



# TEACHERS' VOICES

CAPTURING THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

## 2017

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CAMBRIDGE  
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# TEACHERS' VOICES

CAPTURING THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

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# TEACHERS' VOICES

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CAPTURING THE DYNAMICS OF CHANGE

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- EIA Teacher Training and Support Team – Divisional and Deputy Divisional Managers, Senior Coordinators: Teacher Development, Coordinators: Teacher Development, Senior Coordinators: Field Operations, Coordinators: Field Operations;
- Administration, Finance, IT and Support Team;
- Communications and Advocacy Team;
- Curriculum and Education Advisor and Specialists;
- Institutionalisation and Sustainability Team;
- Research, Monitoring and Evaluation Team.

We owe our deep sense of gratitude to all of them.

## Abbreviations used in the book

ATEO	Assistant Thana Education Officer
AUEO	Assistant Upazila Education Officer
ADPEO	Assistant District Primary Education Officer
CPD	Continuing professional development
DPEO	District Primary Education Officer
EFT	English for Today
EIA	English in Action
EL4T	English Language for Teachers
ELT	English Language Teaching
ESL	English as a Second Language
GPS	Government Primary School
GW	Group Work
HS	High School
HT	Head Teacher
IW	Individual Work
MCQ	Multiple Choice Question
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
PW	Pair Work
SBTD	School-based Teacher Development
SGW	Small-Group Work
SRM	Supplementary Reading Materials
TEO	Thana Education Officer
TR	Teacher Research
TVC	Teachers' Voices Conference
UEO	Upazila Education Officer
URC	Upazila Resource Centre
URCI	URC Instructor
USEO	Upazila Secondary Education Officer
WCW	Whole-class Work

# Teacher research as a possibility and an imperative

## Introduction

As we write this introductory chapter, reflecting on why we decided to initiate classroom-based research by teachers and how it unfolded, and now reading through all the reports teachers have written, we have a feeling of satisfaction and achievement. It becomes clear that we could never have skipped this entity called Teachers' Voices Conference (TVC). It is enough to hear the teachers saying: *'Earlier I was only a teacher, now I'm a researcher too.'* *'I was a simple teacher before, now I think deeply about my teaching and my students.'* *'Now I'm a researcher, I'm the classroom changer.'* We are now even more persuaded by the power this activity has given to teachers to continue to develop professionally beyond the official life of the English in Action (EIA) project and also to influence other teachers to traverse that path of professional development together.

In this short introduction, we will present the rationale for initiating teacher research (TR) on the project, describe the way we went about it, and also discuss the two activities which we see as pivotal stages in accomplishing our goal: one being the conference and the other this very publication.

## Why engage in teacher research ?

For the purposes of this chapter, we shall use the term 'teacher research', though pointing out that it is often used interchangeably with popular terms such as action research, practitioner research, exploratory practice and reflective practice. Here we are concerned with a form of inquiry that enables practitioners, in this case teachers, to investigate and evaluate their work. Therefore it is conducted by and for those in the profession. The primary reason for engaging in this kind of research is to help improve and refine practitioners' actions, so that there is improvement in student learning. It therefore addresses practical problems and comes up with practical outcomes. Thus, *'it is simply an extension of the normal reflective practice of many teachers, but is slightly more rigorous and might conceivably lead to more effective outcomes'* (Wallace, 1991, p. 57).

An important dimension of teacher research that resonates with the approach we have adopted is the one offered by Allwright (2015), for whom *'understanding'* is the essence of all research worthy of the name. He distinguishes two types of understanding: *'intellectual'* understanding (relevant to hard sciences) and *'empathetic'* understanding (being able to see things from another person's point of view; relevant to those engaged in education). Educating people, children in this case, deals with human beings and therefore will essentially involve empathetic understanding. The first kind can be crudely described as 'understanding things' and the second, 'understanding people'. Teacher research will help us to understand people and informs everyday classroom decision-making: *'it is the sort of understanding that is perhaps "beyond words", but that can nevertheless be "lived", even if it cannot be usefully described'* (p. 22). What is interesting about this kind of understanding is that it cannot simply be passed on to other teachers, to simply adopt or follow, because it is not straightforward 'knowledge'. What the teachers can do is describe the steps they went through to arrive at their understanding so that other teachers can try the steps out, modifying them along the way to suit their own situations. This way we ask and answer a lot of 'why' questions as we understand people in their situation.

Allwright recommends exploratory practice as a *'sustainable way for classroom language teachers and learners, while getting on with their learning and teaching, to develop their own understandings of life in the language classroom'* (p. 31). It shifts the focus away from improvement (the goal of action research) to understanding life in the classroom.

We will not dwell too much on the intricacies of these varying concepts and terms, but will settle for the broad term 'teacher research', which has as its goal deeper understanding of the context of schooling and of the people, teachers and learners, who are participants in that context. Reflection and exploration are two critical processes that teachers researching their own context will engage in continually.

In more concrete terms, teacher research offers a way for teachers to self-observe, self-analyse and self-evaluate their work situated in their own cultural contexts, leading to reflectively acquired self-knowledge. It helps teachers to develop a capacity to generate their own context-specific theories of practice based on their professional, personal and experiential knowledge and skills. A personal theory is unique to each teacher, individually developed through the experience of putting professional theories to the test in practical situations that embody the cultural dimension of life: the beliefs, assumptions, norms and values that serve as inputs into teaching and learning. And yet, the individual or personal theory will have resonance among others' theories or understandings and it is only in sharing that a common understanding will emerge. The reflective approach to ongoing professional development is sustainable and is amenable to critique at every stage. It also shifts the focus from being implementers of 'good' practices to one of taking responsibility for classroom decision-making. Teachers researching their own classrooms is thus a powerful way of them becoming autonomous, staying motivated and growing in the profession.

### Why teacher research on the English in Action (EIA) project ?

Teacher research was seen as a logical and essential development leading from the capacity-building programmes and the classroom-based professional development activities that enabled EIA teachers, in primary and secondary schools, to create a learner-centred, communicative classroom. It added a new dimension at this stage of the project, in that it encouraged teachers to critique and look deeper at what they do in their normal teaching-learning in a rigorous way. It also involved collecting evidence at different stages of their research activity to develop a refined understanding of their research question. At the core of the entire research activity was not only improved student learning, but also – equally importantly – the teacher's own professional development. The focus here was also on helping teachers to articulate what they were doing and why, and what the outcomes were.

This fits with the way Lawrence Stenhouse, a well known teacher-as-researcher proponent, emphasised the characteristics of a professional, aware teacher:

- *The commitment to systematic questioning of one's own teaching as a basis for development;*
- *The commitment and the skills to study one's own teaching;*
- *The concern to question and to test theory in practice by the use of those skills;*
- *Readiness to allow others to observe your work and to discuss it with them on an honest, open basis.*

Stenhouse (1975, pp. 143–144)

Thus, we were at a stage when we could try out the notion of teacher research, if on a small scale, starting with EIA Teacher Facilitators and more motivated teachers. This was guided by our firm conviction that whenever teachers learn to inquire into classroom processes with an inquisitive mind and make changes to their way of thinking and working on an ongoing basis, they will become aware of the ‘power’ they have over the changes they can bring about, often in spite of constraints in the system. Moreover, they will be eager to spread this excitement to other colleagues inside and outside their school. The experience of problematising their normal everyday work will not only be satisfying but also enriching, resulting in deeper insights and ongoing professional development, often in collaboration with others.

## How did teachers start doing research ?

To motivate and enable teachers to carry out TR, EIA offered a series of workshops and provided ongoing support over a year, which culminated in a two-day conference titled Teachers’ Voices Conference. The first workshop was for a group of mentors (about 50 in number) who had previously been acting as primary or secondary level Teacher Facilitators as part of the project’s teacher professional development programme and thus had a good understanding of the project’s philosophy, pedagogy and teacher development processes. Each mentor identified three ‘mentee teachers’ in their region, with whom they worked as a group throughout the year. A series of three workshops was held for all the mentors working in each region along with their mentees: these workshops aimed firstly to help the participants to identify a ‘problem’ they wished to look at closely in their classes, then provided ongoing support as they proceeded to investigate their problems systematically in an iterative cycle. Learning from each cycle fed into the next cycle, thus enhancing the teachers’ pedagogical understanding of their individual problems. Regular meetings and discussions between the mentor and mentees, along with continuous support – both face-to-face and online – from EIA project staff helped them to reflect on the emerging issues and concerns that were unique to their context and, eventually, also to share their learning with a wider audience during the conference. Details of the workshops are provided on pages 9–11 of this book: these include the objectives, schedules of the two-day workshops, descriptions of activities that were used and the outcomes of each of the workshops that informed the next step.

## Teachers’ Voices Conference (TVC)

The conference held on 28 February and 1 March 2017 was seen as a logical next step to teachers doing classroom research, which is also advocated by Dikilitaş (2015). He highlights the importance of different stages in teacher engagement with research: it involves a staged approach that begins with planning the research design, goes through a systematic staged approach and ends with writing up the research and presenting it at a conference. TVC and now this publication are both considered important stages of teacher research.

The two days of the conference gave about 150 teachers from across all regions of Bangladesh the impetus to research and explore their own classrooms over a year and then to share their experience of researching with fellow professionals across the country. It provided a platform for teachers to ‘tell their story’ in their own words from an insider perspective. The process of looking for evidence in the changes the teachers had brought about and then of narrating those experiences of teaching-learning practices led to a shift in focus beyond teachers merely being implementers of ‘good’ practices. Moreover, it involved students, peer teachers and Head Teachers all looking critically at how they can make teaching-learning more fun, enjoyable and effective. It gave them a voice, empowered them to take greater responsibility for their own professional development and thus gave them a flavour of the notion of ‘teacher-as-change agent’.

This clearly signalled a movement away from the emphatic pronouncements one sometimes heard previously such as: *'Now I'm applying EIA techniques perfectly,'* to more tentative statements such as *'I tried this technique, but it didn't seem to work with slow learners.'* Or: *'When I thought that everyone will enjoy my class, many did not and so I tried to find out why.'* This speaks of a 'coming of age' as teachers come to understand TR as representing a 'research approach' to teaching. Furthermore, since both primary and secondary teachers were involved in TVC, the coming together of the two sector levels allowed for a fertile intermingling of minds, possibilities and challenges, and it also created a 'melting pot' for further explorations and invigorative discussions.

The event was held at the Institute of Education and Research, Dhaka University, one of Bangladesh's most prestigious research organisations; its long collaboration with EIA made it all the more special as the venue for sharing teacher research carried out all over the country. It was also unique in that unlike a usual conference, where 'outside experts' speak and others listen, here teachers talked and others listened to what they had to say about their research in their classrooms. There were about 180 participants in all, of whom 90 were teacher-presenters from different parts of the country and 90 were representatives from the Government of Bangladesh, Dhaka University, NGOs and other organisations.

It was interesting to see how the teachers made meaning of their research work, as they shared their research studies with other fellow teacher-researchers at primary and secondary levels across Bangladesh. There were in all 90 individual and group presentations, both in talk and poster formats in parallel sessions. It was encouraging to witness an intensive and passionate engagement of teachers not only with their own work but with others' work as well. Deep, reflective conversations took place that created an academic and research atmosphere where everyone was looking critically at what worked in their own and others' classrooms and what didn't. The language used clearly illustrated a shift in perspective: from a prescriptive 'do it, it works' approach to a reflective one of 'try it and see what works and why and in what context'. The 'unanswered questions' at the end of the presentation signalled and underlined the unfinished nature of research and the ongoing pursuit of researchers to continue exploring beyond the conference. Overall, it appeared to be a satisfying experience for all stakeholders who were present.

## Dissemination of teacher research

Sharing teacher research in a public way acknowledges clearly that teachers' research is also respected and has value, in the same way 'academic research' has, which is carried out by university scholars and other experts. While some teachers' trepidation to present their work at a reputed research institution was palpable, there were also many who appeared confident and eager to share because they were now researchers, not 'mere' teachers, and they had something concrete and worthwhile to share and disseminate. More importantly, the message that their research was valid, credible and usable was sent out loud and clear: valid, because the research site was their work context and the inquiry stemmed from and fed back into authentic, live classroom contexts; credible, because it had been carried out quite systematically and benefitted from multiple perspectives such as those of peer teachers, learners and Head Teachers; and usable, because the teacher was also the researcher and therefore the understanding they developed through the researching process was usable by both teachers and learners, and other stakeholders widely.

## Researching collaboratively

Other than the teacher-researcher group, there were other collaborators, i.e. the peer teacher, Head Teacher and of course the learners who provided multiple perspectives on the question under study. The different members of this 'community of practice' supported each other and helped one another to arrive at an 'empathetic understanding' of the phenomenon and the people themselves. An important point to note is that the project's approach to school-based teacher development (SBTD), which involved peer teachers and Head Teachers, was further strengthened through teacher research. According to Anne Burns (2015), collaborative research allows dialogic interaction between participants, places emphasis on 'insider' experiences, rather than the more generalised observations that external researchers make and democratises the process of knowledge production: *'Collaboration with others in the same or similar social situation (managers, colleagues, learners, parents) means that collective knowledge can be more widely shared, expanding beyond the individual teacher's classroom and potentially influencing other teachers' practices more broadly'* (p. 10). The nature and quality of the discussion witnessed at the conference clearly reflected the authenticity and genuineness of the whole enterprise; moreover the language used was easily accessible to the whole community creating a friendly and non-threatening environment.

## The papers in this volume

The 42 papers have been divided into five sections, according to the themes that they mainly focus on. In fact, each paper has ideas that spread across many themes, but presenting them under different sections has been done to provide some coherence and to increase ease of reading. Each section begins with a brief introduction that attempts to highlight the features that the papers capture. These themes are:

1. Developing language skills
2. Listening to learners' voices
3. Encouraging inclusiveness
4. Strategising pair and group work
5. Continuing professional development

The themes and sub-themes clearly reflect the kinds of concerns language teachers have in primary and secondary classrooms. An important point to note is that there are many papers that highlight the importance of listening to learners' views on what they like and don't like, their choices and how they would like to learn. This is especially significant, as teachers, it seems, are quite convinced that once you respond to the learners' expressed needs, learning will be fun and you can also include many more learners in the learning process, even slow learners.

Further, teachers seem to have figured out the intricacies of conducting context-specific pair and group work: grouping strategies; the kind of group leader that facilitates learning and also ensures participation from every member; managing noise; the importance of clear instructions and the language in which to give them; monitoring group/pair work, and so forth. One reason that has persuaded teachers to use these strategies across different papers seems to be inclusion and better participation, apart from other benefits.

It will be interesting to see what learnings accrue from these very interesting stories that stem from authentic classroom-based inquiries. Teachers began to put together their understanding into a coherent whole at the conference itself, when they heard other teachers from other parts of the country talk about classrooms and children who were so different from theirs and yet so similar. We will need to continue this effort further and get together to hear their stories more often.

## Acknowledgements

We would like to acknowledge the support extended by the Education Officers at the local and central levels, the URC Instructors, and other government officials. Head Teachers and colleagues of teacher-researchers have not only given their expertise and time but have also raised the quality of these studies by providing an important 'insider' perspective. EIA colleagues have wholeheartedly and tirelessly supported the workshops and the ongoing activities online and face-to-face. Without their input, this year-long research endeavour would not have been possible. We owe our deep sense of gratitude to all of them.

## In conclusion

As we conclude this chapter, we are acutely aware of what the next step for the teacher could be. Teachers have been assuring us wholeheartedly that this research won't stop: they will continue with it, and in teams, because they see value in discussing their perspectives and sharing their achievements and challenges, and see themselves as part of a collective force that is capable of bringing about change in the classroom. The notion of SBTD advocated and concretised by EIA has seen its culmination in this teacher research. In most studies, as is clear from their reports, the teacher, the peer teacher and the Head Teacher are all closely involved in this exploration and have together tried to understand English teaching and learning in a way that is meaningful to their context and become part of the 'community of practice'. With support from the local and central educational authorities, their quest should not only have the approval but also the chance to continue beyond particular classrooms and schools and long after the official life of the project.

This publication is available online at:

<https://www.eiabd.com/>

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/>

<http://www.camb-ed.com/intdev/resources>

Teachers would be delighted to enter into new professional conversations about their studies. They can be contacted at one of the email addresses given below. We will then forward the mail to the teacher concerned.

[info@eiabd.com](mailto:info@eiabd.com)

[IDO@open.ac.uk](mailto:IDO@open.ac.uk)



# Guidelines for enabling teachers to do classroom-based research

Teacher research (TR) was an important component of EIA and was set up in a planned and systematic way so that teachers could carry out small-scale research studies in their own classrooms for about six/seven months over a one-year period.

Very briefly, teacher facilitators were trained as ‘mentors’ to start with (Workshop 1) so that they could carry out classroom research and also support their colleagues in conducting TR. They were provided with some broad researchable questions to choose from for their research. The mentor then selected three mentees in the vicinity of her/his school for collaborative work. TR involved asking a ‘deep’ question that the mentor found relevant/important in their context and investigating it systematically in iterative cycles. This inquiry was carried out collaboratively in which the peer teacher, the Head Teacher and students were all equal partners in trying to understand the phenomenon in question. There were three workshops in all, each of which had specific objectives (described below). Teachers were helped to carry out the research study, which involved collecting evidence, analysing it, and also preparing for the conference at which they shared their research experience and discussed the results of the study. After the conference, they wrote a paper for publication and wider dissemination. They were supported throughout this process, beginning with the planning stage and through to the stage of writing and revising their drafts.

## Areas covered in the research study

The following broad areas formed the focus of research studies:

- A diary study
- A study of group/pair work
- Building class profiles
- Creating an inclusive learning environment
- Professional development: How can we make peer and HT support work?
- Teaching large classes
- Using a technique in the classroom: How well did it work?
- How can I improve my speaking skill as a teacher?
- A study of students’ perceptions of their role and their learning
- Structured group feedback

Although work began with this initial set of areas, teachers were encouraged to change the study, including its focus and how they went about the study, based on their individual context and the availability and willingness of other stakeholders in the school. The three areas where teachers needed most support were:

- giving their research question a specific focus;
- collecting specific and relevant evidence;
- getting ready to present and communicate clearly.

As first-time presenters at a conference, the teachers showed a good deal of confidence and claimed their space with authority and credibility.

Details of each of the stages are provided on the following pages:

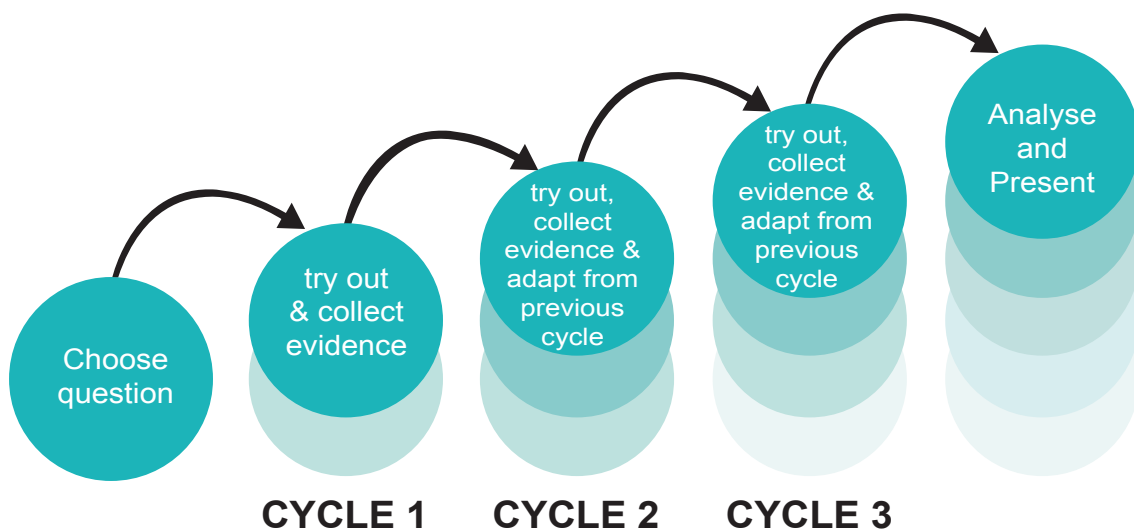
## The TVC journey

The TVC concept note was designed first and the whole process was supervised with technical support from EIA colleagues from Cambridge Education (Dhaka) and The Open University (UK).

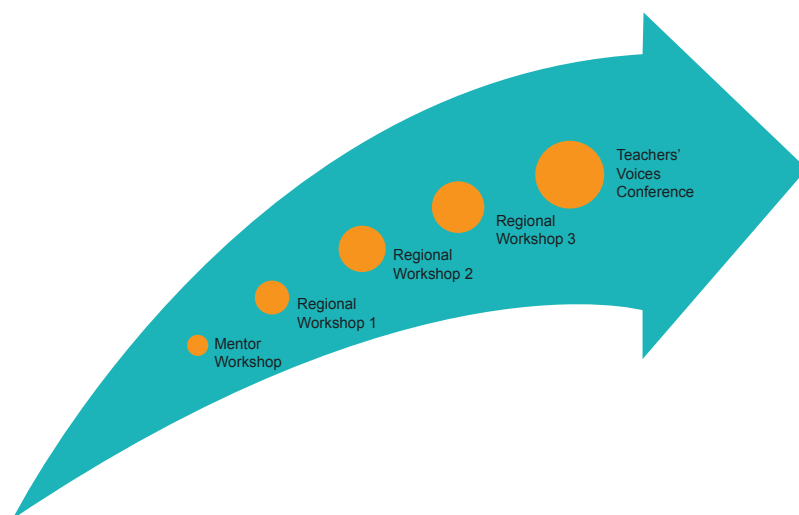
The initiative was coordinated by the Head of Teacher Training programme and there were eight divisional focal persons from the project team who served as a bridge between the mentor and the teachers, and also provided ongoing technical support.

150 teachers from EIA intervention schools in groups of four formed a team in a particular upazila. The following diagram shows the different stages of the initiative culminating in the Teachers' Voices Conference (TVC).

The teachers' classroom research started with identifying their research inquiry and then exploring this in three iterative cycles, leaving unanswered questions to be explored further



*The teacher research journey*



*Supporting workshops and final conference*

## *Mentor Workshop*

45 mentors were selected from the eight divisions of the project intervention areas and a three-day workshop was held in December 2015 to orient them to classroom-based research and also to mentoring their group members for carrying out their research work.

### *Specific objectives*

- Orient mentors to teacher research so that they carry out TR in their own classrooms.
- Familiarise them with research stages with a focus on collecting evidence for their research study.
- Help them to understand their role as mentors, give them the opportunity to practise how to mentor their group members and support them to carry out their research work.

### *The sessions covered*

- Classroom drawing and active listening: thinking of teachers' own classroom, talking to their partners about what they like most in their classroom and listening to their partners' description;
- The puzzle: to let researchers explore an issue/question through what, why and how questions, and discover what assumptions might prevent us from examining the issue without bias and from various angles;
- Presenting 'What is teacher research?' and 'Why should we do classroom research?'
- Reading and discussing other teachers' research reports with guiding questions and examining how they might take up a study of their interest;
- Activity on how to write a reflective diary and understanding a research study;
- Describing mentor/mentee roles for an effective relationship.

## *Regional Workshop 1*

This two-day workshop was organised in January/February 2016 to orient teachers to their research work in their particular study areas. The mentors conducted the workshop with support from EIA staff.

### *Specific objectives*

- Orient teachers to classroom research to help them to be able to carry out research in their own classrooms;
- Familiarise them with possible research study outlines so that each mentor-mentee group could design their own studies relevant to their individual context;
- Practise how to write a reflective diary and develop data-collection tools.

### *The sessions covered*

These were almost identical to the sessions that were carried out during the mentor workshop; the main difference being that the mentors conducted the sessions mostly, with support from EIA staff. Prior to the workshop, half a day was spent planning the workshop, deciding which mentors would lead each session and who would be observers and reporters, and working on handouts, worksheets etc .that would be used.

- Classroom drawing and active listening: thinking of teachers' own classroom, talking to their partners about what they like most in their classroom and listening to their partners' description;

- The puzzle: to let researchers explore an issue/question through what, why and how questions, and discover what assumptions might prevent us from examining the issue without bias and from various angles;
- Presenting 'What is teacher research?' and 'Why should we do classroom research?'
- Reading and discussing other teachers' research reports with guiding questions and examining how they might take up a study of their interest;
- Activity on how to write a reflective diary and understanding a research study;
- Describing mentor/mentee roles for an effective relationship.

## Regional Workshop 2

This two-day workshop was arranged after three months to take stock of the work done up to that point and to support teachers in collating their data and also to help them write reflective journals.

### *Specific objectives*

- Take stock of the progress on research work through reviewing the research journey;
- Support teachers in sorting and collating data needed for their specific studies;
- More practice with writing a reflective diary and revising data-collection tools.

### *The sessions covered*

- Review teachers' TVC journey with the following questions:
  - What did you do?
  - What was exciting to you?
  - What was/were your major challenge/s?
  - What will you recommend your colleague to follow?
- Sharing a TVC Study of an EIA teacher as an example of focusing on the following three stages;
  - Pre – What did s/he do to prepare herself/himself to do for the study?
  - While – What did s/he do during the lesson?
  - Post – What did s/he do after the lesson?
- Going through their study designs and providing support as required;
- Looking into their data-collection methods and providing required support with data collating, and making meaning of data;
- Role-play of an interview with Head Teacher/peer teacher to demonstrate a post-observation discussion;
- Demonstrating how to write a reflective journal/diary avoiding factual descriptions;
- Planning Cycle 2 of the study, focusing on their learning from Cycle 1.

## Regional Workshop 3

This two-day final workshop, which was held after three/four months, was mainly to make the teachers ready for presenting their research experience and learning at the conference and also to support them with writing their research article to be published in a book/journal.

### *Specific objectives*

- Review the TVC journey so far, with a special focus on success areas as well as challenges;
- Share the evidence and find the focus of each individual study;
- Sort the evidence collected so far and organise/analyse them in line with each individual study topic and presentation template;
- Understand different modes of presentation and get prepared for the conference.

### *The sessions covered*

- Sharing evidence collected on the individual studies and finding the focus of their studies;
- Discussing different modes of presentation (individual/pair/group and poster/talk) for the conference and deciding who is going to present in what mode;
- Orientation to presentation template and practice with writing for the presentations;
- Metaphor: thinking of an image/metaphor/symbol/phrase that best describes the research journey and drawing that on a poster;
- Showing examples of good and not-so-good abstracts of research studies and practising how to write good research abstracts;
- Preparing presentation for the national conference followed by mock presentations.

## Teachers' Voices Conference (TVC)

91 teachers presented their research experience and learning at the conference. They were centre stage, and education administrators as well as national and international education experts were present to listen to their stories. Details of the conference are provided in the Introduction.

There were in all 90 presentations: 60 individual presentations and two poster sessions involving 30 teacher-presenters. The programme also showcased eight video case-studies of teachers narrating research journeys they had traversed through the year. In addition, there were panel discussions on 'Celebrating TVC' and 'Teachers investigating classroom practices: beyond TVC' with different stakeholders as panelists, presentations by EIA staff and plenary sessions by Professor Rama Mathew, Delhi University, India and Tom Power, The Open University, UK.

The two-day event buzzed throughout with research-related terms: action, reflection, observation, evidence, findings, unanswered questions and so forth. It was reassuring to hear teachers say what their next research study would be about.

### *Expected outcomes of the conference*

- Teachers are confident to conduct classroom research into their own classroom practices to learn from their experiences to improve their teaching.
- They can support other teachers to carry out similar research studies in their classrooms.
- They consider classroom research as a practical approach to their continuing professional development (CPD).
- They share their research observations in different national and international conferences.
- They prepare their research papers and publish in national/international journals.
- Their experiences of classroom research are well recorded and are published as a book arranged by the project.

The workshop and conference plans, fully annotated with notes, are available from:

<https://www.eiabd.com/>

<http://oro.open.ac.uk/>

<http://www.camb-ed.com/intdev/resources>



# SECTION 1:

## Developing language skills

There are two key aspects of language skills development to emerge from the studies in this section. As the studies' titles suggest, some of the teachers here explored the puzzles and uncertainties that they were finding when helping learners to communicate in English, whether as speakers and listeners or as readers and writers. Equally important as a theme, though, is the extent to which teachers were interested in developing their own use of English in the classroom, and in improving their own skills in the language.

A common theme that we find in the studies is how the teachers often started out from a feeling of wanting to improve their own English and of aspiring to an increased use of it in the classroom: by doing this they could try to see whether this would encourage the learners to use it more themselves. Thus we find some of the teachers seeking answers to questions such as how to improve their speaking skills in English and how to use it in systematic ways in their teaching. From this, they reflect on how their learners responded to this changed approach. In fact, these responses lead to some fascinating insights that include issues of discipline, changes in classroom atmosphere and even changes in learners' personalities.

With regard to supporting learners to develop their communicative skills, the teacher-researchers frequently found themselves identifying barriers faced by the learners and looking at ways to motivate them, especially in the particular choice of topics, towards reading or speaking. Thus the questions they delve into involve trying to understand how and why learners communicate – or not – in class, and how they could do it more effectively. Some of the teacher-researchers describe their experimentation with different approaches, such as group work or 'structure frameworks' in skill activities: they explore their learners' reactions to these and look at the impact on learning outcomes.

The teachers carried out these studies using a wide range of techniques. All of them, however, are clear that the process of research has helped them to identify more directly and closely with their learners and how they engage with the process of developing language skills. As one teacher puts it, doing the research has made her realise that she should 'avoid asking students to live in my world, I need to visit their world instead.'

## 1.1

### Shamima Sultana, Grades II & IV

#### The story of improving students' speaking skills



#### Background of the study

I used to speak very little English and so did my students. They were not interested to learn English as I was not able to motivate them. So, their involvement in lesson activities was not rich. I thought I needed to evaluate my own teaching: How am I doing? How are my students progressing? In this way I can bring changes in teaching and learning, make students confident in speaking more English, enrich my own professional skill in speaking English and, finally, build the classroom as a centre of excitement and speaking English through increased motivation to learn English.

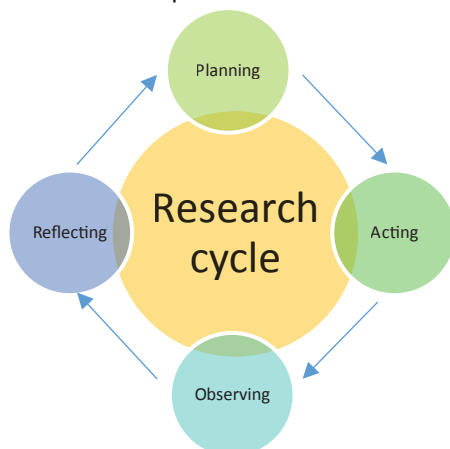
#### Research questions

Through my study, I've mainly explored these questions:

1. How can I improve my speaking skills as an English teacher?
2. How can I make the lessons fun and include everyone?

#### Description of the study

During my research, whenever I planned to apply a new technique in classroom, I followed these steps:



Even previously, I used to make lesson plans, but now, I follow these steps. I plan my lesson and decide in which part I want to apply a new technique. Then I put it into action in my class by actually implementing the technique. Then comes observing, which is done by videoing, either by myself, or by my peer teacher, students or other observer. Then I reflect on what I have done in my classroom and what I could do differently. On the basis of these results, I plan what I will do in my next class. I started Cycle 1 with very easy techniques: like silent mouthing, the bingo game, chain drill. I started to use more English in the lesson to motivate students to learn English through the techniques.

Using a particular technique in three or four classes, I collected data and reflected on it in comparison with techniques. I used a classroom evaluation form which I gave to my peer teacher, Head Teacher, students (Class 4) and other observers. My students also gave feedback through a smiley (emoji) especially in Class 2, orally and in writing. I wrote a reflective journal a minimum of once a week.

#### Comparison between the cycles

In Cycle 1, changes came in this way:

1. Students were not able to understand English well and I decided to focus on more practice with repetition, which could change learning.
2. Students could learn well by listening to more English and they realised that they needed to help each other.

Here I focused on vocabulary-related techniques.



In Cycle 2, I used more English and changed my plans after considering the results of Cycle 1. Here the changes were:

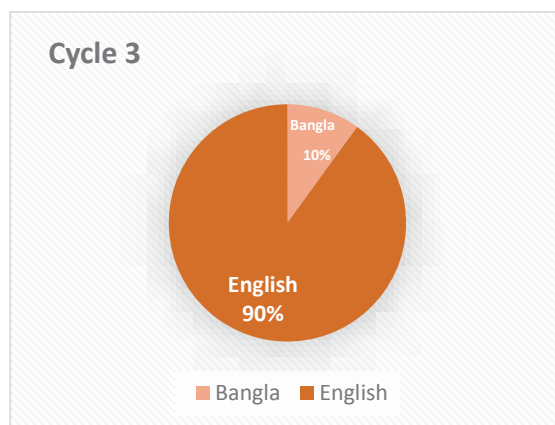
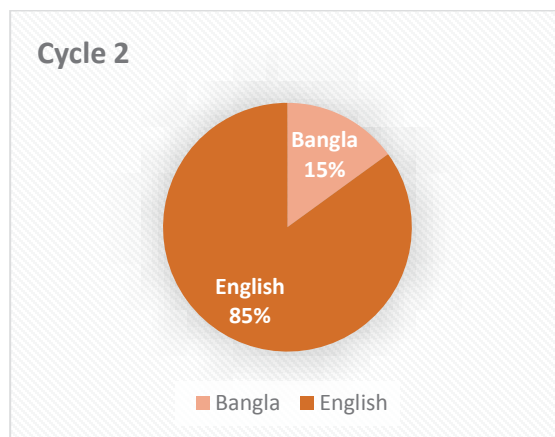
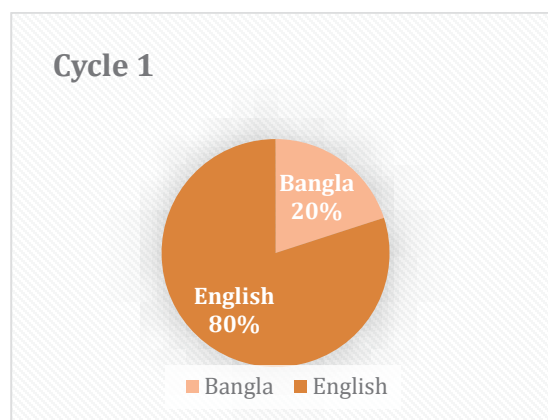
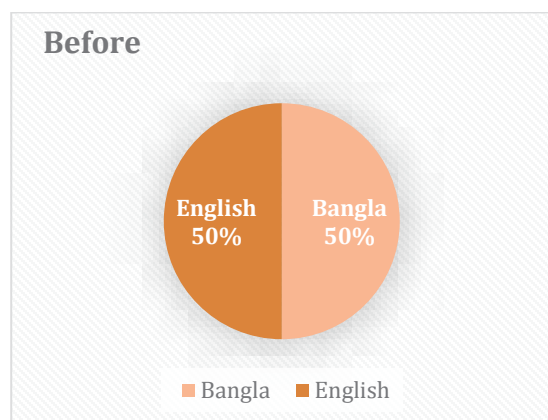
1. 50% of students think that speaking English is difficult. So I tried to involve them in speaking English by using simple classroom language.
2. Also, I tried to increase students' interactions and monitoring.

In Cycle 3:

1. Here, I put emphasis on grammar structure and collaborative learning.
2. I concentrated more on silent and slow learners and tried to involve specific children.
3. I divided lessons into small parts to make them easier.

## Findings

I implemented the study in two different classes (Class 2 and Class 4). I tried to increase English speaking time for both my learners and myself. Here I present the findings from Class 4:



This is directly related to my **research question no. 1**. Here, I'm trying to improve English speaking skills by speaking more and more English in the class and, in this way, to motivate my students according to my study.

I also collected these statements from the classroom evaluation form to get answers for **research question no. 2** (how to make lessons more fun and include everyone) at the end of each cycle.

**Cycle 1:** Data table (number of tally in each column from classroom evaluation form).

- 1 = Lowest, 5 = Highest
- Class 4, No. of students : 46, Boys: 21, Girls: 25



Students are discussing in groups with the help of leaders

Serial	Title	1	2	3	4	5
1	How much did I use the new methods?	-	1	1	4	40
2	How well did I use these methods?	-	-	1	17	28
3	How much did the students enjoy these parts of the lesson?	-	-	-	5	41
4	How well did I get all the pupils to join in with the activities?	-	-	5	19	22
5	How good was my pronunciation of classroom phrases?	-	1	-	8	37

Here my students gave points for each of these questions. I motivated them by saying that together we are going to make English lessons more fun and inclusive. I found it worked. When they wrote about what they like most in the class, what makes them happy or sad, they tended to make a lot of spelling mistakes; but now they are able to write about their likes and dislikes and their feelings about the class. Thus we are working together

in a democratic way to change the way of learning. I have a lot to do to keep up with their demands.

**Cycle 2:** After Cycle 2, I noticed that the statement was changing. Class 4, Number of students: 51, Boys: 21, Girls: 30.

Serial	Title	1	2	3	4	5
1	How much did I use the new methods?	-	-	-	-	51
2	How well did I use these methods?	-	-	-	13	38
3	How much did the students enjoy these parts of the lesson?	-	-	-	5	46
4	How well did I get all the pupils to join in with the activities?	-	-	2	7	42
5	How good was my pronunciation of classroom phrases?	-	-	-	7	44

This change indicated to me that their motivation to learn English was increasing. When I looked at them when they worked together, and at their responses in my class, I used to forget all my frustration. Sometimes their ability to learn something is amazing. But I've faced one problem from the very beginning of my study: I observed that some students are not participating in the classroom activities. I have thought about why these students are not participating. I wanted to talk with them, but I thought that if other students could help me with this case, I would get to the more authentic reasons. So, I made some small groups that was not part of my study plan. I selected leaders to lead each small group consisting of six members. I wrote some questions on the board, such as why

aren't the group members participating in the classroom activities and what are their expectations from my class. The leader was asked to discuss the questions with their group members. At the end of the group work, I collected data from my group leaders and it became clear to me. Some girl students said, 'If I say something in English, I may make mistakes and the boys will laugh at me.' Some students said that they were slow or nervous. So, I found the students do not have confidence to represent themselves. That meant I had to increase motivation to face this problem and I planned activities on the basis of this finding.

**Cycle 3:** Class 4, Number of students: 53, Boys: 22, Girls: 31.

Serial		1	2	3	4	5
1	How much did I use the new methods?	-	-	-	3	50
2	How well did I use these methods?	-	-	-	11	42
3	How much did the students enjoy these parts of the lesson?	-	-	1	15	37
4	How well did I get all the pupils to join in with the activities?	-	-	-	10	43
5	How good was my pronunciation of classroom phrases?	-	-	1	12	40



*Students of Class 2 give feedback in the form of smileys*



*Interviewing students to get opinion*

As I'm implementing the study in two different classes, I also found that Class 2 can be very slow to respond, so sometimes I can't apply the same techniques here.

## My learning from the study

I never thought of writing about my classroom experience focusing on feelings, love, hopes, smiles and a small degree of frustration. As I write every day, I'm looking back and getting something motivating. From this study I have learnt that my students are improving like a plant. I have to water them regularly. They need air and sunshine also. So I have to motivate them to learn English well.

Besides this, some other learning points are:

1. As a teacher I must avoid asking students to live in my world, I need to visit their world instead.
2. Increased motivation is important for both teacher and students to learn anything.
3. I can increase students' motivation to learn English by considering their opinion while planning and implementing any activity.
4. It is better to involve a peer teacher, Head Teacher and parents (if possible) to reveal better ideas and get feedback.

My study has helped me to get the answers to my research questions. Now I know I can improve my speaking skills as an English teacher by using more English in the classroom and I can make the lessons fun and include everyone by planning techniques according to the class and students' likes and opinions.

## Unanswered questions

Now I'm exploring two more questions which still remain. These are:

1. How can I help students to speak English confidently?
2. What can I do to improve students' writing in English?

I started this unique and amazing journey with the mentors' workshop in December 2015. Now, I'm thinking about my classroom deeply. If my students don't learn anything, it makes me think about why they are not learning. My plan is to get more reflective experience of research by implementing more studies in the classroom and also to use different sources of evidence. I hope to inspire other teachers to do it for their professional and personal betterment.

## Conclusion

In this journey I worked with three peer teachers in our upazila, who are also doing the same study in other schools. Sometimes our activities matched with one another's, but our classroom situation is not the same. So the study has been changed. I collected information about what they were doing in their classroom and applied those in my classroom appropriately. It was great to work in a group. I enjoyed this type of group work, because sharing is a very effective way to face challenges in this case.

We can get the flavour of sharing opinion with colleagues and students through classroom research. It's amazing to look back, compare with the present and plan for the future. Now teaching is not only my profession but also my passion. I'm searching for opportunities for further improvement in my class. The activities I'm doing and the evidence I'm keeping are my own resources and resources for any other teacher and researcher. I can grow professionally on the basis of these activities. I'm really excited to say that: 'I'm the classroom changer and I'm really proud of that.'

## 1.2

### Archana Rani Roy, Grade III

#### Role-play to improve students' speaking skills



#### Background of the study

In my English classes, I noticed there was a big problem: my students could not use English to communicate with each other. There was fear and shyness about English. At first, I used a lot of gestures, miming, pair work and group work, but I was not happy with the way I did it. I then changed my techniques in my class. I used a lot of gestures, miming and pair work through role play that helped my students to speak English. Students were more confident and they were now trying to speak more in English.

#### Research questions

For my study, I had the following aims:

- To explore how my students use English to communicate with each other.
- To find out how often they use English in real life.

To achieve these aims, I tried to find out the answers to these questions:

- Did the activities change participation in my class?
- Did my students use English in real life?
- What did I learn from my students' feedback?
- How can I utilise my learning in future?

#### How I went about the study

I wrote my reflective journal where I wrote all of my thoughts and findings. Then I talked with my peers and Head Teacher and they gave me suggestions. I followed their suggestions and, in the first cycle, I took the class using role-play techniques. It was Class 3, text-based. At first, students did the activity related to the text and then they applied

it to real-life situations. That was, 'What are you doing?' – one of the students acted in miming and another one co-operated with her. But I noticed some of my students didn't understand my instructions clearly, so they couldn't do it properly. In the feedback session, they also couldn't answer me because I asked them who liked the class most and they had to rate it as golden, silver or another colour. All of my students gave me golden stars. So, I wasn't happy with the result as they copied each other. When the first five/six students started to give golden stars, the rest of the students just blindly followed them. But I didn't want this type of feedback. I wanted to see the real situation.

I needed to go on to the second cycle. I talked with my peer teacher. She also agreed with my decision. Recollecting my first cycle, I changed my techniques. I used a lot of gestures, miming and classroom language for their better understanding. I wrote down some class instructions on a poster paper and posted it on the wall. They practised it again and again. In the feedback session, I used a feedback form. I set up some MCQ (multiple choice) type questions that were very easy for the students to understand so that they could give their feedback. So, this time, they gave their feedback without any hesitation. A copy of the feedback form is given below.

Comparing the feedback session between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 (no. of students = 37):

Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Golden star 32	Awesome 29
Silver star 3	Good 8



*This is an example of a role play activity*

### **What I learnt from the study**

From this journey, I find that if a teacher applies various techniques and supplementary activities and regularly uses classroom language, then students take an active role and also engage in English communication among themselves. As a teacher, I have to think about my class and will need to know what they want so that I can make the class enjoyable. From their feedback, I can know their expectations and also evaluate myself. It also helps me to change my classroom techniques. Now, when I take a class at first, I think about their expectations: which techniques are more effective for the lesson from the students' point of view? This helps me to achieve my learning outcomes.

So, what was my success? Now, in my class, students are more interactive and enjoy the English class more. It has also removed their shyness and fear. When I compare my class with the past then I see the difference easily. Sometimes I take leave and next day, my colleague who took my class in my absence says, 'Didi, your students are very sharp and active. They forced me to take the class in English.' So, I think it is my success to increase the participation of students to talk in English. Role-play activity helps us very much in this matter. If we use role-play activity regularly and practise classroom language, it helps us to increase students' speaking skills.

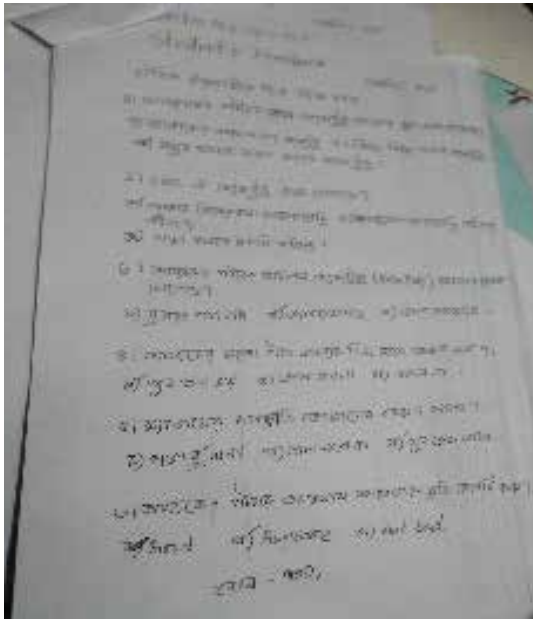
When two or three students do a role-play activity, they feel more confident to communicate with each other, because they

both talk on the same level. Neither fear nor shyness can stop them from doing these activities as they are all meant to do it at some point in the class, so they are always eagerly waiting for their turn, when they also have fun. Of course, clear instructions have to be provided so that they don't get confused or go out of line.

I think at the primary level, if we use one or two structure-based role-play activities, they also can get to practise role play more and that helps them to be more confident of themselves and also removes their shyness. We also should be careful about one thing when they start doing role play: no one should interrupt them. This helps the students to have trust in themselves and they then realise they can make mistakes and these mistakes will be taken with a warm heart and mistakes help them to become better. In my feedback session, one thing they all asked for is more role-playing activities. So, that confirms they are not shy any more to ask for something, which is good for them and that is a good thing.

In this journey, there were no difficulties. I did face some problems but with the help of my peers, I solved all the problems without any problem! I faced some minor challenges while doing these activities. When my colleague and I had a class at the same time, she found it difficult to observe my class. But with my Head Teacher's support, we resolved it: either she or another teacher took my colleague's class at that time.

Another problem I faced is that students loved to choose their partners for the activity. But this can affect some students badly as some students will be always left out by this process. So I came up with a plan and chose their partners randomly so that all can perform and have fun from this activity and thus can learn.



## Conclusion

I would like to thank everyone for giving me the chance to do this study. Today I am writing this report in English. It was an imaginary thought some years ago. If I can do another study, I would like to do it with my peers because I realised that sharing is the best way to solve some challenges and it would enrich my study also.

## 1.3

### Mahbuba Sultana, Grade III

#### Becoming fluent in English requires practice



#### Background of the study

I realised that I was not speaking in English during English lessons and that this didn't help students to develop their speaking skills. In our primary level, most of the students come from poor and illiterate families. They are not capable of communicating in English. After completing my EIA training, I'm now conscious about whether my students are speaking English in the classroom. So I changed my approach and implemented whole-class speaking game activities and found that it worked.

The experience also raised other questions about discipline and growing interaction among students. I tried to explore ways of improving students' speaking skills and my own.

#### Research questions

For the research activity, I tried to find answers to these questions:

- How can I improve my students' speaking skills and develop my fluency?
- What are the students' reactions when I'm speaking English?
- Why do my students speak less?

#### Description of the study

First, I planned some game-type activities for improving their speaking skills. I made video recordings of my classroom activity and discussed the lessons with my peer teacher and my Head Teacher as I tried out different ways of teaching. I also had discussions with my students.

Based on what they told me, I was able to plan what I would do in my next classes.

In Cycle 1, I used whole-class game activities. 60% of my students did not respond to these. So I discussed this with them, but they weren't interested in giving their answers. Then I gave them some statements in a questionnaire. The results confirmed to me that they thought English was a very difficult subject and they did not have enough vocabulary. They also said that improving speaking skills requires practice.

So, in Cycle 2, I planned role plays, chain drills and word games for increasing their vocabulary and to remove their fear of speaking.

In Cycle 3, I wanted to increase their interaction, so I arranged pair and group work. I found that that did increase their interaction.

#### Findings

After Cycle 1, I thought I needed to identify why my students were speaking less. First, I asked them orally. But they were not interested to give me an answer. Then I discussed with my peer teacher and the Head Teacher and we made some statements in a questionnaire for the students. I gave them the questionnaire statement two times.

- Collecting data
- Cycle-1
- students-50
- Class-3

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Indifferent
1. Speaking in English is very difficult	35	10	5
2. I think it will take long term to speak in English	32	15	3
3. I believe I can speak English	26	14	10
4. I have not enough vocabulary stock	38	12	-
5. I think I need more practice	40	10	-



After Cycle 3, I gave them this statement again and the results were as follows:

## After cycle 3

Students-46

Statements	Agree	Disagree	Indifferent
1. Speaking in English is very difficult	20	24	2
2. I think it will take long term to speak in English	14	30	2
3. I believe I can speak in English	35	08	3
4. I have not enough vocabulary stock	25	20	1
5. I think I can speak in English if I practice more	38	5	3



*Pair Work*



*Guess the word game*



*Speaking practice in chain drill*

## Learning from the study

In this study, it was found that although most of the students try, the subject of English seems to be a terrifying subject for them because previously I wasn't using any fun learning strategies. After taking up this study I talked with my students, peer teacher and the Head Teacher and I changed my teaching approach. I had learned that it is possible to develop fluency by doing more practice. This study helped me better understand the expression 'teaching-learning process'.

Working with a team was amazing: my mentor and the two other mentees in our group always helped me. We met every month and shared our experience. This helped me a lot.

Doing this study I faced some challenges. Getting feedback from the students was so difficult. For my next study, I am going to research on how I can give them opportunities to speak outside the classroom.

## Conclusion

Looking back to my first experience, I feel that it was an unimaginable experience. Reflecting on my teaching methods and getting feedback from students was satisfying because different techniques were implemented on the basis of their needs. Research is awesome: an effective tool to sort out our problems and find ways to solve them and so I will try to continue doing it.

## 1.4

### Md. Shabbir Hossain, Grades III–V

#### Improving skills of reading aloud at the primary level



##### Background of the study

I realised a very surprising fact: that most of the students of Classes 3 to 5 at primary school can't read well. Moreover, this problem is common for both English and Bengali. There are a number of reasons for this situation. Teachers are not so concerned about this problem. The class-wise competency is also not achieved and the weak students are not given extra care. I conducted the research study to attain the following goal:

All the students of Classes 3 to 5 will be able to read English and Bengali well and enjoy the learning.

##### Description of the study

We know that learning a subject well includes reading as one of the major important competencies. If any student can't read well, s/he won't be able to enjoy the subject matter. I tried to develop the reading skill through two different techniques, i.e. pair and group work, and measured the effectiveness of those strategies. In my research, I ensured the involvement of students, peer teacher, Head Teacher, Assistant Upazila Education Officer (AUEO) and Upazila Education Officer (UEO). I prepared the research questions, keeping in mind the goals of the study:

1. How and to what extent can pair and group work help to improve the students' reading skills?
2. How can learning be enjoyable through pair and group work?

To make the techniques effective, I conducted several cycles. In Cycle 1, I did the following steps sequentially: planning, acting, observing and reflecting.

##### How I went about the study

In this study, I followed four cycles of four different steps, i.e. planning the research, turning it into action, observing improvement and reflecting on the students' reading skill and overcoming problems. I used several tools and devices for the study. Classes 3–5 were grouped into different technical groups, i.e. roll number 1 student who is believed to be the most meritorious student in a class was paired with the last positioned student; number 2 was paired with the second positioned student from end and so on. The students were then supposed to read their English book in their pairs. Physically challenged students were grouped with the strongest students who were presumed to perform well. Audio clips of different English poems and songs were played on the cassette player. All the students took part in reading with rhythm of physical displays along with the researcher. Posters and flash cards were also used for reading.

##### Results and discussion

In this section, I will focus on the findings of my research. From the very beginning of the study, I found that most of the students were almost very poor in reading English. The following table will show the class-wise performance of students before and after the pair and group work of reading and completion of all the cycles as case studies of inside school, i.e. Debiganj Adarsha Shishu Shiksha Niketan GPS, Debiganj, Panchagarh, and outside my school i.e. Matiarpara Government Primary School and Peralbari Government Primary School.

1. Debiganj Adarsha Shishu Shiksha Niketan GPS					
Class	Before pair and group work		After pair and group work		Success rate of pair and group work
	Number	Percent (%)	Number	Percent (%)	
V	2	12.5	13	81.25	6.25
IV	3	12	19	76	12
III	3	9.38	17	53.13	37.49
2. Matiarpara Government Primary School					
V	2	11.11	11	61.11	27.78
IV	2	8.69	12	52.17	39.14
III	1	3.33	15	50	46.67
3. Peralbari Government Primary School					
V	5	25	14	70	5
IV	4	13.34	16	53.34	33.32
III	2	5.72	18	51.42	42.86

*Data showing the effectiveness of pair and group work for reading skill improvement in different primary schools*

The table above is self-explanatory. I conducted the research in those three primary schools. In the case of Debiganj Adarsha Shishu Shiksha Niketan GPS, the number of students was only 16 in Class 5. Before applying the pair and group work techniques, I found only two girls could read English well but the other students couldn't. I made the pair of students like roll number 1 and 16, 2 and 15, 3 and 14 and so on. Firstly, I read and told the students to listen carefully. Then they were told to read. Initially they failed, but after two or three times almost 81.25% of students were successful. I monitored the improvement on a daily basis and in a complete cycle. I also realised that the teachers are very cautious about the students of Class 5 compared to Class 3 and lower. In the case of Class 5, the success rate was 6.25, and for classes 4 and 3, it was 12 and 37.5 respectively. In the cases of Matiarpara Government Primary School and Peralbari Government Primary School, the effectiveness of the pair and group work was also praiseworthy. The success rate was satisfactory. The significant observation was that the weak students got help and courage from the strong or meritorious ones. The students were carefully handled, monitored

and strategically managed. The physically handicapped students were to some extent successful to read thoroughly by the help of good students in a pair. I also made mixed pairs, i.e. boys with girls. Firstly, they felt shy due to our conservative social system, but after some encouragement, the learning was successful. Some students couldn't succeed finally and they should be nurtured more.

Dancing with the rhythm of songs was also very effective as group work in learning to read well. At first, the researcher danced with the songs and said the lyrics simultaneously. Then the students also did the same. After some unsuccessful attempts, finally most of the students (around 75%) were successful in reading and reciting the lyrics appropriately. That indicates the effectiveness of group work. The important observation of the study was that the students learnt their lessons and were able to read English with full enjoyment, which is undoubtedly of very much importance for learning fruitfully.



*Group work for learning to read by singing and reciting*



*Students are working in pairs*

### **What I learnt from the study**

I've learnt a lot from this research. The study was concerned with the effective learning of reading English well by primary school students. During the entire study, I took help and suggestions from my peer teachers, colleagues, Head Teachers, UAEO and UEO and they also monitored my research from time to time to analyse and measure the fruitfulness of reading techniques. We worked together like a peer group. My colleagues gave me a number of suggestions to execute my techniques when I was a bit frustrated and finally I was quite successful. From the results section, it is clearly seen that still a significant number of students cannot read English well. It is quite challenging to build a truly functional primary education system. We

have to address all of the students and all the students have to be nurtured from the very beginning, i.e. Class 1. This study helped me greatly to get the answer for my research questions, i.e. how to improve the reading skills of the students and make learning enjoyable. When most of the students are able to read English well and thoroughly, they will enjoy the learning and their basics will be strong from the beginning, i.e. primary education.

I faced several challenges in conducting the study, for example, students' shyness, unwillingness to participate in pair and group work and logistics support. It could be improved through continuous motivation and follow-up evaluation. In future, I'm keenly interested to continue my research individually and as a group.

### **Conclusion**

I enjoyed the research throughout, working deeply with my colleagues and students, where weak students could take help and inspiration from strong students. They became friendly and their personalities also developed due to participation in pair and group work. I'm very interested to take this forward to include reading and speaking skills, because I believe that in this modern era we live in, all the students should read English well and speak to communicate in daily life. All the concerned agencies and stakeholders should come forward to make efforts to improve the reading skills and overall learning of primary students.

## 1.5

### S.M Rabbi, Grade V

#### Can students' reading skills improve through group work ?



#### Background of the study

I joined as an assistant teacher at Hatipara GPS in 2010. Till today I have worked in four schools. When I taught, I faced a similar problem everywhere – that most of the students could not read the text properly, which made me very unhappy. If a student can read the text properly, s/he will continue his/her regular learning process at school and self-study at home smoothly. Then I asked a question to myself, 'How can I overcome this situation?'. The answer came: I could involve bright students in groups to overcome this situation. That is what motivated me to take up this topic for classroom research.

#### Research questions

In my classroom research, I tried to find answers to the following questions:

- How can group work be used to improve the reading skills of my students?
- How can I conduct group work with slower students with extra support effectively?
- How can small-group work (SGW) be used to improve the reading skills of my students?
- How can a reflective journal and post-class video observation be used to improve my own teaching techniques?

The persons who were involved in my classroom research: my beloved students, my Head Teacher, my colleagues, mentees, mentors and EIA representatives.

#### Description of the research study

For this study, we joined a mentor workshop for TVC which was organised by English in Action. They showed me what things we could

do for our research study. After completing the workshop, we were called for joining another workshop with mentees at Gazipur PTI. Coming back to my own school, I prepared a lesson without any learning because I took Cycle 1 as the baseline. I made six groups in an organised way. I took feedback from my students. I faced some problems and wrote a reflective journal with learning after completed Cycle 1. In my journal I wrote possible solutions.

This research study was very effective and interesting to me. It showed me the way in which I could overcome problems and enrich my professional life. It has helped me to increase the reading skills of my students in an organised way. For this classroom research, I completed three cycles. For each cycle, I gave the students an individual feedback form. In that form I mentioned some questions. I tried to find out the actual condition of my students by asking some questions and through my own observation.

The main questions were:

1. Has the teacher done group work in your class?
2. Which skill has the teacher given preference in group work?
3. Have you improved your reading through group work? How?
4. Do you think that extra classes can increase your confidence?
5. Do you feel better in small groups?

To improve the reading skills of our students, I involved bright students to improve slower students in groups in an organised way. Here, I selected a leader who would lead the group, a secretary who would write and present the

group work and a time-keeper who would remind other group members about time. For increasing the confidence level of slower students, I gave them extra support and appreciation. To give them extra support I organised some extra classes for slower students. I made a plan to organise two extra classes on Saturday and Tuesday every week. I

gave 15–30 days’ interval between every cycle. In Cycles 1 and 2, I provided group work and in Cycle 3, I provided small-group work. These helped us to improve students’ reading skills and ensure participatory group work. I tried to improve my own teaching techniques by writing reflective journals and watching class videos.

Area of comparison	Cycle 1	Cycle 2	Cycle 3
Slower students	Could not participate actively because couldn't read the text properly	Some slower students read the text properly	Most of the slower students read the text properly
Myself/ teacher	Conducted class with usual lesson plan because no learning at the beginning of Cycle 1	Conducted class with improved lesson plan after considering the learning from Cycle 1	Conducted class with improved lesson plan after considering the learning from Cycle 2
Members of group	6–7	6–7	4–5 (SGW)
Number of extra classes	0	4	6

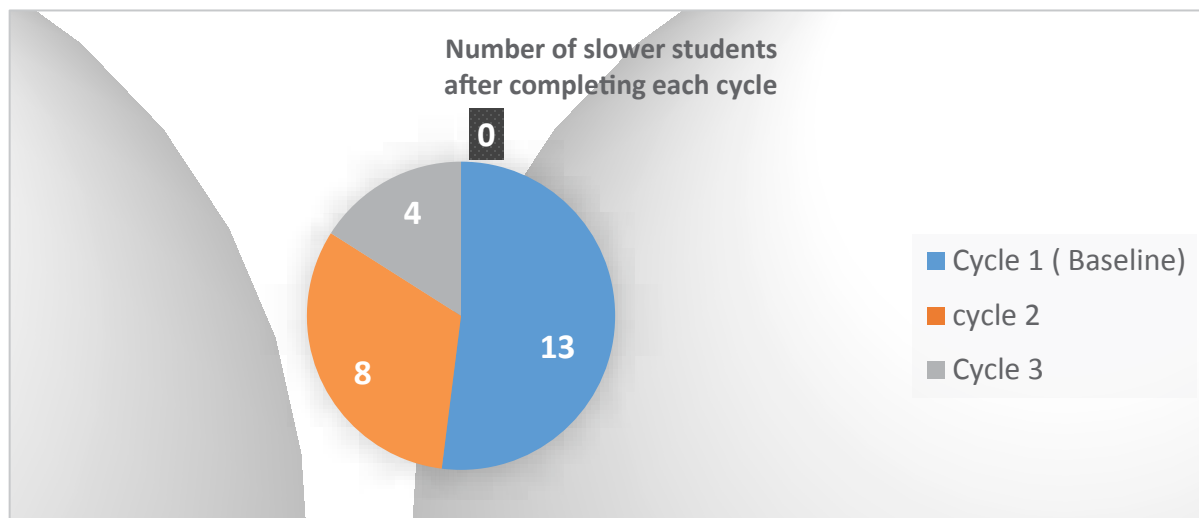
## Comparison between the cycles

### Outcomes

*'It is our attitude at the beginning of a difficult task which, more than anything else, will affect its successful outcome.'* (William James)

In this regard, I would like to say that the outcome of my research study is very successful. It seemed a very effective way

to me and my students. It inspired and motivated me to go forward. I believe that if I improve the reading skills of my students and give them some confidence to use English, not only as a language but also as a tool, it will help us to create an economically enriched Bangladesh. Here I want to mention the progress of my students in a chart:





## Conclusion

I would like to give special thanks to my beloved pupils. They helped me very much to do my research work. Now I would like to say what the famous Martin Luther King of USA said: I have a dream. I have a dream to develop my own English. I have a dream to create some good students so that they can use English not only as a language but also as a tool. And make Bangladesh enriched.

## Recommendations

1. You may use group work as a tool for improving students' reading skills.
2. Understand students' real problems. If possible, give extra support to slower students.
3. Appreciate your students. It can play a vital role in improving their confidence.
4. Provide small group work activities. They can help you to increase students' participation.
5. Maintain a reflective journal and watch while-class video. It can inspire you and show you the area of improvement of your class.

## 1.6

### Salma Begum, Grade V

#### Fun activities as a means to improve speaking skills



#### Background of the study

I had to conduct English classes even though my graduation subject wasn't English. So, my lessons did not run well because of the hesitation in my speaking. My teaching consisted of 'ask and answer' type activities before I started the EIA training, and so only a few students responded. Once I got into the EIA programme, I tried my best to speak more. That made my lessons serious and other peer teachers encouraged me to do it more. I found that my students were interested in using audio materials in classroom activities. So, I wanted to improve my speaking skills as a teacher and also make my lessons fun for everyone by doing some supplementary activities.

#### Description of the study

In order to enhance my speaking skills, first I tried to speak English the whole time in the classroom. To observe and evaluate my teaching techniques, I involved my peers, mentees (different schools) and my students of Class 5. I began my study with the following research questions:

#### Research questions

1. How can I improve my speaking skills as a teacher?
2. Why do my students need to speak?
3. Which activities are best for getting students to speak most?

#### Comparison of the cycles

I started my first class in the first cycle in my usual way – with ask and answer (using audios). I practised EL4T activities and classroom phrases related to the lessons I was going to teach. Sometimes, I listened to songs

and the news in order to improve myself. I used some language of praise and also had students use it themselves when they were performing with each other.

I used some specific techniques for listening and speaking skills. I did a comparative analysis between my learning in Cycles 1, 2 and 3, paying special focus to my research questions.

I prepared myself a lot by writing lesson plans with learning goals and by adding more opportunities to let students practise more speaking skills. At every stage, I tried to think of myself as a student of Class 5, with their learning needs. I wrote a diary/journal every day in order to follow the specific findings. I tried to improve our classroom phrases. In the first lesson, my young learners were nervous when doing 'ask and answer'. So, I added some games in the next class. Action songs helped us to remove shyness even more and to get confident. Then in the second I emphasised making my lessons joyful to improve the weaker students. So, here I added more fun activities, such as games, action songs, picture descriptions etc. In the third cycle, I used more supplementary activities such as role plays, tongue twisters and 'ask and answer' while throwing a ball, where every student tried their best to speak and do something. Sometimes, I took interviews and did assessment with a questionnaire in order to get the students' impressions directly. For example, one of the questions was: 'In which speaking activity did they participate most?'

My peers observed at least two classes in each cycle along with making audio and video



recordings. They assured me that FUN activities can be a tool to improve our speaking skills. Here, I used some questionnaires for myself and my students, and an observation checklist for peers, AUEO and URCl to get feedback. Finally, I ensured the students' joyful participation in every speaking activity.

I tried to cover every practice activity within the class period I started with whole-class work, then I tried doing them as group activities, and sometimes I added games as small-group activities. I asked more advanced students to practise each activity with the weaker ones in small groups and pairs. Both I and the group leaders encouraged students who found it challenging to speak and do pair activities or take part in chain drills so as to ensure everyone's participation. When they were struggling, I gave them praise. As a result, those students overcame their challenges and started to show that they were learning by speaking quickly. Students of other classes started to assemble outside the classroom windows to watch the fun class. I got more successes day-by-day through using these different interaction patterns. After learning the 'same sound game', some of my advanced students started to write their own rhythmic rhymes. This confirmed for me that children can learn and remember more through doing fun activities. Soon, my students were adapted to the language and techniques: so group leaders started to lead warmers and games. They also used English both inside and outside the classroom: even out on the street and with other teachers. It was all great fun!

## Main findings

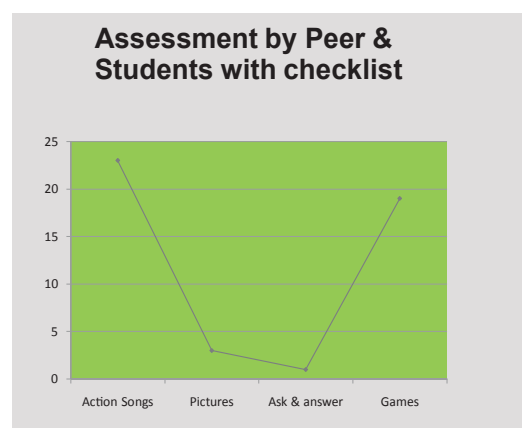
At the very beginning, I thought that my students would not be able to assess my teaching activities. So, I made three circles, BEST, GOOD, WORST, with different colours, to stick different marks from 1–10. It was unbelievable that they filled the BEST circles with some appreciative words: a really

enjoyable and positive result for me. Then, I enjoyed looking with new eyes at the teaching and learning along with the students in my 'researching classroom'. It made me happy when I watched videos of my classes and could notice what was going on, what should not happen, what should be added next time.

After observing a class of mine, our URCl remarked that the class was the best teaching-learning class of his observation in his whole life. That was a great achievement of my action research. One day a British Council team came to my school for a quick visit and they highly praised my students' speaking skills. Not only that, the honourable District Commissioner was surprised also to watch their conversation in English. Now, they don't hesitate to speak in English in front of any visitors.

## Outcomes of the study

Between January and July, the number of advanced students in my classes was increasing and there were fewer weaker students, as was seen in the group leaders' and my records. So, I was able to do more speaking activities with my pupils: and for this reason they had the best results in PEC examinations. This also helped me to be named the best teacher of English in the upazila and in the district. After this, some institutions arranged for me to provide professional improvement training for their English teachers.



The above graph shows in which activity students could participate most



*Students are very excited watching a demonstration of an interview in pairs about their 'leisure time'*

### My learning from the study

Every teacher is a researcher, but we can't express it without evidence. So, this was my first learning about the research process and for collecting evidence. I started it with formulating research questions and planning. Then action, observation, reflection, overcoming the challenges, using teaching tools, success, presentation and now publishing; all of these things have empowered me with various experiences.

I became deeply involved in every activity. Even my most challenging students responded a lot to action songs. My peers and students supported me and gave me confidence through providing information, comments and data to show that speaking skills could improve very fast when the activities were fun. So, I learned to feel certain about how to set up the conditions for my large classes to learn easily. Keeping to the same topics and the same techniques helped me to compare the different outcomes of the three cycles. But at every stage I had to add different structures within the same strategies in order for the advanced students to move forward and to provide more repetition for the weaker ones. I found that a number of different factors could sometimes influence the findings: these included length of time spent, using a large number of techniques, the presence of observers, the environment in which students were present and taking specific photos.

### Unanswered questions

I'm still trying to explore how I can motivate all students to ask questions more willingly. At the beginning, they had no creativity to ask but now they are trying. So, I've a plan to start a new research study.

In my study there were three mentees with me. But I was disappointed when one of them dropped out. I think, I shouldn't be so strict about their work so that they lose interest. As a team leader, I should be smoother to motivate them to work. Actually, most of us don't want to conduct a class where you need to document evidence and also waste extra time in diary writing because of tuitions, family, illness, interest etc. So, next time I'll do the work individually with the help of my students and school peers.

### Conclusion

Research on the brain tells us that when the fun stops, learning often stops too. I've realised this and have my own documentary proof of it through my fun activities. Research makes me a complete teacher. So, I'm trying to observe every fact from the starting point, not the end. Hence I'm seeing a hunger in my students to learn more on their own. I'm frequently asking myself 'Why' questions to find out the inner meaning of why something isn't working well. And I should present my lessons in a clear, inclusive and structured way to minimise distractions. Now, I've made a promise to myself to let my students see a dream. I hope to present my next research about an 'English Classroom of a Rural Area' at an international conference. I'm so grateful that I had this chance to cooperate, be inspired and to be setting high expectations for teachers, including their pupils. Really, this is a dynamic change.

## 1.7

### Shamim Ara Begum, Grade V

#### Using different techniques to develop listening and speaking skills



#### Background of the study

My research work was about using a variety of techniques to teach sentence formation. I chose this area because, at first, students could not make sentences in a proper way.

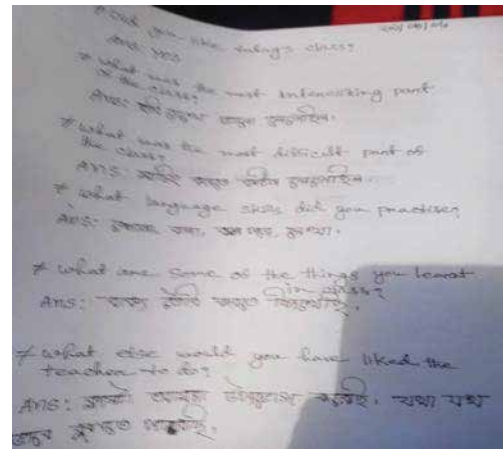
#### How I went about the study

In Cycle 1, I took two classes and used six techniques. 30 students were present in my class. For example, half of the questions and half of the answers were removed from the board. Then the students were asked to complete the sentences. They learned to make interrogative and assertive sentences. Students were also taught the name of the 12 months by using placards. Students were divided into seven groups, and were called Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday. They made two sentences from each of the groups. All students participated with joy. Students learnt sentences through chain drill and they learnt sentences by arranging word cards. Throwing a ball, I selected the students and told them to ask questions. I collected their perceptions of whether they understood the techniques in my first class. Among them, 20 students were able to understand the techniques and the other ten students had problems. I helped them to understand. Among the six techniques, students learnt three techniques easily. These techniques were more effective.

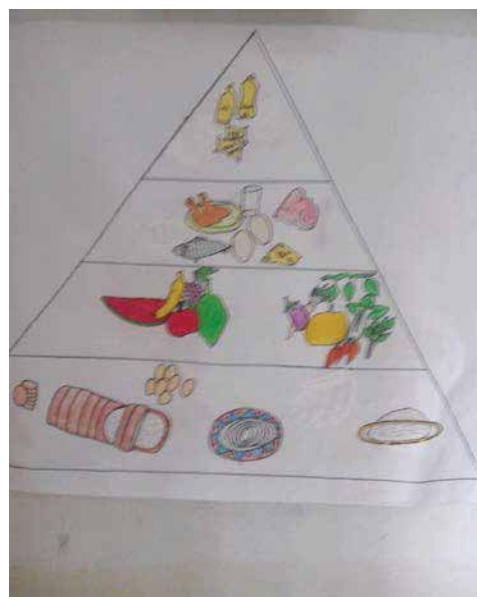
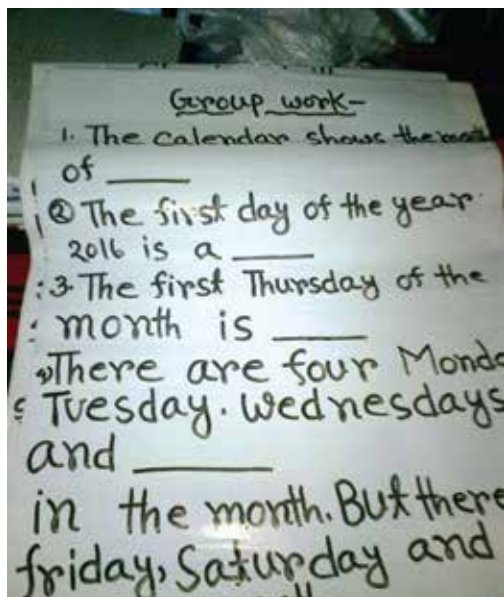
Then, in Cycle 2, I applied three techniques. Students learnt to make sentences with the help of these techniques. They learnt with joy and achieved learning outcomes easily. After using these techniques, students said, 'Lessons are easier for us.' I found that applying different techniques can make the

lesson enjoyable for the students. It helps to keep discipline in the classroom. Students learnt to build sentences with joy. They found the lesson entertaining and thus developed their speaking power. This time they were divided into four groups called protein, vitamin, carbohydrate and fat and made two sentences from each group.

The URC Instructor observed my class. He gave me some advice, such as group work is better than individual work as it helps us to save time. Students gave me feedback through a checklist as shown below.



However, I faced one challenge in my classes. I needed a long time to complete the class. When students were forming sentences individually, they were taking time. I helped them by getting advanced learners to give them feedback in groups. I realised that group work is better than individual work. Thus I tried to solve problems through 'learning and doing'. In Cycle 1, I needed ten minutes more than the class time. As I applied group work instead of individual work in Cycle 2, it took less time. I finished my class within the class time in Cycle 3.



Tasks for group work

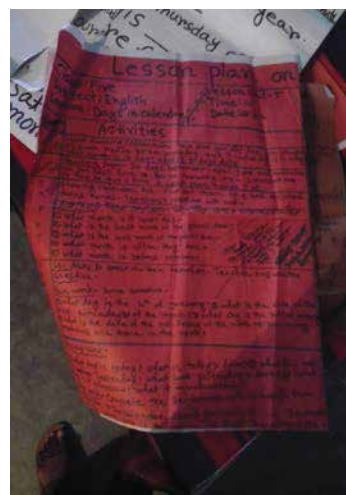
### What I learnt from the study

I have learned from my study to control my class better than before. Through proper monitoring, increasing confidence and developing my professional skills, students have become more attentive than before and they achieved their learning outcome easily. I collected much evidence, such as pictures of group work, pictures of my classroom, the URC instructor's observation checklist, video of the class, students' perceptions, my own lesson plan, lesson-relevant materials and peer observation.

### Conclusion

I realised that the classroom environment has changed; all students are involved in the activities. They are learning through songs and many kinds of games with joy. The lessons are entertaining for them. Attendance has increased. Now guardians are happy that their children are learning English at school. They feel very proud. Now students wait for their English classes. I find it difficult to manage time properly, but I try to solve problems through 'learning by doing'. Use of EIA techniques has made all subjects more effective and achievable for our students. Using a variety of techniques to teach students with the correct structure, using EIA audio and video, self-evaluation, doing

demonstrations and maintaining lesson plans – all this made it possible for me to deliver many messages in a short time and the students learned from them.



A sample of a lesson plan



Children are in different groups

# 1.8

## Subrata Samaddar, Grade V

### Increasing English speaking time in the classroom



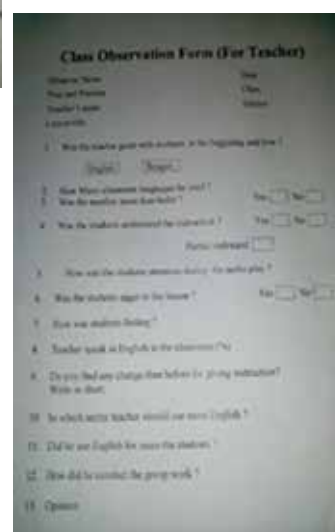
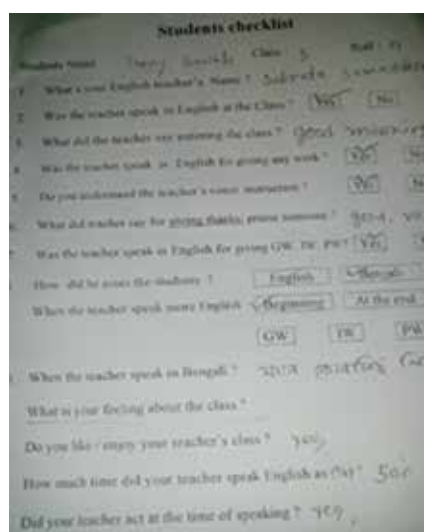
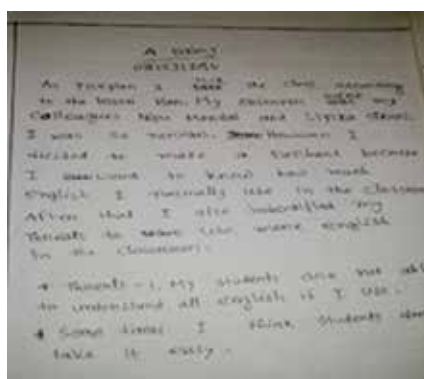
#### Background of the study

We learn a language for communicating with each other. So why not English? But after completing Class 5, many students do not continue their studies. They go to foreign countries for jobs. They face serious problems in communicating because they are not able to use communicative English. Our pupils have very little scope to practise English outside the classroom. As an English teacher, I am aware that I speak more English in the classroom. A good listener can be a good speaker. When they become a good listeners, they will be good speakers. So I decided to do a small research study to increase my English speaking time in the English class. It will also help me to become a better teacher and will

definitely help students to practise it even outside the classroom.

#### How I went about the study

I wanted to find out the techniques for using more English in the classroom. At first, I wanted to know my present situation in terms of using English, so that I can emphasise these points. I made a plan. I decided to write self reflection diaries after the class. I also made a lesson plan. I called my peers to observe my class and requested them to find out some turning points to use more English in the English class. After they observed my class, I interviewed my peers by using a questionnaire. A sample of my diary is given below.



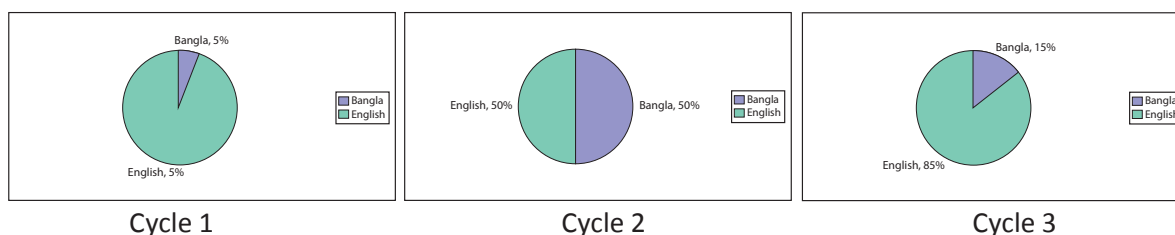
I also decided to take some interviews of my students for identifying the reasons for using Bangla in the English class. I made a plan to cover three cycles and every cycle consisted of three special classes. From my self-reflection diaries, observers' opinions and students' perceptions, I came to know that I was using 50% English language in the English class. My observers told me that I used more Bangla for giving instructions.

I made a plan to use more English language for giving instructions. I wrote some instructional language on some poster papers. I hung them at different places on the wall. I also took a demonstration class. I also made a

lesson plan with classroom language and put it in a place so that only I can see it.

At the end of the first cycle, I noticed that I used about 85% English. It was only 50% at the starting time of my research. Again I made a plan to maintain the second cycle. I found that some of my language was in the lesson plan, but unfortunately I missed using it in the classroom. So I gave a red colour mark under those I forgot to use. At the end of the second cycle, I noticed that I used about 90% English. My peer observed my class and she also give me 90% marks.

Then again I made a plan to use 100% English in class. After the third cycle it was a success.



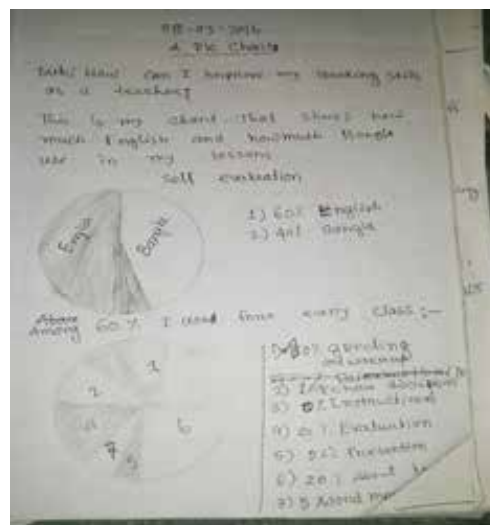
### What I learnt from the study

I noticed that now I use about 95–100% English in every class. I understood that regular practice, confidence and avoiding shyness to use English are the main issues that I needed to keep in mind. Self-reflection diaries also helped me to become better. Sometimes it is very difficult to maintain diaries after every class. But we can use it for special practice classes.

### Conclusion

Now I am very happy with my students. In my class they are very active in group work, pair work, games and so forth. Some photos below will illustrate this.





## 1.9

### Md. Robiul Alam, Grade IV

#### A diary study: enhancing students' reading skills



#### Background of the study

This study marks the beginning of a new chapter in my teaching life. It also changed the traditional ideas about my English language teaching and learning. Initially, I faced difficulty in following these new methods and techniques. At that time, I was not quite satisfied with my students' reading skills because I noticed that many students did not participate in the process of improving the reading skill under my guidance.

Only fast/bright students i.e. able students participated actively. I noticed that only a small number of students could read. Then I thought about how well I was doing to increase the students' reading skills. There were a number of students in all classes who were very interested in learning. But what do I do with those students who are shy or weak? Can I ever build their confidence? Every day I used to analyse some of my teaching and learning techniques after school. But in this analysis, I couldn't follow any systematic ways. At that time, EIA gave me an opportunity to do a research study. I felt that doing a 'Diary study' is a unique opportunity for self-assessment and professional development, which will help to increase the students' reading skills. My specific questions were:

- Why couldn't all of my students read?
- What should I do to increase my students' reading ability?

#### How I went about the study

In the study, I selected two general and simple topics from Class 4 titled 'Family' and 'Sagar and his family' from Units 3 and 15 respectively. Thinking about the students, the following contents were included in the lesson:

- At the beginning of the lesson, the 'Teddy bear' song from *English for Today* was played with actions as a warm-up activity.
- To understand the content of the lesson easily, a digital banner of the content was presented in the class.
- The new words in the lesson (kushtia, doctor, patient, hospital) were taught by using a map, pictures and word cards.
- Chorus drill, chain drill and group work were used so that all the students could participate in the lesson.
- The class was arranged so that weak, shy or not-so-able students sat in the front benches.
- The learning outcome of the lesson was about reading skill; I applied the loud reading technique twice and played the EIA audio so that students could properly understand the lesson.
- I used gestures to make my instructions clear to all the students.

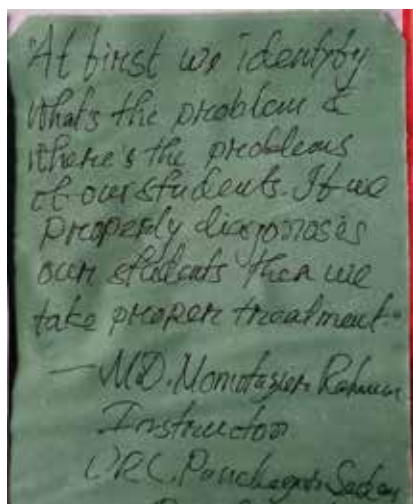
I invited my colleague and Head Teacher to observe the lesson. They provided their feedback as follows:

- All the students were motivated. They enjoyed the action song 'Teddy bear'.
- Students could easily tell the lesson topic as the lesson-related picture was printed as a digital banner.
- In group work, some students were trying to pass their tasks on to others. The assistant teacher and Head Teacher advised me to encourage those students to do their work on their own.
- In addition, the Head Teacher's suggestion was to distribute some of the disciplinary responsibilities among the students.



- The suggestion from colleagues was to increase the role of weak and shy students rather than reducing the role of fast/bright students.
- At the end of the lesson, when the students were asked to read the text one by one, it was noticed that a small number of students were able to read the text properly, which was not a significant result.

Keeping in mind the above-mentioned issues, I started writing a diary. Every day I tried to write something in the diary. It took three weeks to finish this study. How do I increase the students' reading skills? When I asked my Head Teacher about this, he said, 'Practise the text with spelling more and more during reading activity', which was written in my diary. According to the Head Teacher's suggestion, in Cycle 2, I made some changes in the lesson plan. Then I tried to conduct the reading activity with spelling. But I didn't notice any significant changes in the class. Afterward, I shared with the URC Instructor about how to increase the reading skill of my students. He advised me to do a baseline survey on finding out the number of students who can read properly and cannot read and later on suggestions could be provided to those students as required. His comments are given below:



According to his advice, I did a baseline survey in my following lessons. And that survey allowed me to understand how many students can read properly, how many can read partially and how many can spell words accurately. Afterwards, I shared my thoughts with two well-known subject-based trainers and a Teacher Facilitator of EIA regarding how I can increase my students' reading skills. One of them said: 'If we teach our students new words I think it is better for developing their reading skill.' Another suggestion: 'SRM (supplementary reading materials) and group work is necessary for developing students' reading skill'. Then as per his advice I made six groups by various meritorious students in Cycle 3 and distributed SRMs among them and brought some changes in the lesson plans. So that ensured more group work in the reading activity. And then I took an interview to identify the progress of each student's reading skill based on their SRMs.

## Discussion of results

The class got the following:

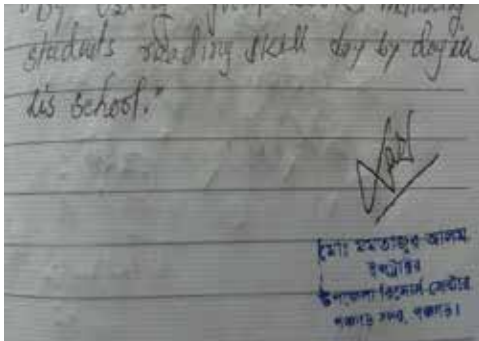
- The EIA song 'Out in the garden' was played with actions as a warm-up activity. Students enjoyed the song.
- The image of the content was presented in a digital banner. As a result, it was easy to understand the content of the lesson.
- Students were able to pronounce new words quite well when those words were taught through chain drill and chorus by using a picture card and sound card.
- Extra care was given to the weak students in the lesson so that all the students could read.
- Fast/bright students helped the weak students to explain the instructions for the lesson. Our HT observed the whole class with good attention and filled in the baseline survey form. Later on, he wrote in my diary – among 30 students, 15 can read properly, 7 partially and the remaining 8 can read with spelling.



*I am monitoring their group work*



*An interactive class*



*My colleague's comments on my lesson*

### **What I learnt from the study**

Earlier I didn't know how to conduct a study, nor knew how I could increase my students' reading skills. But with this study, which involved my colleagues' feedback and my own reflections, I have been able to address this issue to quite an extent.

I have been distributing SRMs to the students each week, which helps them to increase their reading skills. Students are participating in

teaching-learning activities with fun and I am continuing the activities by using methods and techniques, as in the case of Cycle 3 and day-to-day increasing their reading skills. In the near future, 100% of students in my class will be able to read properly with comprehension as well. In teaching-learning activities, I have now increased the time of group work and reduced my talking time as a teacher. Because of the mixture of different types of students in groups, the able students can help less-able students. As a result, my job as a teacher is as a friend, or elder brother, or a guardian. As a mentor, I can offer suggestions to my mentees on teaching and learning activities. We can solve many problems by discussing our teaching-learning activities. Relationships with the colleagues have become closer than before. Through this research work, a good relationship has been created with other teachers around the country. That's why I am grateful to the people of EIA.

### **Conclusion**

This study shows that it is difficult to increase the reading skill of the English language by following only the class textbooks. If I am aware of the learning outcome, then I can verify whether the learning outcome is achieved or not. If the target reading skill is not achieved as expected, then as a teacher, I can change my teaching-learning process.

This study shows that there is a good relationship between the learning outcome and the learning process. As a teacher, we can play an important role in the teaching and learning process. It is also proved from this research that the teacher can become aware of his/her teaching-learning process by sharing and discussing with his/her colleagues, Head Teachers, officers or any external people, and act as a major source of his/her students' language development.

## SECTION 2:

# Listening to learners' voices

*'Students can play a great role in changing teaching and learning.'* This sums up the studies in this section. They illustrate stories of courage: teachers who had never asked their students about their class – what they like, don't like, find easy or difficult – have discovered that getting regular feedback makes it easier for them to change their teaching strategy and to improve student participation and learning. After a feedback session, students are more alert and eager to see how the teacher is changing their way of teaching. They have also become keen observers/evaluators of teaching. Teachers concede that now they are not strict like before and as a result students love them more.

Some examples of teacher-learning: one teacher found out that a group of five rather than seven/eight students worked better in many respects and choosing the group leader based on students' opinion increased the *'functionality of the group'*; another teacher presented vocabulary using synonyms and at times used Bangla meanings according to the students' suggestion. Another finding was that students learnt better when the teaching was related to their daily lives: when they were allowed to relate textbook stories to their real lives, they did a very good job although their English wasn't very good. But they were willing to learn new vocabulary to express their views. What makes it significant is that this is their research-based learning.

However, all teachers agree that getting student feedback wasn't easy at the beginning; students even copied from one another when they were asked to give written feedback. They also felt shy and frightened of their teacher: *'If I give you bad feedback you may punish me'*; besides students didn't know how to do it. Although teachers normally asked questions such as 'Have you understood?' or 'Any question?' everyone knew that it wasn't a serious question. Gradually, when teachers created a friendly atmosphere and gave some specific questions to answer, it made the job easy. They could see that their views were appreciated and taken seriously; moreover, they saw changes in the way the teacher taught. Teachers are astonished to see even the so-called slow learner giving valuable suggestions. Over two/three cycles during the study, teachers saw that *'students are playing the roles of a thinker, an analyser, an evaluator and so on. Through their perception and feedback we are thinking deeply over the lesson, making inquiries, analysing evidence and trying to bring in innovative techniques.'*

From the time when teachers taught according to their way to now when teachers declare: *'I don't need to worry about how my class went, I just ask the students'*, they seem to have come a long way and have discovered for themselves it is easy and enjoyable to teach through a learner-centred method. What is most heartening is that they have only *'anchored at the port for the time being.'* They won't stop: they *'will have to go for further adventure to explore the field of education research.'*

## 2.1

### Adhipakoli Sarker, Grade V

#### What do students like and dislike about group work ?



#### Background of the study

I had to manage a large class where 60% were slow learners. So I didn't take my class according to my plan. I noticed that advanced learners became more advanced and slower learners couldn't develop themselves. I couldn't find out the reason of weakness within a short time because I couldn't check their understanding one by one. When I told them to do anything, I thought that they understood my instructions, but when they started working I saw that they couldn't do that work. But I wanted to involve all the students in class and tried to make the lesson easier for them. So, I chose group work through which I could solve my problem.

#### Research questions

To conduct my study, I selected three questions. These are:

1. What type of group do the students like most and why?
2. Why are the weaker students inactive in groups?
3. How can I involve them in group work?

#### How I went about the study

For enhancing participation, I formed groups in several ways, such as: advanced students with weaker students; weaker students with weaker students; and boys with girls. I tried to find out what kind of grouping they liked most. I set up students' roles, and after finishing group work the reporters told me how the activity worked. I also invited my Head Teacher to observe my class to give me feedback by filling up an observation checklist.

Before starting Cycle 1, I prepared an observation checklist for my Head Teacher and feedback form for the group leaders. I also discussed my study with my Head Teacher and colleagues. I asked them to help me. I observed my students closely to identify their understanding level so that I could continue my study smoothly.

For collecting data I used some tools. When my Head Teacher observed my class, he filled up the observation checklist. There were 15 questions here. For example:

1. Are the students interested in group work?
2. Are the instructions clear to the students?

I also took feedback from every group leader. Two questions from the feedback form are:

1. How many students were able to participate actively in the group?
2. How many students were inactive in groups and why?

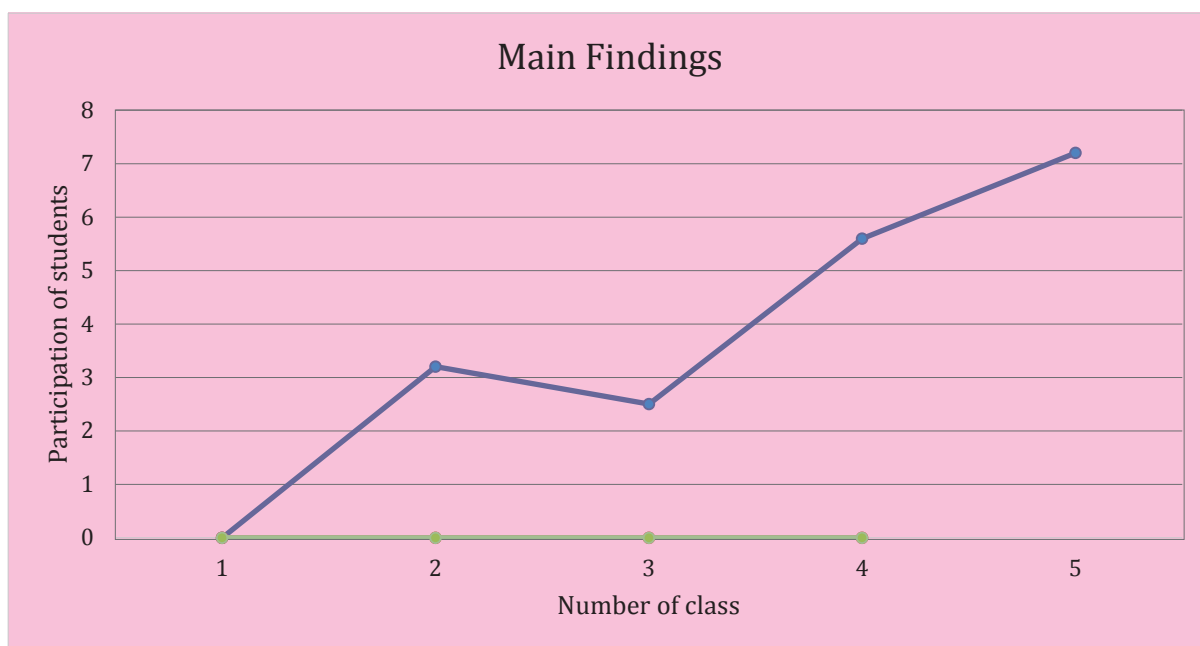
I tried to note down all the problems in my journal. I used to write it once a month.

In Cycle 1, I formed groups by mixing advanced students and weaker students, because I thought that the weaker students could get help from advanced students. But I noticed that students can't understand my instructions clearly and, as I didn't set up any clear roles, there was chaos. So, they didn't finish the group work as per my expectation.

In Cycle 2, I formed groups by putting all weak students together because I thought that the relationship between them will be good. But I noticed that the advanced group finished

their work quickly and laughed at the other groups and the weaker groups were struggling to finish their work. Though I gave them a creative task, the weaker groups felt upset. The groups who couldn't finish their work asked for an advanced group leader. Because I used to tell them we are going to start a competition, every group wanted to win. As a

result, the participation of students decreased. So, in Cycle 3, I again formed groups by combining advanced students and weaker students. That time I gave instructions step by step rather than all at one time because if I give instructions at one time they forget all things.



In the graph the vertical axis means the participation of students and the horizontal axis means the number of class. In Cycle 1, about 32% of students were involved in the activity. In Cycle 2, about 25% of students were involved. And in Cycle 3, the participation of students increased to about 70%. But in every cycle I felt that the practising time was short for weaker students.



### What I learnt from the study

As I always wanted to enhance the participation of students, I collected data from my Head Teacher and students. Then I noted down the problem and their possible solution in my journal, so that I can use it in the next cycle. I have found that students most like the mixed group of advanced and weaker

students because the group members can get help from their leader. I have to set up clear roles for the group leader, a secretary and a reporter so that no one will feel left out. I should give instructions step by step so that the students can do their work easily and smoothly. After giving instructions I should check it. If I don't check it when they start work, they feel frustration. And then I have to make a sense of competition among the groups. Because if I say we are going to start a competition they think it is a game, so they want to win the game. But I wanted to enhance participation. But I didn't touch my goal of 100% involvement in groups actively because only 70% were involved. The remaining 30% weren't engaged in group work because they can spell the word but can't pronounce the word. Maybe they aren't fit for this level.

## Conclusion

As a mentor, I think the discussion with my mentees was effective. When I felt upset or didn't understand anything, I tried to contact them. Fortunately, before presenting our work we sat together and they helped me to arrange the documents. As we live in remote areas, we can't meet when we feel a problem. We always have contact over the phone.

Our group was also slightly problematic. Two out of three of my mentees were very good, but one mentee always tried to copy from me and from my other mentees. She never wanted to collect the data but wanted to present. It was a great challenge for me. So, if I continue doing research, I would like to work in a group but with different group members.

When I started doing research, though it was difficult at the beginning, things became clear as we had divisional workshops. One thing I wish to say with pride: my students love me more than before, because I have given up being strict and try to find out why they aren't active, what their problems are. I try to encourage them. So now, they are eagerly waiting for my class. My colleagues were astonished because I invited them to observe my class. They wanted to know more things about my study. This journey has been a turning point in my professional life. Because I am usually a bit curt and to the point, I thought that problem is mine but happiness is for sharing. But I proved it false in my study. Now I share both the woes and joys of my class with my colleagues and I want to continue that in my whole teaching life.

## 2.2



### Fahmida Nazir Musa, Rumi Chakraborty, Rama Chowdhury, Md. Azharul Islam, Grades VII–X

## Can students' likes/dislikes and choices improve teachers' and students' performance? A journey of change

### Flashback

In teaching-learning activities, students are an important resource. Their active participation makes the classroom vibrant and lively. Out of their curiosity, they want to get something new and interesting in every day's lesson. We four teachers feel that we should give emphasis to their perceptions, roles and opinions. We have made a sincere effort here to find out how every student can play a vital role in the improvement of both the students' and the teachers' performance. Their profound curiosity and immense power of evaluation can help a teacher to be reflective. Students' feedback about the class helps us to reform ourselves as mentors for the students. Their demand to learn new things helps us to use appropriate teaching techniques and pave the way for further professional development. So, we chose this study to evaluate our teaching techniques according to students' perception of their role and learning and to improve our ways of teaching.

### Planning for the voyage

Before starting our research work, we four doing the study sat together and drew up an action plan. We decided to talk with our peer teachers and the Head Teacher for their

cooperation. Besides this, we thought about maintaining reflective journals for self-reflection. We also asked for student feedback through some questions to continue our study smoothly. Those questions are as follows:

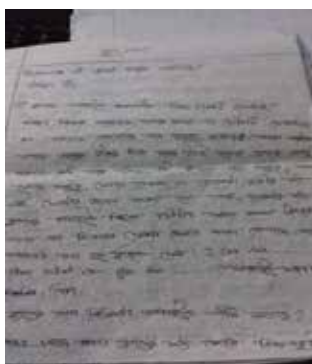
- Did you like today's class?
- What was the most interesting part of the class?
- What was the most difficult part of the class?
- Which language skills did you practise?
- What are some of the things you learnt in the class?
- What else would you have liked the teacher to do?

### Tools for the voyage

We know that a lighthouse shows the way to a ship in the deep, dark ocean. Similarly, students' feedback indicates the way to a teacher for the research-journey. After completing the lesson, we provided a questionnaire to the students and asked them to comment on the class. Sometimes they gave us written comments. We also collected their feedback through video clips and sometimes through audio.



*Students are giving feedback*



*Students' feedback*

For self-reflection, we tried to write reflective journals regularly. These journals worked like a mirror of our performance. By keeping diaries, we were improving gradually after

each cycle. In teaching, in learning, in using techniques – an overall improvement happened through these diaries, as a compass helps a ship to move in the right way.



*Some pages from our reflective journals*

In addition, we invited our peer teachers to observe our classes and give some feedback. To get their comments, we provided some questions to them. So, they observed our classes and gave us their valuable feedback,

which helped us in moulding our teaching-learning activities. Actually, peer observation helped us drag our ship on a proper track in the research-ocean.

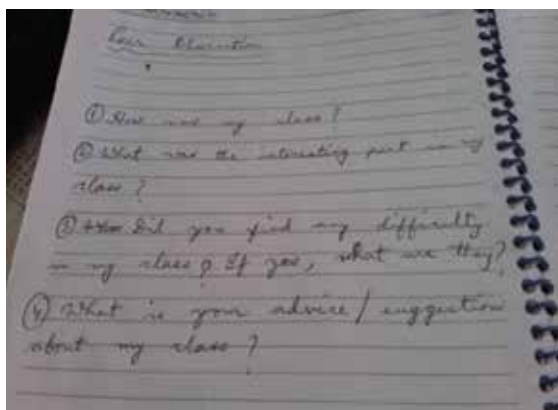


*Class observed by peer teacher*

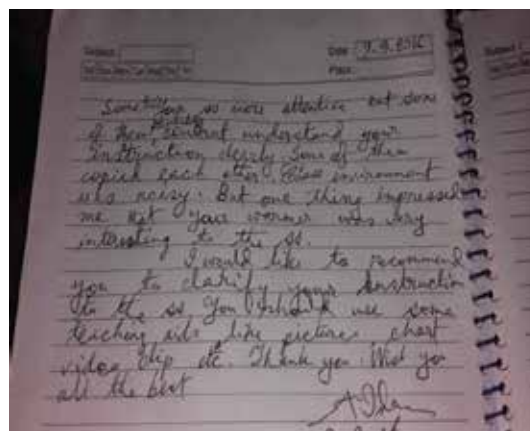


*Giving feedback after class*





Questionnaire for peer observation



Peer observation

## Enjoying the voyage

Most interestingly, when we compared the evidence collected from different sources, we found some contradictions. For example, after collecting students' feedback in the first cycle, we were a little bit happy because it was the first time students were asked to give their feedback in a systematic way. But from the

opinion of the peer observers, we came to know that students' feedback was not completely impartial. Probably they didn't want to hurt their teachers. Besides, the instructions were not clear enough. The peer observers also informed us that 30–40% of students copied from others while giving feedback. Peer-teachers' feedback was thus very critical.



Some students are copying from others while giving feedback

By following the observers' valuable opinions, we became more alert to make the instructions clearer in the next cycle. We asked the students to comment on the class neutrally without any hesitation. Then in the third cycle we noticed that there was a significant change in the classroom performance. Students were more confident, conscious, active and comfortable while giving feedback than before.



Students are working in groups

## Waves during the journey

Before involving ourselves in the research work, we used to take feedback from the students, but not in a systematic way. For example, after finishing class, we usually asked the students, ‘Have you understood?’ or ‘Any questions?’ Actually, no guideline was provided to them then. But when our research journey started, our concept changed. Here we are focusing on what happened from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 to Cycle 3. In the first cycle, we noticed that our instructions were not clear to the students. As a result, the class became noisy while they were engaged in giving feedback individually. Their feedback was only 58%, which was less than our expectation. We wrote down

everything in the reflective journals – how we conducted the class, what successes and challenges we found – discussed these and decided to change our techniques where necessary. In Cycle 2, after taking the class, we asked the students to give feedback in groups. This time the class was not noisy like before. Students’ feedback increased to 71%. In Cycle 3, we found that our instructions were clearer to them. There was a significant change in students’ perceptions. They became more enthusiastic, lively and curious than before in evaluating the lesson and 92% of students gave feedback in this cycle.

The average result of our teamwork is given in the following table:

	Total no. of ss	Ss present	% of ss who gave feedback (orange)	% of ss who enjoyed the lesson (blue)	% of ss who found lesson difficult (purple)
Cycle 1	75	63	58%	41%	59%
Cycle 2	75	68	71%	65%	35%
Cycle 3	75	73	92%	86%	14%

From the beginning of our profession we gave little importance to students' likes, dislikes, choices and learning styles. We taught according to our own way. Students' interest here was fully neglected. Actually, we were not aware of their immense power of evaluation then. After involving ourselves in this research work, we realised that students can play a vital role in the improvement of our teaching-learning activities. As we mentioned above, we used some questions to collect students' comments on the lesson. Their feedback helped us to revisit the lesson. After going through their feedback, our reflective diaries and the peer comments, we took the initiative to change our teaching techniques.

But still one question is unanswered: Why did 2–3% students remain inactive? This question makes us thoughtful. However, we are very happy to share that our teamwork was well-arranged and effective. Every two weeks, we got together, shared our experience of our class and took feedback from each other. It was obviously enriching. As we had to share our experience of our class, we would maintain our journal regularly. We also would apply new techniques that we got from our group discussion.

### Facing stormy winds

We know that if we want to do any task, we have to face many challenges, and yes, we also faced many challenges during the study. It took time to make students understand the idea of giving feedback. Sometimes it was challenging to involve all the students to think about giving feedback at the same time. Students sometimes copied from others while giving feedback. We found that some of the male students tried to create indiscipline and seemed to be less active. Most importantly, it was very difficult for us to manage time to sit together from our scheduled duties in school.

### Different personalities, different views

Although we shared our research findings in our group, we noticed some variations, though minor – because we are after all individual personalities and we are from different schools. And different environments prevail in different institutions. We have shared four pieces of our individual experiences here:

Hello, I'm Fahmida. I have been in the teaching field for 15 years. My school is in a backward area of the city. Here students as well as their guardians are not so conscious about the importance of education. They tell us that they send their daughters to school just for a secondary certificate to get them married into a good family. So, it was a great challenge for me to change their view. I noticed very early that students were scared of English classes. After having some subject-oriented training, when I tried to change my teaching techniques, I noticed that students were getting used to an English environment in the class. After joining the research study, I discussed with the mentees and with my peer teachers about some effective techniques. I implemented those in my next class and found a radical change there. I found that my students were more attentive, active and conscious. For example, earlier when I conducted classes on paragraph writing, I used to ask my students to open the book and memorise the paragraph. But one day, a question from a Class 9 student made me think. Tasmia said, 'Memorisation is one of the most difficult things in the world, teacher. It's boring also. What if there were no paragraph writing in the exam?' Besides, I was also concerned when I found that students were not able to write anything on a new topic. After discussion with my peer teachers and the research group, I did the class again by using spidergrams. I was surprised to see that information about a new topic was coming from each and every corner of the class. Students told me they also got surprised

when they saw that they had filled up the spidergram and by using the spidergram they were able to compose a paragraph by themselves. Again, in a class on 'The ferry boat', Sadia, a student of Class 10 said,

'Teacher, if you show any video clips on how people cross the river using a ferry boat, it would be quite interesting.' I fulfilled their demand about using multimedia content.



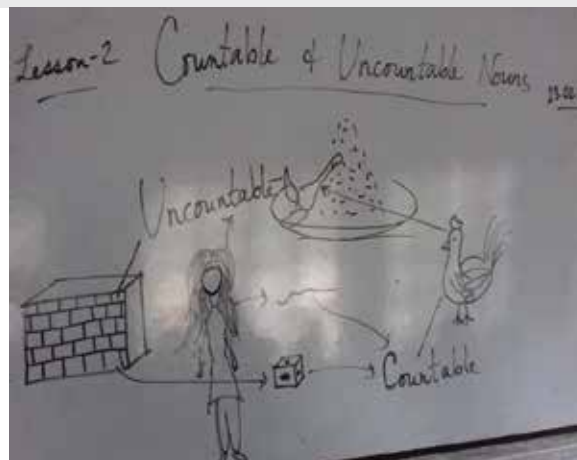
*Using multimedia content*



*Using spidergram*



*Role play makes a class lively*



*Teaching grammar with drawing*

Thus students' profound curiosity and evaluation have played a vital role in exploring my teaching techniques as well as myself and thus modifying myself into a reformed teacher gradually. It seems as if I was a farmer working in the field without having any scientific knowledge of cultivation earlier. But now I'm properly implementing fertilizer and water, i.e. the techniques to make a good harvest. So, I'm happy that I'm now trying to sow the seeds of a golden future of the nation.



*It's really nice when students participate in classroom activities with spontaneity*

Hi, this is Rumi. I have been a teacher for 14 years. Teaching is a passion for me where there is scope to deal with young learners about their feelings, expectations and so on. Before joining this research work, I didn't think deeply about students' expectations. When the research went on, I started thinking of many ways to know about students' preferences of my teaching, as it is the most effective tool for bringing about change in techniques in language teaching. During our research work, I tried out different techniques such as, group work, pair work, etc. As ours is a class of mixed ability, at the very beginning I adopted a technique to divide the whole class into groups where there is a mix of bright and weak students. But I noticed that the boys



were not as active as the girls. They tried to create indiscipline in the class at the time of giving feedback. I couldn't be so strict, as it led to a situation of gender discrimination. Then I made those disruptive students lead representatives of the group, and hence, was able to manage them. In order to break the silence of the weak students, I invited feedback on a particular topic from them individually, which helped me understand their individual demands. Now they are demanding something new related to their text. For example, while conducting a class on 'Going on a foreign trip' with Class VIII, I had to show some foreign currency, passport, video clips on immigration, boarding a plane, etc. according to students' demands.

Thus gradually both students and I have become enriched through the active

participation of the whole class. Besides, my colleagues supported me a lot, for example sometimes my HT took the responsibilities of my respective duties and allowed me to sit with my research group for discussion. Really this is a great thing in my professional life.

And thus I'm exploring myself in the field of teaching.



*Conducting a co-education class at secondary level is really challenging*

Hi, I am Rama. In the first cycle, students were afraid of unknown words. At the time of giving feedback, they tried to copy others. 53% of students gave feedback. In Cycle 2, my class was on tense. At first, I gave them a clear concept about the new words by acting, drawing pictures, presenting synonyms or antonyms of the words. Then I showed them a page of a calendar where some pictures were shown about some activities. In this cycle, I noticed students were more curious about the class and their activities. About 70% of students gave feedback in this cycle. In the first cycle, students' demand was to show a video clip on deforestation; and in Cycle 2 their suggestion was that I take the class by showing the picture. In Cycle 3, I arranged them in groups and told them to write down what they do every day from morning to night. I collected their answers and wrote them on the board. In this cycle, I observed 90% of students gave feedback. I asked them to write a paragraph on their daily activities as their homework.

Hello, this is Azhar. I found that my students were not organised, cooperative or active because of my unclear instructions. Some of my peer teachers praised me for the idea of taking the opinion of the students and reflecting on it to improve my next classes. I, for the first time, established and proved that even the weaker students made me more thoughtful than ever.



### Two heads better than one

If we were to do the study again, we would like to do it in a group. Because, in our group, we found a number of benefits, such as sharing ideas and techniques, exchanging feedback, improving ourselves and – most importantly – developing professionally together, though managing time from scheduled duties and getting together was sometimes challenging. We think that if we were to do it individually, we would be stuck in a circle. We would not be able to go out of the circle and think over our work widely in a different way.



### Anchoring at the port

After a long journey, the ship of our research work is anchored at a port. We have already shared what we found, what we learnt, what we gained – everything during this journey. The whole journey of research has been adventurous despite a few challenges. We teachers, as well as our students, have gone through a remarkable change during this research work. Students have become conscious about their role in the class. They are now playing different roles, like the role of a thinker, an analyser, an evaluator and so on.

This research work helps us make our wings strong so that our students can fly in the sky of knowledge with us. Through their perception and feedback we are thinking deeply over the lesson, making enquiries analysing evidence and trying to bring in innovative techniques. We will also try to involve those students who are still inactive in the classroom activities. We are thinking about making a work plan in order to motivate those students. We will also try to share our experiences with our other colleagues and involve them in this type of study. We believe that our adventure is not yet finished. We have anchored at the port for the time being. But we are not the people to stop. We will have to go for further adventure to explore the field of education research.

## 2.3

### Fatema Khairun Nahar, Grade III

#### Students' opinions count when selecting group leaders



#### Background of the study

Group work is an effective and active learning method for teaching English at the primary level. Usually I apply group work half-way through my class to make the class joyful and fruitful for achieving the learning outcomes. But often I see a lack of active participation in group work in my class. Then it is not possible for me to manage the class. Therefore, it is important to stimulate students' participation in group work. I decided to increase students' participation through group work in this research study.

#### How I went about the study

In Cycle 1, I wanted to teach some text-related new words with their meanings. I made groups of seven students (total 40). 20 students were able to understand the meaning of the words. Ten students could not match the words and didn't spell the words correctly. The rest were inactive in class. They were not able to understand the meaning. That set me thinking: Why are some students reluctant to participate? How can I improve students' engagement in group work? Then I took some feedback from students, the peer teacher and the Head Teacher. My peer teacher told me that I had to practise in groups for a longer time. She told me to make a group leader for every group. Then I thought if I combined weaker students with advanced students it would be more fruitful. But time was not sufficient. My Head Teacher told me to make small groups and to change group leaders. After completing Cycle 1, I decided to select a group leader, and make small groups, which I planned to apply in Cycle 2.

According to feedback from students, the peer teacher and Head Teacher in Cycle 2, I wanted to teach text-related new words with their meanings, spelling so that they could match them with their opposite words. I made seven small groups with five students in each group. According to my plan, group work was to happen about halfway into the lesson. Before the students formed groups, I gave instructions for what they will do in the group and how they will do it. The instructions were focused on the purpose of the task. I selected a group leader for every group with students' help. Out of 35 students, about 30 students were able to understand the words. They could match the words with their opposite words. I recorded it by taking photo and video. But when I asked them to write the words matching their opposite meaning/words, five students were not able to write with correct spelling. Then I monitored them properly so that they could follow their group leader's instructions.

After completing Cycles 1 and 2, I found that groups consisting of five students were more effective than groups of seven/eight students. But I didn't feel very happy because I could not finish the class according to my expectation. The students made a lot of noise. They did not participate willingly. Some students felt very shy and it was not easy for me to monitor properly. So, I thought I should organise group work properly by making a group leader in each group. I found that having a group leader was effective in students' learning. In group work, students can give and receive feedback on performance. It develops stronger

communication skills. In my study, I found that improved student performance stimulated learning in students. So, I made small groups by mixing advanced and weaker students so that advanced students could help the weaker students. I also selected a

group leader for every group. But I found that a pre-decided group leader was not always acceptable to the group members. A change in group leader was therefore needed. Here is a comparison among the cycles:

	Cycle 1	Cycle 2
<b>Methods</b>	Groups were made without a group leader	There was a leader for each group
<b>No. of students</b>	Each group had 7–8 students	Each group had 5 students
<b>Time</b>	10-15 minutes	
<b>Result</b>	50% of students were not engaged in GW, 30% were able to achieve the learning objectives	More than 80% of students were participating actively and about 50% of students were able to achieve the learning objectives

In Cycle 1, when I made large group of seven/eight students without having a group leader, I faced some challenges, such as large groups made a lot of noise, some students were inactive and some students did not follow my instructions. That is why I formed small groups of five students with a group leader in Cycle 2. I also changed group leaders because sometimes it was not acceptable by all. So, I had to change the group leader according to support from other members of the group.

### My learning

From my study I have learnt that smaller groups seem to be more effective than larger groups. It is easier to monitor, control noise level, check learning and ensure attention. It's also easier to keep the students engaged in small group work. I learnt that having a group leader makes the group work participatory. I found that a group leader makes the other members busy with their task. But sometimes other students don't follow the group leader's instructions. I found every group leader was not acceptable. Some of them had to change.

So, it was my learning from my study that selecting a group leader based on students' opinions improved the functionality of the group. After completing Cycles 1 and 2, though I have learnt something from my study, I couldn't achieve 100% student participation. My achievement was 80%. Now my unanswered question is, how can I ensure the remaining 20% students' participation?

I began the journey of researching with a team. The members of the team were very active. We contacted each other when needed. We shared all of our ideas with the team and it made it easy to carry on the research. If I get any opportunity to do the study again, I would like to do it in a group because I think anyone can give and receive feedback on performance in a group and it is a platform to share ideas.

### Conclusion

Undoubtedly group work is an effective and active learning method. At first, it was not too easy for me to form groups and organise proper group work. It was so difficult to make



the group work participatory. For this, I had to try again and again. Basically I was interested in how I could engage every student in their task. I collected feedback from students, the peer teacher, Head Teacher and video-viewing. Observation feedback helped to correct and apply new techniques, for example making group leaders, changing group leaders etc. In a small group, the

weaker students also get scope to participate more than in a large group. It is easier to monitor. Active participation makes a student confident. Although it was difficult at the beginning, now I hope if I stay with my learning I would be able to increase (the remaining 20%) students' participation using group work.



*Students doing group work*

## 2.4

### Rafiqul Islam Sardar, Grades IX & X

#### A study of students' perceptions of their role and their learning



##### Background of the study

The idea of understanding students' perceptions is a new thing to me. Before I went through the research journey, I didn't think of this point. But now I think that it is an important thing for learning. The teaching-learning process is completely connected with the teacher and students. So I made up my mind to understand students' perceptions of their learning and their role. For this, I wanted to find out their views because that will help me to make my plan. In this context, one question came to my mind: 'Why do some of my students sit idly in class?' If I know the reason, I will be able to help them to take part in classroom activity. So I asked my students: 'How do you want to learn?' Someone said through games, others said through EFT books and telling stories, and yet others by talking to their classmates.

##### What I did in my study

At first I prepared myself and chose a lesson from the EFT book. The lesson was in Class 9, Unit 2, Lesson 2. The lesson was about 'Reading really helps!' Usually I teach using only the EFT book, but this time I prepared myself by using EFT, video guide, games and telling a real story.

Before administering the tool that contained questions for students, I looked at the questions and decided how I would go about it: I would ask the questions after the class and if they didn't give any answer, deal with it accordingly.

Most of the students didn't give feedback. I decided to use Bangla for their clear understanding. After I finished the class, I asked individual students to record their

views. I gave them a time limit so that they would finish their work within that time. Some of my students didn't want to give their views at all. I thought, what can I do for them? I thought something was wrong with me! I made up my mind to discuss this with my peer teacher and Head Teacher. My Head Teacher suggested I go to that kind of student who doesn't want to speak and ask him cordially, 'What's your problem, my son?' Then the student will feel free and will talk about his problem. I followed his suggestion. The student told me that he was afraid of English. I asked him why. He said that he didn't understand English well. I told him I'd asked the question in English and he had answered it! When I said slowly: 'What's your name? What's your parent's name? What do you like? Where have you come from?' he gradually answered all the questions. After that, I asked him to repeat all the sentences at a stretch. This way the students were getting used to answering my questions about their class.

After finishing Cycle 1, I set up some questions for my peer teacher. Our conversation went like this:

**Me:** Do you think it is important to know about students' views?

**Peer Teacher:** Yes, because students are the main element of learning.

**Me:** Why is it important to know about their perception?

**Peer Teacher:** Because if we know their opinion we will give them appropriate teaching.

**Me:** How can the classroom be more interesting and interactive?

**Peer Teacher:** I think, if we provide a suitable learning environment and teach them using teaching aids such as posters, videos, games, charts, telling stories, having fun and using the projector, the teaching will be more interesting and interactive.

I also added another important thing: that the teacher should be active in the class and observe the activities very carefully.

When I completed Cycle 2, I noticed a change among students. They spoke something but made mistakes. I said it is OK, which gave them hope. I also said they could speak about anything – whether it is about their lesson or any other thing, I mean objects outside the classroom. Sometimes I started gossiping and asked my students to join with me. Often I helped them to speak difficult words. I asked my advanced students to help their slower friends, after which I asked my students to answer the questions mentioned above. When they failed to reply, I helped them.

After completing the first step, I found that most of the students think that they learn only for passing the exam and for getting good marks (A+ grade). I am aware that if they don't get good marks, they will not be able to take the next step. So most of our students don't care about the four skills because they will have to face only a written exam. It is a matter of great concern that there is hardly any relation between the curriculum and the exam. So I decided to explain how they can get a proper education and how they will be able to learn the four skills. This seems to have had some effect.

### The next step

I gave a brief introduction to how I would like them to give their frank and considered views on the English class, sometimes written and at other times orally.

Then I asked my students the following questions (individually):

- a) Did you like today's class?
- b) What was the most difficult part of the class?
- c) What language skills did you practise?
- d) What are some of the things you learnt in class?
- e) What else would you have liked the teacher to do?

Most of the students said that they liked that day's class. I asked them what they liked. Someone said presentation, miming, showing pictures and someone said pronunciation. Most of the students said grammar point is their most difficult part. Some students pointed out the vocabulary problem, because it is not their mother tongue it's not easy to understand. Strange but true, they don't know even Bangla well! Some students said that they practised the four skills. Many of them said they learnt how to talk with other people. They liked their teacher's work, such as miming, telling stories and asking questions using body language, which I actually implemented in class.

I wrote down my detailed comments on each of the following questions.

- i) How did it work? (It worked well, because they have understood the view of learning, i.e. learning objectives.)
- ii) How many students actually gave feedback? (In the first cycle, only 10–15% of students gave feedback, but in the second cycle, 50% of students did.)
- iii) What did I do with the information? (With the information, I tried to make a plan for the future, for example, present vocabulary using synonyms, sometimes using Bangla meanings according to the students' suggestions. Before going through the research study, I did not consult any of my students.)
- iv) Do you want to modify the questions/procedure? How? (I want to mention the objective of that topic and ask them very carefully about their learning.)

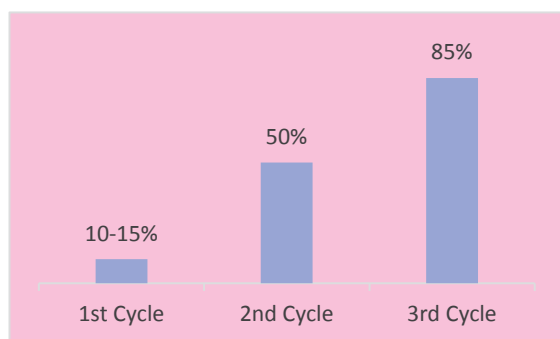
- v) What is your next plan of action? (I will try to write a short note before going to take the class. The note is about the main learning point for me.)

Before going to Cycle 3, I discussed the notes which I had taken in Cycles 1 and 2 with my peer teacher and Head Teacher. Their suggestion was to take the class using simple language, discuss the topic very clearly and discuss the main objectives of the lesson. In this way I was able to manage even the slower learners. Now they take part in classroom activities. They express their opinion without any fear. I try my best to take the class according to their opinions. I learnt that students are ready to learn, but we are not giving them enough space to grow.

## Results

I repeated these steps with other lessons in the textbook. This time, I described all the details of the topic. The most noticeable thing was that they all took part in the classroom activities. I appreciated their logical argument. Suppose it was a rainy day, most of the students said, 'Oh! Sir, today we want to just chat or sing.' Then I allowed them to do that. Then I would ask questions about their gossip or singing. So they became alert about their work. I realised I can teach them something even through their gossip or singing.

When I analysed the data, I could see gradual improvement. I have shown this in the chart below :



Their ability and willingness to give their views improved from 10–15% to 85% in the third cycle! At the beginning, they thought that English is a very difficult subject and it's not possible for them to learn English. Sometimes I was also a bit disturbed about this. But now I've overcome this gradually. Now they not only express their views, they also give me suggestions according to which I have tried to take the class. I am astonished to see even the so-called slow learner giving me valuable suggestions. When they noticed that I appreciate their opinions, they were very happy. Most of them like to be asked for their opinion. I had never thought of this before. They want to learn, they want to express their views, but the teacher should create the situation. This way they build their vocabulary, will be keen about their pronunciation and about the learning objectives etc. When I finished another lesson, and gave them the task of interviewing a freedom fighter, 45 out of 50 students submitted their assignments. I helped them to set up questions for the interview. I think this way they will learn more. They will learn not only the textbook but also outside elements.



### My learning from the study

Before conducting the study, I thought that research is a very complicated thing, that it is very difficult. Many years ago I also heard that 'some things are difficult but nothing is impossible'. That's how I accepted this research journey. The journey has been very rewarding.

First of all, talking to my students has been very exciting and fun. They have become so cooperative. And then talking with my peer teacher, Head Teacher, co-trainer, divisional manager, field coordinator, head of teacher training and parents has given me a lot of experience and insight. But I take decisions about teaching based on what the students tell me.

I was a bit stereotypical in my thinking, but this research work has helped me to come out of that attitude. Now I am more democratic and generous. If we don't know the students' views, how can we teach them well? In this way, my learning as well as the students' has increased. I'm now optimistic to continue this approach.

I faced quite a few challenges with my mentees: two of them dropped out because they were not keen to do the study. But the other mentee and I have had lots of useful discussions on the phone. I had never discussed teaching-related matter with colleagues on the phone before. Going through the research journey together has helped us to improve our thinking. Two heads are always better than one.

### Conclusion

The teaching-learning process is a long process. If we clearly identify the objective of the lesson and share it with students, it is much easier for learning. I found the whole experience personally enriching. I think through this process, the teacher will develop him/herself and students also can develop themselves.

## 2.5

### Rumana Razia, Grade V

#### Exploring learners' expectations by taking learner feedback



#### Background of the study

As an English teacher, I don't think I'm bad. My colleagues are always praising me. But I was not happy with my Class 5 students' participation in class. Most of the time the students were silent. They would just listen to me and do their task without understanding. It really made me feel tense. Fortunately I had the chance to take part in the TVC workshop of EIA. The idea of doing research about my classroom techniques made me very happy. After the workshop, I started to think deeply about my class. I began looking for some answers to questions like these: Are the

students enjoying my class? What do they want in their English class? Finally, I got answers to my questions by taking feedback from my students.

#### What I did in my study

I wanted to explore learners' expectations. So, after finishing a lesson, I began to take feedback from my students. I did this study in Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. In Cycle 1, I took a class on vocabulary. I applied some supplementary activities such as different games (silent mouthing game, acting competition, miming etc.)



I always tried to start my lessons with singing a song or telling a story. When I taught vocabulary showing colourful cards and playing games, I noticed that my students were enjoying the class. I could feel that the children liked the 'learning by doing' approach and being fully involved in the lessons. After finishing my class, I wanted to evaluate myself.



To do my research study, I asked my students to give feedback about the class. But they did not give it. This was because they found it impossible to give feedback about their teacher. They had never done it previously. They felt shy and also fear. And also they

didn't know how to do it. Then I made some questions: Did the activities motivate the class? Did the students enjoy the class? What did I learn from my students? From these, I made a 'structured feedback paper'. I also involved my peer teacher and Head Teacher.

## How I did the study

The main focus of my study was how to conduct a joyful and effective English lesson. So, I had to explore learners' demands. But since it was difficult to get feedback, I made my students 'fear free'. In Cycle 2, I did a grammar lesson about adverbs. I wrote some words on the board: *slowly, quickly, quietly, loudly; eat, read, run, draw*. Then I demonstrated an action verb by acting it. They understood which words were verbs and which were adverbs. Then I made four groups and arranged a competition out of acting action verbs. They enjoyed this and understood the lesson very well. After finishing the class, I distributed the 'structured feedback paper' and asked them to complete it. They all completed the paper. Here they wrote about what they had liked or disliked about the lesson, team members, teacher (me) and also EFT.

There was a change between Cycle 1 and Cycle 2. I took photographs of the lesson and I wrote a self-journal on a regular basis so as not to forget my study line.

## Results

Finally, I had done it! Now, I know about my students' expectations. They are now used to giving feedback about me. They also now evaluate me by drawing smileys. They want to learn by playing games, doing acting, group work, competitions etc. However, it was not so easy to do this everyday. My students are now free of shyness and also very friendly with me. But it was not so easy from the beginning of Cycle 1.

One of my students told me: 'If I give you bad feedback, you may punish me.' It made me surprised. I assured him not to be afraid. 'I'm not that type of teacher who gets

angry with students. I love you all.' I just wanted to make sure about their active and joyful participation. In Cycle 2 they started to give feedback more freely.



## My learning

Generally in an English class, teachers do not think about students' expectations. By doing this study, I was able to let every child have his or her own choice. They want to learn by playing. If they learn a difficult topic like grammar by doing some activities such as acting, filling in the gaps, ball-throwing game, it will be easier than memorising. And students can learn very easily. Teachers' work will be easy. This study has helped me to find answers to my research questions and to understand when my students give feedback.

This study has opened the window of my mind. Now I'm always thinking about my class. I'm thinking about the other teachers of my school. It is impossible for me to conduct a joyful class every day in seven classes. However, all of my students want to do this type of cheerful lesson. I also take other subjects. In general science classes there is less chance to play games than in language classes. How can I conduct a joyful general science class? How can I help the other teachers to be more engaged? I will need to investigate these questions next.

## 2.6

### Md. Tofazzal Hossain, Grade V

#### Students' perceptions of understanding and learning texts



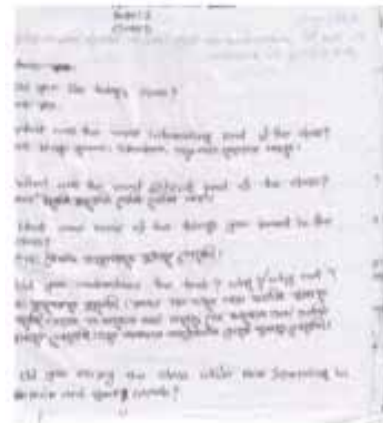
#### Background of the study

While teaching, I faced some problems and thought for a while to do a study on how a text can become understandable. Some students informed me that they were not interested in reading the text. This encouraged me to understand their perception about their role and learning more closely. I wanted to explore how a text can be taught fruitfully through the proper application of different techniques according to students' perceptions. I explored it through my observation and students' perceptions of their role in learning. I learnt that a text can become understandable through the application of pair work, small group work (SGW) and individual work.

#### How I did the study

For my study, I selected two questions

1. How can I teach my students a text so that they can understand it better?
2. What will I learn from my study?

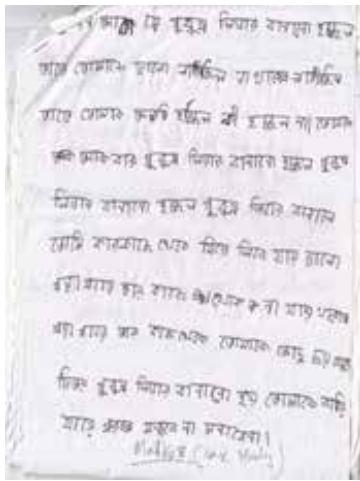


To continue my study, I involved my students, peer teacher and the Head Teacher as study tools. I prepared some questions to collect students' perceptions.

I worked in three cycles. In Cycle 1, I observed my class and tried to understand what students actually want. In Cycle 2, I took support from my peer teacher and Head Teacher and I made a case study of an advanced and a slow learner.

In Cycles 1 and 2, I worked on students' perceptions and their role in learning text. For this, I chose two different texts from Class 5 in two cycles. In Cycle 1, I took students' perceptions orally and kept a record. In the second cycle, after finishing my class, I took students' perceptions in a written form by giving them the questions I had prepared before. I gave the students seven questions. They answered and I kept records. After Cycle 3, I made a comparison between the cycles and analysed the data and came to a conclusion.





I took the classes gradually using different techniques such as whole-class work (WCW) to teach vocabulary, small-group activities such as ‘ask and answer’ through the ball game, filling gaps and others using various techniques such as chain drill, spotting mistakes, role play etc., I used pair work (PW) and individual work (IW) for checking

learning. I checked the slow learners most of the time through PW and IW. In Cycle 2, I took the class using same techniques and collected data in written form.

In Cycle 3, I made a case study. There were 44 students in my class. After analysing data I found these results as shown in the table on the next page:

Student perceptions		Findings
Students who enjoyed the class		96%
Interesting part of the class	Bingo	95%
	Using speaker	90%
	SGW and pair work	95%
Difficult part of the class		Teacher is talking too much English
Students who didn't understand the text		6 out of 44 students
Evaluation (IW)		25 did well, 19 made some mistakes



### What I learnt from the study

From the study, I learnt that maintaining a sequence of teaching vocabulary (WCW) first, and gradually small-group work (SGW), PW and finally individual work enhances student learning. Students cannot pronounce some words because of a lack of practice. In WCW, students sometimes scream or imitate others. The weak students are identified easily through individual work. However, time factors cannot be maintained properly in IW. Learning vocabulary through games lasts longer. A text can be understandable easily by proper application of WCW, SGW, PW and IW.

### Conclusion

Personally I think one should do such a study with the permission of the head of the institution. It will make an easy way to continue the work. Peer support is also very helpful.

## 2.7

### Md. Shafiul Islam, Grade IV

#### A comparative study of using a general text and a personalised text



#### Background of the study

As a teacher, if I cannot contribute to our children's bright and secure future through education, our hard work, sweat, talent and time will all be a waste. Children are in direct contact with us during their childhood. So this is the proper time for us to create values of morality, humanity, generosity, modesty, honesty and idealism in their minds. In this context, I thought about the improvement of my students' language skills and also about developing them as social and human-friendly individuals through language education. In that context, by getting them to read the stories in textbooks, can I simultaneously develop humanistic qualities and help them to become proficient in the English language? From this perspective, I planned to conduct this study.

#### The study

As I want to create society-friendly people and skilled students in language simultaneously, I thought of giving them a few questions to get maximum output from a class to assess students' attitudes. The following were some of the questions:

1. To what extent do they like textbook stories?
2. How will it be if their own stories are discussed in class?
3. How will it be if they can think about the issues discussed outside the class?
4. What if they discussed topics that will help them to think and use them outside the classroom?

I decided that the topics discussed in the class would be such that they can use some sentences and words in their conversation at

home. By doing so, it will create responsibility, humanity and other values among them. They will learn to be people-friendly, environment-friendly and country-friendly. The work in class will not be a different issue; rather it will be a discussion around their daily familiar environment.

Since I had decided to conduct research activities using a 'Students' perceptions of their role and learning' approach, I gave the questions to the students. After collecting their responses, I found that they were more interested in discussing the issues directly related to their lives. They wanted to cooperate with their parents on daily activities. They wanted this kind of discussion in the class. They wanted to discuss these kinds of stories in the class – to cooperate with people in danger. They wanted to speak, listen, read and write about their own stories. And, above all, in the case of speaking in English, for which they have been waiting for a long time, when I told them about our plan, then I noticed a flash of light in their eyes. And in their expression I noticed, they will learn this as they wanted to learn it for a long time.

I noticed this kind of a 'waiting symbol'. Although, before that time I did not discuss new ideas with them, since they were concerned about that topic, they thought that Sir would then discuss those issues, so they asked me the question: 'Will we like those?'

#### How I went about the study

Through an open-ended questionnaire, I tried to learn about the attitude of the students. Students wanted to directly discuss the story of their own life in class. In different situations, they wanted to discuss their

feelings. They wanted to learn how to say it in English.

Then in Cycle 1, I asked them to compare the simple sentence selected from the textbook in the left column with the sentence related to their life, involving morality, in the right column, and applying the star mark. In this case, I found that in a couple of sentences presented in two columns, the students provided more marks to the sentences about their ethics and values than the usual sentences. Statistically the sensitivity of students was 53.52% on the general sentences, on the other hand, the sensitivity was 96.61%, in the case of real-life situations.

Then, in Cycle 2, I gave a story containing simple sentences, morality and values, and I said that they will find out their favourite sentences from this story and put a star mark according to the desired level. Here, also, the students were more interested in the sentences where they found their emotions, and they gave more star marks.

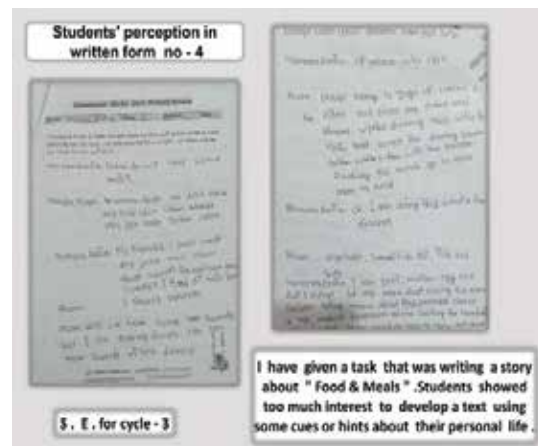
An example of how they put in their own individual views to a task:



*Students are adding their individual views*

Finally, in Cycle 3, I gave them an activity to make their own story through a fill-in-the-gap task. There they got an opportunity to make their own story by presenting their own information. While doing this activity, the students worked calmly, no one bothered me,

and even did not disturb each other. Everyone was busy with their work. Because there was no scope to duplicate it. They were writing a story about themselves, they were busy creating something new and learning the new technique of how to write a story about themselves with fun. The picture below illustrates this:

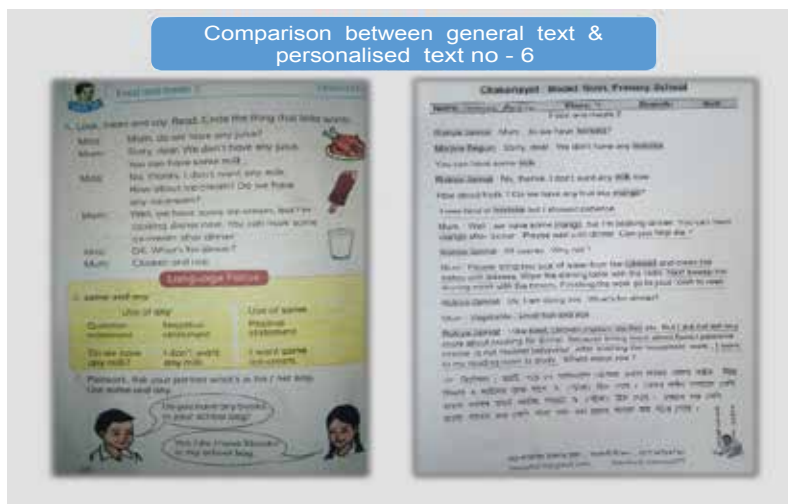


*Students are busy making their own stories*

Most of the sentences in the story were prepared in the familiar surroundings of the house with their parents. The next day in the class, when they were asked what they did at home, those who did not do it felt shy, and those who did were looking forward to speaking, but certainly in English. I was providing the necessary English words as needed. I noticed they wanted to tell their story with great enthusiasm. Those who did not do it, they said that they will do it the next day. It seems that the students were not

making any difference between the home environment and the school environment, but the school is home as well as home is school, which means reading is everywhere. Reading

is not extra work, it is fun. It was discussed in the school about what things happen at home. Actually, this they expressed with a lot of feelings.



## My learning from the research study

Only reading textbook stories cannot be considered for the purpose of creating a learning environment among students. It is important for the students to remain subconsciously in a joyful environment. During this period, they usually learn every moment. If we cannot teach something good then they may learn something not-so-good.

It is not possible to build society-friendly, environment-friendly, country-friendly individuals only through textbooks. When we try to develop ethics, humanity, generosity, modesty, honesty and idealism in the heart of the students, then we have contributed to a civil society.

If we cannot take students into a deeper state of thought, they regard English language as a way of doing or studying as an extra task, and when they finish their task, they express such feelings. It is necessary therefore to develop interesting English-language stories related to the daily life of the student.

## Conclusion

We all, perhaps, agree with one thing: Lack of ethics and values although skilled in language, are harmful to our society, country and as a whole to the world.

For this reason, I desire to continue the work of developing students' English language proficiency as well as creating morality and values among them. Creating new stories is not an easy task, but for some good work to happen, someone will have to work a lot. I would be the first one to add my name to that list.

## 2.8

### Umme Hanufa Khanam, Grades III & V

#### A study of students' perceptions to teach vocabulary



#### Background of the study

I would like to teach vocabulary to my students easily in a short time. I have always tried to ensure that students can learn more vocabulary with correct pronunciation to be able to speak fluently. The main purpose of my research is to teach vocabulary to students and assess their feelings and apply different techniques and activities based on what they say. This type of research, which looks at how I can get students' perceptions to teach them vocabulary better, seemed quite attractive to me. This study also helped me to find out the reason behind their reluctance in learning new vocabulary.

#### How I went about the study

The different sources of evidence I collected were as follows:

- Self-reflection
- Feedback checklist for students
- Puppet show

In my class I selected some vocabulary to teach students in an easy way. In Cycle 1, I used some techniques and activities. I wanted students to increase their use of creative English language. I tried to do some activities such as greetings, showing pictures, reading aloud etc. This was the general method to teach vocabulary. Then I saw that some students were inactive, maybe because it was a teacher-centred class.

So, in the next cycle, I used some other techniques. I displayed some real materials and pictures. Then I called students to role-play as a teacher to one another to practise vocabulary. I always helped them to role-play. This process was meaningful, but I could not

complete it on time. But this process helped students to make friends with the teacher and reduced student inactivity.

Finally, in Cycle 3, I modified my lesson plan so that I could teach them vocabulary more easily. Based on my learning from Cycle 1 and Cycle 2, I arranged a student-based puppet show to get students' attention and interest. The students performed this show in groups. I realised that trying different techniques is a good way to get students to use vocabulary in real life.

This made them attend class regularly. They came to class on time and budgeted their time for each question and they started writing legibly. In a class they enjoy, they try to understand what they listen to and do. They also note down vocabulary as an important point. Because the process of teaching to learn more vocabulary with correct pronunciation and intonation is fun.

Student checklist



*Students are busy doing activities in a meaningful way.*

After completing three cycles, now I see that they can read the text one by one. I evaluated their learning through many ways: I followed the back-benchers and made it a point to give feedback so that they don't feel so shy. I involved them in role play and made them group leaders. They were able to do different kinds of tasks: filling in the blanks, matching words with pictures, rearranging jumbled words, answering questions etc. I also pronounced the vocabulary again and again. We know practice helps a lot.

I also tried out self-reflection of my teaching life. I found myself very confident and understood how I can make new words understandable to my students.

### **What I learnt from my study**

From my study, I have gained a lot of experience. I am now aware that we should speak with a 'standard' pronunciation and our voice should be audible to all students. I should give special importance to the students lagging behind and be sympathetic to them depending on their age, capacity, eagerness to learn, and their feelings. I would like to use every moment for the welfare of children.

I know that learners like some techniques through which they can learn more vocabulary spontaneously and can participate in learning. We should observe the child and find out which way each one likes to learn. Based on that, we should inspire them to be attentive. Before the study, I tried to teach according to my ways; now I try to teach according to their perceptions. A class can be very effective when we exchange students' views. This research has also helped me to identify areas where I need to develop as a teacher.

### **Conclusion**

The friendly and smiling behaviour of a teacher makes the lesson more attractive in class. So I have learnt through research that the learning outcomes become permanent and effective if students acquire vocabulary according to their opinion and realisation. We should study the realisation of students' vocabulary acquisition and know how they learn words and enrich their vocabulary. It is easy to teach new words through a student-centred method. If I get another opportunity, I will try to research about why students can't apply English language skills in their real life and will try to do something about it.





# SECTION 3:

## Encouraging inclusiveness

This section addresses, in a refreshing way, a very common and almost taken-for-granted feature of schools and classrooms. Involving most, if not all, students in classroom activities, especially in large classes, including assessment, irregularity in student attendance and getting students' attention to the task on hand are all issues that are being looked at in individual contexts very carefully. When some 'action' is taken, for example shortening the lesson based on student feedback, teachers notice that they have more students participating willingly. This even leads to students waiting eagerly for English classes.

An interesting feature of most studies seems to be that of including other stakeholders such as parents, peer teachers and Head Teachers in the study. For example, when students were seen to be quiet most of the time, the teacher wondered if this was true even at home and consulted their parents; when they revealed that these children were very talkative, the teacher set out to find out why they were silent in class: were her instructions not clear, was the task not interesting or was it some aspect of group dynamics? This made her reflect on each of these aspects systematically and also ask students for their opinions. One teacher said, *'Meeting with some parents when they came to school and explaining about inclusion and how gender discrimination hinders our progress also helped.'* Most teachers took suggestions from their peers and Head Teacher based on classroom observation, which strengthened their own conviction and made the study not just the teacher's individual problem but a common concern of the entire school. There is clearly a sense of ownership of the issues on everyone's part here.

Outcomes from the studies that seem significant are the following: when children are confident they participate in the lesson and this way the teacher becomes happy and confident, which further improves student participation; there seems to be a chain reaction. It seems that creating a *'comfortable environment'* is a good starting point, as opposed to *'rebuking students without going deep into the problems'*. Other aspects to consider are asking for students' opinions and taking them seriously, showing a positive attitude and giving them the assurance that they can learn, linking the lesson with the real world, and setting high standards and they WILL come up to our expectations. While these strategies appear to be commonplace, what makes them special is that each teacher has arrived at this 'knowledge' from their own informed research experience.

Teachers understand after researching that it takes time for things to happen, and they have to be patient. One teacher says: *'Now I am confident that if I continue my effort this way I think they will all develop.'*

A teacher sums up 'inclusion' thus: *'Like the physically or mentally challenged students, the students who are lagging behind are also sort of "lesson challenged". We must design proper strategies to include them.'* The research studies in this section demonstrate teachers' efforts to enhance inclusion quite competently.

## 3.1

### Shahanaz Parvin, Grade IV

#### Action songs work as a stimulus in English classes



#### Background of the study

As a teacher, I have always tried to make my classes more effective and more enjoyable for every student. For that, I adopt different ways. After trying some techniques, I find that some students are always remaining absent-minded in class. They are gossiping with each other or planning something with friends. In my study, I tried to find out how I can get back all of my students' attention to help me to achieve my learning outcomes easily and successfully. For that, I used action songs in my classes for creating emotion and to fulfil the lesson's requirement.

#### How I did the study

When I started to use action songs, I found that the students who were unmindful in my class also started taking part in actions. So, I interviewed some of my students and discussed with my peer teacher how, actually, action songs are working to involve all of the students in my lesson.

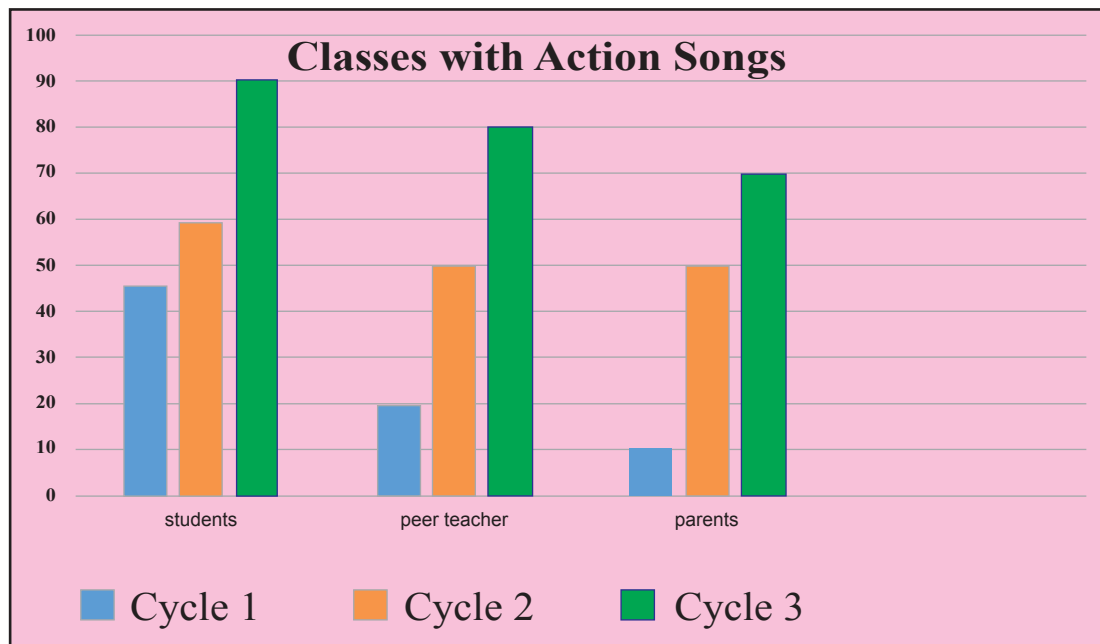
In the first cycle, I took an English class in Class 4. I started my class by using a lesson plan. After class, I provided a questionnaire to the students to assess how far they could achieve the day's learning outcomes. I made a tally of their answers. Then I found that 42 out of 73 students achieved it. But 14 of them could achieve only some parts of the learning outcomes and the rest couldn't get it.

In the second cycle, I included action songs in my lesson. Then I found that all the students were active in my class. Then I set up my aims of the study as follows:

- to identify how action songs help to make the classes more effective and joyful;
- to find out if the action songs are beneficial for our students' learning or not.

From some students' interviews, my peer teacher's interview and through close observation, I came to know that when the students took part in the action song their attention came back to the lesson. It helped my students to achieve the lesson's learning outcomes. I also talked with some parents. They found that the students were eagerly waiting for their English class. The students said, 'We sing songs and dance in our English class. We learn through singing and dancing. So, that brings a lot of fun to us.' After one month, the parents also found that their children's pronunciation was much better than before.

In the third cycle, I found that the number of students' attendance increased in my class. And they felt easy to start the class with action songs. I collected data about 'How the action songs help me to make my classes more effective' from my students, my peer teacher, other colleagues and the guardians. After analysing the collected data, I got the following graph, which shows how the action songs help our students.



In Cycle 1, I found that 46% of students were active in my class, but in Cycle 2, when I started to use action songs, 59% of students became active but the rest felt shy to do actions. In Cycle 3, 90% of students became active and attentive in my class. In Cycle 1, my peer teacher was not sure whether action songs could play a vital role in classes. So, she was 20% agreeable to use it in class. In Cycle 2, she was very impressed to see that the students became very active and they couldn't remain unmindful in class. She was 50% in favour of using action songs. In Cycle 3, she was amazed to see the change in my students. So, she became 80% convinced about using action songs.

In Cycle 1, among the 30 guardians whose interviews I took, only 10% agreed that using action songs would be useful, because they thought that it will waste the class time. In Cycle 2, 50% of guardians were in support of action songs, because the students were so excited about doing the actions and they shared it with their parents. In Cycle 3, 70% of them were in favour of using action songs.

### What I learnt from the study

As a result, it was found that when I use action songs in my classes it made the classes amusing, interesting and joyful to the students. If the students could get interest in their classes, they became attentive to me. Then I could provide any lesson or lesson-based activities and it would be easily achievable.

From this research study, I found that some students faced some difficulties to understand the meaning of the song. So sometimes they had some problems to take part actively in action songs. In that case, if the teacher helps the students to understand the inner meaning of those songs and first shows how to act with them, I think it helps to get better results. In spite of taking necessary steps, still a few of the students could not avoid their shyness to take part in action songs. But they are improving day by day. Here are some photos:



## Conclusion

It seems that using action songs makes the classes more effective and joyful. It helps to get the students' attention to achieve the learning outcomes joyfully and their learning will be sustainable. I have got very successful feedback by using action songs in my classes. If teachers use this in their classes, I think they must benefit. I am very grateful to English in Action, who gave me a chance to be part of the Teachers' Voices Conference. As primary school teachers, generally we don't get this kind of opportunity. I also want to give thanks to my students, my peer teacher, the guardians and all of my officials for helping me in various ways.

## 3.2

### Habibur Rahman, Grade X

## Assessment of students' learning in large classes



### Background of the study

I have taught hundreds of students over the span of 12 years, and my current class has 90 students. At first, I realised that I had finally achieved that comfortable security of having a ready-made set of lecture notes, volumes of exam and quiz questions, and a sense of predictability regarding the course. Strangely enough, however, I was also bored and bothered. Bored from lecturing about the same things year after year, and bothered because my lectures came across so rigidly that I was failing to impart to my students the satisfaction of finding solutions to problems. I kept thinking about how to get rid of this condition.

As I generally teach large classes where it is almost impossible for me to assess all my students in the classroom in 60 minutes, I couldn't even give proper feedback to everyone. So, I took students' note books into the teachers' library to check them in my leisure time but most of the time I couldn't assess them properly. But it is very important to assess all the students in a short time. That's why I thought of trying to find some way to do that job easily by following the action research process.

### Description of the study

#### Aims

My aim was to find effective ways to assess students easily in a large class.

### Research questions

1. How can I assess all the students in my large class?

2. What is the easiest and most effective way for me to assess students' learning in a large class?
3. How can I best manage assessment?
4. How can I engage every student and create a community of learners in a large class?

I planned the following sources of evidence:

- My diary of reflections
- Interview with the students
- Talking to the Head Teacher and peer teacher
- Checklists
- Observation of the classroom

### Comparison of the three cycles

#### Cycle 1

I realised that having a clear connection between the lecture material and the assessment process is very important. Self-assessment encourages learners to reflect on their learning, and to assess their strengths and weaknesses. I invested time in developing assessment tasks and in preparing students for them. I provided model answers, clear directions, detailed assessment criteria, practice assessment tasks, and self-quizzes. I selected group members. I found that this rewards the students who were actively involved in group learning and discourages 'freeloading' or the non-participation of some group members.



### Cycle 2

I learned that peer assessment through grading and peer corrections are better than self-assessment for assessing students in a large class. Occasionally it requires an individual product based on a prior group work task, such as a one-minute paper about an issue learned from an exercise, a short quiz or an oral presentation by randomly selected students.

### Cycle 3

I used peer evaluations at the end of an exercise. For instance, I gave each student in a group a 'score card' and asked him or her to give a grade to each of his or her group members. I carefully observed the groups and their members to check the students filled out the cards individually and privately, without the other group members watching. This method was especially helpful for judging the relative contributions of members in a large class, where it could be difficult for me to personally evaluate all individuals.

## Main findings

- Continuous peer and self-assessment through grading to evaluate the students can reduce teachers' workload. Here, both teachers and students may feel that the class seems small and enjoyable.
- Appropriate assessment can provide a clear picture of students' learning in a short time.



- Ongoing self- and peer assessment can greatly improve students' learning in a large class.

## Challenges faced and limitations of the study

Assessing progress in small classes is easy; just ask students or observe them working.

In larger classes this becomes more difficult, especially since you are likely to interact with a small subset of students.

My specific challenges were:

- student distraction (talking, using their mobiles and doing other work);
- guiding discussions with a large group;
- extreme diversity among the students (attitudes, background, interest);
- administrative loads.

## Outcomes of the study

Now I am able to assess all my students properly in my large classes within the limited class time: I can do this by following the above-mentioned techniques and activities, something which was previously almost impossible during the class time. This research has reduced my workload. Now I can clearly identify my students' and my own teaching-learning challenges. I can instantly support those students who really require most attention. Through this research process my students' ability in the four skills of English has improved significantly.

## Unanswered questions

Although I feel I have achieved a lot in this study, I am still puzzled by the following question:

How can I make large classes a place of attraction for the students? I hope to make this the focus for my next study.

**Teacher Evaluation by Students**

Teacher's name: Habibur Rahaman Your name: Ozifa class: Nine Roll: 10

The student rating stands for the following: 1 = rarely, 2 = once in a while, 3 = sometimes, 4 = most of the time, 5 = almost always. If a student's reply, leave it blank. Circle the answer that fits with your experience of this teacher for each item.

EXPECTED CURRICULUM:		If you checked #1, write why with the class first.				
1	Teacher is prepared for class.	1	2	3	4	5
2	Teacher is organized and clear.	1	2	3	4	5
3	Teacher makes class time assignments that help students to problem solve and think critically. Teacher makes activities that make subject matter meaningful.	1	2	3	4	5
4	Teacher is flexible in accommodating for individual student needs.	1	2	3	4	5
5	Teacher is clear in giving directions and in explaining what is expected on assignments and tests.	1	2	3	4	5
6	Teacher allows you to be active in the classroom learning environment.	1	2	3	4	5
7	Teacher manages the time well.	1	2	3	4	5
8	Teacher makes homework a priority.	1	2	3	4	5
9	Teacher has clear classroom procedure so students don't waste time.	1	2	3	4	5
10	Teacher is able to help you.	1	2	3	4	5
11	Have learned a lot from this teacher about this subject.	1	2	3	4	5
12	Teacher gives me good feedback on homework and projects.	1	2	3	4	5
13	Did not like English.	1	2	3	4	5
14	Teacher is creative in developing activities and lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
15	Teacher encourages students to speak up and be active in the class.	1	2	3	4	5

UNEXPECTED CURRICULUM:		If you checked #1, write why with the class first.				
16	Teacher follows through on what he/she says.	1	2	3	4	5
17	Teacher follows and understands students' point of view, but does not agree, but still tries to understand.	1	2	3	4	5
18	Teacher respects the opinions and opinions of students.	1	2	3	4	5
19	Teacher is willing to accept responsibility for his/her own mistakes.	1	2	3	4	5
20	Teacher is willing to listen from students.	1	2	3	4	5
21	Teacher is sensitive to the needs of students.	1	2	3	4	5
22	Teacher is fair and follows rules.	1	2	3	4	5
23	Teacher is fun to be with.	1	2	3	4	5
24	Teacher has good subject knowledge.	1	2	3	4	5
25	Teacher helps you when you are in trouble.	1	2	3	4	5
26	Teacher is consistent and fair in discipline.	1	2	3	4	5
27	Trust this teacher.	1	2	3	4	5
28	Teacher has a major effect on teacher aspects of students.	1	2	3	4	5
29	Teacher is fair and fair in discipline without being too strict.	1	2	3	4	5

What is the thing that your teacher does well?  
Teacher is organized - happy

What is your thing that you can suggest to help this teacher improve?  
Teacher may be strict in time management process.

Thank you for taking the time to think through the items carefully and write down your thoughts honestly.

Source: 2005 National Schools of Character Award Winning Practices.  
 Published and distributed by the Character Education Partnership.

Evaluation of teacher by students

**EIA MINI-RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE**  
 Issue: Large classroom evaluation  
 Teacher: Habibur Rahaman, (Mentor-EIA)

Class: \_\_\_\_\_ Subject: \_\_\_\_\_ Present Student: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Did the teacher enter class in time?	Yes	No
2. Did he make individual pupils to give chance for improving?	✓	
3. Did he apply ice-breaking at the beginning?		✓
4. Did he follow a formal lesson plan?	✓	
5. Did he use class room language in English and make positive comments?	✓	
6. Could he give instructions clearly?	✓	
7. Did he run EIT related activity with EIA materials?	✓	
8. Did he run pair and group work?	✓	
9. Did he monitor properly during pair and group work?	✓	
10. Did he write questions, answers on the board for evaluation?	✓	
11. Did he apply peer teaching activity to evaluate?	✓	
12. Were the students honest in the evaluating part?	✓	
13. Could he evaluate all the students?	✓	
14. Did he keep record of the results?	✓	
15. Did he give feedback?	✓	
16. Was the class inclusive?	✓	
17. Could he bring out learning outcomes?	✓	

Name of the data collector: Nirmal Chandra Baidya,  
Asst. Teacher.

Designation: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Signature & date: \_\_\_\_\_

Institute: Naxos Secondary School, Aspet, Bhola.

Examples of student checklist





I also shared my experience with my Head Teacher, peer teacher and other colleagues. They captured their comments or experience by writing diaries. I also noted down all of my

techniques and new ideas, especially about including all students. Following is an example of the journal my peer teacher wrote after classroom observation:

শ্রেণি পরিচয় কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা  
 এখানে লাইভের বৈশিষ্ট্য (Live) ব্যবহার  
 করে একটি গুরুত্বপূর্ণ ক্রিয়াকর্ম  
 বাধে। সেখানে দেখা গেল যে  
 (Male teacher) কয়েকজন ছাত্রের নাম  
 জিজ্ঞাসা করলে কেউ উত্তর দিলে  
 অন্যকে এক বিশিষ্টতার মতোই গুরুত্ব  
 করে একটি বহিষ্কার সিদ্ধান্ত  
 উপস্থিত হলে পারে। এতে নিজস্ব  
 শ্রমের অপব্যয়, সার্বজনীন পাস  
 ছাড়াই জেতা, নিশান করে শ্রেণি  
 পরিচয় কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা করতে  
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 করে এই কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা  
 করে শ্রেণি পরিচয় কার্যক্রম পরিচালনা  
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 সহকারী শিক্ষক  
 পাবনা সরকারি কলেজ  
 কলেজ রোড, পাবনা

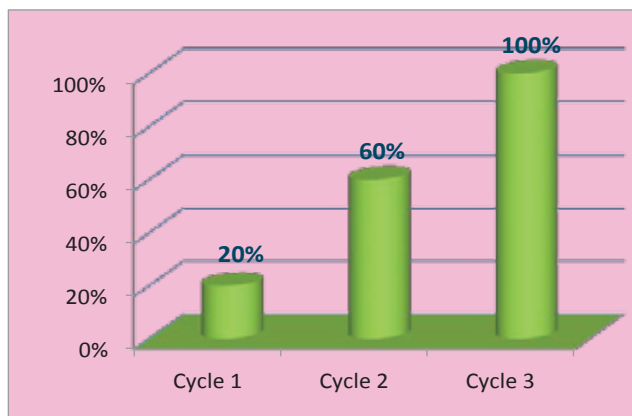
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 পাবনা সরকারি কলেজ  
 কলেজ রোড, পাবনা



Here students are working in pairs.

I tried to address gender problems in my classroom activities. Although in the first cycle I did not manage to do this, in the second cycle many of my students mixed with other boys or girls and did better than in the first cycle. Meeting with some parents when they came to school and explaining about inclusion and how gender discrimination hinders our progress also helped. By the end of the third cycle, I successfully overcame most of the challenges. Now my students are improving a lot. There is a graph which will support my result.



There are some pictures that support my research:



*Whole-class work*



*Pair work*



*Peer teachers and me*

## What I learnt from the study

Teaching-learning is a continuous process. Pair work is a technique that I applied in my research systematically. I have come to know that I have many things to learn, even from observing pair work. In pair work, two students share their own ideas and do so much better compared to whole-class or group work.

Besides this, I have addressed gender discrimination problems to some extent, which occurs most prominently in pair work.

Next time, I want to start my research about making digital content, which will help me to digitise teaching-learning. Besides this, I want to start an English Language club on the school campus, which will help my students to learn English in an easy way. I want to start another research study with my colleagues.

## Conclusion

When my students realise that through pair work they are learning more and more, enjoying it a lot and making new friends every day, they will be eager to do their activity in pairs. I want to spread my research to my peer teacher and other colleagues. All my colleagues believe that pair work is the most effective classroom technique for better understanding. They assured me that they will explore pair work as a technique for better learning. So this exploration is ongoing.

## 3.4

### Md. Abul Mansoor, Grade II

#### Encouraging students to attend and participate in classroom activity



#### Background of the study

Like other teachers, I sincerely try to ensure that all the students get equal opportunities for participating in activities in the classroom. But the first and main obstacle I faced was the large class size. On average, there are about 70–80 students in my class. But some students are irregular. I normally try to involve all students in the lesson by using choral drills, changing the seating arrangement, giving pair-work activities, using gestures while giving instructions in a loud voice, calling on the students in the back benches. But all to no avail. As a teacher, I felt that it is my moral and professional duty to ensure the involvement of all the students in the lesson. Hence, I considered the topic 'Inclusive education' as very important for my job and therefore I selected it for my research.

I was at a loss as to how I could start the research study. I called a staff council meeting and presented the matter of my research. I requested them to share their concepts and experience of inclusive education. I sought their help and assistance to do the research work. I requested my EIA colleague to observe my class and give feedback to me. She agreed happily. I arranged a mothers' meeting and we exchanged opinions about ensuring students' regular attendance at school. I felt the necessity of a smartphone and so I bought one.

#### Research questions

I formulated some questions for getting to the root of the matter.

1. Why do some students attend class irregularly?

2. How can I encourage them to attend school regularly?
3. What are the feelings of the students about my classes?
4. Do all the students get equal opportunities to participate in the lesson activity? If they do not, then why?
5. How can I encourage them to participate in the lesson?
6. How can I create a comfortable and joyful environment in the classroom?

I started Cycle 1 using *English for Today* and my hand-drawn colour circle. The techniques were 'look, listen and say' and choral drill.

#### Description of the study

##### The journey

I called a mothers' meeting again and collected all the parents' mobile phone numbers and made a mobile register to communicate with them if children attended irregularly or were absent. I made another daily attendance register to record the daily attendance of all students. Every Thursday, after lunch break, we practised sports and cultural events, so that students find joy through entertainment along with studies. We made a garden in front of the school and decorated the inside and outside school walls with colourful hand-drawn pictures. With the help of the school managing committee, we arranged proper lighting, enough fans, drinking water in the classrooms and built another toilet for the students.

I thought that it was very important to know my students' opinions about my class. So, I asked my students to express their opinions about my class by giving them the questionnaire below and got their answers.

1. Do you get a chance to take part in your English class activity? Yes: 29; No: 46
2. How do you feel in your English class? Happy: 12; Nervous: 63
3. Do you have fun in your English class? Yes: 7; No: 68

I kept a reflective diary. After my class, I noted down the impact of the techniques, which I observed.

In the first cycle, I usually presented the lesson using textbooks, hand-drawn colour circles and the technique was 'look, listen and say' and choral drill.

In the second cycle, I used flash cards. The techniques were: 'Show ..... card', 'Stand ..... colour and exchange with your right/left elbow partner', 'All ..... colour, come to the front of the class'.

In the third cycle, in the beginning I sang an action song with all of my students. I made the students do pair work by using the structure: 'My colour is ..... . What about you?' For group work, the technique was 'All ..... colour, stand and loudly say, hello/yes/no/English'. At the end of the class, we played bingo with the colour words.

## Findings

The positive impact of hard work: After performing the above tasks, our school became a very attractive place, and also the daily attendance of the students increased as expected due to using the mobile register. The average monthly attendance of the students is shown below.

April: 75%

July: 90%

November: 97%

## Comparison of the three cycles

In Cycle 1, my technique was 'look, listen and say' and choral drill. Only 35–40% students were actively involved in the lesson. I think, my presentation was traditional and I

emphasised much more on ELT subject knowledge and on the lesson plan, instead of thinking about all students' involvement. I was not happy with the class. I have no hesitation to say that the class was completely teacher-oriented.

In the second cycle, I distributed colour flash cards among all the students. So, all students got a chance to take part in the lesson because they had flash cards in their hands. I applied new techniques as mentioned above. After the class, my peer teacher informed me that all students participated more or less, but the class was limited to identifying the colours only, and not interactive and joyful. I also felt the same way from my own observation.



In the third cycle, I added an action song, pair work and bingo game along with the techniques of the second cycle. We sang an action song with all students at the beginning. It created a joyful environment in the classroom and everybody enjoyed it. The students practised the language structure 'My colour is ..... . What about you?' in pairs. At the end of the class we played 'Bingo' with colour names.



My peer teacher's observation and my own observation say that all students participated in the lesson actively and the students enjoyed the class very much. I thought that I was the happiest man in the world!

Student's involvement in the lesson:

In the first cycle: 40%

In the second cycle: 85%

In the third cycle: 97%

My students' opinions about my class after Cycle 3:

1. Did you get a chance to take part in your English class activity?  
Yes: 73; No: 2
2. How did you feel in your English class?  
Happy: 69; Unhappy: 6
3. Did you have fun in your English class?  
Yes: 71; No: 4

### My learning from the study

This has been the most amazing teaching experience in my life, which I didn't imagine previously. Before this study, I thought it was impossible to include all students in a lesson due to the large class size and irregularity of pupils' attendance. Learning from my study showed that it is possible to ensure pupils' regular attendance and attract them to school by creating a safe, comfortable and attractive learning environment and communicating with parents by mobile phone. Co-curricular activities did a lot to encourage the students to come to school.

I've observed that students love songs, rhymes, games and fun activities. If any topic-related or relevant game or fun activity is added at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of the lesson, all the students will participate in it and enjoy it. The class is flooded with happiness. Here, I was astonished observing one thing: that the weak students responded comparatively better in games or fun activities than the good students who were better in lesson activities. So, singing songs, rhymes, games and fun activities uplift the confidence of the weak students and stimulate them to take part in the lesson activity.

Good voice projection by the teacher, eye contact, monitoring around the class, giving pair and group work, applying learning-by-doing techniques, proper utilisation of flash cards, posters and other teaching aids are good tools for involving all students in the lesson activity. I found that revision lessons gave more chances to the students who seemed less confident in the previous lessons. In the revision class, the role of the teacher decreases a lot and spontaneous participation of all the students increases to a great extent.

One thing I observed is that although most of my students took part in the lesson activity, there are 60–70% students who can't speak English fluently. They are a bit shy or scared. So, I'd like to start my next research study about this matter. Since this study has taught me how to do classroom research, it will be easier to do the next research study. But I'll do it as collaborative research with one of my school colleagues.

### Conclusion

Teachers' classroom research is not an ornamentation or beautification of teaching and learning. It's a part and parcel of pedagogy. By doing this classroom research, I've learnt to think outside the box and about thinking and doing things differently.

Like the physically challenged students, the students who are lagging behind and the slow learners are also sort of 'lesson challenged' students. Since the number of such challenged students is bigger in the class, the teacher must formulate a proper strategy for the class considering the needs of those students.

Before this study, I was a teacher. After this study, I'm a reflective and innovative teacher as well as a classroom researcher. Thus, classroom research has helped me to develop professionally.

Teachers' classroom research is the best way to change the classroom and meet the students' classroom needs. Every teacher should be a classroom researcher. It's impossible to be a good teacher without classroom research.

My research has not ended, only started. I'll continue my research on different aspects of my school and classroom activities. In future, I want to be a writer. I'd like to write about different aspects of teaching and learning English and about classroom activities. This practical experience of classroom research has encouraged me in this regard.



## 3.5

### Md. Jahangir Hossain, Grade II

#### Effective group-work strategies to enhance participation



##### Background of the study

In my class (Class 2) the number of students is about 40. When I conduct English classes, I notice that about 60% of students take part in the activity and they always remain attentive in class. But some students take part in the activity at times and some others do not want to take part in any activity. Not only that, they always try to keep themselves at the back of the class. But I want all the students to be involved in all the classroom activities equally. That's why I decided to make groups before providing an activity.

The classroom was not spacious but the space was sufficient to arrange some groups. There is no fixed or heavy furniture in my class. So I can arrange some groups in my class easily. Then I made some groups during the middle stage of the class. There was no specific reason for forming groups. After forming groups I instructed them what to do. I conducted the class accordingly.

##### Research questions

1. From this study, I wanted to know why some students do not take part in any activity.
2. I wanted to know how I can involve all the students in activities.

##### How I went about the study

I noticed that about 55–60% students took part in the activity actively. The rest did not take part actively. Most of the time they remained silent. I think they felt shy. But I wanted to increase student participation.

At this time, I faced some challenges. The classroom became noisy while the students were working in groups. Besides this, it was

difficult for me to monitor all the groups at a time. I kept all the findings written in my diary.

I continued to do the same thing without making any change for the next 20 days. But I did not find any significant improvement. After that I invited two of my colleagues to observe my class. Before the observation, I made them understand what to do and provided an observation checklist. After completing the class, I asked them some questions and discussed with them what changes I could make next time. I discussed with my colleagues the following questions:

1. How many students were involved in group work actively?
2. Was my instruction clear?
3. Were all the groups active equally?
4. Was the formation of groups proper?
5. Were all the students comfortable in the classroom?
6. Was the environment safe for the students?
7. Was my monitoring proper?
8. Was the time enough for them?
9. Was the classroom noisy?
10. Was the size of groups too small or too large?
11. What is your suggestion for next time?

The finding of my colleagues was that the groups that consisted of advanced students were very active, attentive and participated in the activity. On the other hand, the groups that only consisted of weaker students were not active in the activity and felt shy. About 60% of students were involved in the activity. Some students were speaking in their groups

while others were not doing the activity actively.

My colleagues suggested that I should form groups by mixing advanced and weaker students equally in each group next time and to select a leader in each group to reduce noise and to reduce difficulties of monitoring.

I talked to some guardians to know the behavioural nature of some students who are not so active and of some who are active. I thought that the students who are not so active may be calm and quiet everywhere, even in their house. But after talking to their mother I came to know that they are very active and talkative in their house. Then I started to think about how I can involve them in the activity.

Besides this, I talked to some students who are not so active in activities. I wanted to know what they liked and about understanding instructions, group size, partners and their comfort level when doing group work. Some of them said that they cannot understand my instructions clearly and others told me that they like their friends in their groups. I noted all the data in my diary.

## My reflections

My finding was almost the same as my colleagues'. I think that if I mix the weaker students and the advanced equally in each group, the advanced can help the weaker. If the advanced students help, the weaker will be encouraged to take part in the activity and their shyness may also be removed. Besides this, I made a plan to select a leader in each group so that they can help the group members for doing the activity. It will also make my monitoring easier.

Number of cycle	Participation (%)
1	55–60%

I kept all the data written in my diary and then I made a plan to make some changes in the next cycle. The changes I made in the next cycle were as follows:

1. I made a group leader in each group.
2. I formed groups by mixing equal number of advanced and weaker students.
3. I monitored the class more closely.
4. I was more careful at the time of giving instructions so that all the students could understand them clearly.
5. After completing the first cycle, I thought of the challenges, successes and possible solutions for starting the second cycle.

## Challenges

1. Some students did not understand my instructions clearly.
2. Some were not comfortable with the group members.
3. In some groups, all the students were weaker.
4. In some groups, all the students were advanced.

## Successes

1. About 60% of students were active in activities.
2. Students were more attentive in class.
3. Eagerness had been created in students.
4. I found some possible way to involve the inactive students in activity.

## Cycle 2

After planning, I started working for the next cycle. This time, I arranged the groups on the basis of equal numbers of weaker and advanced students. Before giving the group work, I instructed very carefully so that all the students could understand clearly. Then I told them to select a group leader. Then I instructed the leader to help the weaker students in his group.

Number of cycle	Participation (%)
2	65–70%

At this time I noticed that the class is more lively than before, as shown in the table. About 70% of students were participating in group work very actively. The rest were trying, but their ability was probably not up to that. I continued the process for about four weeks. Then I invited one of my colleagues to observe



the class. I gave her a checklist and told her to try to identify the problem. After completing the class, I discussed the questions with her again, like the previous time.

My colleague suggested that I should increase the use of teaching materials and students' working time in groups. I talked to my Head Teacher also. She also asked me to increase time for group work.

### My reflection

I think that I should be friendlier with the students to remove their shyness. Perhaps the allotted time was not enough for their work. Teaching materials were not used properly.

### My future plan

I kept all the data written in my diary and then I made a plan to make some changes in the next cycle. The changes I will make in the next cycle are as follows.

1. I will use teaching materials properly.
2. I will increase time for doing group work.
3. I will monitor the class more closely.
4. I will be friendlier with the students to remove their shyness.

Number of cycle	Participation (%)
3	80–85%

### Conclusion

From this study, I have come to know that to increase students' participation in group work, groups should be made on the basis of equal numbers of weaker and advanced students. A group leader should be selected before working. Instructions should be clear and teaching materials should be used properly. I will continue to see how it works.

## 3.6

### Saimun Nasrin, Grade Primary Starting from the end for inclusion



#### Background of the study

A teacher doing a study can act as a change maker in the class. This has a great impact on including all the students in the class. I remember those days when it was hard for me to conduct the class with every student's participation. I had to face the challenges of involving them in the classroom activities. I would make groups, pairs or use any other techniques but somehow it would be unsuccessful. Then, I felt motivated and decided to do this research study and considered looking at including all the students in the class and creating a comfortable learning environment. I chose this topic since I had noticed that all the students of my class didn't feel easy and enjoy the class.

#### Research questions

As including all students was my challenge, from the study I wanted to find answers to some questions, which were:

1. Which techniques are inclusive?
2. What are the elements of an inclusive approach?
3. How can I create a comfortable environment in the classroom?
4. How can I include all the students?

#### Description of the study

To get the answers, I had to follow some steps and collect data by involving my students and my peer teacher. I applied some specific techniques in the class. Here are the techniques I applied in three consecutive cycles. In the first cycle:

- I instructed the whole class about the class procedure.
- I divided them into two big groups, A and B.

- I practised the lesson with the two groups separately.
- I created small groups by asking the students to sit face-to-face on two benches.
- I invited my peer teacher to observe my class.

#### How I did the study

I wrote a short note in my reflective diary after finishing the class and discussed with my peer who observed my class. I felt the importance of students' opinions and made a questionnaire for them: 'Feedback Form'. Students expressed their opinions about the class. The questions on the form were:

Did you participate in all activities? Yes / No

Did you like to work in groups? Yes / No

After analysing the data I got the ideas about my next 'to do' work.

In Cycle 2, I tried out new techniques, which were:

1. I divided the students into four small groups, A, B, C and D.
2. I practised the lesson with the four groups and checked learning individually and randomly.
3. I re-formed groups of students by mixing advanced with weaker, boys with girls, back-benchers with front-benchers.
4. I collected the students' feedback and asked them about their point of interest.

In Cycle 3, I wanted to do something different. I started my class by singing an action song, with gestures. I integrated the lower-level students into different groups and made a competition among them by promising rewards: I played a game with the students after the class.

## Findings

Here, my focus was on creating interest in the lesson among the maximum number of students. However, I had to face obstacles such as how to control the high level of chaos and how to pay attention to lower-level students.

In Cycle 2, I worked with this focus.

First, I managed to rearrange them into four small groups and mix them differently in groups six days a week. It influenced my study positively. As a result, all the students got mutually closer and every student in the group showed competitiveness with other groups. In this cycle, I noticed that more students than before were paying attention in the class and participating actively. I wanted to know their level of interest and opinions after the class. It helped me to know their individual or group choice. As I would check the learning among the groups randomly, every student was attentive to me concerning the lesson. To prepare the students physically and mentally, I used some techniques in Cycle 3.

Cycle 3 was the ‘maturity stage’ of my study. I finally realised what the most effective inclusive techniques were. Here, I designed my classes according to my diary analysis, comments of the peer teacher and finally the demands of the pupils. In this cycle, chaos was under control. For starting the class, I would get all the students to sing with actions in order to get them into harmony. Here, I got a very positive output. The students paid attention to me and eagerly waited to go on to the next step. I divided the students into small groups and spread the lower-level students among them. Then, I set up a competition promising rewards, such as SRM (supplementary reading materials), telling stories, puzzles etc. As a result, I got the best return from the groups that I could have expected. Before ending the class, all the students did a puzzle or a game. Finally, the class ended with ‘smiley’ clapping.

## Students’ feedback form analysis

Students’ involvement in the class:

After Cycle 1: 33%

After Cycle 2: 58%

After Cycle 3: 92%

	Questions students answered	After Cycle 1		After Cycle 2		After Cycle 3	
		Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
1.	Did you participate in the group work?	25	51	41	29	74	0
2.	Did you like to work with the group?	22	54	38	32	72	2
3.	Did you like the group you sat with?	24	52	42	28	73	1
4.	Did you express your opinion in your group?	28	48	36	34	72	2
5.	Did you understand the instructions?	30	46	45	35	74	0
6.	Did you enjoy the class?	23	43	43	37	74	0

## Learning from the study

I am overwhelmed by the outstanding contribution that my study has made to inclusive learning in my classes. I just

remember how I was in the past and realise what a change I have made in the class environment. Now I enjoy every class with all the students participating.

I have learned a few specific things from this study which are:

1. Being friendly with my students helped me to go on with the study.
2. I realised that students feel better in group work than in whole-class work.
3. In small-group work, students participated without their previous shyness and I noticed a competitive mood among them.
4. By dividing the lower-level and leading students in all the groups, I made all of them ready.
5. By doing an action song and playing games or doing puzzles, their enthusiasm was enhanced and that prepared them to start or finish the class with some rhythm.
6. They were more attentive than at any other time, as I would give importance to their opinions and reward them.

Moreover, diary analysis, observing a class by my peer teacher and discussing with my peer helped me to complete the study.



*Students' happy inclusion in the class*

Hence, I became enriched with inclusive techniques to create a comfortable environment in the class. I wanted to include all the students in group work. Finally, I came to the end of my study with a level of satisfaction.

I have found a limitation of my study to be that about 5% to 8% of the students

are still not included in my class actively and this still remains to be explored. When I started the journey of this mini study I had a lot of questions in my mind. But now I have a clear destination and I have a plan to ensure 100% of students' effective involvement in the class: and this is my next pathway. If I have a chance to do this study again, I would do it individually.

## Conclusion

To review my whole study, I have seen that first creating a comfortable environment makes it easy for all the students to participate. I would try to inspire my students in every phase of the class. I also used teaching materials to increase students' involvement.

Though including all students is a great challenge, the approaches to inclusive learning make it easy. Finally, I will emphasise classroom research and say that research is the pathway to inclusion of all the students. It starts from the end...

## 3.7

### Surma Begum, Grade VII

#### Engagement of weak students using games, role play and songs



#### Background of the study

In my class, most of the students are weak and below standard. They felt shy to participate in the lesson. Observing this situation, I felt disappointed. I always thought about my class and tried to do something about this situation. But most of the time I remained dissatisfied. In the meantime, I got an opportunity to join a workshop on TVC where I found a clue about how I can handle this situation. Actually, I was motivated then.

#### Research questions

I tried to engage all the students in my class. So, from the very beginning, I planned different types of techniques, such as games, role play and fun activities. I explored the answer to the following questions:

1. How can I develop the weak students and increase the quality of their participation?
2. How can I develop myself as a confident teacher?

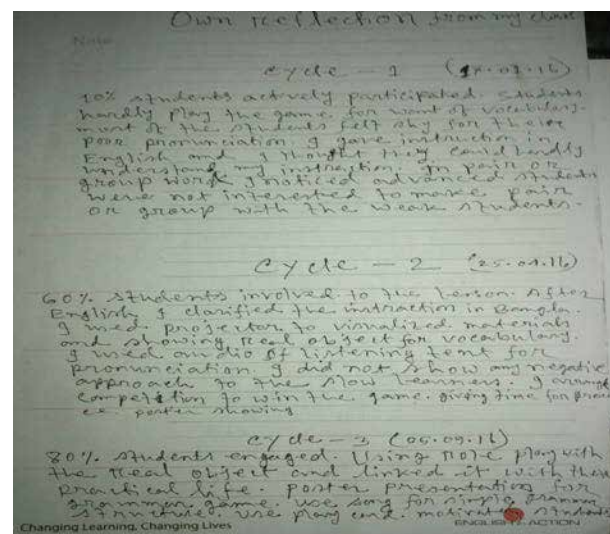
So, after planning the lesson, when I tried to teach the class I felt discomfort seeing their performance. To conduct this study, I engaged the students in giving feedback on what they liked and didn't, and used my reflective journal.

#### How I went about the study

I collected evidence from students' feedback and from my reflective journal that I wrote after finishing the class. I wrote the questions for students' feedback on the board. For example, 'Was the lesson interesting? Were the instructions clear? Did maximum students participate in the lesson?'

35 students out of 42 gave the answer 'no'. I asked them orally about the reason. Some of them said that for want of vocabulary, for want of proper pronunciation, for want of practice before starting the game they could not participate and enjoy the lesson. I worked for 15 days on the first cycle. I spent four months on the second cycle, and the next four and a half months on the third cycle. Due to various reasons, I had to take long gaps among the cycles.

In the first cycle, from the students' feedback and my reflection I observed only a few students actively participated in the lesson. So I changed my teaching techniques. In the second cycle, for games and role play, they needed more words and proper pronunciation. I used a slide projector, word demonstration, showed real objects and used audio. In the third cycle, along with this, I arranged a competition and linked the lesson with their personal life.



Copy of my reflective journal

From the first cycle, I came to know only 10% of students actively participated in the lesson. I collected this evidence after 15 days of taking my class. I noticed most of them did not play the game for want of vocabulary. They also felt shy to do the role play. I asked them why they felt shy to do the role play. They answered that they did not pronounce the words properly. When I tried to make any pair or group work to maximise the lesson, advanced students showed a negative approach to mixing with the weak students. In this cycle, they hardly understood my instructions.

So, after three months, in the second cycle I noticed that 60% of students were involved in the lesson. In this cycle, I used a projector for increasing vocabulary to visualise the invisible idea. For increasing more vocabulary, I used word demonstration by the students and showed real objects. I used audio for EFT text and different type of activities that are preserved on the SD card provided by EIA for proper pronunciation. I spent a lot of time to practising with the whole class for the weak students' better understanding. I motivated the students giving a message that we all together will go to the next class successfully by working like a team. So gradually they accepted making a pair or group with any students in their class. I used a poster for a grammar game. As they were able to increase their vocabulary day by day, they got enjoyment through this game and were involved in the lesson.

But still I tried for more engagement and that's why I added some new techniques when I started the third cycle. But before the third cycle, the school was closed for summer vacation, Eid vacation, another vacation and then tests and second model test exams were held. So during this time, I practised with the class using different techniques and then collected evidence.

After four and a half months, I reached the third cycle and noticed that 80% of students

were involved in the lesson. After practising the lesson with the whole class, I asked: 'If you are interested in role-playing this game, to show the demonstration of this word, raise your hand.' I counted their hands and noticed 80% were involved in the class. Besides this, I also collected this evidence from students' feedback. I also noticed group performance when monitoring. In this cycle, along with the previous techniques, I arranged a competition for motivation of the students to increase the involvement in the lesson. I tried to arrange any role play and song activity with real objects and linked it with their personal life that helped me to increase the involvement of the students very effectively. When I showed a poster for describing their own experience it worked very well. Using picture cards for any activity is also an interesting way for the students to keep attention to the lesson. Besides these I also showed a positive attitude to the students and always inspired them by giving assurance to remove their shyness. By this I tried to increase their confidence. Through this, when I noticed the slow learners' involvement in the lesson, my joy knew no bounds and I got confidence to remove my disappointment.



*Maximum students are involved in the lesson without shyness*

### **What I learnt from the study**

From this study, I came to learn that generally weak and slow learners feel shy and they are unwilling to participate in the lesson. Different techniques such as games, role play, songs,

showing visual and real objects, and listening from audio are very effective to engage the weak students. The teacher's positive attitude and assurance are also very powerful to increase students' involvement. They enjoy the class when the lesson is linked with a real situation. Teacher also enjoys the class when the slow learners actively participate in the lesson and through this the teacher gets confidence about herself. Now I believe that weak students can get rid of their shyness and weakness, but that it takes time.

The students gave feedback without any hesitation. As my mentees were not available and they did not communicate with me properly, I did the study individually just with students' feedback. They gave me feedback saying that if I rearrange the students from back to front and front to back they will be able to understand the lesson properly. They told me that visual and game activities are good to learn grammar. They requested me to shorten my lesson plan. I wrote this down in my reflective journal and that helped me to change my teaching techniques for more engagement.

## Conclusion

In my study I managed to get about 80% of students to participate in the lesson. Now they are able to communicate with each other by using the four skills in English. Now they are tension-free about English as a subject. But through this study, working through the whole year, I made them only passable and 'middle abilities' students. Now I want to develop their quality further. I could not engage 20% of students and among them I could not make 10% students passable who are very weak, not only in English but also in other subjects.

Now I am confident that if I continue my effort this way I think they will be able to develop their quality. I got the result of this study within one year. If I get these students for the next three years, I hope I will do better at increasing their quality.

## 3.8

### Swapon Kumar Biswas, Grade X

#### Truancy among Class 10 students



##### Background of the study

I am a form teacher of Class 10. I have huge responsibilities to observe the classroom situation very often. I often noticed empty desks. I was not happy with the attendance of my boys. I tried to find out the reasons for their truancy: from the family and from the schooling point of view. Far from blaming them, I began to reflect on my own qualities. When I placed my performance to 'inspire' them under the scanner, it revealed a different story. I started exploring the scenario.

##### What I did in my study

As a form teacher, I was facing some crucial problems. Some questions came up. Why do they stay absent from my classes? Why do they prefer coaching classes? What's going wrong with me? So, I began to collect information from various corners. I involved my Head Teacher, my colleagues and my boys to unearth the mystery. In Cycle 1, I started collecting data based on the research questions. Cycle 1 was a bit challenging for me to finish in time.

##### How I did the study

Cycle 1 was a raw deal for my life. As a novice researcher, tools selection was a bit tough for me. I decided to use a questionnaire and an interview for my purpose. For example:

- Why do you avoid the classroom activities?
- What's wrong with my approach?
- Can you suggest any new alternative?

School hours are very tightly arranged for me. In Cycle 1, I decided to address the problem in a friendly way. I became more frank than before. I wanted to discover what was faulty in my behaviour. I discovered that most of the students were afraid of my corporal

punishment and rude remarks. This is what they said:



In Cycle 2, I changed my iron-hand policy. I tried to polish my strictness. I noticed that a gradual progression was taking place. So, I started exchanging views with their parents. I began to take help from my Head Teacher, deputy head and my peer teachers, so as to be proactive. In Cycle 3, I became a keen observer of my own performance. Before my action research, I was the 'blamer'. I used to humiliate them on many occasions. I frequently made them squat and pulled their ears. Now I assure them that they will not suffer any form of demoralisation. So, I have become a 'solver'.

##### Results

From my everyday research, it is evident that most of my boys don't attend classes because of my negligence and apathy. Apart from that, there are some family and social problems which play a role. Also they fear corporal punishment. Besides this, we fail miserably to motivate them.

This study opens the two-way lanes of my journey. As a practising teacher, I was the dictator in my classroom activities. Very often



I would rebuke my boys without going deep into the problems. The study mirrors my casual attitude to the needs of the students. I am still dissatisfied with my knowledge, skill and attitude. From the beginning of the study, I was nervous. With support and clarification from EIA staff, I gained some momentum. I am now on solid foundations to initiate any exploratory process to solve problems related to my teaching. I want to reach perfection of being a teacher. All my mentees were very supportive. They enriched my knowledge. They were helpful in analysing the minute details of data. In future, I will do research as part of a group: teamwork sheds my load and streamlines progress by creating a supportive mentality.



*Colleagues observe my class*

## Conclusion

The study that I undertook has been an eye-opener for me. From the initial meeting, I got the clues to solve any problem in my school. The journey has become a training academy for would-be teachers. The problems were minimum in my journey. When I found any difficulty, the EIA team extended their helping hand to expedite my venture. The initiative has taught me to talk with my colleagues and my boys to interact. I can see and plan before any class. When I finish my class, I reflect on what I have accomplished. If there is any scope to improve, I can share it easily with anyone. I have started writing my reflective diary. I write on everyday incidents in my class to take them forward.



*I talk to students*

## 3.9

### Iffat Roushan, Grade V

#### A diary study on enhancing inclusive learning



##### My Concerns

My first and foremost aim in my class was to make every student feel comfortable in a learning environment. I wanted every student to participate and learn in an interesting and enjoyable way. For this, I decided to add some new techniques. This research in my teaching life is a new beginning for me. In this case, I have to start working with understanding the content very well. Enhancing inclusion is a big matter. I believe that I have to ensure the participation of all and that everybody can learn speaking, reading and writing skills and everyone can learn to do any kind of work in a joyful way.

I focused specifically on the following:

Students who are not advanced and talk less, I have to identify and help them to learn. I thought if I can help them to learn, then my teaching will be fully effective. Those who are quick learners are always excited to learn. How could I bring success in creating interest in learning listening, speaking, reading and writing among the less quick learners? Am I able to do it? If I can't, then how can I do it? These questions made me think. Sometimes I'm frustrated. Again I try. I am deeply concentrating on my study and work.

I designed a plan to properly manage the research and selected some questions to verify them. I considered diary practice, as it is effective for analysing oneself in the study.

##### How I went about my study

###### First step

I selected one of the lessons from the textbook. I thought everyone would be very interested in this lesson. The name of the lesson was 'My home town'. Before conducting the class, I prepared a picture of

the lesson and a lesson plan. I thought that weak learners will be able to do well. I asked the students to collect information about their home town. I developed a table for it and asked them to bring the completed table. They had to arrange the table with name, size, population, thana, tourist place, special personality etc. I did the lesson according to lesson plan. In the lesson, I created groups with quick learners and weak learners. I hoped that they will fill the table with required data in the next class. Later, whoever completed the table among the eight teams read the table and the other students listened to it. Many students even noted some information. Later, I conducted the lesson with the help of the map of their home town. I also asked a few questions to the students related to the lesson. The interested students answered the questions. In this way, they were also given a task to work on reading and writing activities. I think the lesson was good.

After finishing my first lesson, I thought:

- Did the students have meaningful participation?
- Were there natural opportunities to learn?
- In what way did the students have a positive relationship with their peers in their group?
- How is their learning enhanced?
- How did I make adjustments to ensure that the students are properly, actively and inclusively engaged?

In my opinion, the result was quite disappointing.

- I noticed three types of student in the class. Advanced learners who were very interested in reading. Medium learners

who are a little bit confused. And weak learners who are lagging behind and talking less. There were also backward students who made mistakes in writing English letters, such as *b, d, p, q, c, e, f, t, w, m, M, W, N, S*.

- I was thinking that the students were not clear about my instructions. They did not understand my instructions. So they made mistakes.
- Some students were not interested in the lessons. They were simply talking to each other.
- Students who collected the information were excited about the presentation, which resulted in chaos in class. If I had made some rules before, they would not have done this.
- Quick learners were enjoying the lesson and participating in a spontaneous manner. But there were some students who didn't find any pleasure from the lesson and also were silent. It seems that I taught them forcefully.

### Second step

This time I changed a little of my thinking. I discussed the issues with my Head Teacher and peer teacher. Later, my HT advised me to practise more and more. And while talking to me, he said that he also faced similar kinds of problems. In this case, he asked me to apply my techniques well. Then I started my second step again. This time I entered the class with a very colourful map. It was the whole country map. I gave them the detailed idea about their country and about home towns. But this time, the pictures of the tourist place, special personality and some audio/ video clips were shown on the mobile phone. For the activity, I divided them into eight groups, and then I made separate groups for bright students and weak students. I gave much more time to the weak students. Creating their interest was my main goal. In this case, I kept them busy practising repeatedly – sometimes reading, sometimes writing and sometimes speaking.

Again, I involved them in chain drill and pair-work activities. Sometimes, when they felt bored in the class, I played some games with them or sang a song. I also told them to share their responsibilities. I think there were many changes among them. They could answer if I asked a question. They were doing the task as given.

The result of the second step was very positive.

- They quickly understood my instructions and worked accordingly.
- They worked properly as per their assigned tasks. They were aware.
- I noticed that those who were behind were playing a good role.
- Those who were making mistakes, were not making that many mistakes.
- All the students were attentive to reading. So they were not making a noise.
- Now I did not think that I forced them to do the task. Rather, they were trying to finish the work very quickly.
- They were doing the work with joy. They were collecting their data from each other. They could fix any mistake by themselves.
- Now they did a lot of practice. They were regular and on time. They were very positive as well.

### What I learnt from the study

In my opinion, any lesson in the student-centric learning method needs to create more room for the learners. And I think it is not possible to do well without any plan. In order to achieve positive results, there must be an effective plan. In this case, taking help from our peer teacher and HT is required. Because, in this case, if I take help from others with planning, then I think the plan is more productive.

This study started a new chapter in my life, because this is the first study of my life. Here I got the opportunity to develop myself. I tried my best to correct my mistakes. Before doing

this research, I used to discuss some common areas, but when I started the research, I started discussing more with my peer teacher regarding the general problem of the class. I feel that if I do not discuss my problem in a detailed way every day, then I do not feel good until it is solved. Sometimes we discuss the issues with our HT and ask his advice to do better. He suggested to give more emphasis on practice. He said that all of us were facing these problems. They had also noticed the tendency among the students to speak less. They also observed disinterest. Another problem was in the area of vocabulary learning; therefore, the tendency to talk less.

I wish to say that if I get a chance I would like to study students' behavioural issues – social and personal values and behaviour. I want to understand their morality and mentality. My research has helped me to think about something about my students, change myself, change my concept of self-evaluation, helped me to think and to do something good. It also helped my professional development skills.

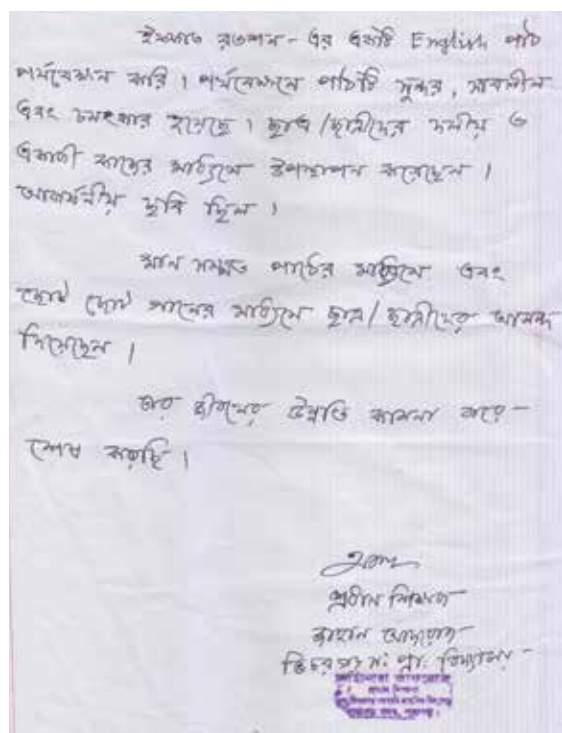


Students are discussing in pairs and groups

If I can do my next research, I would like to do it in a group because participation of all the members will enrich through all the ideas, discussions, critiques and additions to the study. I think everything in the study will be better.

## Conclusion

The study was very inspirational to me because I got the motivation to do something new. This research opened the way to think of creating new things with my professional skills. When I am conducting my classes and I am doing it as long as I want, I want to enhance inclusive learning. This creates interest among students. I just want to say one thing – when giving feedback, I convey the importance of high standards and that I believe that learners can achieve those standards. Some photos that capture the class activities and the Head Teacher's comments are given below.



Head Teacher's feedback on the lesson

# SECTION 4:

## Strategising pair and group work

The studies in this section cover a wide range of issues around using pair and group work. However, in almost all of them, the teacher-researchers to some extent share a common starting point: namely a belief, or at least a hope, that pair and group work can be helpful to learners in one way or another.

In fact, some of the studies focus precisely on just that: if and how cooperative learning techniques are of benefit to the learners. One teacher, for example, explores whether pair and group work could really be a useful tool to help transform a current unsatisfactory situation. *'In my class only I talked and students listened, I didn't give them any chance to speak. In English class they looked at me foolishly. I asked questions which they couldn't answer.'* The teachers frequently identify these benefits as improved achievement and increased confidence, motivation and more willing participation among many learners, notably among 'weak' and 'slow' learners. We find even more striking, and perhaps less predictable benefits emerging from some studies: such as learners' leadership skills and improvements in learner-teacher relationships being promoted in some cases.

Some of the other teachers attempt to unlock the secrets of managing pair and group work effectively: aiming to ensure that there really is a positive impact on learning. Several of the teachers found themselves in a situation where not all their learners were equally involved, or willing to be involved in pair and group work. Thus their investigations lead them to explore possible reasons for this, whether it was related to the tasks, the learners' partners or their own feelings about learning.

They describe how, sometimes as the result of fairly tough experiences, they have come to appreciate that there is no simple magic formula. Successful group work, as one teacher puts it, *'is not an easy classroom management option'*. So, in their studies, they relate some of their trial-and-error attempts to experiment with different strategies in order to find what will work best in their own particular situation. Thus, the teachers have gained insights into subtle, yet critical issues, such as when and how to assign learners to specific groups, in what conditions it is good to let learners choose their own groups, or when a teacher might find it desirable to form groups according to ability or personality. The diversity of strategic issues unearthed by the teachers in this regard also includes strategies for appointing and making the most of group leaders: for example giving a chance to 'weak' learners to lead a group proved to be a fruitful move for one teacher. Another even made

the discovery that girls often did not like working with boys and therefore felt the need to get to the bottom of this.

For a further group of teachers, the principal concerns addressed in their studies were around practical management of the classroom and also of control. One teacher describes an attempt to manage time effectively: first coming to understand the nature of the challenges that a 35-minute lesson presented to a teacher keen to use group work, then to explore strategies to address these. Another teacher was equally concerned about classroom noise, and thus developed, and monitored, an approach that dealt with her fear of losing control when managing group activities within a large-class context.

As with the studies in other sections, the teachers have used a wide range of research tools to get to the heart of their issues. One teacher, however, found that keeping a reflective diary was a particularly helpful support in steering the gradual changes that were taking place through the process of refining the use of cooperative learning. Another teacher sums up the feeling of coming to a closer understanding and confidence in this particular area of classroom practice: *'This study was the first in my teaching career. It was a different experience for me. This study has changed my mind about the classroom. It has taught me to think about the classroom and the lessons.'*

## 4.1

### Md. Akmat Ali Miah, Grade V

#### Choice of group leaders as a strategy to improve conversation practice



##### Background of the study

I was not satisfied with the work I did in my class because, first of all, there were more than 50 students. As a result, many weak students did not understand the lesson; in fact they got weaker gradually. They did not learn anything eagerly. Every student did not get an opportunity to speak. Moreover, the environment was noisy. I thought group work is a way to enable different kinds of students to participate in their learning. I had five/six students in every group. I was always conscious about the slow learners learning. I engaged advanced students as group leaders. I could see that the group leaders' speaking skills were improving day by day as they tried to speak English. On the whole there was only 30–35% participation. This set me thinking and I decided to investigate it more seriously.

##### How I went about the study

In this study, my students played an important role. My peer teacher, Head Teacher and other teachers also helped me. They always argue with me, advise me and inspire me. Here reflective journals and classroom observations were also helpful. The peer teacher and Head Teacher's feedback also helped me get a different perspective.

##### Description of different activities

In my research work, I used many techniques and tools. First, I used only advanced students as group leaders. Here, weaker students did not get much opportunity to enrich their speaking power. At this stage, I used the following questions to develop my research work:

##### Research questions

- Was the group work well organised?
- Were the learning outcomes achieved?
- Were the advanced learners eager to co-present?
- Were the slow learners active in the group work?
- Did members in the group communicate with each other in English?
- Did the slow learners benefit from the group work?

I used student feedback sheets every week. After some days, my peer teacher observed my class and filled up the observation checklist sheet. He gave me many valuable suggestions. The guardians of my students also helped me by giving much information. Then my Head Teacher observed my class and advised me to change the group leader. He said that if I change my group leader then every student will get a chance to perform.

After 30–35 days I changed the group leaders; even slow learners became group leaders. When every student got the opportunity to be a group leader, I saw eagerness in their behaviour. When I continued these techniques again and again, the slow learners improved their speaking ability. The questions I asked for their feedback were:

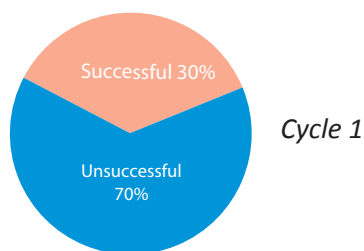
1. Did you like today's group work (GW)?
2. Did you feel comfortable?
3. Did you need any help from your teacher?
4. Did you get any help from group members?
5. Did you enjoy GW?
6. Do you like practising conversation in English?
7. Are you interested to present in GW?

8. How did you feel before and after your GW activities?

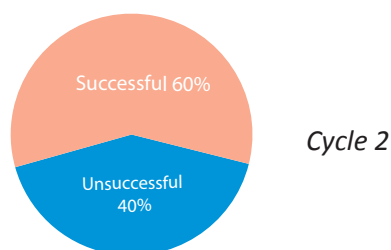
For the 20 days of Cycle 2, I used slow learners as group leaders. As a result, their speaking ability in English increased day by day. In Cycle 3, I alternated slow and advanced learners as group leaders. At this stage, every student wanted to be a group leader and said, 'I will be group leader.'

### Discussion of results

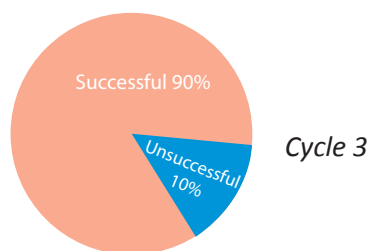
In the first cycle, when I used only advanced learners as group leaders, only 30–35% of students could converse in English. The other group members were inactive. This was in spite of my applying different techniques of teaching. The pie chart of my first cycle of group work is as follows:



In the second cycle, I used slow learners and other students as group leaders. Then every student got the opportunity to participate in the activity. At this stage, my success increased to 60–65%.



In the third cycle, I made everyone a group leader by turn and I did this many times. Then my success rate went up to 90%, as shown below:



### What I learnt from the study

I learnt that using different kinds of students as a group leader gives everyone the opportunity to participate. The students easily conversed about the learning points among group members. So I can say group work is very helpful to improve students' speaking skills. When I started my research work, then students were very weak in English.

The inspiration I received from my colleagues and the Head Teacher encouraged me. Even my mentees were very cooperative. Next time, I want to do my research work on 'Pair work' and 'Teaching in large classes'. If I can work with a group of ten teachers, then we can spread the word around in many areas.



### Conclusion

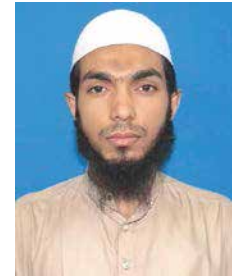
It is a good idea to have different group leaders because that way everyone gets a chance to participate fully. This way, their speaking skills will improve. When I began the study, I asked myself, 'Why can 10% of students not communicate and converse in English?' I answered the question to my satisfaction. Finally, I want to say that this research work has brought me a high place, not only in the primary teachers' family, but also in the secondary teachers' family. It will inspire me to do better in future. At present I can say, 'Now I am not only a teacher but also a classroom researcher.'



## 4.2

### Moarrif Billah Khan, Grade IV

#### Supporting slow learners during group work



#### Background of the study

The location I work at is an extremely rural place. Slow learners are the common picture of classes. It's not possible to help all of them individually. When I came up with a plan to do something in my classroom, they always disappointed me. I noticed that advanced learners do not help slow learners but their own close friends.

Previously I tried several ways to overcome the situation. It was when EIA guided me to do a mini study that I picked group work (GW) as my research topic to support slow learners. It was not a long journey, but I learned a lot from it and noted some important things. Let's see how I worked and what I found.

#### What I actually did

Initially I started by finding out the causes of the inactivity of slow learners and what they actually do during classes. Understanding their attitude and observing their activity was essential. I also observed how other students, including advanced learners, were behaving with slow learners. I also tried to look at their approach to a new topic during any learning process. Finally, I tried to explore an effective way of supporting slow learners during GW. I will discuss it in detail below.

#### Research questions

So, I set some research questions for my study:

1. What types of problems are slow learners facing in the classroom and how do they like to get help?
2. What are advanced learners thinking and doing with weak students?

3. How can I engage slow learners during GW?

#### How I went about the study

In Cycle 1, I tried to get in touch with slow learners during GW. I also instructed group leaders individually to help slow learners in their groups. At the very beginning of my study, I took help from my colleague. Unfortunately, just after I started, I lost him and then my Head Teacher helped me to complete the work.

I completed three cycles to do the study. Here, I am mentioning briefly what I did in each cycle, but later I will discuss details of the cycles with outcomes. I found they needed extra time and needed to change the group-making method. I did that in the second cycle. Later, I didn't find much improvement. In the third cycle, I came up with an experiment: only slow learners will be group leaders and they will be responsible for the failure or success of their group.

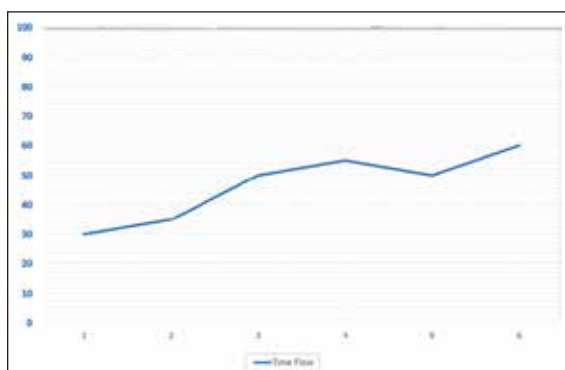
I realised that change is a slow process, especially when you are working with slow learners; it is not possible to see change overnight. I needed to collect data continuously. During the study I used a few tools to collect data. I noted even little changes in my notebook on a regular basis. I also collected feedback from my Head Teacher. Students' feedback also helped me to track the changes. Here are two of the questions from my observation checklist:

1. Are slow learners participating in group work more than before?
2. Are they trying to understand instructions?

Students' feedback is a good tool to find out what's going on in their minds. Here are some questions from the student feedback form:

1. Instruction was clear or not?
2. Your group member helped you or not?
3. Do you like to help group members?

### Improvement of Weak SS during Group Work



Graph of improvement flow

Take a look at the graph. I tried to show the starting and ending point of every cycle. On the vertical axis, I measured time flow and on the horizontal axis, improvement ratio. I started with only 30% of my students participating actively during class. It improved a little bit while I was at the end of the cycle. In Cycle 1, I tried to get in touch with every slow learner during group work. I made advanced learners group leaders and instructed them individually to help slow learners in their own groups. It worked a little bit, but not significantly.

### Results and findings

Though I knew I couldn't expect changes overnight, I hoped to see changes from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2. Time taught me to leave this tendency. So, to make the improvement better, I tried continuously and did not look for immediate results.

After Cycle 1, I found:

- Progress was positive, but inadequate.
- The advanced learners are not as supportive to slow learners as I thought.
- Sometimes all of the group members seemed weak.

Then I started Cycle 2 with some new ideas based on the collected data. It seemed that the time given to the activity was not sufficient. So I increased the time and also mixed advanced and slow learners. It sounded pretty good, but it created new problems too.

Let's see the main things I found during Cycle 2:

- It was not working for every group.
- It increased the progress rate better than in Cycle 1.
- Advanced students started to care for slow learners.

But the last one was not fully established. That's why after a few days improvement was decreasing. That's why I brought in something new in Cycle 3. The main thing was that only slow learners would be group leaders, not advanced learners. Another change was friendship-based group making. The most important change was the rule of success and failure. I announced that there would be no individual success. Failure or success will go to the group. I think it worked mostly.

I found a good improvement rate, but some problems too:

- The improvement rate was more than before.
- Slow learners were now doing more activities than in Cycle 2.
- It's hard to combine advanced and slow learners based on friendship, as they start gossiping when they are together.

So, I realised that without proper monitoring it's not possible to bring out the best, even with good techniques.



My class during group work in Cycle 3.

## Learning from my study

I have learnt a lot from this study. It helped me a lot to understand the situation and take a deep look at every situation.

- Slow learners actually think questions are not for them, advanced students should answer them. This mentality is not very helpful.
- Slow learners like to make friends among themselves.
- They talk about many things but not related to study.
- When strong students are answering/dominating, it's making the slow learners weaker and weaker.
- Group work without planning for slow learners can be less effective for them.

It's not easy to do any study in my location. I also faced some challenges during the study:

- Doing activities with slow learners takes extra time. It also takes time to focus on their previous inadequacies.
- I can plan and work for the classroom, but out-of-school factors are not possible to change where students spend a substantial part of their time.

## Unanswered questions

After completing this study, some questions are still unanswered. I think these issues are beyond my control. They are:

1. How can I control the negative attitude of advanced learners while they are working with slow learners?
2. We know the development is a continuous process but how can only a teacher or teachers carry this on without the help of parents?

We enjoyed working as a research team (three mentees and a mentor). Though it was difficult to meet often, we kept communicating with one another. I would like to do any further research with this team.

## Conclusion

Finally, I think it was a short journey but it is going to help me for a long time. Before I started the journey, it was not possible to go deeply into problems. It also helped me to measure the improvement accurately. It has made me think differently. I realise now how keeping a diary can help you improve your strategies and make your teaching student-centred.

## 4.3

### Nushrat Shayla, Grade V

#### Effective management of group work



#### Background of the study

*'Cooperative learning is the use of small groups through which students work together to accomplish shared goals and to maximize their own and others' potential.'*

(Johnson, Johnson and Holubec, 1994)

When considering the issue of an active classroom, group work is one of the major activities for ensuring the learners' active participation and that they understand the lesson. But because I get only 35 minutes for a class, I didn't get enough time for effective group work. I wanted to find out how I could manage time in group work and how I could make it effective.

#### Research questions

Successful group work is, therefore, not an easy classroom management option. Indeed, it demands a lot of skill on the part of the teacher. So, as a teacher, I also faced some problems such as the limitation of time. In this regard, I have some questions in my mind.

- What are the challenges for conducting group work within time?
- How can I manage time properly?

#### How I went about the study

The research study was an experimental experience. To find out the answers to these questions, I gave an observation checklist to my peer teacher, got feedback from my students about their perceptions and maintained a self-reflection diary.

My first step towards effective time management in group work was to track down the problems. So, I set up a questionnaire as my tool for the students and peer teacher.

These questions included:

- Was a time limit set up for discussions and for answering?
- Do you think the instructions were clear?
- Did the teacher give a reminder about the time limit?

After my class, I asked my peer to fill up the checklist and give me suggestions for the group work. I also wrote my own reflections in a diary and got the same points from my peer and my students.

The participants involved in this study were the fifth grade students of a primary school. In the first cycle, I gave the instructions in English. At first they couldn't understand what to do and how to do it. So, they couldn't manage to focus on the tasks and that caused chaos in the classroom. Therefore they were unable to finish their group task in time.

So, in the second cycle, I took a revised lesson plan using their L1 (Bangla) for giving instructions so that they could understand it better. I also made my instructions short and simple so that students could adopt the system faster. I gave chances for them to build up their autonomy as learners, since gradually they could start to work as a group and build up leadership in the group.

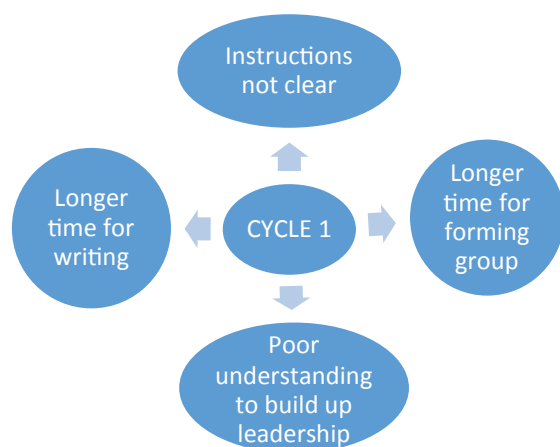
In my third cycle, I gave more opportunity to the ESL (English as a second language) learners to use their first and second language for discussion and writing and asking questions in a supportive environment.

#### Results and findings

The results of the three cycles are shown separately.

### First cycle

The first cycle was planned to highlight the challenges for conducting group work within time. I wanted to introduce a new way of giving instructions within a timeframe. But the students were unable to understand it because of my instructions in English. They took much more time to form groups and to select their own group leaders.

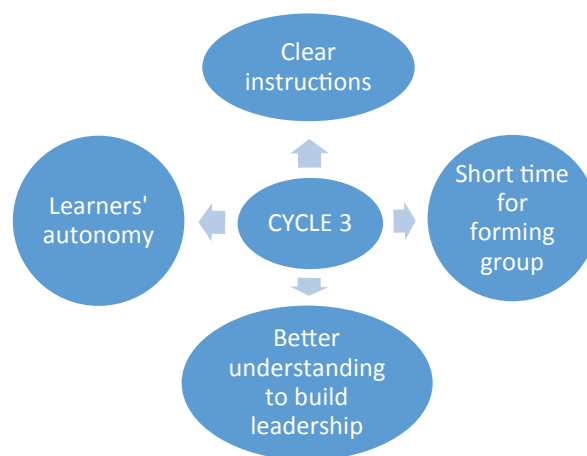


### Second cycle

The second cycle became better when I used L1 (Bangla) for giving instructions side-by-side with English. This time the learners got the point of what to do and how to do it. So they took less time to form groups than before. They also selected their group leader with awareness. Students talking time environment was created by giving the learners some autonomy.

### Third cycle

So, in my study, I tried to maintain the 'affective filter' for the learners' language acquisition. This helped them to be free from anxiety. In this case, they were able to start functioning as groups in a shorter time than before, work out who was the person who can write more quickly than the others and were comfortable working in groups. This revised lesson plan helped me to conquer most of the problematic obstructions of time management for group work.



## Learning from my study

In this study, it can be seen that time needs to be allowed for the activity plan for the group members to integrate together as this can help make good use of time. Thinking about the pupils, group learning can help them to develop their thinking and problem-solving skills by encouraging them to take turns in discussion while exploring a topic within a limited timeframe. Sometimes, pupils may be spending too much time on one aspect of the task and may need a time prompt to urge them to move on. When setting up group-work activities, it is important for teachers to use their professional judgment to decide whether it is best to assign roles or to let the pupils decide for themselves within their groups. Empowering learners to accomplish effective group work may be helpful.

## Unanswered questions

But besides this, some unanswered questions are also in my mind which I want to solve next time:

1. What is the role of weaker students in a group?
2. What will be the situation if I get 50 minutes for a class?

Being a teacher, research is a very new topic for all of us in the Bangladeshi context. When I started my journey of researching, I had just a vague idea about what to do. There were also some obstacles that I faced during this time. These were: lack of involvement of all

the students and finding time in the schedule to work with my peer teacher. But after doing this, I have gathered some knowledge about research and its procedure.

There have been a lot of ups and downs when researching and bringing my mentees together in this process. However, with the help of each member of this group, we were able to conquer all our problems. All of us have shared our ideas and could solve the problems that we faced during the study. So the research study is the product of our hard work and the dedication of everyone in this group. But if I get another chance for further study, I would like to do it individually: I want to test my own ability to face the challenges.



*Children working in groups*



*Teacher monitoring group work*

## Conclusion

At the end of the study, it is possible to say that once the pupils are comfortable with the principles and procedures of group work, they can engage with increasing confidence and success in collaborating on a task. This causes the group to work effectively thanks to proper management of time.

## 4.4

### Soumandra Nath Gowshami, Grade V

#### Boys and girls work together in pair work and group work



#### Background of the study

During the research study, when I taught my first lesson I think I achieved some of my aims. But I noticed that many of my students did not participate actively in the class. I think sometimes I failed to keep their attention. Besides this, most of the time I used English in the lessons. In pair work and group work, some students did not participate actively in the class. Sometimes I tried pairing up advanced learners with weak learners. Then I tried making pairs based on their roll number: 1 with 30, 2 with 29 etc. But when I wanted to make pairs and groups mixing boys with the girls, I noticed that the girls didn't want to sit with the boys. I took this as my challenge. Then I thought that if I were able to overcome this challenge and ensure learning outcomes I would be successful as a teacher. This is why I did this study.

#### How I did the study

Before starting my first cycle, I asked my colleagues to observe my class. But, as there was no leisure time, I found no one was available. However, I made a lesson plan and started my research work. Finding no alternative, I told my students to 'observe' the lessons and give me their feedback on individual pieces of paper after the class. Then I wrote in my notebook and continued to plan lessons according to my students' demands and tried to take the class according to that lesson plan.

After taking the class, I reflected on it myself. I asked myself if my teaching was fruitful for the students. Were they able to understand my class? If not, why not? What should I do then? I also asked myself how I can help the

weaker students to share in the group. How far did mixing boys and girls improve learning situations? I involved my students during my study. After the lesson I asked them how they had found it. Had they understood it or not? They informed me about the class on their individual papers. One of my students, S1, said that he couldn't understand my class, as I spoke English all the time. He requested me to speak Bangla sometimes instead of only speaking English all the time.

During my study, in the first cycle, most of the time I used English in the classroom. After the class, I asked them some questions like this: 'Days in a calendar, my students. How many days in the month of January? Then how many weekends are there: Saturday, Sunday and so on?' I used a real calendar for their better understanding. I also said 'Hello!' and 'Hi!' in the classroom. They also repeated it after me. They enjoyed that very much. But some students informed me, in their individual papers, that they couldn't understand the lesson thoroughly as I spoke English in the class most of the time.

After the class, I collected their individual papers about my class. Then, whenever I got time, I used to write my diary almost every day. I also reflected myself. I tried to find out my challenges and promised to overcome them in my next class. In my next class, I would change some techniques: for example, in group work I didn't keep the same students in the same group every time. I also took care over making the pairs properly. I tried mixing the advanced learners with the weak learners instead of keeping them separate. If there was not enough time for pair work, then I would give the task to the students in group

work. I took care to monitor the pair work and group work properly. I tried to give clear instructions before giving tasks to the students. I went around encouraging them during their pair work and group work. I used classroom language phrases and showed appreciation for their work. I also gave them rewards according to their performance. This is how I made changes from cycle to cycle.

When I started Cycle 2, I noticed that most of my previous problems have gradually been improving. The learners are now more interested in pair work and group work. The weaker students try to participate in the class actively. The weaker students, for example S1, who had mentioned the problem about my using English, said, ‘Sir, I could understand your class. I enjoyed your class.’ Another student, S2, said, ‘I also understand the lesson. Sir, if you speak Bangla sometimes I will understand better.’

In Cycle 1, 30% of students said they understood my lessons. But in Cycle 2, 50% said they understood my lessons. In Cycle 2, when I took the class on 15 February 2016, I think it was more successful than the previous one. This was because, since some weaker students (S1, S2, S3) had told me that they would not be able to understand everything, I gave them clear instructions both in Bangla and in English before giving tasks for pair work. In that particular lesson, the topic was ‘Which foods are healthy, which are not?’ Students asked and responded in pairs about their likes and dislikes for food and about healthy foods.

In my next class (Cycle 3), I noticed that most of the learners tried to speak English in the class. In the group work, all the learners participated actively. They learned the names of various items of foods according to the food pyramid. They also learned how much they should eat of each food item.

Cycle	Activities	Teacher’s techniques	Result
Cycle 1	I used only English in the classroom.	WCW; PW; GW	30%
Cycle 2	I used English and sometimes Bangla in the class room.	WCW; PW; GW	50%
Cycle 3	I used both English and Bangla and mixed boys and girls together during pair work and group work.	WCW; PW; GW	70%

## Findings

Before putting the students into groups, I planned one thing. I wanted to mix the boys with the girls in every group, but I noticed that the girls didn’t sit with the boys. Some of them even began to cry! Then I took this as my challenge. I told my mentor about this challenge and she advised me to discuss with my colleagues and Head Teacher and they were able to give me some suggestions. Then I thought it over a lot. How will I face the problem? How will I overcome my challenge? Then, one Saturday, when my class was over, I told my students that all good things in the world have been done by both men and by women. I also told them that if males and females work together to do good deeds, then they will be successful. After that, I told them to ask other men and women outside the school if they thought the same way. Then I also told them that if they (the girls) sit with the boys in pair work and group work and perform well, I will give them rewards and gifts. They also told me that their madam told that whatever I told them in my last class was



correct. Then they became very interested in my class. They said, 'Sir, if you want to take the class according to your plan we will do it, Sir.' So then I took the class according to my plan: mixing up boys and girls. And I gave rewards to those who performed well in pair work and group work. Then they became very happy. Some of my students (S4, S5, S6, S7) told me, 'Sir, all of us enjoyed this class very much. We are delighted to perform the activities altogether.' Again they said, 'Sir, if you take the class in this way, we will understand better.' Another student, S8, said, 'I like to perform in group work. I request you, Sir, to take the class in groups. Then the class will be better.'

S9, S10 and S11 said that they had enjoyed it when I said 'Hello' and 'Hi'. They also told me that they also enjoyed the 'Good bye' song. When my students participated in the class actively and understood and enjoyed the class very much, I also felt very proud. So, this is how I have overcome my challenges.



Across Bangladesh, nowadays girls are performing better than boys. So I have tried to improve the learning situation by mixing boys and girls together during pair work and group work. When the PEC exam result was published I found that three of our students got GPA 5. Out of them two are boys. But, on average, the girls got better GPA scores than the boys. I also found that boys did better than their previous results. This is how the learning situation is improving day by day.

Handwritten student work in Bengali, titled 'Cycle-1'. The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

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Handwritten student work in Bengali, titled 'শ্রেণীর গুরুত্ব' (Importance of Class). The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

Handwritten student work in Bengali, titled 'Students' observation Cycle-1'. The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

Handwritten student work in Bengali, titled 'শ্রেণীর গুরুত্ব' (Importance of Class). The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

Handwritten student work in English, titled 'Group-A'. The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

Handwritten student work in English, titled 'Group-B'. The text discusses the importance of group work and pair work in learning, mentioning that students enjoy these activities and that they help in understanding concepts better. It also mentions that students are motivated to perform well when they work in groups.

## My learning from the study

There are many things that I have learned. Before my research work, I was a simple teacher. I did not know how to think before or after the class in the way that I do now. I did not know what research was or how to do research work. Since the TVC programme, I have learnt about research and that it is a continuous process. Although I knew about 'plan – do – action', I did not know about self-reflection. I have to ask myself questions, and this is a new idea for me.

Now I am a researcher, I have also come to know that we have many things to learn. We can even learn from students' observation. This is very helpful for a teacher. Answering the research questions in the study helped me very much, since, from these research questions, I have come to know about my progress. Some students might say that they have understood the lesson although I know that they could not understand. Why they should say such words still remains to be still explored.

When I first heard that we had to do research work, I became frightened. 'How will I do it? 'Will I be able to do this research work?' Later, discussing it with my mentor, I started the research work. Now I want to carry on my research work because it is a continuous process. It is very helpful for my teaching.

There are four members in our team. We all worked on pair work and group work. Our mentor helped us very much. Whenever I faced any challenging situations, I informed her. She tried to solve my problem and encouraged me. But we had to face some challenges. We could not meet regularly as a group. Sometimes, one member's Head Teacher did not give them permission to meet with the other members during school time. If I want to do the study again, I would do it as part of a group again. If we do it as a group, we may discuss our problems with another. If we discuss them, many things will come out and then we will be able to find out some possible solutions.

## Conclusion

To conclude, we may say that research is a very helpful tool for a teacher and for his/her teaching. By researching, we may learn many things, such as self-reflection, students' observation and so on. If a teacher carries out self-reflection by writing a diary he or she can easily understand his or her teaching, whether his students understand the lesson or not. If not, why not? Then he or she can decide what to do about it, how to teach the class and so on.

## 4.5

### Shahinur Akter, Grade V

#### Managing classroom noise during group work



##### Background of the study

Group work is an effective and active learning method for teaching English in our primary level. When I do group work in my class, there is a lot of noise in class. Then I've thought of how to manage the classroom noise. Before EIA training, I never used English in the English class. I always used Bangla. EIA has taught me many techniques and classroom language. So, after EIA training, when I entered my class, I tried to speak English. At first, many students didn't understand my classroom language and my instructions. But when I continued to apply EIA techniques, some students began to understand my instructions. However, while doing group work I faced problems. Some students created a noise while doing group work. So, I decided to learn to manage classroom noise. And I decided to work on this issue.

##### Research questions

At first I had three questions. They are:

1. Why do students make noise in class?
2. Which techniques can reduce noise?
3. How can I manage the classroom when students make noise?

When I do group work, some students make noise and some students just look silent. So, I applied some EIA techniques to solve this problem. I used a new technique to manage the class. Sometimes, I talked with my peer teacher and Head Teacher about this problem. They gave me new ideas and techniques.

##### How I went about the study

I made small groups of four/five students. Now I always speak in English in my English

class. I always use classroom language and materials. When I do group work, some students are assigned roles, such as group leader. Whoever spoke and read in English very well, I made them group leaders first. They helped the weak students. They discussed with each other about their problems. Sometimes, they asked the teacher when they faced problems. I tried to solve their problems. I used easy classroom language and applied silent mouthing technique. I used to write a diary every day and collected evidence like audio and video. After finishing the class, I enjoyed my class video. I checked the video and tried to learn from it. Sometimes, my peer teacher and Head Teacher enjoyed my class. I also observed my peer teacher's class. Besides, I observed every group doing group work. Almost every time they gave me feedback. One day my AUEO visited my class. He enjoyed my class. After finishing my class, he gave me feedback. I recorded and followed it.

##### Comparison between the cycles

Cycle 1	Cycle 2
Students were producing huge noise. So, some of my students were not able to understand my instructions. That's why I decided to reduce this.	I've made group leaders who help me to reduce this problem.

##### Discussion of results

Applying different techniques such as creating group leaders helped me to solve some problems. About 60% of the noise was reduced. The group leader helped other

students who don't speak in English. Besides, the group leaders discussed their problems with each other. Sometimes, I encouraged the leaders to do their job well by offering some incentives, for example, the leader who kept peace in their group, they would be first. So, every group leader tried hard to reduce noise. But a few group leaders were not acceptable to other members. So, I changed the group leader.



### What I learnt from the study

I know that professional development means developing myself and my teaching and learning process. It helps to develop my personal qualities, professional qualifications and language skills. I talked with my students, not only in my class but also outside of the class. After finishing my class, I talked with my peer teacher and Head Teacher about my problems. I discussed with them how to reduce the noise. They gave me feedback. After my study, I learnt that while doing group work, selecting group leaders and assigning some responsibilities help towards a fruitful and effective group as well as reduce noise in group work. Since the study, I apply this technique every day. I know that it is a tough task for me. Still I am trying this. Sometimes I

talk with my mentor and other mentees about my research. I would like to share with my mentor and other mentees innovative ideas that I can develop with my own effort.



### Conclusion

Now I am not only a teacher but also a researcher. The ideas of researching on the internet are new to me. I am trying to learn new techniques and ideas on the internet. I want to know new ideas from specialist researchers through the internet. All the students love me very much. I also love them. All my colleagues help me in my research too.

## 4.6

### Sayedra Parvin Shakila, Grade IX

#### Using pair and group work for participatory learning



#### Background of the study

It was in November 2015, when I came for the first TVC workshop in Dhaka, that I got an idea about research. After the workshop, each mentor selected three teachers from their own area and we worked together as a team. As a teacher, I have practised so many techniques. I wanted to find out whether group work and pair work was effective or not.

In my class, only I talked and students listened, I didn't give them any chance to speak. In English class they looked at me foolishly. I asked questions which they couldn't answer. I thought at that time what I could do and I noticed that the first boy tried to talk from the back bench. I asked him what he said. He answered, 'Ma'am if you give us time to talk with each other it will be easy for us.' Then I gave them chance to discuss for about five minutes. Then I got the point that I should involve them. To apply these ideas, I tried hard, but I didn't succeed. Therefore, the first day, I took the class in a traditional way without planning.

#### Research questions

1. Does using group and pair work really help the students to learn English in my classroom?
2. How does it engage students in classroom activities?
3. Why is it effective in the classroom?

#### How I went about my study

I divided my plan into three stages: Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3. The sources of evidence I used were: my reflections, students' opinions,

peer teacher's feedback, Head Teacher's feedback and sharing with guardians.

#### Cycle 1

I talked; the students only listened, looked at me and waited for the bell to ring. When I asked, 'Did you understand?' they were silent. I thought, 'What is the matter?' I thought about it and prepared a small plan for the next day's class. I thought of a ball game first which I knew would go very well. I tried to ensure that all students got the ball and spoke using English. On that day I succeeded.

#### Cycle 2

While in class I monitored their work during pair work and group work. I helped the students when they wanted. I also tried to ensure all students' involvement. Sometimes I spoke in Bangla specially to give instructions. When I praised them they were very happy. For better understanding I used a poster. While I used the poster, about 70% of students were in learning mood and were able to speak and understand English. I got the idea from this cycle that giving clues and real-life examples are working very well here.

I noticed about 70% of students did their classwork and also responded in English. After that, I asked them to give feedback. 'If I speak in Bangla sometimes, that will be better,' said a slow learner and also two other shy girls. I changed my plan and I also invited my peer teacher and Head Teacher to observe my class.

### Cycle 3

After completing Cycles 1 and 2, I noticed something new: a weak student tried to help others to use English. I was astonished while playing the ball game: Hira said, 'I am handsome.' 'Hira would like to go to Holland.' At this point, I arranged a students' interview. To reach my goal I changed my plan according to my reflections, students' opinions, peer teacher's feedback and Head Teacher's feedback.

In my next class, two or three students were able to speak, listen, understand, read and write in English. By now, I could give my students an English environment where they could practise. Because the classroom is the only place where they listen, speak, read and write English. We practised English only in the classroom. I feel quite proud that all of the above makes me a classroom changer.

### Conclusion

To do this research, I have faced many difficulties, such as my peer teacher and Head Teacher did not agree to be part of the study initially. Then I depended on students' feedback and my own reflections. When I was confused, I called my EIA madam and she helped. That's how I completed the study.



*With peer teacher*



*Discussion in groups*



*I listen to students with interest*

## 4.7

### Noorjahan Khatun, Grade III

#### Group work as a tool to develop students' leadership qualities



##### Background of the study

In my Grade 3 class, I noticed that many of my students were not participating actively. They felt shy, but were also laughing when someone answered in English in class. Even in groups, they were not actively participating. Only the brighter ones participated; this was painful to me. In this situation, some questions arose in my mind. What is the reason that some students stay behind as slow learners? How can group work be a way, or tool, to develop students' leadership qualities?

##### How I went about the study

I wanted all students to speak English confidently and express their own ideas and hold a leadership position. I wanted to change my classroom. I took it up as a challenge. For this reason, I made a plan and divided my teaching into three cycles. In Cycle 1, I applied different techniques. At first I selected the partners and made pairs and wrote down the roll numbers on the blackboard. The first time round, it took more time. I also chose one slow learner group and participated as a student. I found that they were excited and participated actively. But there were some challenges: the slow learners shared their ideas only with me and not with others. They did not like to come in front of the class or share with the brighter students – they thought that only the brighter students knew the right answer.

I wrote down these challenges in my diary. I thought again about what techniques I could apply, why the slow learners were still inactive. Why do only the bright students always come in front of the class? I also

discussed it with my peer teacher. I discussed it with some students in a friendly environment. I found that brighter students always tried to dominate the weaker students and therefore probably the weaker students did not express their ideas.

In Cycle 2, I applied a new idea: I asked my students if we can change the group leader and suggested that we should do it by rotation and every group will present their work in front of the class. I also asked them to suggest the name in a competition sort of way and that I will announce who will be first. It was surprising for me that every student took part actively to become the winner. The brighter ones helped the slow learners wholeheartedly to become the winner.

In Cycle 3, I wanted to develop their confidence further and so I asked them to act as a teacher. They performed like a teacher in the class. They were very interested to behave like a teacher. It was amazing for me that all of my students wanted to act as a teacher. They took the class, applying all the techniques such as organising a song, using the board, making group work, giving instructions and praising the students like me, using English confidently. They said that it was a very exciting experience for them. They paid more attention to my class. Sometimes, I asked my colleagues to observe my class with a set of questions. One of my colleagues observed my class and gave me some feedback and also gave suggestions to those students who were still not participating. I met those students alone and listened to their demands. Some of my students liked games, some liked competitions, some liked the body movements with rhythmic sounds etc. After

listening to their views, I changed my lesson plan every day.

### What I learnt from the study

After completing the research, I found that if we give our students more attention, they try to express their demands. We can change our classroom accordingly. I also learnt from the study that every student has the same quality. Our duty as teachers should be to explore this quality by using different techniques.

The research study also gave me a chance to develop the relationship between my colleagues and my students. Teaching-learning is so vast. It gives me the scope to think about it in a scientific way. When my mentees face different types of challenges we discuss them and find new ways to solve them. It's opened my eyes to think of different ways to look at a problem. Sometimes my mentees and I wanted to observe each other's classes, but time did not permit this. We met after our class time. This also has a good side, in that now our relationship is developed. It also gave me scope to learn new things. So I want to continue working in a group.



### Conclusion

I think this is not the end of the journey, but the beginning. This journey has reduced monotony in my classroom and we start our teaching journey with new inspiration.





## 4.8

### Muhammad Ali Asad, Grade IV

#### Making group work and pair work effective



#### Background of the study

I felt inclined to use group work (GW) in most of the classes because I think group work is an important learning strategy. But I was frustrated. I was not able to make group work effective and interactive. In group work, some students are not active, some students dominate others, some students feel shy, some may do the job alone, and then there is little interaction. At that time, EIA created the opportunity to participate in teacher research. In the first workshop held for mentors, we were asked to draw a picture of the classroom as we saw it, and I tried to highlight this issue of my class. The picture drawn in the workshop encouraged me to choose this topic as my study subject.

Basically, three of us working as a team conducted the study, with myself as the mentor. At first, we decided to set a goal for the study, which was as follows: to make us more confident users of various techniques to conduct English classes aimed at making the class interactive.

#### Aims of the study

Then we set some objectives for the study. Through the study we wanted to:

1. identify areas that we needed to develop in group work and pair work;
2. make pair work and group work more effective;
3. involve all students in group work;
4. make a holistic class profile.

#### Research questions

We had two research questions:

1. How can we increase students' interaction in group work and pair work?

2. How can we involve all students in group work?

#### How we did the study

We observed other teachers' classes to collect data for the study. We used an observation checklist for monitoring purposes, and we collected written feedback from teachers after the completion of the class. A copy of these is provided at the end. After the class, we also received written feedback about the classes from the students. In addition, during the study, I wrote detailed notes on each issue with my opinions in my diary.

We observed the classes of eight teachers in five government primary schools; one of them was a non-EIA teacher. All the members of our study group observed teachers in their respective schools separately, and together we also observed the classes of two other teachers. To get feedback on using these techniques in different classes, i.e. first, second, third and fourth grade children, we prepared a student feedback form.

**Step 1:** At first, I selected an EIA-trained teacher and a non-EIA teacher. I talked to them about my study. Then several times I observed their classes. I used a checklist for every observation.

**Step 2:** I interviewed the teachers after their classes. I provided a set of questions for the interview. Then we talked about the class and about preparation for the next class. We discussed: Are the techniques working or not? How did they work? What can we do in the next class?

**Step 3:** I interviewed some students after observing the class. I provided a set of

questions to each student. I tried to analyse the classes from the students' angle.

**Step 4:** I tried out the techniques in my own classes and I invited one of my colleagues to observe my class with an observation checklist.

**Step 5:** I took notes on everything in my reflective diary, which is an important source of data. I analysed the data collected from all sources and made a cross-check among the data.

I observed four lessons taught by a teacher. She did better in the fourth class than in the first one. In the first class, she used pair work and group work. However, it was not effective because she could not manage the students well: some of them were making a noise, some were not working. She made groups as the students were sitting on the bench. In the second class, she changed her techniques. She at first arranged the seats. She took some bright and some weaker students to make groups, so that bright students can help weaker students. Before starting pair work, she demonstrated the role play in front of the class. She gave clear instructions before starting work in pairs and groups. Thus students were more active in the second and third classes. When they were working, she monitored their work and helped when needed. She selected a leader for every group. She made the leader understand what his role was – to inspire the students to speak in English. Students were discussing in groups. They were making mistakes, but she was helping them to correct the mistakes.

In the second cycle, we practised chain drill in groups. In the first class, my peer teacher used chain drill as whole-class activity. She made a long chain and she started to ask and answer the questions from one side of the chain. At that time, the students made noise and disturbed others. In the next class, my peer teacher formed small groups and gave them instructions on how to do the task. This time, she monitored their work and helped

them as required. She noticed that students were acting like they would in a game and they were doing better. In her third class, she demonstrated the activity before starting the chain drill. Then she did a short pair-work activity before she started the chain drill in small groups. She made a leader for every group to lead the activity. In this way, she saved her time and energy so that students got more chance to listen and speak. In this cycle, we noticed that the participation of students in group work was increasing.

In the third cycle, we tried out 'ask and answer', guessing games, miming, action and gesture, using clue words to make the group work interactive. In this cycle, we tried to use clear and simple instructions. We checked instructions before starting work. At times, we used action and gesture to make them clear. Now the students could interact with each other easily. We are very happy with our classes. Some findings from the cycles are given below.

## Results and findings

- Groups of four/five instead of eight to ten students work better. This increases students' working time and interaction.
- Giving clear and simple instructions and checking before starting group work helps the students to understand their work better and it increases interaction in groups. Using action and gestures to give instructions also helps.
- By selecting leaders in groups, noise can be reduced, time can be maintained better and students' involvement can be increased.
- Chain drill and ask-and-answer type activity in groups can increase students' participation and interaction.
- When the students talk or write something in groups and we provide clue words, phrases or pictures related to the topic on the board, it helps the students to produce something orally or in writing. It increases interaction among them.

- Miming and guessing-game activities can involve all the students in group work. It is better to show a role play before starting group work.

## Conclusion

While doing this study, I found out how experience from the class can help to make the next day's class more effective. We can easily invite one of our colleagues to observe our lessons and at the end of the class, we can discuss it, and this makes our next classes more effective. Besides, if we practise taking

notes on our daily work, then this reflection can greatly help in changing our attitudes.

This study was the first in my teaching career. It was a different experience for me. This study has changed my mind about the classroom. It has taught me to think about the classroom and the lessons. I am happy when I see that the students enjoy the class and are active in the class. Now they get opportunities to work more in the classroom, and interact among themselves. I believe that this kind of action research or study can help a person to develop his/her professional skills.

### Observation Checklist

Name of Observer:		Name of School:		
Name of Teacher:		Date:		
Subject:		Class:		
Lesson starting time:		Lesson ending time:		
		Yes	No	Scale
Teacher's behavior and activities:	1. Proper Classroom management			
	2. Apply knowledge and understanding of the text content.			
	3. Provide clear instructions			
	4. Involving students with practical experience			
	5. The use of teaching aids.			
	6. Co-ordination of activities with L.O. and time.			
	7. Use of chalk board			
	8. Selecting Activities			
	9. Involving Students			
	10. Encouraging students to speak			
	11. Monitoring of while students work			
	12. Ask and answer (I-e, S-SS)			
	13. Friendly behavior with students			
	14. Creating safe environment			
	15.			
	16.			
	17.			
	18.			
	19.			
	20.			
Learner's behavior and activities:	21. Active Participation			
	22. Interaction			
	23. Student's working time			
	24. Student's can follow instructions			
	25. Acquire Learning outcome			
	26. Student's listening and speaking			
	27. Student's reading and writing			
	28.			
	29.			
30.				
Strengths				
Area to improve				
Comments				

### Teacher's Feedback

Name of Teacher:		Name of School:			
Subject:		Date:			
Lesson time:		Topic:			
Sl. No.	Questions	Yes	No	Why	How much Students involved or understood (%)
01	Have you used IPA?				
02	Have you used L/W?				
03	Have you used K/Ws/diBT?				
04	Have you used SA?				
05	Were your instructions clear?				
06	Have you checked your instructions?				
07	Were your instructions simple?				
08	Have you mixed verbal and non-verbal modes in L/W?				
09	Have you helped and motivated students when they were working?				

Mobile Phone Number:

Teacher's Signature



The teacher is monitoring group work



Children are discussing in groups

## 4.9

### Rowson Akter Bina, Grade IV

#### Fear of English reduces with pair and group work



##### Background of the study

I noticed that 90% of the students in my English class were inactive. So I wanted to make them active through group work and pair work. I also did the group/pair work to

- make the English class fun;
- achieve learning outcomes;
- assess all students at the same time;
- eliminate fear of English in my students.

##### How I went about the study

I had to follow several techniques to carry out my research work. At first, I prepared lesson plans for each class and wrote a reflective diary at the end of each class. I noted the successes and failures of the lessons as well. In the next class, I also wrote some techniques for doing an effective class in the lesson plan, based on how to overcome those failures/problems. In this way, a cycle was developed through four/five classes.

This school is in a hill tracts area, and different ethnic communities with different languages live here. They mostly love to sit with the students from the same community. That is why, in this cycle, I formed pairs/groups by mixing Bengalis and other tribes.

After Cycle 1, I studied my reflections again. To conduct the study, I received written feedback from the students at the end of each class. Some days, information was also collected through interviews. The questions I asked them were closely related to my research study. I also learned from my peer teacher about the number of students who were active in my class through a checklist during the observation of my class.

##### Description of research methodology

For conducting the research work, I took written and oral feedback from the students. Some questions were asked at the end of the class. For example:

1. How did you like today's class?
2. Was your partner active in pair work?
3. How much did you participate in pair work?
4. Is there anything difficult for you in class?
5. Do you always want to do such work in class?
6. Pair work or group work, which one do you like most?

After each class, I wrote my reflection note. My peer teacher, who observed my class, also gave me feedback through a checklist and verbally as well.

After four/five classes, I finished Cycle 1.

At the end of each cycle, I thought about the challenges of my class and discussed them with my peer teacher. For example: in Cycle 1, I observed that they were very silent while forming groups with boys or girls. So I formed the groups by mixing boys and girls, Bengali and tribal groups and this proved to be effective and fruitful.

##### Discussion of results

The results of the study are as follows:

- Tribal students are now learning more English through the iPod and they are now more spontaneous in the English class than before.
- Fear of English is slowly getting removed.
- Having mixed groups is better than the previous traditional way of doing groups

and teamwork is more effective if the team is formed by mixing boys and girls, active and inactive, tribal and Bengalis.

- The students mostly like group work rather than pair work.

I developed a table based on the information on student participation obtained from my observation and that of the peer teacher and student feedback as shown below:

Cycle	Students	Peer teacher	Teacher
Cycle 1	85%	45%	20%
Cycle 2	90%	60%	57%
Cycle 3	95%	85%	85%

### Cycle 1

I practised a bit of the traditional method in Cycle 1. No new methods were implemented in creating groups. Students were afraid of English and they were mostly silent (20%). And because this is a hill tracts area, students of different ethnic minorities wanted to sit with friends of their own tribe. Then I looked for answers to some questions. For example:

1. Why are they not working in groups?
2. Why are some students unwilling to come to the front to present their work?
3. Why are they not willing to speak in English?

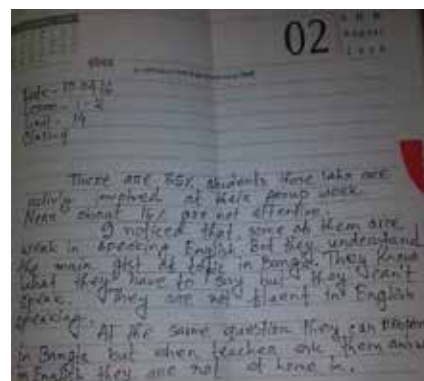
### Cycle 2

Here I came up with a variation in forming groups such as boys-girls and tribe-Bengalis mixed groups. I received their responses very quickly. They quickly showed a competitive attitude in group work. The English phobia began to disappear.

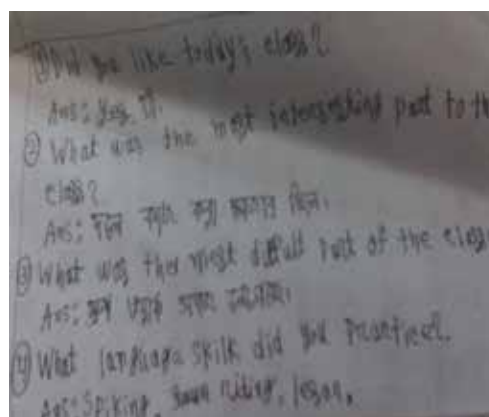
### Cycle 3

In Cycle 3, I observed that students were much more spontaneous in class than before.

They could present in the class without being shy. Even tribal students became much more active. Now they were also very interested to give feedback.



Student feedback

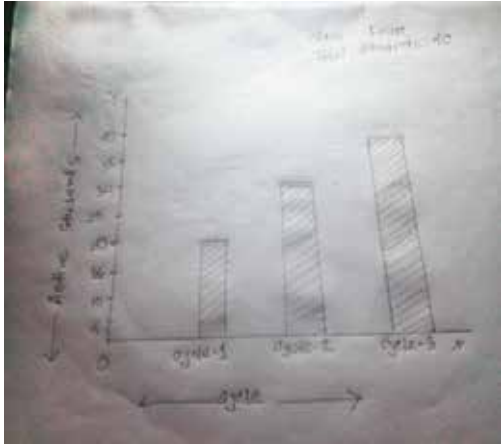


## My achievement/ learning from research

My main achievement from the research is that I have helped the underprivileged community to overcome the fear of English. Students are now more active and interested in English classes.

I've also noticed that mixed groups (boys and girls; tribal-Bengali) is much more effective than traditional group formation.

I had not thought of my weaknesses as well as strengths after conducting classes before. And I had not thought of using these techniques in order to increase the English proficiency of the weak students.



*Graph showing the number of active students across cycles*



*I am getting a student's feedback*

## Conclusion

By following this study, I have collected every student's feedback. I have explored the cause of their weaknesses and have prepared the lessons accordingly. I am not just a teacher here, I am now a researcher.

My students, colleagues, Head Teacher and EIA team helped me a lot to finish this task. Through peer observation, I received the most valuable information about my class, and this improved my research. Students' feedback helped me to get answers to many research questions.

I want to do more research like this because there are still four/five weak students in my classes. I could not address those using different techniques.

In future also, I want to do research in a collaborative way. This way I can easily talk to others about my work and learn a lot.

## 4.10

### Mohammad Akkas Ali Mia, Grade III

#### Enhancing active participation through pair work



#### Background of the study

When I was first appointed in a government primary school in a rural village in Rajbari, I was astonished when I entered my Grade 1 classroom for the first time. I had no previous experience about how to maintain the class. All the students were very excited to receive me. I was puzzled about classroom management. I noticed that all students were talking to each other and making a lot of noise. They didn't listen to me. The next day, I discovered that in Grade 3, the students were so silent that they didn't dare to say anything. I tried to inspire them to talk with me by asking some simple questions. But it didn't work well. Then I thought that the equation teaching = learning wasn't working in my class. But I was an English teacher and English is a foreign language in my country. In this situation, I talked with my Head Teacher and colleague about how to overcome this situation and achieve my best. We discussed it a lot, but there seemed to be no easy solution. That's when I started thinking about this research study.

#### Aims of the study

1. To achieve mastery learning (full participation and learning) for the students through pair work
2. Research questions for the study
3. How can I increase students' active participation in class?
4. How can I control the students in a large class?
5. How can I help them to overcome their shyness?

#### Sources of evidence

I collected evidence from different sources. Firstly, a well-prepared lesson plan and a reflective journal. Secondly, peer/HT observation of my classroom and their feedback. Thirdly, students' feedback on a checklist. They provided various kinds of information about their experiences.



*My class before the study*

#### Step 1

I chose some teaching techniques such as individual work, pair work, small-group work and chain drill as part of my normal classroom pedagogy, among other kinds of teaching techniques. I carefully selected pair work so that the students could get more chance to practise English in their class and outside of the class. To teach and achieve full participation, I made a lesson plan.

#### Step 2

According to my lesson plan, I was going to talk about where they come from. It was a dialogue in Unit 3, Lesson 3B. What questions could I ask? Firstly I asked one student,

'Where do you come from?' The student answered, 'I come from Goripur.' I said, 'Good.' I asked the same question to another student. He said 'I come from Boropul.' Then I wrote the basic question and answer on the board. 'Where do you come from?' And 'I come from ...'

### Step 3

I was going to get them to work in pairs. I told the students to turn around and sit face-to-face to do this activity. After making pairs I told the students to ask and answer the

questions that were written on the board. First, one student asked the question to his/her partner and another answered the question. Then they reversed their roles.

### Step 4

Students worked in pairs. I moved quickly round the class, checking that everyone was talking. But I didn't try to correct mistakes at that time. When most pairs had finished, I asked a few students what their partners had said. They answered satisfactorily. Within a short time, the students had finished their work properly. Then I asked every student the same question, but all the students answered one by one rapidly and spontaneously. I was surprised to see this result. Later, I thought the equation teaching = learning was working somewhat. The students gathered data from each other.

### Step 5

Being inspired by this work, I took a demo class in front of my seniors, such as my Head Teacher, the ATEO, TEO, ADPEO and the DPEO in my own school at the sub-cluster training programme. We didn't use any Bangla words in the whole class. But all the students of Grade 3 took part spontaneously and spoke English fluently. This way I achieved my learning outcomes fruitfully by using pair work properly.



This is how my class looked during pair work:



## Comparison between the cycles

In my first study cycle, I faced some problems such as large class management and active participation. Then in my second study cycle, I made well-prepared lesson plans, selected pair work and made the class enjoyable. But in this cycle I faced some other problems, such as students' shyness, time management, domination by stronger students and irregular attenders. In my third study cycle, I used pair work to control the large class, gave more time for practising to overcome the shyness and made pairs between stronger and weaker students to lessen stronger students from dominating. I could see that I achieved my

learning outcomes and my students participated actively through pair work.



## My own reflections and evaluation

I found some benefits and some challenges in this study. These are given below.

### Benefits

1. This activity gave far more chance to each student to speak in English. If this had been done as a whole-class activity, students would have said only one sentence each at the most and in a large class not even that.
2. Working in pairs encouraged students to be more involved and to concentrate on the task. Here the 'bright' students didn't dominate.
3. Students felt less shy as they did not have to perform before the whole class.

### Challenges

1. There was noise, but it showed that the students were engaged in a task.
2. I couldn't monitor each and every pair. Fortunately it was a structured task, so when I moved around I could get a general idea of what was going on.



## Conclusion

I learnt the value of giving clear instructions about when to start, what to do, and when to stop. Students in turn learnt to get into a routine of listening to instructions, and doing pair work in class. Using pair work to teach speaking successfully in class can be extended to real life outside class. If we use this technique in our own practical life, school, field and home, our students will benefit and our country's economy will improve.



# SECTION 5:

## Continuing professional development

Two strands seem to run through the six studies in this section: one, a diary study that is used as an effective tool for self-improvement; two, peer and Head Teacher support as a means to develop professionally. In some studies, both are present.

Although the themes in the studies overlap with other sections, for example group and pair work as effective techniques, listening to learners' voices and developing language skills, what distinguishes these studies from others is the focus on teacher-researchers' express concern with self and continuing professional development. Furthermore, these teachers see professional development as a prerequisite to learner improvement.

A diary or journal is seen as a *'good document for recalling previous classes and improving next classes'*. Writing a diary or journal involves self-reflection and is an *'effective and continuous process to see the progress of language learning of our students as well as of ourselves'*. *'If we keep a day-to-day diary and try to find out the problem ourselves, we can succeed.'* Teachers have used this as a tool to focus on their development while not losing focus on student concerns such as skills development, better participation, needs of special children and so forth.

The second sub-theme is about how peer teacher and Head Teacher support is one of the most essential tools for professional development. Without discussion or sharing in the group, teaching can never be as good as when you share; it is only peers who can give evidence-based advice. One teacher strongly believes that *'a teacher can develop herself but the development gets enhanced with the help of a peer teacher. The peer teacher knows the strengths and areas for development through observation and shows the way to overcome by discussion'*. This is also true of learning to speak better: *'We should practise with our peers to get speaking improvement. By practising, sharing and following the feedback with peers, the teacher and students can improve their speaking skills.'* This clearly means that the peer teacher and Head Teacher have to cooperate with the researcher and find time for the 'extra' work. Being willing to reschedule classes, and to observe and discuss the teacher's classes are key to help the teacher develop. In the process, the peer teacher and the Head Teacher also develop, even though they didn't plan to!

Students have also played a crucial role in helping the teacher develop. In one study, although they were shy to give feedback, when the teacher explained the importance of the process because this is the most crucial part of his development, they understood and gave feedback freely and frankly. Students seem to keep the teacher grounded and help teachers to see things in perspective.

## 5.1

### Mahmudul Hoque, Grade V

#### A daily log of experiences



#### Background of the study

For a long time, I wanted to find a way that will help me to reflect on my work. EIA gave me a chance to be a researcher. It gave me a choice of some study topics among which I think 'Diary study' was one of the best. Though every day I take English classes, I don't know which technique is working well or not so well. I didn't have any evidence, let alone any 'reflective notes' on my classes. I also realised that I could share my study with other colleagues. It can help me to think deeply about and modify my next class. So, the idea of self-reflection motivated me to take up this topic.

#### Aims of the study

The specific aims of my study are given below:

- Making teaching fun
- Building communication with one another
- Engaging all the students in class

I planned to achieve these aims through self-reflection.

#### Research questions

In this research study, I selected some questions to reflect on. These questions were very much related to involving all the students in class. Some of us worked together on this study: there were three mentees who were in my group, my school's Head Teacher, my peer teacher and my beloved students. The questions I used for my study were:

1. Is the lesson that I have planned interesting?
2. Does it provide opportunities for students to be actively involved?
3. Which skills will I focus on in the class?
4. Were the students involved?

5. Was the lesson smoothly/badly organised?
6. Who was not involved? Why?
7. Did I accept their ideas?

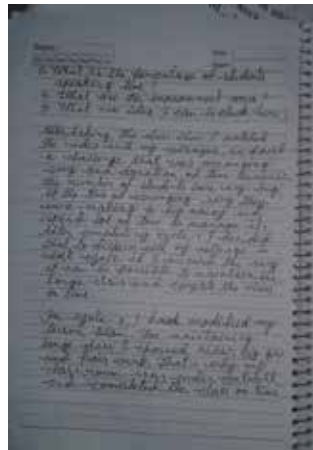
In Cycle 1, I designed a plan on Class 5, Unit 4, Lessons 1–3, Lesson name 'Leisure time'. Then I conducted the class by giving instructions fully in English. I tried to make students understand the topic by explaining. Then I got them to pronounce the words with me. I arranged group work. Finally, I checked the students' learning by myself.

#### Main findings

##### *Progress of students' involvement from the reflective journal*

For this research, I collected different types of data from different sources. Apart from writing reflective journals, the sources included audio recording, video recording, still photographs, Head Teacher observation checklist, lesson plan, home visit and peer discussion.





After every class, I wrote a journal based on that class. In my journal, I answered questions such as, 'What were the challenges?' 'What were the successes?' 'And what were the improvement areas?' The journal was a good document for my research. It clearly showed the 'message' for the next classes. I completed this research in three cycles.

The first cycle was completed in three classes. In the first class, the techniques used were showing a picture and group work. In the second class, the technique used was chain drill, and in the third class, the technique used was small-group work. The learning from Cycle 1 is, every group needs proper monitoring, which was not possible in a large class, for a single teacher. So, I needed to involve advanced students for monitoring.

The second cycle was completed in three classes. In the first class, the techniques used were asking questions, whole-class work and group work. In the second class, the techniques used were a reading game and pair work, and in the third class, small-group work. The main learning from Cycle 2 was that students learn in various ways. To involve all the students in the class, I need to apply fun - type activities.

Similarly, I completed Cycle 3 in three classes. The learning from Cycle 3 was that by using different types of techniques such as WCW (whole-class work), SGW (small-group work),

PW (pair work), IW (individual work), showing posters, chain drill, silent mouthing, role play, audio play etc. it is possible to engage all the students in class.

### Comparison between the cycles

When I was completing Cycle 1, I observed that in my class some students couldn't talk in English when they worked in groups. When the teacher is present they try to use English, but when the teacher is a little bit far from the group, they start speaking in Bangla. I took note of that challenge in my reflective journal. I discussed with my peer teacher and took feedback. I talked with the students about their likes and dislikes. Then I modified my lesson plan to solve this problem in Cycle 2. So, to solve this problem in Cycle 2, I changed the role of the group leader. One by one, every student became a group leader. This way students got a chance to speak and were active in groups. But in Cycle 2 I found another challenge (from the classroom video) that is, in group work, weaker students disturb the advanced students and advanced students are interested to work only with other advanced students. So, in Cycle 3, I engaged some advanced students as leaders to check them. After completing three cycles, I realised that the students' involvement was increasing.

### My learning from the study

My classes were large. This created a lot of noise in the room. Every classroom usually has space for the teacher to move around. But my classroom was very crowded and there was no easy way to solve this problem. This proved to be quite an obstacle to continue my study. Taking feedback from my Head Teacher and peer teacher was not sufficient for me to design different types of class activities. In my study, I realised that it was very important for me to reflect on my work, then to modify the lesson plan and to conduct a good lesson. To involve all the students, relevant activities were taught in relevant ways, so it was possible to involve all students in class. I wrote some journals after taking some classes.

Journal writing showed me how my previous class was. Also there were adequate pointers about how my next class could be. That is why the journal is a good document for recalling previous classes and improving the next classes. This document has changed my teaching style. Now I can teach in a way that the students can enjoy and understand. Now I am a classroom researcher and now I can change my class.



## Conclusion

At the beginning of my study I was really nervous. What was I going to do and how would I complete my study? But I was not alone. I had a team. We were four. First of all, I had conducted a meeting with them and made a plan for proceeding. We had selected some research questions for doing this study. After an average of two months we met again and shared our experience about successes and challenges. That sharing was really good and helpful for doing the next cycle. So, I want to continue my study with new team members. I want to work in a group because in my study I realised that two heads can be better than one. Without discussion or sharing in the group, teaching can never be as good as when you share. This study has helped me to develop my professional skills. So I specially thank my team members who helped me at different times by giving their valuable ideas and evidence-based advice. Therefore this researching process will continue.

## 5.2

### Rakiba Akter, Grade II

#### Teachers' professional development: the role of peer and Head Teacher support



#### Background of the study

I was not happy with the way I developed professionally because I noticed that it was difficult to continue my professional development without support from others. I had a lot of materials with me but due to different reasons I couldn't practise them well. I realised that professional development demands continuity of practice, and this requires others' support from school. In school, peer teacher and Head Teacher support is one of the most essential tools for teacher professional development. Recognising this, I chose my research topic to ensure the ongoing process of my professional development.

#### What I did in my study

The objectives of my present study are:

1. To identify the barriers to my professional development
2. To ensure peer and Head Teacher support in school

Throughout my study, I involved my peer teacher and my Head Teacher and also my students, their parents and my other colleagues as well.

I worked on the study in three cycles (Cycle 1, Cycle 2 and Cycle 3) and each cycle had four classes. To do the study, I followed the 'learning by doing' process (see-plan-practice-do-reflect-share). In Cycle 1, I started to work with my peer and Head Teacher by asking them to observe my classes and to give their feedback based on the observations. And then I started writing my reflective diary.

#### How I did the study

For my study, I chose three methods: lesson observation, discussion, questionnaire and writing a reflective diary. As a research tool, I used one questionnaire for my colleagues and another for my students to get feedback on the activity. This questionnaire consisted of open-ended questions for their comments. And then I practised writing my reflective diary regularly after each activity which I discussed with my peer and my Head Teacher. The following table shows the tools I used for my study:

Self-reflection	Peer/HT observation	Feedback from students/parents
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Reflective diary</li><li>• Classroom video</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Interview questions</li><li>• Observation checklist</li><li>• Peer discussion</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Feedback checklist</li><li>• Parents' interview</li></ul>

From my self-reflection and peer observation, I gathered information to address the areas where I need to improve, which were the raw materials of my work. At the beginning, it was difficult to get proper support from my Head Teacher and I was also a little bit nervous about how to teach the lesson properly. I made a lot of changes in the other cycles, taking into consideration my peer's and my HT's observations and suggestions. I made

some changes in Cycle 2, for example inviting my peer to observe my class after school hours and showing my HT my pre-video recorded class for her further suggestions. And I took some initiatives, for example talked to parents and students and also organised a field trip.

## Results

Here, I must share the experiences of each cycle separately. After Cycle 1, I made up my mind to convince my Head Teacher somehow. So I showed her one of my pre-recorded classes and she welcomed this, thinking that it wouldn't harm the students.

I wanted to develop professionally. But on my way I found that a large number of students were lagging behind day by day. I felt this as a threat to reaching my destination. So I considered my school as my field of work and my class as my laboratory. In Cycle 2, my great challenge was that I couldn't reach every learner. Most of them were attending classes irregularly. I think somewhere they didn't find my lessons interesting. On this point, my peer suggested that I consult with the demotivated students, and with their parents, to explore the reasons behind the irregularity and also told me to think more about my presentation strategy.

Considering my peer's suggestion, I set up a get-together with some of the parents and asked them about their child's reactions towards my class. In the parents' interview, I came to know the basic reason behind their irregularity. And yes! It was acute economic problems. In spite of getting the stipend given by the government, they were not coming to school because they were involved in part-time earning. Most of them had lost their father and they had the responsibility to earn.

There were a few students who were grown up enough and they felt shy to sit with the young learners. So I made a trip to their homes with some of my demotivated students on one weekend. And it really worked. After

the consultation, some of them have been convinced and have agreed to come.

I started to provide more fun and enjoyment in the classes. Most of them had the courage to lead. So I arranged some game-like activities and lesson-related small group work and gave them the opportunity to lead the teams. I was surprisingly pleased watching the change in their attitudes. Earlier these 'grown up' children didn't want to learn, they just wanted to show their physical power. But now they were learning unconsciously, which was my motto and my hope.



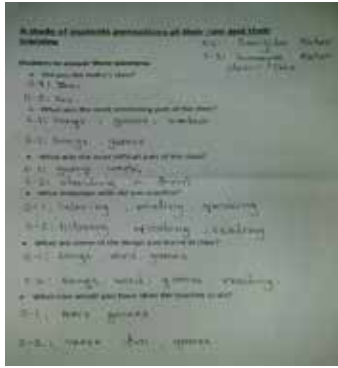
*A lesson-related fun-activity*

I took interviews with my students after each class to get their perceptions towards my teaching. To do this, I randomly chose students, but tried not to repeat the same students each time. For getting student feedback, I used a student perceptions questionnaire and some related questions. The students gave feedback, but the most common expression after completing two cycles was: 'Our class is more enjoyable now.' A sample of the questionnaire is given on the next page:



*Interview with students*





The main findings of my study :

- A teacher can develop herself, but the development gets enhanced with the help of a peer teacher.
- The peer teacher knows the strengths and areas for development through observation and shows the way to overcome by discussion.
- Following the cycle of 'learning by doing' (see – plan – practise – do – reflect – share) with my peer teacher, I have developed as a teacher over the space of three cycles.

### My learning from the study

Being a part TVC is my touchstone which played the greatest role to reverse me as a skilled professional. After completing my study I've learnt many more things but something should obviously be shared and they are:

- Following the cycle of learning by doing with my peer teacher I have developed as a teacher over the three cycles. As a mentor, I worked with my three mentees. We work together with the same study topic. I must say that it was a tremendous encouragement for all of us working as researchers.

- As we are primary school teachers, there is a prevailing 'talk' that primary school teachers know nothing. But this research work blessed me with the opportunity to think myself someone special who can play a vital role in bringing change in the future of Bangladesh. It was not easy to find enough time after school to work with mentees. We sat once in a week or twice in a month.
- Before working as a researcher, I didn't know if my colleagues would help me to develop professionally. I just used to think that they were jealous of me. But I must say that this journey rewarded me with a rich, heartfelt, insight. Now my relationship with my colleagues is radically changed.
- In teaching, there is no such word as 'perfect'. All that we can do is to keep trying to be better.
- In the journey of professional development, peer support is the best vehicle.
- If we want to develop ourselves professionally, we should work with our colleagues in our field. And our classes should be our laboratories.
- By getting involved in this study, I got a chance to change myself as a professional. Otherwise I would have gone on year after year as a typical teacher.

### Challenges

All the way through my research, I had to face a lot of challenges. The major ones I faced were:

- At the beginning, my Head Teacher did not agree to give me time.
- My peer teacher was not interested in working with me.
- Students were not all interested.
- Some demotivated students are still attending irregularly.

## Personal feelings

Getting involved in this study I got the chance to 'reverse' myself as a professional. Otherwise I would go on year after year in the same way, as a typical teacher. Now, at first I try to listen to my students and keep notes on this. Later on, I try to read their minds so as to provide them essential tasks. Now my ambition is not to be a good teacher, but to be a great explorer.

## Conclusion

All through my study, I've tried my best to get better so as to reach all the students. I've tried to be a better classroom practitioner who will go further with all her students. But there is still one question in my mind: 'How can we ensure each individual's learning in the classroom?'

After the TVC final presentation, I want to let everyone know the taste of research as much as I can. Because now I believe that teaching is an art and if we want to be a good artist we must get involved in research. Researching opens the door of thinking in multi-dimensions. This is not simple observation. The observation is deeper. Now I feel proud to introduce myself as a classroom researcher rather than a typical primary school teacher.



## 5.3

### Md. Nur Alam, Grade III

#### Peer support for self-development



#### Background of the study

I couldn't speak English to the whole class and my students were also very shy. So, I wanted to use more classroom phrases to improve our speaking skills with EIA techniques. I used EIA materials to give commands and to instruct my students. My peers observed, gave feedback and supported me. My aim was to ensure teacher and students' speaking for communicating in class. My Head Teacher suggested that I do the activity with Teachers Support Network through lesson study. But I was confused about that and started by asking some questions which were bothering me. The questions were:

1. How can I improve my speaking skills as a teacher?
2. How can my peers support me to speak?

#### How I went about the study

I started the first cycle by trying to use classroom phrases in the whole class. I tried to apply some EIA techniques with classroom phrases. But I faced many challenges. I found more challenges with speaking in the classroom but my peers supported me to face that.

I completed my full study with two cycles with three classes in each. After every researching class, I described the whole environment and data about the participation of my students to my peers. My peers suggested to me to continue the 'learning by doing' process. My Head Teacher and other peers observed my class with an observation checklist. Sometimes they did audio/video recording, which helped me to reflect on what I did. I wrote a short note after my researching class on my reflections. For example, how the students were responding to me or their peers, which activities they liked most or which ones

flopped. Sometimes, I recommended to my students to choose the activities through multiple choice (MCQ). Specifically, I noticed the activities challenged some students. Then, I tried to modify the activities in my lesson plan so I could compare the improvement of our speaking skills.

In each cycle, I wrote my learning in a journal. Then I took help from the reflective diary, audios, videos, my Head Teacher's and my peer's comments. I used some games and structured activities with whole-class work, demonstrations, group work and pair work. In the first cycle, I emphasised my classroom phrases, here I practised EL4T (English Language for Teachers) with my peers to improve my speaking skills. In the second cycle, I tried to improve my students' speaking skills with peer support.



*I'm practising EL4T with my peers*



*Students are practising making a request*

After observation, my peers helped me to find out and match the data. So, I could compare the improvement of our speaking skills. At the beginning, I found it difficult to give instructions to my young learners in English. But the situation improved when I practised classroom phrases with my EIA peer. She also helped me to do 'micro-teaching' (a kind of 'mock teaching') with other teachers in the office room. I was quite happy with the techniques and planned to apply them in my class. I made pairs with an advanced and a slow learner, so that they got support from each other. Here, slow learners could listen and practise more and the advanced learners could ensure their active participation. In the first cycle, using English with students in the whole class, giving instructions and students' communication were my challenges. As I continued, I could speak more than before and my students participated actively.

It was remarkable that a special-needs child who was always silent started to show interest in activities. I discussed that with my peers and they suggested to me to let the child do some activities with other students. So, I chose some different types of pair work and chain drill in the second cycle. I created an opportunity to practice some commands and instructions with each other. At first, 48% of students were inactive, but this improved a lot slowly. Advanced students enjoyed a lot and they tried to help the weaker students. The not-so-bright students also did better but without correct pronunciation. And the miracle was my special-needs child participated also with his peers.

My mentor also met me and my Head Teacher and we followed up on my improvement. My other peers, Head Teacher, AUEO, UEO and URCI praised me highly for my efforts with these activities.

## What I learnt from the study

When I want to listen, read and write, I can do the activity on my own. But when I want to speak, then I need another person to keep the conversation going. So, we should practise with our peers to get improvement in speaking. By practising, sharing and following the feedback with peers, a teacher and a student can improve their speaking skills.

I also faced some challenges in peer support: time management, pressure of more classes, etc. but in spite of that we need our peers' support for professional development. Now, I know how I can make a friendly relationship with my young learners. It was also a great learning to motivate them to cooperate with each other. As it was my first classroom-based research study, in the three workshops we got other peers' support from different schools, different upazilas and therefore a different environment. And presenting the work in front of the large audience was remarkable, especially the question-answer session. It gave me a lot of courage to face more challenges in my classroom, workshops and presentations.

## Conclusion

On the basis of this experience, I'm convinced that conducting a good class is highly possible. There is no way to use a good teaching technique unless we have something worth planning for. So, for the next work or any critical challenges, I should plan well to do my best. Really, it was a dynamic change of our classroom and of the teacher also. Because it was the first opportunity for a primary teacher to be a researcher and present his work at a national conference. So, this step will be a milestone and a reminder for us.

## 5.4

### Hasan Sayeed, Grade X

#### Structured group feedback: a journey towards improvement

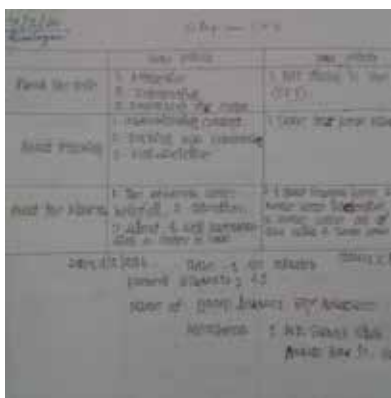


#### Background of the study

As an EIA teacher, I have always tried to do something new to engage all my students in my classroom activities so that they can learn better; and as a teacher I want to be more skilled, strategic and communicative. The study on 'Structured group feedback' has an activity where the students give feedback to their teacher about his teaching and at the same time they give feedback themselves too. I am curious about how I can improve with students' help, as they are always my audience. This idea is new and actually unthinkable in our country. But I felt eager and interested and I thought, by doing this, I can improve myself and the students will become smart as well.

#### How I went about the study

In this research, I gave the students a form which I prepared earlier. In the form there were three columns in which the students gave their feedback about their book *English for Today* (EFT), about themselves and about me. After finishing the class, I gave them this form and instructed them how they can fill it in. This is a sample of the feedback form:



In the first class in Cycle 1, I tried to make my students understand the whole difference between a normal class and a research class, as there are some additional activities which are very important for a study, such as giving feedback. I made them understand 'feedback' and how they would give feedback to their teacher and to themselves. I think they were charmed, but a little bit confused too. However, I started my research class. At the beginning, the students were shy to give me feedback. I gradually told them the importance of the process and to give feedback freely, because this is the most crucial part for the development of this process. I think they understood me. From the second class they gave me feedback more freely.

But the class schedule was broken. My class entered into the next class for 30 minutes. So the discipline also became problematic. But I was successful in the sense I gave them something new that was impossible and unthinkable in our country. But from the second class, I convinced my Headmaster to arrange two classes together for my research class. I am grateful to him that he supported me in that way. I also agreed mutually with another teacher to reschedule our two classes. So, from the second class, the time disturbance and indiscipline situation had gone. But surely it was a temporary solution. From the second cycle, I shortened listening activities (pre-, while- or post-) and gave them either group work or pair work. By adopting this strategy, I managed my research classes within the scheduled period from the second cycle.

In the second cycle, my students were not so shy and felt eager to go through the process. I could see that they started giving feedback spontaneously, which was very helpful for me later. Since 2013, I have taken English classes in an EIA way. So they were used to pair work or group work. Now they curiously waited for the new process – ‘feedback’. It seems to me that, they observed and listened to me very carefully now, compared to before, and they gave me feedback very carefully and impartially, which was very important for my next class.

I was reminded of Sigmund Freud who observed that children are not babies as we think. They can understand and justify, but cannot express because their language is not yet mature. He was so right. In Cycle 3, my students maintained the class themselves. I only told them what to do and they made groups, pairs, the feedback frame and every session they conducted successfully. The group leaders did their work properly, so my work in the class decreased. Doing these activities in the class, I could locate my weaknesses and faults and started improving those things gradually and my students also got smarter in listening, writing and speaking English as well.

### My learning from the study

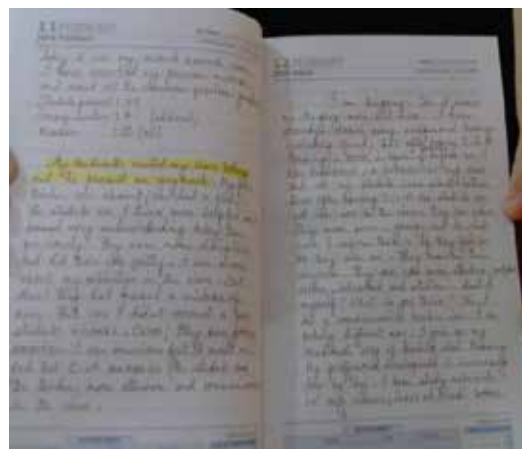
First about my students. They gave feedback about:

- my teaching: my pre- and post-listening capacity and my ability to make them understand the text;
- the way I moved around in the classroom;
- my body language;
- how I collected text-related examples from them;
- how I made pairs and groups;
- how I managed time etc.

Second, my learning from Cycles 1, 2 and 3:

- I must prepare better to apply new ways of teaching, as they always want to know new things.
- They pay more attention to learning in the feedback process (because it has an exciting feedback part).
- I can find out my faults and gaps through their feedback.
- Through this process, I can be more active and communicative.
- I can learn how I can complete my class within a scheduled period.
- I can learn to manage a large class and how all the students can be active in class activities.
- In Cycle 3, my work in the class became less and students themselves made the groups and my work was only to monitor them.

These are examples of my journal:



This is how the peer teacher recorded his comments:



After finishing the third cycle, my findings about the students are that the students have become able to communicate among themselves in English and when they talk to me. Though it is not fully correct, they have begun to try.

For example, they say:

- Sir, what do we do now?
- Sir, I correct, he wrong.
- Good morning (though it was evening).

They can write more correctly and spontaneously than before. They can listen attentively and can understand what I say clearly. This is clearly evident in the video I shot.

### The most important finding of my research

My most important finding is that this feedback framework can be used in any subject by any teacher! I gave a form to my peer teacher and another to my colleague, a math teacher.

In this research, my most interesting finding and learning is, the feedback framework process can be used in any major subject like Bangla, Social Science or Mathematics by any subject teacher. First, the framework would be translated into Bangla and then it could be implemented in any class you want. If you successfully do it, I am sure, your professional skill will rise tremendously and your students will be more interested, participatory, not shy and will be spontaneous in their work. As a result, their exam results will improve. But first, you will need to be open to the idea that you can get feedback from your students, other subject teachers, peer teacher or Head Teacher. And my experience says that if you make them understand properly, they will not deceive or trick you as they respect you and obey you. They will tell you the truth and nothing but the truth. So, would you like to try? Why not? Then let's begin.

### Conclusion

It was an exciting journey for me. My research topic was a new concept in our country for both teachers and students. So it was a little bit difficult for me to make it happen at the beginning, but after finishing the study I am now eager to continue it in my other classes. If I implement it in my other classes, I am sure to have a positive result from the students and I will also be more skilled. So the next step is thinking and planning how I can continue it further.

## 5.5

### Ummea Siphon Hosne Ara, Grade VII

#### A diary study



#### Background of the study

A diary study involves self-reflection. It is an effective and continuous process to see the progress of language learning of our students as well as of ourselves. A diary with regular and sequential notes of our individual teaching helped us to improve our professional skills gradually and to continue our teaching practice properly. Our group chose to work on this topic because we thought if we maintain a diary regularly, we can reflect on our activities. And when we met together after every two weeks we discussed our challenges and successes. Every one of us tried to share our ideas and gradually we noticed that our students became spontaneous and responsive to the techniques and other activities in the classroom. We focused especially on listening and speaking skills.

#### Research questions

- How can I help the students to develop listening and speaking skills?
- What can students do to improve listening and speaking skills?
- How can I improve myself?

#### How I went about the study

I conducted the study in three cycles. The details of data I collected are as follows:

- Peer teacher's class observation and sharing
- Head Teacher's feedback
- Mentor-mentee discussions
- My reflective diaries

Every day I asked questions to myself before the lesson. What was my (teacher's) demand? What are students' demands? We kept our observation notes and findings in our diaries every day after finishing our classes regarding

what the successes and challenges were. And why? It helped me to change and revise my teaching before going to the next step in teaching. I also knew through discussions with my mentor, other mentees and my peer teacher which way I should take the class. My peer teacher was observing my class using a checklist and gave me useful feedback.

My focus in the study was on developing students' listening and speaking skills and my skills of teaching. So, here was a situation where there was no opportunity to practise speaking. They didn't want to speak in English. I wanted to help students to move from this traditional thinking so that they could communicate with each other and develop their language skills. I used three techniques: chain drill, pair work and group work. This way I helped them to improve gradually. It was not only my observation and reflection, but also the peer teacher's observation and students' feedback that helped to fulfill my research aims.

#### Comparison between the cycles

##### *Cycle 1*

- Some students were not involved because other subjects were not taught this way; so they found it difficult to adjust to this method.
- Some students did not respond because they couldn't understand my instructions. Their answers were limited to 'yes/no'.
- Some felt shy because the teacher was speaking in English most of the time.
- The weaker students failed to participate in activities through pair work and group work as they were irregular. As a result, they lost interest and disturbed other students.
- Most of the students had difficulty in pronouncing English words correctly.



## Cycle 2

Considering these problems, I changed my lesson plan and also prioritised my teaching aims:

- I maintained my diary regularly after observing my class carefully.
- I prepared myself by thinking of questions such as: Which technique will I use in my class so that all students can learn in a collaborative way? What was the problem in the previous lesson?
- I paid attention to my classroom instructions and made them very short and simple. I prepared and hung some posters in class to remind my students about the language they can use.
- I developed and practised some classroom guidelines with the mutual agreement of the students.
- I have followed some of the techniques in the class after checking their understanding.

I formed groups by mixing students with advanced/average and weaker ones, and changed the group members after every week. After completing my classes, I found out from students if I had managed to solve some of the problems. The table below sums this up:

Areas in which there was improvement and reasons	% of students
Developed their language skills because they practised every day	40
Could understand and practise using the techniques	60
Could respond because they could understand my message, body language, miming	60
Did not have any fear about their teacher because of her friendly and helpful manner	60
Could pronounce words properly because of repetition and also because of audio	80



*Students are working in groups*

## Cycle 3

At the end of Cycle 3, I observed that:

- Students got used to greeting each other inside and outside the classroom. Their confidence levels increased and now they could pronounce words correctly.
- Students learnt to work in pairs and groups by sharing with their partners/group members. They were very eager to learn the lesson when the teacher used fun and games. Their response was spontaneous.
- They followed the techniques and gradually they became attentive with interactive participation.
- I realised that if some of the minor mistakes can be ignored initially with positive error correction then it gives the students confidence to speak fluently and comfortably. This allows the teacher to deliver messages in a short time.
- The learners who did not want to participate earlier were now involved in classwork too.

Some challenges that I still face are:

- Time management is still an issue.
- Irregular students are slow and some are still shy.

## My learning from the study

I now have a better understanding of how to teach and correct myself and create a friendly environment. I am quite convinced that we should listen to students' demands. This we can do by keeping regular notes and by getting others' views including those of the students.



*An interactive class*



*Teacher-peer discussion*

## Conclusion

At the beginning, every teacher faces problems. If we keep a day-to-day diary and try to find out the problem ourselves, we can succeed. Without practice, a teacher cannot improve herself. Nowadays, when I finish my class, my students say 'Good bye' 'Thank you for your nice presentation, Ma'am' 'See you tomorrow', 'See you again' and so forth. That makes my day!

Some photos that capture our students' work as we did the study are given below:



*Students are working in pairs*

## 5.6 Md. Shahzad Hossain

Grade III -IV

### Professional development through peer support



#### Background of the study

Through this research study, my colleagues and I have tried our best to pick up and work on some positive aspects and challenges in our classrooms. We did a lot of work to sort out some critical points with each other's help. First time, after starting my research work when I went to class I observed my students and also myself about what I regularly did in the classroom. While taking classes, I wasn't particularly satisfied with my own language use and also my teachers', techniques of asking questions, monitoring etc. Clearly I found that I was somehow wrong in the way I took classes. Then I shared my ideas with my peer teachers. That's when I decided to look carefully at my peers' and my way of taking classes with other teachers' help.

#### Aims of the study

- ❖ To gain knowledge about using techniques;
- ❖ To generate support from colleagues;
- ❖ To be able to better our teaching with feedback from peers.

#### How I went about the study

First, I found a research question which would help me to go forward: How can I help my teachers in different classes as a Head Teacher? And how can I improve myself as a teacher?

I used the following tools: Class observation, peer Interview and my own diary.

#### What I did in the first cycle

In the first cycle, I observed my peer's class carefully. I made sure I didn't interfere in her class; rather I showed interest in how she managed her class using 'classroom language'. There I found that the students were not very much interested in speaking in English. Moreover, they couldn't understand what the teacher said. Here I used a diary for keeping notes on what I observed and wrote down my reflections.

I observed another class to compare the teaching of my other peer. She used English in her class but a little less than the other. Here many students could easily understand her points. Here also I used a diary to keep notes on my class observation. These points emerged from Cycle 1:

- Instructions were mostly not clear.
- Students were inattentive.
- Little use of classroom language.

As a Head Teacher, normally I would have said something to peer teachers but I was careful not to tell them what my observations were, at this point. After two classes, I called one of them and let her know what my diary said. We decided together that she should try and teach the class in an effective way: she must understand what her students actually want; and they couldn't cooperate with her since they failed to understand her instructions. The observation was similar for my second peer teacher. Through interviewing my peer

teachers, I came to the conclusion that after cycle 1 I have to follow my peers with great care. All this while, I was observing my own class more carefully and taking notes. using language clearly in the classroom context.



Children are participating attentively



### What I did next

Here between cycle 1 and cycle 2, I again sat with my peers and also with other teachers to let them know what was going on. Here I took the help of my senior-most teacher, to observe the classes. I talked to some of the 'shy/slow' students, to know what their problems were. They said that they couldn't understand the language that the teacher used. So I recommended to the teachers, according to my diary, to be aware of



My colleagues and I discuss our classes

I need to point out here that from cycle 1 to cycle 2 the students were very much able to understand the instructions of the teachers. They also paid attention to the classes and tried to understand what the teacher was saying.

Lastly in cycle 3, we saw that more than half of the students could understand their teachers' instructions and language and also they were more attentive in their classes.



My class observations and my diary



### Main findings

We noticed that at the beginning, teachers and students were hesitant/shy and students were unwilling to share their ideas with teacher in English. We realized that this was as students couldn't understand teachers' instructions properly. This slowly changed after we started sharing new techniques, planned a good activity based lesson plan and interacted with each other in a friendly way. Systematic observation notes and the diary helped to a great extent. We engaged in all these activities:

- Class Observation and active monitoring
- Peer reflection and sharing ideas
- Weekly and monthly teachers' meetings

The table below shows how teachers' use of techniques and students' attentive behaviour improved from cycle 1 to cycle 3.

Class	Teacher	Use of EIA Techniques (%)		Students' active behaviour (%)	
		Before	After	Before	After
III	A.	45%	65%	35%	58%
IV	B.	38%	60%	33%	57%
V	C.	53%	71%	45%	59%



### Learning from the study

- Students dared to use more English.
- Teachers were more confident of using English.
- Teaching-learning activities are more interactive.
- Collaborative sharing of lesson planning, techniques, innovative ideas with others is a good idea.

“It’s a great achievement for me to share my ideas with my Head Teacher”

-Teacher A

“When I take my English Class, my Head Teacher and peer teacher help me to analyze my mistakes”

-Teacher B

### Conclusion

In sum, I wish to implement my findings and thoughts in my school as well as other schools on a continuous basis. It is a great achievement for us to recognize the problems we face in the classroom ourselves and to be able to solve them on our own. I think my research work will help others if they face such obstacles in their classes. My plan is to take proper initiative to do further research and monitor the classes. I will take peer support where necessary and this way build up new techniques for an effective class. This approach will also help teachers teaching other subjects, not only English.

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English in Action (EIA) is a ten-year education programme which aims to enhance the economic and social prospects of people in Bangladesh by improving their communicative English. It does this through communicative language learning in primary and secondary classrooms, and television and other media, such as websites and mobile, aimed at adults. EIA encourages teachers to introduce new English language learning activities into their classroom practice, with their students. Teachers are supported by audio-visual and print materials for professional development and classroom practice activities, and by other teachers in their school and local area. Teachers 'learn by doing', in the classroom, reflecting on their practice and by supporting each other. They are guided by a video 'trainer in the hand', showing authentic videos of classroom practice and supported by audio materials for use with students in class. Audio-visual materials are provided at low cost, offline, through memory cards accessed on affordable mobile phones.



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