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Emergency Remote Teaching Experiences of Bangladeshi English Language Teachers in Pandemic

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Abstract

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) approach arises when there is a sudden clog in teaching and learning physically. This study explores the emergency remote teaching experiences of English language instructors during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objective of this study was to examine teachers' adaptation strategies, technological challenges, and the impact of ERT on student engagement and learning outcomes. Through qualitative interviews and FGD with a diverse group of English language instructors, the study identifies key factors influencing the effectiveness of remote teaching, such as access to technology, digital literacy, and institutional support. The findings reveal that while teachers faced considerable obstacles, including limited resources and inadequate training, they exhibited resilience and creativity in overcoming these challenges. This study acknowledges some limitations such as the number of participants could be larger; data collection tools could be more diverse and broader. It also acknowledges that the result could be different if the students' experiences were gathered. In conclusion, this study provides some recommendations for improving the preparedness of English language educators for future emergencies, focusing on the need for professional development, improved technological infrastructure, and more effective pedagogical frameworks for remote instruction.

Keywords: *Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT); Online English Education; Teachers Professional Development; Teaching English in Crisis Situation; Covid-19; Bangladesh*

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1.1 Introduction

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) has gained widespread popularity and swift acceptance as a teaching method among educators worldwide. Teachers in private universities in Bangladesh have quickly adopted ERT, in contrast to their counterparts in public universities. Hence, it is imperative to conduct a comprehensive examination of the ERT experiences of private university teachers in Bangladesh. Teachers in English departments at private institutions have successfully adapted to teaching language and literature courses online, a transition they made from previously teaching these courses in person. This also warrants attention from the researchers' workstations. Regrettably, there has been a lack of focus on studying the experience of English teachers in private universities regarding Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, and there has been a heightened focus on emergency learning and instruction in the education system, particularly for university students. Implementation of this innovative and unexpected learning system has been accompanied by a range of experiences that have reinforced educational and pedagogical concepts. University students have encountered this wisdom because of the extended closure of educational institutions. [4] demonstrated the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the Indonesian education sector and highlighted its disruptions. The author of this study highlighted the weaknesses of Indonesia's distance learning initiatives during the ongoing pandemic. [7] Conducted a study on the role of technology, including the Internet, cellphones, laptops, and their global utilization, in facilitating distance- learning systems. [9] demonstrated that the repercussions of this crisis were observed in [22], when Emergency Remote Teaching and Learning (ERTL) was initiated during the initial semester. It was noted that for certain students, this semester was either their second or final semester according to the local academic calendar. Recently, English professors at private colleges in Bangladesh have been facing the impact of the epidemic, known as ERT, which has not been extensively studied by researchers.

1.2 Background of the Study

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) indicates the sudden transition from traditional classroom instruction to online learning platforms, typically in response to crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, or other unforeseen events. Various platforms (e.g., Zoom, Google Classroom) are allowed for flexible teaching approaches, accommodating different learning styles during a critical situation [27]. In contrast to planned online education, ERT represents an expedient, improvised solution to maintain educational continuity. This approach frequently lacks the robust

infrastructure, adequate training, and essential resources associated with well-designed digital learning environments. The intersection of ERT, online English instruction, teacher professional development, and crisis-driven education underscores critical areas for scholarly inquiry and practical application. Effective implementation of ERT and online English courses necessitates competent educators who have undergone continuous professional development, particularly in digital pedagogical methodologies. In a study, [23] coined that teachers sought training through webinars and courses to improve their digital competencies during an emergency situation. Facilitating English instruction during challenging circumstances requires adaptability, resilience, and the capacity to innovate under adverse conditions. As academic institutions continue to explore the role of technology in education, comprehending these domains becomes increasingly crucial to ensure that teaching and learning remain effective, inclusive, and equitable.

1.3 Statement of the Problem

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) has emerged as the sole dependable pedagogical approach on a global scale, in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bangladesh follows suit in this respect. However, according to [7], remote teaching is a situation in which courses are delivered online in lieu of in-person instruction in the classroom as a result of unforeseen circumstances. The years 2020 and 2021 are regarded as afflicted years for educators and policymakers because of an impending catastrophe of which no one can ever be certain. According to [7], emergency remote teaching is an alternative to the conventional mode of instruction. This has arisen as a result of the academic session being entirely disrupted by Covid-19 and requires an immediate solution to close the study gap. [10] investigated how the Covid-19 pandemic has prompted instructors to reconsider traditional campus-based online instruction and learning. [15] have stated that adequate technological resources and epistemological entry are essential. Additionally, [10] asserted that emergency remote teaching is a challenging endeavor for academic institutions and a difficult strategy to implement in professional education. [17] examined the distinctions between emergency remote teaching, online teaching, and learning. Additionally, the authors noted that emergency remote teaching is an unplanned and imperative implementation, for which no preparation has been made.

At this time, the COVID-19 issue has revealed one thing: the profound apathy exhibited by policymakers in Bangladesh towards the education sector. Consistently, the national education system, educators, and instructors have been subjected to negative consequences due to the lack of a well-defined strategy by the regulatory

body. In any case, private universities are at the forefront of remote teaching and learning. Despite this, to date, there has been a lack of scholarly investigation into educators' specific experiences in this area. Emergency remote teaching (ERL) has brought about a significant transformation in the field of education. With regard to this transition to ERT, university instructors and students have encountered a variety of experiences with distinct facets and types. As a pandemic, COVID-19 has emerged before instructors and pupils, introducing the novel concept of continuing regular study without preparation or prior strategy.

As a result, university instructors are confronted for the first time with ERT, a novel teaching system that offers educational institutions a glimmer of hope for sustaining the pedagogical curriculum in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. Simultaneously, the implementation of ERT diverges significantly from the conventional teaching approaches adopted by educators. Additionally, English department instructors are currently engaging in online communication with their pupils to teach language and literature courses. Many institutions and educators are still unaware of the extent to which ERT is effective or of the novel challenges that educators encounter when utilizing ERT to teach English. Therefore, an investigation is required to determine the general comprehension and experience of English instructors at private universities.

regarding the emergence of remote teaching.

1.4 Research question

The research question of this study is-

What experience do the private university English teachers have about Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) of English during the pandemic?

1.5 Research objective

The objective of this study is-

- to explore private university English teachers' experience of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT)of English during the pandemic.

1.6 Significance of the study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the emergency remote teaching experience of English department instructors teaching at private institutions in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 outbreak. Thus, this analysis aims to explore the rationale for implementing the new teaching method and tackle the various challenges encountered by university teachers in implementing Emergency Remote Teaching

(ERT) for English instruction. The findings of this study will directly impact private university English teachers' understanding and expertise in teaching remotely, which has become necessary owing to the advent of the COVID-19 epidemic. First, there is a lack of prior studies on how private university teachers adapt to the use of Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) during the shutdown of educational facilities for an indefinite duration. This study will also uncover the psychological and physical state of pupils who have turned to an unconventional education method known as Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT). Teachers acquire knowledge from the results of this study based on their shared experiences. Future researchers will benefit from performing studies on this subject. The findings of this study may also assist them in strategizing and implementing ERT in a more effective and influential manner. Ultimately, the outcomes will assist policymakers in formulating and determining an education policy centered on ERT for English language and literature departments.

2. Literature Review

Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) is a quick and temporary shift of teaching modality from in-person to online academic platforms due to crisis circumstances arising from natural calamities or pandemics, where both teachers and students move to online academic platforms without planning. ERT is significantly different from 'Online Education or Distance Learning'. As ERT differs greatly from online instruction, everyone should approach and become ready for it in a new way. A curriculum designed with online delivery in mind is assumed in regular online education, while ERT is defined as a temporary shift of instructional delivery to an alternate delivery mode due to crisis circumstances [15]. The curriculum for ERT is intended to be developed over time.

"Online learning can be broadly defined as the use of the internet in some way to enhance the interaction between teacher and student. Online delivery covers both asynchronous forms of interaction such as assessment tools and the provision of web-based course materials, and synchronous interaction through email, newsgroups, and conferencing tools, such as chat groups. This includes both classroom-based instruction and distance education. Other terms synonymous with online learning include 'web-based education' and 'e-learning [8]"

The overall global teaching system of the whole world collapsed during the pandemic. With the rapid outbreak of COVID-19, the formal teaching-learning system has switched to virtual platforms and Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) faces several challenges during the pandemic. In a study [11-12] found that emergency remote

teaching encountered technological, educational, and social challenges. The technological challenge stems from unreliable Internet connections and pupils' lack of necessary electronics. Educational shortcoming indicates that a lack of digital skills, lack of structured content versus an abundance of online resources, a lack of interactivity and motivation, and a lack of social and cognitive presence are the main pedagogical challenges. The key social issues include the loss of human interaction between teachers and students, the lack of home-based learning places, and poor support from parents who work remotely in the same locations. In another study, [29] found that participants faced many problems when transitioning to emergency remote teaching (ERT). In response to these challenges, the participants reported participating in various learning experiences to ease their transition to remote instruction to teach English language skills along with literature. Like other skills teaching writing was also challenging [3]. Participants felt overwhelmed and unprepared to use online and remote teaching strategies and tools due to students' unreliable Internet access, changing personal needs, and unclear or shifting educational or governmental directives. The participants relied on informal, self-directed learning with their professional learning networks to modify their practice because they needed serious help.

Educators like many university professors, struggled to move their face-to-face courses online because of COVID-19. The problem also worsened for teachers who were unsure or uncomfortable bringing technology into their classrooms and those who had negative opinions of technology. As technology platforms change rapidly, "the online environment also presents challenges for many academic staff who increasingly require higher levels of technological competency and proficiency in addition to their regular academic workload". [2] Found that integration of technology in teaching improves teachers' professional skills. Price [26] explored that teachers should have proper knowledge about using the technology at their disposal during emergencies, and it would be appropriate to follow asynchronous and synchronous class hours to prepare for oral performance. [18] Emphasized that both faculty and learners should have proper knowledge of ICT, appropriate applications, strict rules, strong moral ground among the faculty and learners and easy access to ICT for the best outcomes during emergency remote teaching experience. [1] Positively assessed practitioners, such as schools, government bodies, and educational foundations, and noted that publications mostly cover the tertiary level. They also believed that a more in-depth study would help in understanding the issues and affordances of ERT in language teaching. Although teachers' self-efficacy and positive teaching mindedness

help EFL teachers during ERT [24], the hollowness and ex post facto approach to teaching, along with the wrong idea of the teaching situation [19] to teaching English.

In a study [14] categorized Arab countries into two sections: low-tech and high-tech. Low-tech countries failed to switch to ERT due to an inadequate supply of technological infrastructure whereas high-tech countries could move to ERT in a timely manner.

A recent study by [20] public universities has revealed that the teachers showed a positive attitude toward online teaching. Game-based learning and teaching played an impactful role in motivating and teaching English language [20]. Although they lacked reparation and poor online pedagogical skills the students shared negative reactions of poor Internet connections, unaffordability of devices, unfamiliarity with how to use devices and assessment challenges. In an empirical study [6] and [16] found that synchronous collaborative tools, often combined with textbook tools, were used in ERT in a broad range of countries where the major concentrated fields were Health & Welfare and Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics. The study also found that most studies were conducted cross-sectionally and descriptively focusing on undergraduate students. [25] showed that the institutions need a spacious platform, necessary coaching for the teachers and the students to handle remote teaching, along with proper evaluation practices.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Method

This study used a qualitative method. Data collected from qualitative research facilitated comprehension of the phenomena from the participants' perspective. Interviews, group discussions, observations, document analyses, and ethnography are often used as qualitative approaches [13].

3.2 Sample and Sampling Technique

The sampling frame was designed based on the list of elements. The sampling frame for this study was taken from the teachers of the English department in higher education institutions in Bangladesh and private universities. Higher Education includes teachers teaching at bachelor's and master's levels at different universities in Bangladesh. The reason for selecting university teachers as target participants was their experience in teaching English departments, guiding students in learning the English language, analyzing students' written papers, witnessing students' plagiarized papers, factors that challenge teachers to solve this problem, teachers' perception and

guiding influence on students, etc. Almost all teachers in higher education in Bangladesh have dealt with online teaching during the pandemic. Overall, teachers at the tertiary level were convenient for the sampling frame and easy to access for collecting the data of this study. Therefore, the expected data can be collected from them. The sampling frame was constructed by ten participants based on the following criteria: teachers who are residents of Bangladesh and teaching in higher education private universities in Dhaka, Cumilla and Feni. The required data were collected using the purposive sampling technique.

3.3 : Data Collection and Processing

For data collection, an in-depth interview was chosen as the instrument to help the researcher to analyze the perspective of a small number of participants on specific phenomena. The respondents were university teachers who generally taught both English literature and language so all of them were experts in teaching English skills. Their permission was obtained through social media, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings prior to their interviews. The interview was taken in-person and over the telephone and all participants were encouraged to share their perspectives liberally. In total 12 teachers from seven private universities were interviewed. Their designation was from lecturer to professor. The validity and compatibility of the interviews were verified by thoroughly encountering their perspectives and analyzing them for the research objective.

3.4 : Developing an In-depth Interview Protocol

A semi-structured interview guide was developed [21]. The researchers focused on the teachers' perceptions of plagiarism. The researchers conducted validity and reliability assessments before conducting the data-collection process. Qualitative experts at the Southeast University validated the interview guide using a combination of argumentative and cumulative techniques. Argumentative validity uses data as a source of argument to overcome conflicting points of view [5]. Cumulative validation is a cross-referencing method in which researchers use the accessible literature to match the findings. Based on the nature of the data and availability of resources, the present study followed the cumulative verification process considering the nature of the data. Cross-referencing was used in the cumulative validation process, meaning that the researchers used accessible literature to match the results.

To ensure the reliability of the research, e-mails were sent by the interviewees after completing the in-depth interview questionnaire and notes were preserved. There were

17 interview questions and teachers may need approximately 60 minutes to answer these questions. The in-depth interview questionnaire is provided in the appendix.

3.5 Data Analysis

The study followed thematic data analysis to identify, examine, and elucidate recurring patterns or themes within a dataset. This tool involves the systematic organization and detailed description of data, facilitating researchers' interpretation of various aspects of the research subject. It involves typically six steps including familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report [28]. The purpose of following this method is to uncover insights that summarize the broader significance or experiences relating to the research question. This versatile method can be applied to diverse types of data, including interviews and surveys, and offers a systematic approach to comprehending complex qualitative information. Its flexibility and methodical nature render it a valuable tool for researchers seeking to extract meaningful patterns from their data.

4. Findings and Discussion

The study found both advantages and disadvantages of adopting a virtual platform in delivering lectures on English language teaching. The challenges outweigh the opportunities of following blended learning marking teachers' professional inadequacy in using technologies, insufficient institutional support with technological gadgets and so on. Twelve teachers from eight universities participated in the in-depth interviews. All educators were from the same discipline who taught English language and literature courses to graduate and undergraduate students. Eight of the participants were male and the rest were female. The participants were given two options: either in person or in a virtual interview. Seven of the teachers opted for face-to-face options and the other four teachers faced the interview through Google Meet due to their rigorous schedules and other workloads at the station. Moreover, they opted for a virtual platform to avoid time hassles. The study found mixed opinions from the participants through in-depth interviews. Before the pandemic, a small number of participants taught English on online platforms as universities followed an in-person mode of teaching. However, to conduct English classes some of the participants used Google Meet as a virtual platform of teaching while others used the Zoom platform.

The first and foremost problem with very poor internet facilities while conducting online classes during the pandemic led to pedagogical problems. Slow Internet coverage immensely hampered proper teaching, which brought a negative conception

about the online teaching learning system of the country. It lasted for a long period although some operators provided good bandwidth in the last half of the pandemic.

The novice teachers encountered many IT-related problems, while the senior faculty had sufficient experience, that led them to the satisfactory outcome of the classes they conducted. A few of them had no previous online teaching experience. Sometimes, the novice teachers took assistance from senior peers from the same department or IT-related departments to conduct smooth classes who were in close contact either over the phone or through physical meetings. Most private university teachers were found to operate technological gadgets more skillfully.

Different technological devices have been used such as smartphones, laptops, desktops, and tabs to conduct English language classes. More than 50% of the respondents preferred smartphones because they were able to buy and handle most teachers. The second priority was laptop use whereas the other options were for many people. It was also found from the participants that they had to use analog phones due to the affordability, by which they made phone calls to instruct lessons and provide instant solutions. To handle an emergency situation in teaching, policy development has been an emergency.

Language course instructors faced problems while conducting basic skills courses using a virtual writing board. The problem lies in technical issues and inexperience with IT. The use of Google Forms, sometimes, for sharing lessons, engaging learners in class activities via Google quiz, and short or long answer options supported the teachers replacing the virtual board. Screen sharing provides a good avenue for the learning environment. Participants' insights indicate that the evaluation system needs to be upgraded for an online platform of teaching.

In the case of teaching literature courses, the instructors followed Wikipedia sources and prepared soft copies to deliver lectures. Sometimes, slide presentations, image sharing and other documentary sharing helped the teachers teach English. The lack of sufficient Internet speed hampered the demonstration of some video clips in the related field. The study also found that almost all the students were present in a course. The number of students fluctuated and the main cause was the unavailability of personal devices and Internet speed. In teaching literature courses, the participants preferred an offline class delivery system.

Few participants had international teaching experience. Their views were that Bangladesh lags behind in the field of remote teaching following virtual platforms in

comparison with the first and second world countries and even Asian and neighboring countries. Both teachers and students should work to promote the hybrid teaching system. In fact, peer collaboration through online Zoom meetings provided a quick solution to problems related to teaching English to some extent. While some studies argue about the infrastructure of the institutions, this study suggests proper training of the EFL teachers on virtual teaching techniques, for which the IQAC of an institution would play a big role in this regard.

Overall, the online English language teaching experience did not reach a satisfactory level for the newly founded university teachers and novice teachers. Infrastructural issues such as IT training and offering devices to faculty have been found to some extent when conducting online courses. It was a blessing for learners to learn English while sitting in remote areas. Online teaching and learning of the English language brought about a new dimension to the rigorous time-scheduled teachers and learners. The future researchers would focus on ERT experiences of the same teachers marking a comparative study of virtual teaching skills during and after the pandemic.

5. Recommendations

This study had some limitations that might partially impact the findings. If the number of participants were larger, there might have been a change in the results. In addition, data from the students could help compare and contrast the opinions of teachers.

A future study could be a mixed method in which the data collected from teachers and students brings more solid and realistic findings. The data from the guardians of the students of the English department may add new value to future studies. Abundant pre-service and in-service teacher training would lessen the problems of virtually teaching English. The learners could have been introduced to the latest apps for learning and practicing English. Besides, for virtual teaching-learning a special attention to technology adaptation needs a special attention. Teacher training on technology mediated teaching and learning requires institutionalization. Though corona pandemic collapsed academia in the first half of the pandemic, later on the scenario turn positive. Therefore, habituation with emergency remote teaching needs great attention.

6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a big change in all the sectors including education in Bangladesh. The education sector encountered a big catastrophe with the

abrupt commence of the pandemic. Both the teachers and the students fell in danger to continue a smooth education since there was a horrific situation everywhere. This study explored the experiences of English language teachers in Bangladesh during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teachers shared experiences indicated that there was full dominance of the virtual platform of teaching English, where both had to negotiate with the present circumstances to teach English. The result showed mixed reactions of the participants; the total experience was categorized into two sections from the teacher end and from the student's end. Though the first half of the pandemic was worse, in the later half the situation of technology-mediated education started to change to the better. Both problems are connected with teachers and students although the concerned authority cannot avoid their responsibilities too. The most bitter experience was with poor internet facilities and improper knowledge on how to conduct classes on online platforms which mostly impacted learners. This happened because of the lack of proper pre-service training in the virtual teaching approaches of the teachers. It is undeniable that the IQAC Cell could have been more enriched to confirm quality education either online or in in-person. This global crisis has shaken even the top-tier educational institutions of the country.

Proper ICT management could be a good solution for these problems. Although online teaching was challenging during the first phase of the pandemic, the challenges lessened with time as various opportunities for technological and financial assistance were provided to the teachers. English language track teachers were ahead of literature track instructors in teaching English.

If hybrid learning is in full practice all over the country, there could be fewer problems in teaching and learning English with English teachers. Setting up an ICT training section in every university has been time-demanding to avoid any unpredictable problems during emergency remote teaching.

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Ethical Statement
This research was conducted following the ethical guidelines of Feni University Research Cell. The participants were also confirmed about the data privacy.

Conflict of Interest
There is no conflict of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data are not accessible.

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Appendix A

In-depth Interview Questionnaire

Questions

1. Name of institution
2. Age
3. Years of teaching experience.
4. Designation
5. Have you ever taken online class before pandemic?
6. Did you teach English during Covid-19 or during emergency case?
7. Did you have hybrid teaching experience?
8. What apps did you use to deliver your lessons?
9. What challenges did you face while teaching English online?
10. Do you encounter IT related problems? What are they?
11. What is your opinion about internet compatibility?
12. What is the approximate percentage of attendees in the virtual classroom?
13. Could you differentiate between online and in-person English pedagogy?
14. Could you please share your experiences of teaching at home and abroad if you have?
15. What courses do you teach either language or literature courses?
16. In what courses do you find easier in teaching online?
17. What type of course materials you made your students follow?
18. How did you solve emergency remote teaching problems instantly?