

Exclusion of Fundamental English Language Course: Learners' and Teachers' Perspectives in The Context of Barishal University, Bangladesh

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Abstract: Realizing the value of developing learners' English language skill in the present global context, this study aims at exploring situational variables responsible for the exclusion of Fundamental English language course from the undergraduate syllabuses of Barishal University, Bangladesh and finding out teachers' and learners' perception towards this course. This empirical research gathered both quantitative and qualitative data from two important stakeholders of this institution- students and teachers. Quantitative data was collected through questionnaire studies both from students and teachers and qualitative data was collected through semi-structured interviews with the teachers. Quantitative data revealed that 89.47% students considered it a useful course as 80.26% students and 66% teachers believed it helped them to develop their communicative skill in English. Though 71.43% teachers opined that learners past achievements in English was not sufficient to pursue higher education, 80.52% student respondents held students already having sufficient command was the main reason behind the exclusion. On the other hand, the main reasons behind exclusion identified by the teachers were the traditional course content, students' low satisfaction level, credit limitation, no qualitative change in students' communication skill and limited budget of the authority. However, the qualitative data revealed instead of omission, some timely modifications in the course content and teaching strategies would have been more beneficial for the students. Therefore, this study will provide fresh insights for Barishal University authority and teachers, who are involved in curriculum development, in designing an effective curriculum by considering the situational factors which contributed to the exclusion of Fundamental English course and by addressing learners needs and perceptions regarding this course.

Key Words: fundamental English course; situational factors; learners' need, learners' perception, teachers' perception

I. Introduction

In the twenty-first century English language skill is considered as life-long technical skill. Now, it has become the language of survival in the global competition as it is the passport to the ICT sector and the new knowledge domain necessary for boosting up a country's sustainable socio-economic growth. Considering this reality, our National Education Policy 2010 has put a lot of emphasis on building up a skilled manpower by effectively introducing them to the knowledge of the modern and fast advancing world. One of the basic objectives of this policy is to ensure skills of high standard at different areas and levels of education by attaching substantial importance to information and communication technology (ICT) along with Mathematics, Science and English so that learners can successfully compete at the global context and the dream of Digital Bangladesh can be a reality. Conforming with the mission and vision of National Education Policy 2010, Barishal University like other universities of the country made Fundamental English language course compulsory for all the departments from the very beginning of its journey. The fundamental English language course of Barishal University had the purpose of equipping students with English language skill as well as smoothing their academic sailing, yet this course lost its appeal in many departments of this university and officially it was excluded from some of the departments' undergraduate syllabuses. In this connection it is worth-mentioning that the success or failure of a particular course, program or curriculum is determined by some contextual or situational factors of the institutions in which it has been carried out. These factors may be political, social, economic, or institutional. Beside these, many parties are also involved in the teaching-learning process, for example- institutional authorities, administrative bodies, policy makers, teachers, learners, parents, and others. They also influence the continuation or discontinuation of a particular course or program. Therefore, this paper, by focusing on the situational analysis related theories and by doing both quantitative and qualitative analysis of the collected data this study has thrown some fresh lights on those situational variables that worked behind the exclusion of the Fundamental English language course in the Barishal university context. It has also explored teachers' and learners' perceptions toward this course so that necessary steps can be taken to design appropriate curriculum to maximize learning output and thus produce skilled manpower in the context of Barishal University.

II. Literature Review

The theoretical concepts like learners' need, situation analysis have been clarified in this section.

Learners' Need:

The term 'need' does not have any straightforward meaning and can be interpreted in many ways. According to Brindley (1984, 28), "Need is sometimes used to refer to wants, desires, demands, expectation, motivation, lacks, constrains and requirements." Needs are also described as linguistic deficiency, that is as describing the difference between what a learner can presently do in a language and what he/ she should be able to do (Richards, 2001, p.54). Porcher (1977, cited in Brindley 1984) defines it from a different perspective. To him, "Need is not a thing that exists and might be encountered ready-made on the street. It is a thing which is constructed, the center of conceptual networks and the product of a number of epistemological choices (which are not innocent themselves, of course)." In other words, learners' need is something dependent on judgments of different stakeholders like teachers, learners, employers, parents, and others involved in the teaching-learning process and it reflects their attitudes, interests, and values. Therefore, before designing and implementing a language program in any institutional setting, curriculum planners must consider learners' need otherwise it will not bring out fruitful result both for the learners and the institutions rather it will be a waste of time, money, and effort.

Situation Analysis

Situation analysis is often viewed as a complementary part of need analysis. It is one of the foundational steps of developing a curriculum. As any curriculum is carried out in contexts, the specific contextual factors of that context are sure to have some impact, either positive or negative, on the implementation and execution of that curriculum in that setting. A particular language program can be successful in context A which may be a worst kind of experience in context B depending on the specific situational variables. "It is generally assumed that there is major four stages in process of curriculum development at any levels of education. They are- selection of objectives, selection and organization of contents, selection and organization of learning experiences/methods and evaluation." (Kaur, 2017). All these stages are taken into consideration for the purpose of the refinement of the process.

Audrey and Nicholls in their book titled "Developing a Curriculum: A Practical Guide" (1974) added another stage of curriculum development which is situation analysis. As language programs are carried out in specific contexts, so apart from learners' need, some factors related to that contexts are also relevant to the design and implementation of successful language programs. A language curriculum is a function of the interrelationships that hold between subject-specific concerns and other broader factors embracing socio-political and philosophical matters, educational value systems, theory and practice in curriculum design, teacher experiential wisdom and learner motivation. In order to understand the foreign language curriculum in any context it is, therefore, necessary to attempt to understand how all the various influences interrelate to give a particular shape to the planning and execution of the teaching/learning process (Clark, 1987, xii). Curriculum development is a thought seeking and thought-provoking process "carried on and on for the advancement, improvement, and betterment of the curricula on one end and suggesting curricular reforms, innovations, and changes on the other hand. While doing all these activities, teachers, one of the major decision makers of curriculum design and change, find themselves surrounded by situations which are unique to the realities with which they work" (Kaur, 2017). According to Nicholls and Nicholls (1974), "These situations are made up of a number of factors such as pupils, their backgrounds, schools, its climate, its staff, facilities and equipment. Analysis of these factors is one step towards the rational approach of accommodating the best in curricula by making the best decision at the right time." Richards (2001) has defined situation analysis as "An analysis of factors in the context of a planned or present curriculum project that is made in order to assess their potential impact on the project. These factors may be political, social, economic or institutional."

As all these above-mentioned factors can significantly influence the design and implementation of a course or program, a pre-analysis of these contextual factors is a must. It also should be kept in mind that curriculum development is a cyclic and dynamic process, analysis of these factors can be done at any point of curriculum execution for making the course more effective by introducing changes and modifications. When Barishal University started its journey with six departments in 2011, it put a stress on English language learning and made Fundamental English course compulsory for all the departments. But syllabuses were designed in the model of Dhaka University or other established universities of country without sufficient pre-analysis of the above-mentioned factors. For this reason, after 2/3 years of implementation, this course lost its appeal in various departments of Barishal University. Again, unfortunate but a matter of fact that when this course was made optional and finally excluded, it was done abruptly without any kind of intermediate analysis of learners need and these situational factors for the sustenance of the course. Therefore, this study aims to fill the knowledge gap in this regard and intends to provide fresh insights for the Barishal University authority and teachers who are involved in curriculum design and implementation process.

III. Research Objectives

The broad objective of this study is to improve quality of education provided to the learners of Barishal University and thus to produce quality Graduates and skilled human resources to meet the challenges of 21st century.

Some of the specific objectives are:

1. To find out different situational factors worked behind the exclusion of Fundamental English course from the Undergraduate syllabuses of some Departments of Barishal University namely- Public Administration, Sociology, Political Science, Finance and Banking, Accounting and Information Systems, Physics, Chemistry, Mathematics, Botany and Soil and Environmental Science.
2. To explore teachers' (of the concerned departments and who taught this course) perceptions of and attitudes toward this course
3. To explore learners' perceptions regarding this course
4. To provide recommendations based on both students' and teachers' opinion for the successful implementation and execution of this course in the context of Barishal University

IV. Research Questions

1. What were the major factors that influenced the exclusion of Fundamental English course from the Undergraduate syllabuses of different departments of Barishal University?
2. What are the perceptions of the learners regarding this course?
3. What are the perceptions of the teachers (of the concerned departments and who taught the course) regarding this course?

V. Research Methodology

This is primary empirical research. To explore the research questions, a mixed method research design was adopted. Quantitative data were collected through questionnaire studies among the teachers and the learners of different departments of Barishal University. A set of questionnaires was developed to collect data from the learners who attended the course. 380 undergraduate students from 10 departments of Barishal University- Public Administration (36), Sociology (36), Political Science (57), Finance and Banking (39), Accounting and Information Systems (55), Physics (26), Chemistry (19), Mathematics (48), Botany (34), and Soil and Environmental Science (30) were surveyed based on convenient sampling. Beside this, another set of questionnaire studies was conducted among the faculties of Barishal University where 35 teachers from those departments who excluded Fundamental English Course from their syllabuses participated. Apart from these quantitative studies, a semi-structured interview session was conducted with 45 teachers from different departments of Barishal University (both teachers from concerned departments and who taught this course) to get a better glimpse of their perceptions of and attitude toward this course. Then, two sets of quantitative data were analyzed and presented in tables with their respective percentages. Qualitative data were analyzed textually. Finally, recommendations were provided based on teacher-learners' responses to open ended questions in the questionnaires and teachers' suggestions in the semi-structured interviews.

VI. Data analysis

Questionnaire Study-1

Questionnaire study-1 was designed for the students who attended the course. Under this study, total 380 undergraduates from 10 departments of Barishal University who have omitted this course - Public Administration (36), Sociology (36), Political Science (57), Finance and Banking (39), Accounting and Information Systems (55), Physics (26), Chemistry (19), Mathematics (48), Botany (34), and Soil and Environmental Science (30) participated. A set of questionnaires with 12 close-ended questions and 1 open-ended question was distributed and collected. Finally, their responses were calculated and presented in percentages.

Question-1.1	Opinions of the students		
How helpful was the course?	Very useful	Useful	Not useful
	41.05%	48.42%	10.53%

In response to question (1.1), 41.05% and 48.42% respondents considered this course a very useful and useful one respectively. Only average 10.53% respondents found it not useful at all.

Question-1.2	Opinions of the students		
Did you enjoy the course?	Very much	Moderately	Not at all
	39.21%	43.95%	16.84%

It is evident from the chart that 39.21% of the participants enjoyed the course very much and 43.95% of them enjoyed it moderately whereas 16.84% did not enjoy it at all.

Question-1.3	Opinions of the students		
Did the course help you to improve your communicative skill in English?	Significantly	Moderately	Not at all
	26.58%	53.68%	19.74%

The chart shows that 53.68% participants of all these departments believed that this course helped them moderately to improve their communication skill in English. Average 26.50% respondents claimed that it helped them significantly whereas average 20.77% of the respondents thought it did not help them at all to improve their communication skill in English.

Question-1.4	Opinions of the students	
Do you think that this course was a burden on you?	Yes	No
	17.63%	82.37%

The chart shows that 82.37% of the respondents did not think that this course was a burden for them whereas rest of the participants felt it other wisely.

Question-1.5	Opinions of the students	
Do you think that this course is helpful for your professional life?	Yes	No
	77.89%	22.11%

In response to Question (1.5), 77.89% participants thought that this course is helpful for their professional life whereas rest of the participants thought that it will not help at all.

Question-1.6	Opinions of the students		
How were the course topics?	Relevant	Moderately Relevant	Irrelevant
	77.63%	13.42%	8.95%

It is obvious from the chart that 77.63% of the respondents thought that the course topics were relevant whereas 13.42% and 10.39% considered it as moderately relevant and irrelevant respectively.

Question-1.7	Opinions of the students		
Did this course help you in your academic study?	Very much	Little bit	Not at all
	44.21%	45.26%	10.53%

The chart shows that 44.21% of the sample opined that this course helped them academically and 45.26% thought it helped a little. But, 10.53% stated it did not help them in their academic journey.

Question-1.8	Opinions of the students		
How were the instructors?	Very sincere	Moderately Sincere	Not sincere at all
	47.63%	42.11%	10.26%

It is clear from the chart that 47.63% and 42.11% of the participants were respectively very satisfied and moderately satisfied with the course teachers' sincerity whereas other 10.26% thought teachers were not sincere at all.

Question-1.9	Opinions of the students		
Your department has already excluded this course from your syllabus. Which of the following reasons do you think work behind it?	It gives no benefit	It costs time and money	Students already have sufficient command in English
	11.32%	8.16%	80.52%

In response to question (1.9), 80.52% of the respondents thought that students' having sufficient command of English was a major driving force behind the exclusion of this course, whereas other 11.32% and 8.16% identified the reasons as it gives no benefit and it costs time and money respectively.

Question-1.10	Opinions of the students	
Did your department take your opinion when they executed the decision?	Yes	No
	13.95%	86.05%

In response to question (1.10), 86.05% of the participants opined that department authority did not take their concern before executing the decision of excluding this course, whereas only 13.95% opined that their views were taken into consideration by the department authority.

Question-1.11	Opinions of the students			
What is your reaction about the exclusion of the course?	Very positive	Fairly positive	Negative	Very negative
	27.89%	42.11%	21.05%	8.95%

The table illustrates that 42.11% and 27.89% of the respondents accepted the decision of exclusion positively and very positively. Only 21.05% and 8.95% reacted negatively and very negatively.

Question-1.12	Opinions of the students	
Do you want the inclusion of this course in your syllabus again?	Yes	No
	55.53%	44.47%

It is obvious from the chart that 55.53% of the sample wanted the inclusion of this course in their syllabus but other 44.47% expressed it otherwise.

In response to the open-ended question (1.13, Do you think rather than excluding this course some steps to make it more effective would have been better?), most of the participants from these departments expressed satisfactory remarks regarding this course. According to them this course is very essential for their academic and professional purposes because most of the learners of Barishal University are from rural Bangla-medium schools and colleges where they did not get any opportunities to practice speaking and listening in English. This course provided them with the facilities of these practices which was very necessary to cope with departmental lectures as the medium of instruction was English. It also gave them the opportunities to develop their presentation and interaction skills. Many of them believed that the course topics were relevant but teachers' sincerity and more practice-based teaching approach were required to make the course more effective. Some of them opined that course content should be improved and focus should be given on communicative and functional practices rather than on grammar. Many of them opined that authority of Barishal University should take necessary steps to make this course compulsory for all the departments of Barishal University considering learner need.

Questionnaire Study-2

Considering the decisive role teachers can play in curriculum design and implementation, a set of questionnaires with 20 closed-ended questions and 1 open-ended question was designed for the faculties (of those departments who omitted this course) of Barishal University. In this study 35 teachers, based on convenient sampling, took part. Then their responses were tabulated in percentages and presented in tables.

Question-2.1		Frequency	Percentage
Are you satisfied with your students' present English language skill?	Yes	03	08.57%
	No	18	51.43%
	Moderately Yes	14	40.00%

It is evident from the table that 51.43% of the respondents were not satisfied with their students' proficiency level, 40% of them were moderately satisfied and only 8.57% of them were completely satisfied.

Question-2.2		Frequency	Percentage
Can they produce grammatically correct sentences in English?	Very Often	0	0%
	Often	18	51.43%
	Sometimes	17	48.57%
	Never	0	0%

In response to question (2.2), 51.43% respondents expressed that their students can often produce grammatically correct sentences and other 48.57% think sometimes they can do it.

Question-2.3		Frequency	Percentage
Can they write something properly and accurately in English?	Very Often	03	08.57%
	Often	17	48.57%
	Sometimes	14	40.00%
	Never	01	02.86%

In response to question (2.3), 48.57% and 40% participants were of the view that their students can write something properly and accurately in English often and sometimes respectively. Only 8.57% opined that they can do it very often whereas 2.86% of them stated students can never do it.

Question-2.4		Frequency	Percentage
Can they speak fluently in English?	Very Often	02	05.71%
	Often	06	17.14%
	Sometimes	22	62.86%
	Never	05	14.29%

The table illustrates that 62.86% of the respondents opined that their students can sometimes speak fluently, 17.14% and 5.71% claimed they can do it often and very often respectively while the rest 14.29% expressed they can never speak fluently.

Question-2.5		Frequency	Percentage
Do they have mutually intelligible accents?	Very Often	01	02.86%
	Often	09	25.71%
	Sometimes	21	60.00%
	Never	04	11.43%

It is obvious from the table that 60% of the respondents were of the view that sometimes their students have mutually intelligible accents and 25.71% and 2.86% declared they have it often and very often respectively while the rest 11.43% mentioned they do not have mutually intelligible accents.

Question-2.6		Frequency	Percentage
Do they face their academic viva-voce in English?	Yes	29	82.86%
	No	06	17.14%

In response to question (2.6), 82.86% of the respondents expressed that their students face their academic viva voces in English while other 17.14% expressed it other wisely.

Question-2.7		Frequency	Percentage
Are you satisfied with their linguistic performances in the viva-voce?	Yes	01	02.86%
	No	17	48.57%
	Moderately Yes	17	48.57%

Presented data reveals that 48.57% of the respondents were not satisfied with their students' performances in the viva-voce whereas the equal percentage were moderately satisfied and only 2.86% were completely satisfied.

Question-2.8		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think their past achievement in English (up to Intermediate level) is sufficient for pursuing higher education in English?	Yes	10	28.57%
	No	25	71.43%

The table shows that 71.43% of the participants believed that their students' achievements in English up to Intermediate level are not enough for pursuing higher education in English whereas the rest 28.57% opined it other wisely.

Question-2.9		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think your students' academic performance is poor because of their poor language skill?	Yes	19	54.29%
	No	16	45.71%

The table illustrates that 54.29% respondents believed that their students' academic performance is poor because poor language skill but other 45.71% did not blame poor language skill for poor academic performances.

Question-2.10		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think your students' English language skill should be developed for competing in the job market?	Yes	32	91.43%
	No	03	08.57%

It is clear from the presented data that 91.43% respondents were of the view that their students' English language skill should be developed for surviving in the job market but the rest 8.57% thought their students have sufficient command in English to compete in the job market.

Question-2.11		Frequency	Percentage
Do you Fundamental English Language course helped your learners to develop their language skill?	Yes	08	22.86%
	No	10	28.57%
	Moderately Yes	15	42.86%
	Not at all	02	05.71%

It is evident from the table respectively 42.86% and 22.86% participants were of the view that this course helped their learners to develop their language skill moderately and certainly. But 34.28% believed that it did not help the learners.

Question-2.12		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think this course was a burden for your learners?	Yes	12	34.29%
	No	23	65.71%

It is clear from the chart that 65.71% respondents did not consider this course as a burden for the learners whereas 34.29% viewed it other wisely.

Question-2.13		Frequency	Percentage
Who taught it?	Teachers from English department	20	57.14%
	Teachers from your own department	15	42.86%
	Teachers from other institutions	0	0%

In response to question (2.13), 57.14% respondents expressed that this course was taught by teachers from English department while rest 42.86% expressed that it was conducted by teachers from their own departments.

Question-2.14		Frequency	Percentage
Do you think an English language specialist is required for teaching this course?	Yes	23	65.71%
	No	07	20.00%
	Not necessary at all	05	14.29%

The chart shows that 65.71% respondents were of the view that English language professionals are required for teaching this course but nearly 34.5% did not consider it mandatory.

Question-2.15		Frequency	Percentage
were you satisfied with the teachers' qualifications and performances?	Yes	21	60.00%
	No	03	08.57%
	Moderately Yes	11	31.43%
	Not at all	0	0%

The table shows that 60% and 31.43% respondents were satisfied and moderately satisfied respectively with the teachers' qualifications and performances while 8.57% were not at all satisfied with the teachers.

Question-2.16		Frequency	Percentage
How were they?	Friendly, sincere, and qualified	23	65.71%
	Friendly, sincere but not qualified	06	17.14%
	Friendly, qualified but not sincere	05	14.29%
	Above mentioned characteristics are absent in them	01	02.86%

In response to question (2.16) 65.71% participants opined that teachers were very friendly, sincere, and qualified, 17.14% considered them as friendly, sincere but not qualified and the rest 14.29% consider them as friendly, qualified but not sincere.

Question-2.17		Frequency	Percentage
Which of the following reasons do you think worked behind the exclusion of this course?	The course contents were not useful	09	25.71%
	Teachers were not qualified	01	02.86%
	Teachers were not sincere	01	02.86%
	Students were not satisfied with this course	08	22.86%
	Limited budget of the authority	06	17.14%
	Credit limitation	01	02.86%
	Course content problem	01	02.86%
	No idea	08	22.86%

Presented data reveals that 25.71%, 22.86%, 17.14% of the respondents identified the reasons behind the exclusion as the course was not useful, students were not satisfied with the course and limited budget of the authority respectively. Other 2.86% felt teacher's qualifications was the reason while another 2.86% mentioned the causes as credit limitations and problems with the course content. The rest 22.86% propounded that they had no idea in this regard.

Question-2.18		Frequency	Percentage
Did your students give their opinions in favor of omitting this course from their syllabus?	Yes	11	31.43%
	No	24	68.57%

The chart shows that 68.57% of respondents opined that students did not give their consent in favor of omitting this course from their syllabus and the rest expressed it otherwise

Question-2.19		Frequency	Percentage
Was there any ego conflict with the teachers who taught this course?	Yes	01	02.86%
	No	24	68.57%
	I had not seen it	10	28.57%

The chart clarifies that around 97% respondents believed that there was no ego conflict among the teachers who taught this course but other 3% reported it other wisely.

Question-2.20		Frequency	Percentage
Was there any pressure from the authority to exclude it from your syllabus?	Yes	05	14.29%
	No	30	85.71%
	No idea	0	0%

It is evident from the chart that 85.71% respondents affirmed that there was no pressure from the authority to exclude this course while the rest reported it other wisely.

In response to the open-ended question (2.21, Do you think rather than excluding this course some steps to make it more effective would have been better?), 33 respondents out of 35 opined that this course was a useful one to develop their communicative skill which is necessary for their higher studies and professional life. They suggested rather than omitting this course some steps could be taken to make it more effective. They proposed that the course content should be modified and focus should be given on communicative and functional practices rather than on grammar. Some of them also preferred English language professionals for maximizing the output from this course.

V. Findings of the Semi- structured interviews:

Apart from the questionnaire studies, to get a better glimpse of the real cause of exclusion of this course and to explore teachers (both from concerned departments and who taught this course) perceptions and attitudes towards this course, a semi-structured interview session was conducted where 45 teachers from different departments of Barishal University were interviewed. Their responses were analyzed textually. The findings of the interview are summarized below:

The majority of the interviewee stated that this course is a very useful one for the 1st year students of Barishal University. As it is a peripheral University, most of its' learners are from rural background. They are also from Bangla medium learning backgrounds. They did not have opportunities for practicing speaking and listening in English. So, when they enter University, they face problems in adjusting with English medium classrooms where lectures are given in English and learners are required to respond in English. This kind of situation becomes depressing for many learners which ultimately demotivates them in their subjective field also. Besides, due to poor grammatical knowledge, they fail to write appropriately in English which lowers down their grades in higher education. For these reasons, this course should be offered to the 1st year students of Barishal University which will give them the opportunity to practice basic functional English. Besides, it is the responsibility of the University to provide best kind of educational experience to its learners and learners must have knowledge in various fields. Without knowing better English, it is not possible to pursue higher education and conduct research in different fields. Therefore, this course must be in the Undergraduate syllabuses of Barishal University.

To point out the major factors responsible for the exclusion of this course, many teachers opined that within a six-month semester it is not possible to develop linguistic skills in a foreign language. Besides, as the medium of instruction is English, learners will automatically develop their communicative skill in English. Again, learners have learnt grammar up to their H.S.C level, so they have enough command on English to do their academic studies. Instead of this course, any subject related course will help them more. Teachers from some departments also mentioned that they had to struggle with balancing credits as there are so many other departmental courses. So, when Bangladesh Studies was made compulsory, they were compelled to exclude this course.

Some teachers also mentioned that students were not satisfied with the course as there was nothing new in the course. The teachers who taught this course were not sincere enough to make this course effective. Besides, as students are taught to give priority to the applications of methods and approaches of subject related field, they thought that it is not mandatory to acquire highest level of proficiency in English rather workable English is enough which they can acquire from their subjective study.

Some of the teachers also mentioned that limited budget of the authority was responsible for the exclusion of this course. When the authority stopped the monthly payments for teaching the non-departmental courses, it became difficult to get teachers to teach this course. As the course loads of the teachers were already high, they did not feel motivated to teach this course. Some of the teachers also opined that poor infrastructure of Barishal University is also responsible for the exclusion of this course. As the University do not have modern computerized language lab, students do not get the opportunities to practice speaking and listening outside the classroom. Besides, for the scarcity of the logistic support, it becomes very difficult to test these skills practically.

Despite pointing out these situational factors, the participant expressed their views in favour of incorporating the Fundamental English in the undergraduate syllabuses of Barishal University. They have also offered suggestions to make this course more effective which will be discussed in the recommendation section.

Apart from the concerned departments, 6 out of 9 teachers of English department who taught this course were also interviewed. All of them reported that this course was very effective to develop learners' communicative skills as it gave them real opportunities to practice English which was literally absent in their schools and colleges. It helped them to understand and overcome the problems they had in English. They also added that students' motivation level was satisfactory and it was reflected in their participations and interactional patterns in the class. Teachers expressed that as the learners here are evaluated through proficiency tests in different skills, majority of them though not all were sure to improve in their language skill. These participants also expressed their opinion that whether paid or unpaid, English language professionals must be hired to teach this course because of their professional expertise in this arena.

VI. Overall Discussion

The purpose of this study was to identify the situational variables that worked behind the exclusion of Fundamental English language course from some of the departments of Barishal University, Bangladesh and to explore teachers' and learners' perceptions toward this course. Keeping the research questions in focus, this study adopted a combined research approach and collected both quantitative and qualitative data. Quantitative data gathered through questionnaire study from the students revealed that nearly 90% respondents considered this course a very useful one as 80.26% claimed it helped them to develop their communicative skills in English, 77.89% stated it will be helpful for their professional life and 44.21% expressed that it helped significantly in their academic study. In response to the question regarding teachers' sincerity, 47.63% said teachers were very sincere and other 42.11% declared that they were moderately sincere. Besides, according to 80.52% respondents from the students, the main reason behind the exclusion of this course was students already having sufficient command in English which does not match with the findings of questionnaire study with the teachers as 71.43% teacher respondents were on the view that students' past achievements in English is not adequate for pursuing higher education. This statement of the teachers was also found contradictory with the interview data when they said as students learned grammar up to their Higher Secondary level, they did not need this course. Though 86.05% respondents expressed that their opinion regarding the exclusion of this course was not considered which conforms with the findings of the teachers' data, but 70% of them accepted this exclusion positively.

Data collected from the questionnaire study with the teachers revealed that 51.43% of respondents were not satisfied with current English language skill of the learners whereas 40% of them were moderately satisfied. On an average nearly 60% teachers mentioned that sometimes their students can write accurately, speak fluently, and produce grammatical sentences. Students had to face academic viva-vozes in English but 50% of teachers were not at all satisfied with their linguistic performances and the rest were moderately satisfied. In this connection 45.71% opined students' academic performances are greatly hampered by their poor linguistic skills. 91.43% viewed that students' English language skill must be developed to make them fit for competitive job market and 42.86% claimed that Fundamental English course moderately helped learners to develop their language skill. The majority of them were satisfied with teachers' qualification and sincerity and they added there was no ego conflict among the teachers and no pressure from the authority to exclude this course but they identified the main reasons behind the exclusion as course content not being useful, low satisfaction level of the learners and limited budget from the authority. In response to the open-ended questionnaire, both stakeholders acknowledged the necessity of this course in the context of Barishal University but with some modifications in the course contents and teaching methodologies.

Therefore, it is evident from the questionnaire analysis and semi-structured interview analysis that Barishal University undergraduate students' proficiency level in English is not satisfactory. They have lacking in grammatical arena as well as communicative fluency. Despite this, the Fundamental English course was excluded from the syllabuses of many departments for various reasons- teachers' (of the respective departments) belief that learners past learning experience up to Intermediate level is

enough to continue higher studies, students' satisfaction level and motivation level were low, traditional course content, credit limitation, limited budget of the authority, no qualitative changes in students' communicative skills and so on. It is also clear from the study that the majority of the teachers and learners had positive attitude toward this course and viewed that learners need this course and they opined that this course should be made compulsory for them to make them competent in both academic and professional fields. Both teachers and learners acknowledged the necessity of this course in the Barishal University context and opined that instead of excluding this course necessary steps should be taken to make it more effective.

VII. Recommendations

Teachers and learners are the key performers in the curriculum execution process. The questionnaire studies with both important stakeholders and semi-structured interviews with the teachers reflect that learners of Barishal University are in serious need of improving their proficiency level in English. Both parties expressed their positive attitudes towards the inclusion of this course at the undergraduate level. Based on learners' needs and teachers' opinions the following suggestions have been made to make this course more effective for the learners of Barishal University.

1. A need analysis of the learners' language specific needs and a situation analysis should be conducted before reintroducing this course. This need analysis and situation analysis procedures should be administered by the central authority of Barishal University. Authority can hire some professionals and academicians to perform this task.
2. Syllabus should be modified based on learners need. Communicative and functional aspects of English should be given more priority.
3. An updated modern computerized language lab should be established to practice and take practical tests in different skills like the IELTS or TOEFL tests.
4. Course content should be divided into four modules such as- Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing and enough opportunities should be given to the learners to practice these skills in and outside of the classroom.
5. Sufficient motivation and counseling should be given to the learners to maximize their learning outputs. They should be given much orientation to adjust with new methods of learning and practicing English which was absent in their previous academic settings.
6. English language professionals should be recruited to teach this course as they have sufficient knowledge of language teaching methods and approaches, classroom management, individual learners' factors, psychological and affective factors of learners and issues related to second language learning. Teachers who are not English language practitioners can teach grammar but their limitations in these aspects of language teaching will not bring about positive learning outcomes.
7. English language professionals should be paid because it will give them extrinsic motivation and as a result, they will be more committed to their professional duties.
8. Course teachers should be monitored by the concerned departments and evaluation from the learners should be collected from time to time.

Limitation of the Study

In this study, data from students were collected only through questionnaire survey. One of the problems of questionnaire study is that participants may give impressionistic answers. Also, sometimes they may not understand the questions and thus put tick marks randomly. These may affect the validity of this research.

VIII. Conclusion

Bangladesh has already proved itself a fast-growing economy and for its continuous development it requires skilled manpower. Though the number of universities and graduates are increasing exponentially, still we are lagging in producing skilled human resources. Therefore, much responsibility lie on the shoulder of the curriculum developers in the tertiary level as universities are the factories of producing skilled manpower. Need analysis of the learners and situation analysis of academic settings before introducing course can play a major role in equipping learners with necessary skills. From the data analysis and above discussions, it can be said that, in the Barishal University contexts learners are lagging in their English language proficiency skills but no courses are there to develop their skills. It reflects the lack of contextual detailing and the negligence on the part of the curriculum planners of this institution to address this issue. But this is a positive sign that both teachers and learners have affirmative attitudes towards the inclusion of this course. Therefore, authority can reconsider the merit of this course in the context of Barishal University and take necessary steps to improve learners' quality by overcoming their shortcomings.

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