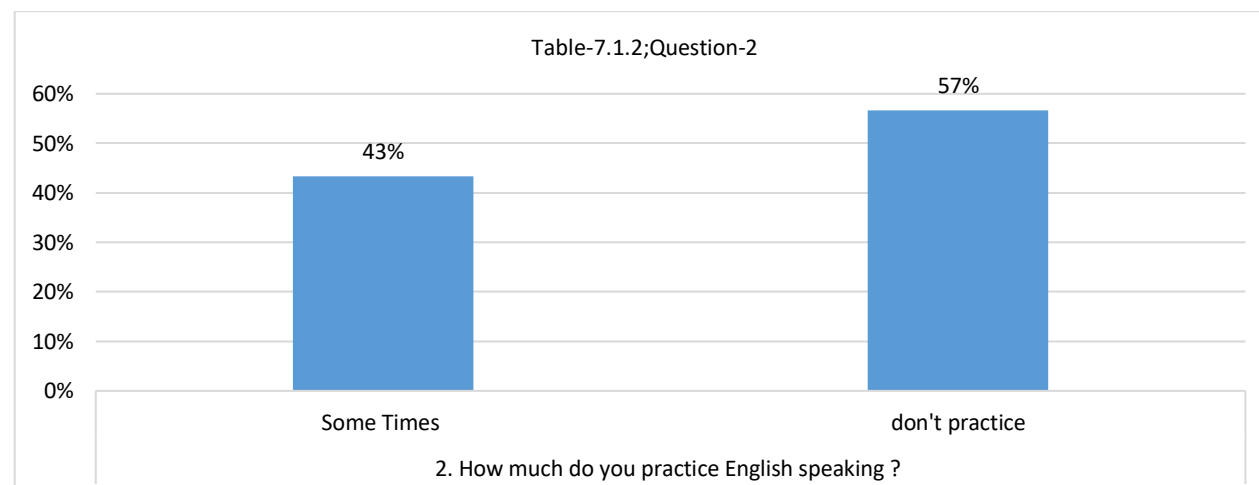
I have used qualitative data for interview and oral test. For interview I have used 10 items of question to find out the overall procedure on speaking of 30 teachers. For oral test I have selected 6 topics. They tried to speak on a topic that he/she has got by lottery for 3 minutes.

6.1: Interview of the teachers:

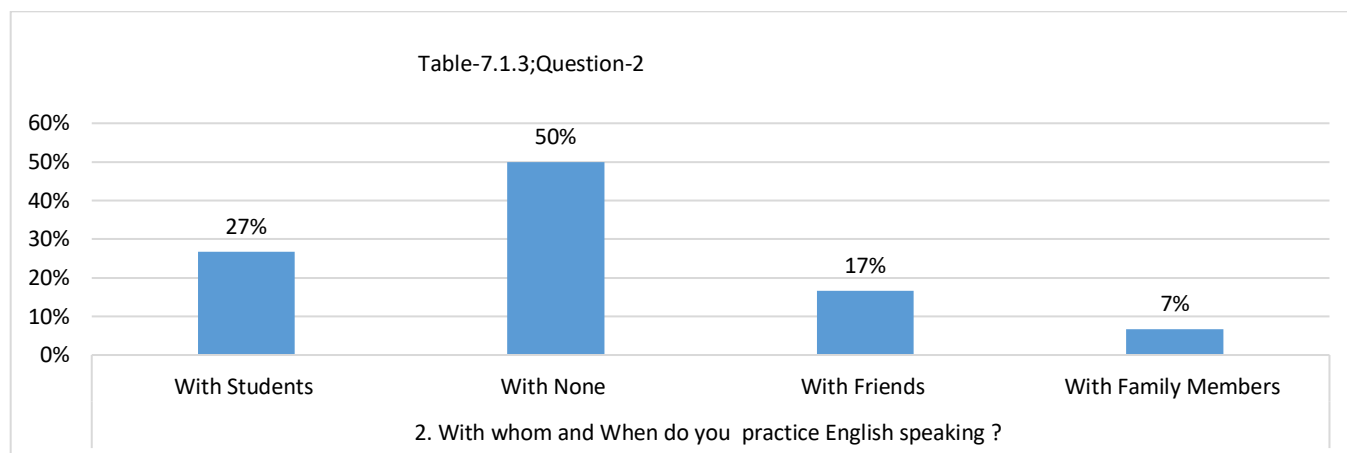
The data collection and information are gathered according to 10 types of questions of interview script. Those are presented here:



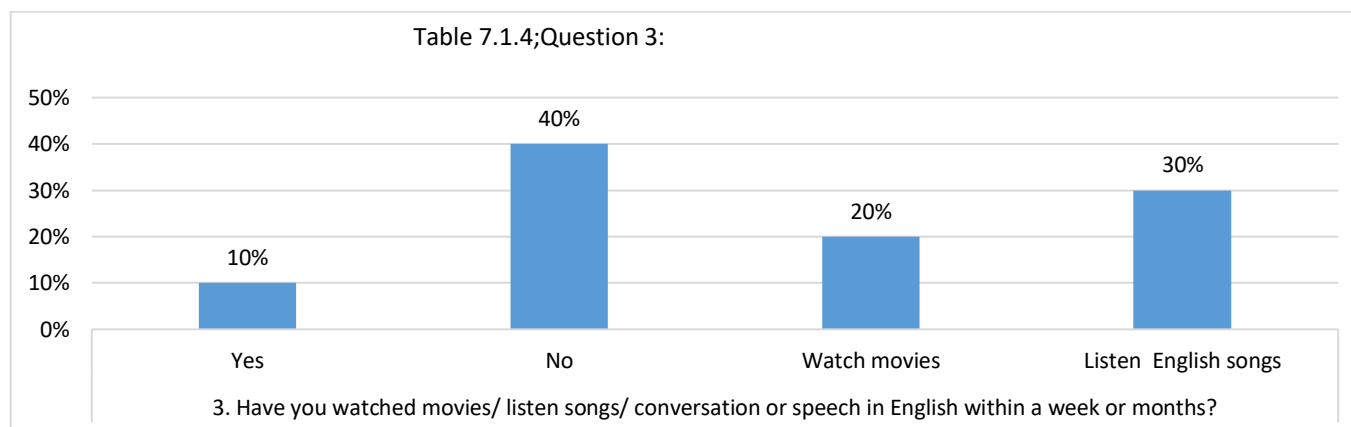
From the Table No. 7.1.1. I asked the respondents how much confident in speaking English. Most of the teachers (80%) replied that they are not confident in speaking English. Only 20% teachers replied that they are confident in speaking English. Even a few tells that they understand English but can't speak. They want to speak confidently.



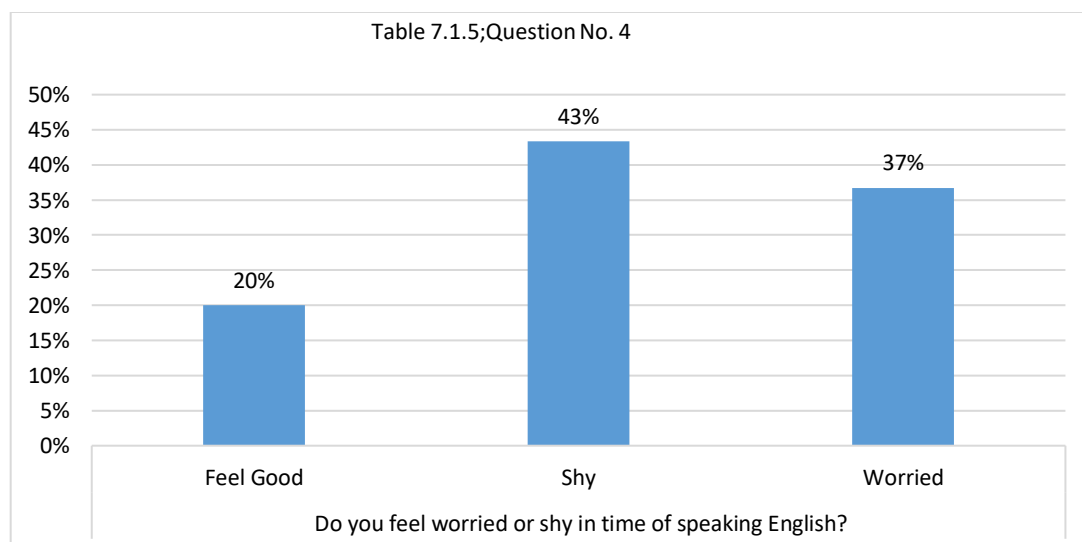
From the Table No. 7.1.2, I asked the respondents how much time they practice speaking English. Most of the teachers (57%) replied that they don't practice speaking in English. Only 43% teachers replied that they practice speaking in English sometimes.



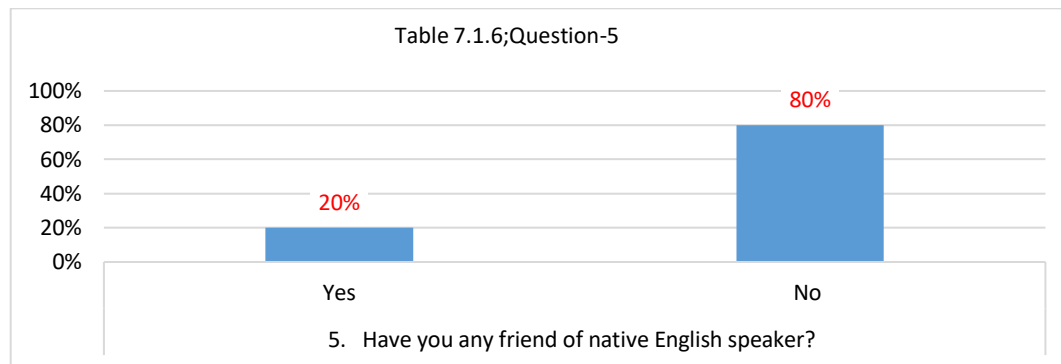
From the Table No. 7.3, I asked the respondents with whom they practice speaking English. Most of the teachers (50%) replied that they don't practice none, 27% replied they practice English with students, 17% with friends and only 7% teachers practice with family members. Most of them tells that they have no enough scope and time to practice English.



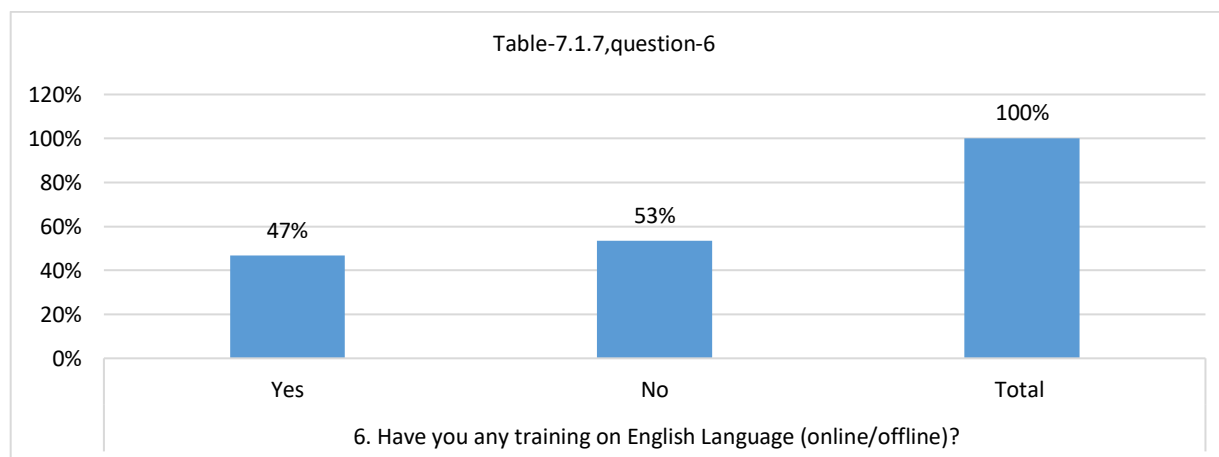
From the Table No.7.1.4. I asked the respondents, have they watched movies/listened songs/conversation or speech in English within a week or month. 40% teachers replied that they have not watched movies or listened songs/conversation or speech within a week or month, 30% listened songs, 20% watched movies and only 10% teachers have watched movies/listen songs/conversation or speech in English within a week or month.



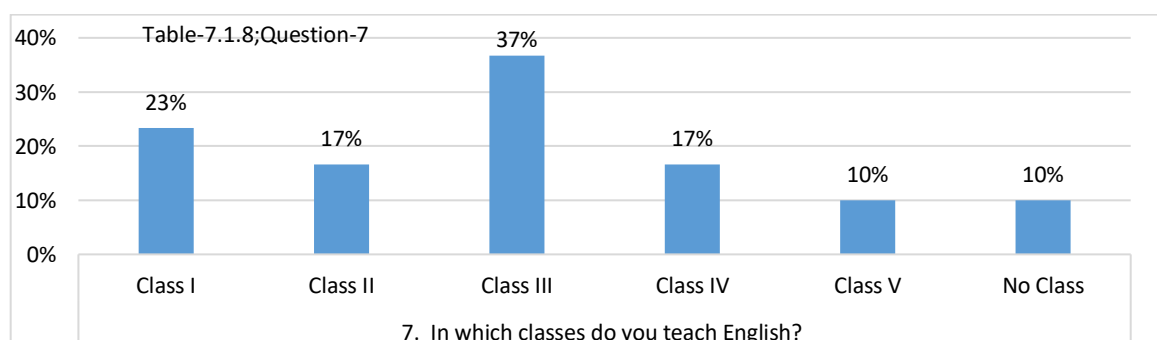
From the Table No.7.1.5, I asked the respondents that do they feel shy or worried at the time of speaking English. Most of the teachers (45%) replied that they feel shy, 37% teachers feel worried and only 20% teachers feel good at the time of speaking English.



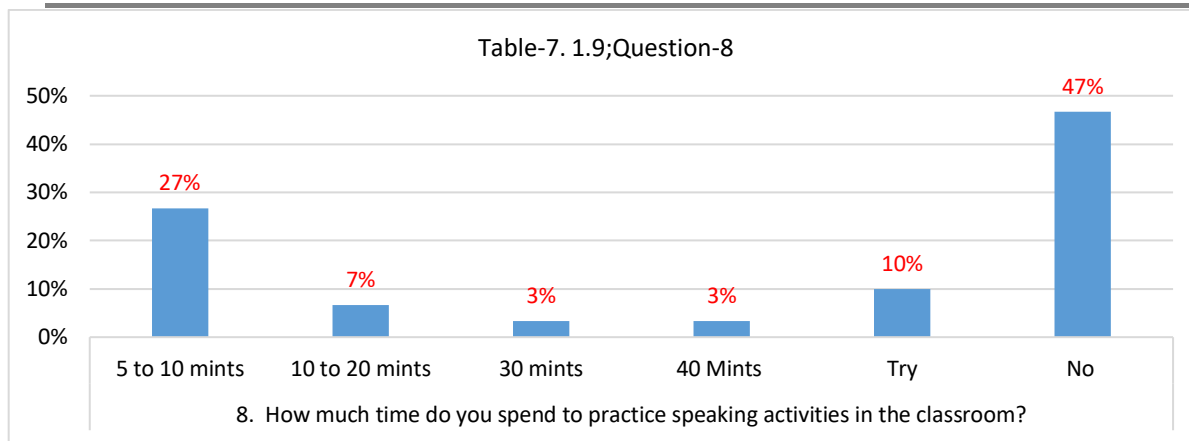
From the Table No. 7.1.6, I asked the respondents that have they any friends of native English speaker. Most of the teachers (80%) replied that they have no friends, 20% teachers have friends of native English speaker and most of them replied they met with them online with video chat.



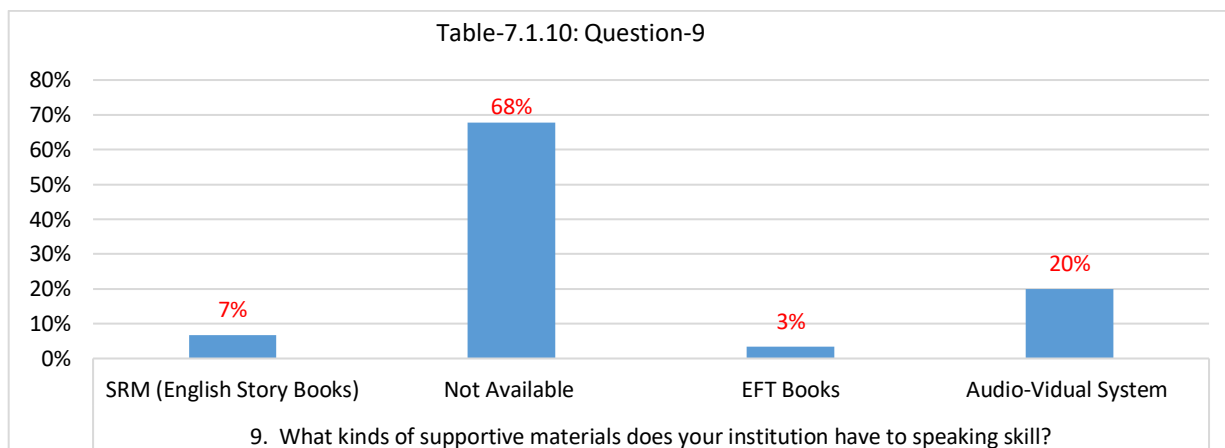
From the Table No. 7.1.7, I asked the respondents that have they any training on English language (online/offline). 53% teachers replied that they have training on English language, 47% teachers have no training on English at all. The teachers who have got training most of them have got English subject-based training for 6 days, specially have no training on English spoken and only 2 teachers have received spoken English training, one from Saifur's English spoken and another from BAU (Bangladesh Agricultural University). No one has received training from online.



From the Table No. 7.1.8, I asked the respondents that in which class have they taught English. About 37% teachers have taught English in class 3, 23% teachers have taught English in class 1, 17% teachers have taught English in class 2, a few 10% have taught English in class 5 and only 10% teachers replied that they have no class in English.



From the Table No. 7.1.9, I asked the respondents that how much time do they practice speaking activities in the classroom. About 47% teachers replied that they don't practice speaking activities, 27% teachers practice speaking activities for 5 to 10 minutes, 7% teachers practice speaking activities 10 to 20 minutes, 3% teachers practice 30 and 40 minutes respectively and 10% teachers try to practice speaking activities in the classroom.



From the Table No. 7.10, I asked the respondents about the availability of supportive materials of speaking skills in the institution. Most of them (68%) replied there have no available materials for speaking at their schools, 20% replied that there has audio-video system at their schools, 7% replied there have SRM and 3% replied there have only EFT books at their schools.



From the Table No. 7.1.11, I asked the respondents about the necessity of speaking skills for Bangladeshi primary school students. 100% teachers replied 'yes', it's very essential for Bangladeshi primary school students.

6.2: Oral Test

For oral test I have selected 6 topics. They tried to speak on a topic that he/she has got by lottery for 3 minutes. Data is presented below:

Table. 7.2.1

	Respondents Number	
Within 30 seconds	1.5 seconds(1), 2 seconds(4), 3 seconds (3), 4 seconds (1), 5 seconds(5), 10 seconds (2), 15 seconds(2),20seconds (3), 25 seconds (1) In Total- 22	74%
Within 31 seconds to 1 minute	40 seconds (1), 1 minute (3) In total- 4	13%
Within 2 minutes	1.45 minutes (1)	3%
Within 3 minutes	No one	
Not capable to speak	3	10%
Total	30	100%

From table-7.2.1, I took oral test for 3 minutes. Here most of the teachers 74% try to continue speaking within 30 seconds, 13% teachers speak within 30 seconds to 1 minute, no one can speak within 30 minutes, even 10% teachers are not capable to speak on their selected topics.

Overall, collecting data from interview and taking the oral test and analyzing it I also get a personal information of respondents. Among 30 teachers only one's education background is English, left 29 have Non –English from different discipline. But the teacher whose background don't conduct any class in English, even she can't receive any training on English language within 13 years work experience as a teacher. The teachers who work in sadar or town is comparatively better in speaking than the teachers who work in rural places though their education qualification are same and about 99% teachers are graduated or post-graduated. And 100% teachers give opinion that it's essential for Bangladeshi teachers and students to improve speaking skills.

RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the findings of this study such kinds of recommendations are given below: -

1. Teachers should be trained up more and more in English language focusing on speaking skills.
2. Supportive materials for English language teaching and learning must be included in every schools.
3. English Teachers should be recruited for English teaching and learning specially who studied from English discipline.
4. English Language Club (ELC) may be established with the help of Government fund or local community or as a teacher's innovation project.
5. To continue the speaking activities in the classroom teachers can practice the classroom languages.
6. To improve both students and teachers speaking capacity 5 minutes can managed to practice speaking activities within 45 minutes class.
7. Teachers can join on online English forum or community or websites ETAB, BELTA, BBC journal etc.
8. Teachers may manage time for 30-40 minutes in every day to practice English/listen songs in English or conversation/watch movies in English.

CONCLUSION

In an age of globalization, it is essential need to build up teachers' competency in English. By collecting and analyzing data I got three types of information of teachers like their speaking ability, their challenges of

speaking and their personal information like educational qualification, background of education, teaching experience and so on. Most of them are very much eager to improve their speaking English and they also try. Most of them have given their opinion that they need proper guidelines, proper environment and situation to carry their activities in English effectively. Maximum teachers have given suggestion to establish English Language Club both in the school placement for betterment of both teachers and students. A few teachers have also given comments to recruit subject base teacher specially for English. In context of Bangladesh proper environment and to make teachers skilled in English is needed to continue teaching learning activities of English fruitfully in order to ensure quality primary education.

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