



Strengthening English Language Teaching and Learning at Secondary Schools in Bandarban, Bangladesh: Challenges and Opportunities

Major Khandokar Mostak Ahamed

Principal, Alikadam Cantonment Public School and College, Alikadam, Bandarban

Email: mostak8019@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

English language teaching is becoming increasingly significant in Bangladesh to open up educational and socioeconomic opportunities. But, it is really a daunting task to ensure the equal opportunity of quality English education in geographically isolated and linguistically diverse areas like Bandarban district in the Chattogram Hill Tracts. The present study was conducted to identify the major challenges and opportunities of teaching and learning English in the secondary schools of Bandarban, Bangladesh. The study uses qualitative text analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns. The data used in this study is secondary data obtained from peer review journals, government and policy documents, education reports and documents released by national and international development agencies. The findings suggest that English language teaching in Bandarban is being confronted with a complex of challenges such as teacher proficiency, lack of educational resources, linguistic diversity, socio-economic issues, geographical remoteness, curriculum relevance, lack of exposure to English language and unequal access to digital technologies. Simultaneously, the data offers insights into teacher professional development, culturally responsive and multilingual pedagogies, digital educational resources, community and institutional partnerships, and contextually relevant educational policy. The research argues that the English education in Bandarban needs to be shifted from traditional to more inclusive culturally sensitive and geographically conscious ways. It provides strategic leadership at the institutional, policy, school and classroom levels to enhance the sustainability, quality and access to English language education in the region. This study adds to a more holistic discussion on the fair provision of English language education by illuminating the particular needs and opportunities of secondary schools in varied linguistic and geographical contexts.

Keywords: English Language Education; Secondary Education; Bandarban; Multilingual Education; Culturally Responsive Pedagogy

Introduction

English is a compulsory subject at secondary education level in Bangladesh. Recent revisions to the national curriculum have attempted to move English instruction away from the traditional grammar-translation approach toward a focus on communicative language pedagogy. However, the gap between policy goals and the actual classroom circumstances still remains, with the effectiveness of English language teaching being affected by contextual issues, teacher competence, lack of resources and testing pressures (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Furthermore, the quality of English instruction at the secondary level and the specialization of teachers are still a concern in Bangladesh. This is confirmed in the recent statistics of education (Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics [BANBEIS], 2025). These issues are especially complex in geographically and linguistically isolated contexts. Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari are known as the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) and

are famous for their ethnic and linguistic diversity and the rugged terrain. UNICEF (2019) listed the CHT as one of Bangladesh's most culturally and ethnically diverse regions. The challenging geography and scattered population of the region pose special challenges for education. In this regard, special attention is required for the teaching and learning of English language in Bandarban. The availability and preparation of teachers, socio-economic constraints, poor learning resources, linguistic variety, limited exposure to English and cultural relevance of educational materials can all affect the teaching-learning process. Gertsch et al. (2015) and Chakma (2024) have also identified wider educational and linguistic hurdles in the CHT. But, a comparative study on secondary level English education in Bandarban especially on its obstacles and upcoming potentials has been less paid importance. Hence, the present study qualitatively analyzes secondary sources to discuss the opportunities and obstacles to improve teaching and learning of English language at secondary level institutions of Bandarban. It seeks to identify key barriers, explore current opportunities and offer context-specific pathways to improve the equitable and effective delivery of English language education in the region.

Context of Secondary Education in Bandarban

Socio-cultural and geographical context

Bandarban is one of the three districts of the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) region which is a hilly part of the country with many ethnic and cultural people. The CHT comprises Bandarban, Rangamati and Khagrachari, where a number of Indigenous communities with diverse languages, traditional practices and social behavior live (UNICEF Bangladesh, 2019). Pupils living in remote areas may face difficulties in accessing educational facilities, qualified teachers and learning materials due to the difficult terrain and scattered communities. Research on education in the CHT has shown that poverty, inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of instructors, and low community engagement are interconnected barriers to equitable school access (Chakma, 2024).

Multiple language manifestations and the phenomena of multilingualism

Language is a very important part of education in Bandarban. Indigenous groups speak a number of native languages but the main language of formal education is Bangla; English is a second language. Therefore, some students may have to function in three linguistic domains (their mother tongue, Bangla and English) during their academic career. Research conducted in the CHT indicates that linguistic differences between teachers and students can cause to problems in interaction and learning, particularly in remote areas where children have little exposure to any language other than their mother tongue (Gertsch et al., 2015; Chakma, 2024). Recent studies also underline the requirement of adequately qualified educators and instructional resources in multilingual learning contexts (Bhuiyan & Kirby, 2025).

Secondary education system of Bandarban

Secondary education in Bandarban follows the national education system of Bangladesh, including its curriculum and evaluation system. But the operation of nationally standardized educational approaches occurs in a distinct local environment. Studies in CHT education show that policies and practices developed in the center do not always fit well with the linguistic and cultural circumstances of the locality (Chakma, 2024).

Availability of educational institutions and materials

Access still plays an important role as geographical remoteness can impact students' access to educational institutions, teachers, learning materials and digital resources. Data from the CHT have reported on educational inequalities related to language, socioeconomic situations,

family literacy settings and lack of reading resources (Gertsch et al., 2015). Such limits are particularly relevant in the case of English language acquisition which requires continuous interaction with new resources and opportunities for linguistic practice.

The role of English in the educational curriculum and assessment system

English has a substantial place in the formal education curriculum of Bangladesh. Yet the learning of English in multilingual and culturally diverse contexts should not be seen as simply an issue of curriculum or assessment. The use of the curriculum in practice may be affected by students' previous language experiences, their exposure to English, teachers' preparedness and availability of adequate learning resources.

Educational inequality and urban-rural gap

The entire educational system in Bangladesh continues to be afflicted by inequalities due to poverty, place and social disadvantage. Children in poor and disaster-affected communities are at greater risk of educational exclusion, with secondary school completion rates falling far short of universal criteria (UNICEF Bangladesh, n.d.). In Bandarban, these wide differences intersect with the hilly landscape and linguistic diversity. Therefore, it is important to study English language teaching and learning in Bandarban separately from the larger Bangladeshi environment to develop culturally relevant, inclusive and equitable approaches to secondary English education.

Review of Literature

Teaching of English Language in Bangladesh:

English is an integral part of the entire school curriculum and holds a significant position in the educational system of Bangladesh. The curriculum changes in the 1990s intended to change the English language teaching from the Grammar-Translation Method to Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) but the execution has not been good. Research shows that there are gaps between what teachers want to do and what really happens in classrooms. The discrepancies are influenced by exam stress, teacher dominated education, inadequate resources, big class numbers and limited professional development opportunities for teachers (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The holistic evaluation identified the persistent deficiencies of English language education sector in Bangladesh as the implementation of the curriculum, evaluation techniques, instructional materials and professional development (Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Development of English for indigenous/tribal learners

For Indigenous pupils the study of English takes place in complex multilingual contexts where they may be speaking an Indigenous language at home, Bangla at school and English as an additional language. Studies on linguistic minorities in Bangladesh have highlighted the difficulties of implementing mother-tongue-based multilingual education, including the lack of appropriate resources and skilled instructors (Mohanty et al., 2010). CHT study has shown that language factors, socioeconomic status and lack of literacy resources at home might cause educational disparity (Gertsch et al., 2015). Recent studies on communicative English acquisition of tribal students in CHT have found linguistic variety, economic restrictions, limited exposure of English and social factors as major elements impacting language learning.

Teaching English Language at Rural and Remote Educational Institutions

The literature on English teaching in rural and remote areas highlights the relevance of infrastructure, learning resources, professional development, and teacher availability. There have been Bangladesh-wide surveys indicating that the suitable resources and skilled English

teachers are not equally distributed especially in the urban and rural areas (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The geographic isolation of CHT communities may further compound these challenges by limiting access to educational programming and resources. The literature on CHT education reveals that teacher shortages, lack of instructional resources, infrastructure constraints and poverty are persistent difficulties for excellent education (Chakma, 2024).

Culturally Responsive and Inclusive English Language Teaching

Research increasingly highlights the necessity of multilingual and culturally responsive approaches, rather than viewing linguistic variety as a problem. Policy discourses in Bangladesh acknowledge the value of mother-tongue-based multilingual education for the Indigenous peoples but the implementation is still a barrier (Mohanty et al., 2010). Recent research indicates a paucity of educated teachers and teaching resources for Indigenous-language instruction in the CHT (Bhuiyan & Kirby, 2025). These findings imply that learner-centered, culturally relevant and multilingual pedagogies could be a more effective contextual foundation for English education.

Existing Studies on Chattogram Hill Tracts

Gap in Research

Despite the rising literature, three limitations are still evident. Most of the material on CHT, however, pertains to basic education, broader educational access, or instruction in Indigenous languages, not secondary English education. Secondly, the existing research written in English tends to concentrate on specific populations or specific aspects (e.g. sociocultural barriers or communicative education) rather than on teacher competence, curriculum, pedagogy, resources, technology, language diversity and geographical differences as part of a coherent analytical framework. Third, the attention to Bandarban has been rather restricted, and the published information is often more concerned with problems than with both problems and potential for improving English training. The present study attempts to bridge these gaps through a careful examination of the secondary data on the teaching and learning of the English language in the secondary schools in Bandarban. The focus of the study is on impediments and contextually appropriate chances for development.

Theoretical/ Conceptual Framework

The current study draws on two complimentary viewpoints, Culturally Responsive Pedagogy (CRP) and Multilingual Education Perspective, which emerge from the wider literature on culturally responsive teaching and multilingual education (Gay, 2018; UNESCO, 2024). Taken together these views present a suitable foundation for the examination of English language instruction among students from culturally and linguistically diverse groups, particularly in rural, remote and indigenous situations.

The Multilingual Education Perspective acknowledges that learners' English progress is shaped by their previous linguistic repertoire. The process of learning in the Bangladeshi environment may need a shift from the mother tongue to Bangla and eventually to English and provides opportunities and problems. Mother-language knowledge can help comprehension, identification and engagement in the classroom; however the differences between the mother tongue, Bangla and English may hamper vocabulary, pronunciation, grammar and communication. Culturally Responsive Pedagogy promotes instructional practices that identify and integrate learners' cultural identities, language contexts, experiences, and social realities. In this regard, effective English teaching should not just rely on standardized materials and methods, but also develop a link between the learning process and the local settings and lived experiences of students.

Therefore, the conceptual model of this study considers the Contextual Factors, such as the geographical location, language background, economic conditions, school resources, and teacher capacity to impact the English Teaching–Learning Process. This comprises motivation of learners, technology, interaction in the classroom, learning materials and teaching methods. The elements mentioned above combine to create the problems and possibilities faced by learners and teachers. The framework continues with Strategies for Strengthening English Education, including culture-responsive teaching, multilingual approaches, teacher development, suitable learning resources, enhanced access to technology, and context-sensitive educational policy.

Conceptual Model:

Contextual Factors

- ↓ Geography
 - | Language | Socioeconomic Conditions | School Resources | Teacher Capacity
- ↓ English Teaching-Learning Process Pedagogy | Materials | Technology | Classroom Interaction | Learner Motivation
- ↓ Challenges & Opportunities
- ↓ Activities to Enhance English Learning

Methodology

The study technique is qualitative and is based on systematic evaluation of secondary data and qualitative content analysis. The methodology is suitable for analysis of existing evidence on English language instruction and acquisition in secondary schools in Bandarban without the necessity of primary data collection through surveys or interviews.

Data source

The secondary data were collected from journal articles, books and chapters of books, government and Ministry of Education documents, materials of the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), BANBEIS reports, educational statistics of Bangladesh, and UNESCO, UNICEF and World Bank publications. Relevant reports from reputable NGOs/INGOs, CHT-related organizations, policy frameworks and authoritative institutional websites were also considered.

Method of Research

Relevant literature was searched in Google Scholar, Scopus, Web of Science, Science Direct, Springer Link, Taylor & Francis, SAGE and Wiley Online Library. Key search terms and their variants included “English language education in Bangladesh”, “English instruction in secondary schools of Bangladesh”, “English acquisition among indigenous students in Bangladesh”, “tribal education in Bandarban”, “education in the Chittagong Hill Tracts”, “English language for indigenous students”, “multilingual education in Bangladesh”, “English instruction in rural Bangladesh”. Further sources were identified from the reference lists of relevant papers.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Where relevant, sources were used from secondary education, English language teaching and learning, Bangladesh, the CHT or Bandarban, and related linguistic, cultural, educational or policy issues. Relevant academic literature, both recent and seminal, was considered. Publications that were duplicates, studies that were not relevant to the research objectives, higher-education studies that were not relevant, and unreliable online resources were excluded.

Data Examination

Qualitative content analysis was applied to analyze the selected items. The data were categorized and organized into themes with repeated data such as teacher capability, student-related challenges, language and cultural barriers, curriculum and teaching methods, educational resources, technological and digital access, geographical and economic constraints, institutional challenges, opportunities, and policy-level actions.

Constraints and Reliability

Source triangulation, checking information across different kinds of documents, and focusing on peer-reviewed and reliable sources, boosted reliability. However, the use of secondary data may restrict access to the lived experiences of students and instructors. The information specific to Bandarban, nevertheless, may be sparse and has to be interpreted with care to avoid over generalizing broader CHT or Bangladesh-level findings to the context of Bandarban.

Findings and Analysis

The secondary literature review shows that there are a range of factors involving instructors, learners, linguistics, culture, pedagogy, technology, geography and socioeconomic situations that influence the teaching and learning of English language in Bandarban. It is important to note that these difficulties are linked rather than isolated. Research from rural schools in Bangladesh and the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT) suggests the importance of context-sensitive approaches to improving English teaching that consider the multilingual and geographically dispersed nature of the region.

Challenges Faced by Educators

The study reveals that teachers' competency is highlighted as a main problem that influences the English language teaching in the rural and remote parts of Bangladesh. Research on rural secondary schools has identified the lack of qualified English teachers, lack of pedagogical training and difficulties of applying Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) effectively (Alam, 2016; Rahman et al., 2006). In rural locations, teachers may have less opportunities for continued professional development, and training efforts often do not lead to long-term changes in teaching practices.

Challenges for Students

Students' English competency is associated with classroom teaching and their opportunities to use and interact with English outside the classroom. In rural Bangladesh, research indicates that pupils have few opportunity to engage in authentic English and are highly reliant on exam-oriented teaching. Alam (2016) also found the examination oriented teaching attitude of rural students can be a barrier in using communicative methods.

Furthermore, anxiety about English, along with lack of willingness and motivation, can also inhibit participation, especially in speaking activities. Recent research on secondary English education in Bangladesh have intertwined the issues of student motivation, English anxiety, lack of resources, and limited possibilities for practice. Language obstacles, financial challenges, and limited access to educational materials may further compound these challenges for Indigenous children in the CHT. CHT's literacy studies (Gertsch et al., 2015) find that language, socioeconomic status, and the literacy environment of the family are the major factors contributing to the learning gaps.

Linguistic and Cultural Barriers

Linguistic diversity is a key feature of English education in Bandarban. Many Indigenous pupils go through a linguistic development of Indigenous native tongue → Bangla → English in their education. Thus English is not a second language but can be taught after the kids have adapted to another linguistic change into Bangla. Research in the CHT has found that differences in language, a lack of resources for learning indigenous languages and teaching practices that are not inclusive enough can impact academic achievement (Gertsch et al., 2015). Recent research on English learning by tribal students in CHT also reports language heterogeneity, remoteness, limited educational infrastructure and socio-economic conditions as hindrances to successful English communication.

Learning Environment and Barriers to Instruction

Although the English language curriculum of Bangladesh has officially adopted communicative approaches, the extant statistics indicate that there is a gap between curriculum aims and classroom practice. Instruction is still mostly grammar-based; exams are a big deal; teachers do all the talking; there are limited communication options. However, Rahman and Pandian (2018) suggest that despite the improved curriculum, the English education in Bangladesh continues to struggle with the implementation. Research on rural secondary institutions found that Communicative Language Teaching is hindered by big classrooms, lack of qualified teachers and lack of modern teaching materials (Alam, 2016). Therefore, learner-centered activities involving speaking, listening, collaboration and real conversation can be eclipsed by grammar, reading and exam preparation. In Bandarban, the challenge has been to implement the national curriculum but also to tailor the teaching methods to a multilingual and culturally diverse student population.

Teaching Materials and Resources

Having enough educational resources is very important to assist learners in acquiring all four skills in the English language. However, studies in rural Bangladesh point to deficiencies in supplementary materials, modern teaching aids and resources needed for communicative language education (Alam, 2016). In the same way, studies of the CHT acknowledge the lack of reading materials, especially those in Indigenous languages as a major educational constraint (Gertsch et al., 2015).

Challenges in the Digital and Technological Setting

There is a substantial body of literature on English education in Bangladesh that suggests that while ICT-based teacher development has shown promising prospects, its practice has been hampered by inadequate resources, inadequate training opportunities, and unequal access, particularly for teachers in rural areas (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). National data demonstrate stark differences in remote learning access across urban and rural areas, highlighting the need for equitable digital infrastructure (Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics & UNICEF, 2023). Technology should be seen not as a solution but as an intervention that requires infrastructure, training of educators, and access for students to be egalitarian.

Financial & Space Challenges

This is an important backdrop, Bandarban is a geographically isolated place. In difficult terrains and isolated populations, access to educational institutions, teachers, and learning materials may not be regular. Educational disparity has been linked to language, socioeconomic status, home literacy contexts, and lack of educational materials in CHT research (Gertsch et al., 2015). The investigation of indigenous education shows that poverty, inadequate teaching staff, poor infrastructure, limited parental involvement, and neglect of

local settings are interrelated barriers to fair education in CHT (Chakma, 2024). Therefore, the problems of teaching English in Bandarban cannot be attributed to the teaching methods used in the classrooms. They are an example of a multifaceted relationship between language, culture, teacher's competence, teaching materials, technology, location and social status. This finding provides a solid ground to explore ideas and develop solutions that are contextually relevant to improve English language education in the next part.

English Teaching: Room for Improvement

The problems stated in the above section should not be viewed only as limitations but as important opportunities to improve teaching and learning of English language in secondary schools in Bandarban. Contextual approaches could include technology, training of educators, bilingual instruction, culturally sensitive teaching and partnerships between schools, communities and educational institutions. The prospects can enrich the national curriculum without hurting the existing educational structures considering the linguistic, geographical and socio-economic circumstances of the Chattogram Hill Tracts (CHT).

Digital Education Opportunities

The utilisation of digital technology to boost students' engagement with English beyond the traditional classroom context offers considerable promise. There are other ways to improve your listening, speaking, reading and vocabulary skills, such as using your mobile device, offline digital resources, instructional videos, audio programs, e-books and online English-learning platforms. This is especially pertinent in physically isolated places where access to additional educators, libraries or language resources may be limited. Technology-enhanced language learning allows students to learn English at their own pace and to access real English resources that may not be accessible in their local context. But in the delivery of digital education, equity must be the priority.

Access to devices, electricity and stable internet connectivity is patchy thus models that are completely online risk excluding the very learners they intend to aid. Distance learning institutions might be better served by blended tactics that include print, digital off-line and occasional online interactions. In Bangladesh, the ongoing growth of digital education infrastructure lays the framework for developing context-specific English-learning programs (Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Teachers' Professional Development

This is a terrific opportunity to help educators grow professionally. CPD activities can encourage teachers to move away from exam-based and grammar-based approaches to more communicative and student-based approaches. Training can be classroom, oral and auditory training, ongoing evaluation, tailored training and the correct use of educational materials.

Teachers in Bandarban should be developed to have multilingual teaching and culturally relevant teaching approaches. Teachers dealing with Indigenous children need opportunities to learn about their linguistic background and to create skills for teaching English in multilingual settings. ICTs can help expand the availability of training to teachers in remote schools through webinars, virtual communities of practice and digital resource-sharing platforms. Teacher training has been found to have the potential to improve English teaching in rural Bangladesh, but sustained institutional support is needed to transform training into classroom practice (Rahman et al., 2006).

Approaches that are Multilingual and Culturally Sensitive

The linguistic diversity of Bandarban can be a chance to reconfigure English instruction, not an educational failure. Learners may move back and forth between their Indigenous language, Bangla and English. Thus pedagogies can recognize these languages as resources for learning. The students' first language can be used for the purpose of understanding, vocabulary, and conceptual clarity while gradually increasing meaningful exposure to English. Using culturally responsive pedagogy to teach English makes the subject more relevant to students by bringing the local history, the natural backdrop, the community's dynamics, the cultural traditions of Indigenous peoples and social issues to which students can relate into the classroom. Examples, stories, texts and visual aids that are contextually relevant can help to boost student engagement and make it simpler to connect English to their daily life. Research on Indigenous education in the CHT points to the importance of incorporating local linguistic and cultural contexts for educational delivery (Gertsch et al., 2015; Chakma, 2024). Thus, a significant possibility might be the development of additional English resources that represent the experiences and cultural background of the Bandarban pupils. These materials would not entail the abandonment of the national curriculum, but may offer contextually suitable methods for achieving national educational goals.

Partnerships with Community and Institutions

Cooperation between schools and colleges, NGOs, institutions that train teachers and local communities can help to enhance support for teaching English. This can be helped by the higher education institutions through teacher training, mentoring, practical instruments, language clubs and educational researches. Where suitable, non-governmental organizations and development groups can sponsor digital resources, educator development and community-based education activities.

The school-community relationships are very important as parents and other members of the community can help create caring educational settings. English clubs, reading projects, peer-learning groups and other language activities can also provide opportunities for pupils to practice English beyond the normal classroom. Partnerships can support remote education institutions to overcome resource constraints. The link between the university and the school can create networks between English departments and secondary schools in Bandarban through ongoing teacher mentoring and digital academic support. Such initiatives have the potential to create lasting links between classroom practice, teacher development and research.

Education Technology and Artificial Intelligence: The Future

Recent breakthroughs in artificial intelligence (AI), digital language learning platforms and open educational resources (OER) are bringing up new possibilities for English instruction. AI-assisted systems can help learners expand their vocabulary, receive feedback on grammar, practice their pronunciation, get help with writing, and simulate dialogs. Teachers can then employ AI-augmented resources to develop tailored assignments, extra reading material and in-class activities.

Artificial intelligence should be viewed as a tool for instructors, not a replacement for teachers. The value of this resource depends on students' digital literacy as well as teachers' ability to evaluate the quality of AI-generated resources, linguistic accuracy, availability of the internet and devices, and ethical usage. Educators must be aware of issues of privacy, academic integrity, cultural sensitivity, and equitable access.

Free digital information is an intriguing choice since it could reduce dependence on costly supplemental materials. Curated OER repositories could include English reading, listening and speaking content for secondary level students. Some resources can be downloaded and shared through offline devices or digital libraries at schools in areas where internet connectivity is sparse.

The general findings show that there is no need of a totally distinct framework of teaching English in Bandarban. The contextually aware resources in the field need to be improved. Teacher professional development, multi-lingual and culturally sensitive pedagogy, contextually relevant materials, digital resources, community collaborations and well monitored educational technology together could cultivate the more inclusive English-learning environment. These Prospects offer a framework for strategic efforts which are pedagogically effective, culturally suitable, technologically possible and attentive to the geographical settings of Bandarban.

Discussion

Major patterns from data

Linguistics, cultural background, and the acquisition of English are related.

English Teaching Requirements & Teacher Qualifications

The quality of teachers is a critical element that connects curriculum goals to real classroom experiences. The sheer existence of a communicative curriculum does not ensure that the classrooms will be sites of communication. Teachers must be trained and provided with the right materials and institutional support. Recent research in the CHT shows that there are no competent teachers and teaching resources for instruction in Indigenous languages (Bhuiyan & Kirby, 2025). Professional development within the framework of English education has to include, besides general language skills, multilingual pedagogies, culturally responsive instruction, use of information and communication technology and communicative methods.

Gap between Technology and New Digital Opportunities

Digital technology is a challenge and an opportunity. Connection to technology, internet connection and technological literacy may also further widen the current educational gaps. Similarly, mobile learning, offline resources, open educational resources and well-designed digital platforms can increase students' exposure to the English language beyond the classroom. Therefore, technology should not be seen as a panacea; it is effective only when infrastructure, teacher training, and equal access are in place.

Bandarban within the Larger Bangladeshi Context

The problems found in Bandarban are representative of the other long-standing problems in the English education system in Bangladesh, such as stress on exams, limited communication, the need to improve the skills of the teachers and lack of resources (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). But these challenges of the nation take on distinctive features when studied inside a multilingual, culturally heterogenous and geographically isolated setting like Bandarban. Recent research on CHT suggests that in addition to formal schooling, the interplay of linguistic, social and cultural factors promotes English acquisition.

Strategic Ways to Get Better

The findings suggest the need for different and contextualized approaches to English language teaching in Bandarban, rather than a one-size-fits-all approach. Barriers include teachers and students, language, pedagogy, resources, technology, geography and socioeconomic considerations, and require cooperation and coordination at the classroom,

teacher, school and policy levels. This approach is in line with research which shows that successful implementation of English language reform in Bangladesh needs curriculum development, teacher training, institutional support and conducive conditions for implementation (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008; Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Interventions at the Classroom Level

Classroom instruction in English needs to be more participatory, learner-centred, and culturally appropriate. Students should be given more chances for vocal expression, auditory understanding, cooperation, group activities and authentic communication than grammar teaching and examination preparation. Local venues could make English language learning more relevant by using indigenous narratives and familiar social settings. Multilingual techniques can be used effectively to improve comprehension and create possibilities for English interaction.

These approaches are particularly useful in linguistically varied environments where learners may be switching between their indigenous languages, Bangla and English (Gertsch et al., 2015).

Teachers' Interventions

Teachers are the vital link between educational policy and classroom practice. CPD programs for teachers should focus on Communicative Language Teaching, multilingual education, culturally sensitive teaching, formative assessment and the integration of information and communication technology. Evidence from Bangladesh suggests that sustained teacher development can influence classroom practices when professional support is more than one-off training activities (Power et al., 2012; Power et al., 2017). Teacher development should include more than short-term seminars; it should include mentorship, peer learning, virtual communities of practice, and continuing follow-up assistance. Data from rural Bangladesh imply that teacher training, with sustained institutional support, may improve English teaching (Rahman et al., 2006).

Interventions at the School Level

Educational institutions should be well supported in terms of English-learning resources including libraries, supplemental reading materials, audio-visual aids and suitable digital infrastructure. There may also be English groups, reading schemes and collaborative learning activities to give other opportunity to utilize the language. For example, in rural schools, it may be easier to distribute offline digital information and low bandwidth learning tools than techniques requiring constant online connectivity. Working with universities, NGOs and teacher training authorities would boost teacher mentoring, resource creation and extracurricular English programming.

Policy-level interventions

English teaching in Bandarban must be integrated into comprehensive measures aimed at inclusive, multilingual and region sensitization. Nationally agreed-base strategy and curriculum should be flexible allowing for local adaptations where necessary but not to the extent of undermining the national standards in education. Policy initiatives should focus on distribution of educators, continued professional training, infrastructure upgrades, digital accessibility and culturally suitable educational resources. Research on Indigenous education in the CHT emphasizes the importance of identifying indigenous linguistic and cultural settings for educational progress (Chakma, 2024; Bhuiyan & Kirby, 2025).

A Model for Enhancing English Education in Bandarban

From the results a three-tier framework may be proposed:

Policy Implications

The findings have implications for some stakeholders of the teaching of English language at secondary level in Bandarban. The Ministry of Education should lead in spatially sensitive policies that reflect the linguistic, cultural and economical settings of the Chattogram Hill Tracts. The National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) should include culturally relevant examples, locally important resources, and more flexibility for multilingual education in the national curriculum, in line with the overarching tenets of Bangladesh's National Education Policy 2010 (NCTB, 2010). Local education authorities should pay attention to the fair distribution of teachers, the improvement of facilities, the supervision and the availability of digital resources in remote schools. Schools can enhance English clubs, reading projects, extra learning activities and work with local communities. Teachers need ongoing professional development in communicative language teaching, multilingual education, culturally responsive pedagogy and educational technology. Higher education institutions and teacher-training institutions can develop sustainable mentoring programs, teacher-training programs, resource development and evidence-based research partnerships with secondary schools in Bandarban. Digital inclusion, teacher development, culturally relevant learning materials and community-based education projects can be supported by development partners and NGOs.

Limitations and Future Research

Before interpreting the findings, there are several limitations of the study to consider. At the very outset, there is a clear lack of empirical studies on secondary level English language teaching and learning, mostly focusing on Bandarban. Therefore, the study employs data from a combination of Bandarban-specific literature and data from the Chattogram Hill Tracts and Bangladesh as a whole. This provides a broader understanding of the setting, but findings from wider geographical areas may not entirely represent the specific experiences of secondary schools in Bandarban.

Secondly, the study is conducted on secondary sources and qualitative content analysis only. Thus, the lived experiences, standpoints and pedagogical practices of students, teachers and school administrators cannot be fully captured. Documentary evidence may also reflect the objectives and constraints of the organizations or researchers who originally produced the sources.

The findings therefore should not be taken as a proxy for primary research conducted at the school level. Future studies can increase the evidence base through mixed-method or qualitative designs involving interviews with students and instructors, observation of classes, discussions in focus-groups, and systematic surveys. Comparative studies between urban and rural educational institutions, for example in Bandarban and other CHT areas, can be carried out to examine the effects of geography, language, culture and socio-economic factors in the teaching of English language. Longitudinal studies could measure the impact of teacher training, multilingual teaching strategies and digital learning programs over time.

Conclusion

There are various limitations of the present study that should be considered before discussing the results. In terms of secondary English language education and acquisition in Bandarban, empirical studies are relatively limited. Thus, the study uses data that are collected from the

combination of Bandarban related sources like as the Chattogram Hill Tracts and general sources throughout Bangladesh. Although this provides a broader background, the findings from broader geographical areas may not fully capture the unique experiences of secondary schools in Bandarban.

Second, the research is primarily based on secondary sources and qualitative content analysis. This means that it fails to reflect the lived experiences, perspectives and pedagogical practices of students, teachers and school leaders. Documentary evidence may also mirror the interests and limitations of the persons or scholars that originally developed the materials. The results are therefore not a replacement for primary research conducted within the educational institution. Future research can build on the evidentiary base of this study by mixed-method or qualitative approaches including interviews with students and teachers, classroom observations, focus group discussions and systematic surveys. Analytical evaluations of urban and rural educational institutions, particularly in Bandarban and other CHT areas, can explore the influence of geographical, linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic aspects on English language training. Longitudinal studies are capable of evaluating the effectiveness of teacher training, multilingual pedagogy, and digital education programs over a long period of time.

References

1. Alam, M. M. (2016). Challenges in implementing CLT at secondary schools in rural Bangladesh. *IIUC Studies*, 13, 93–102.
2. Bangladesh Bureau of Educational Information and Statistics. (2025). Bangladesh education statistics 2024. Ministry of Education, Government of Bangladesh.
3. Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, & UNICEF Bangladesh. (2023). Survey on children's education in Bangladesh 2021: Survey findings report. UNICEF Bangladesh.
4. Bhuiyan, A. A. M., & Kirby, D. (2025). Strengthening Indigenous language education: Teacher perspectives from the Chittagong Hill Tracts. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education*, 54(2). <https://doi.org/10.55146/ajie.v54i2.1090>
5. Chakma, E. (2024). Challenges of Indigenous children's primary education in the Chittagong Hill Tracts of Bangladesh: Insights from individuals working in education. *International Journal of Educational Management and Development Studies*, 5(1), 148–171. <https://doi.org/10.53378/353050>
6. English in Action. (2009). An audit of a range of English language teacher training and adult provision: Baseline Study 5. English in Action, Dhaka.
7. English in Action. (2014). Perceptions of English language learning and teaching among primary and secondary teachers and students participating in English in Action: Second cohort (2013). English in Action, Dhaka.
8. Gertsch, L., Hossain, A., Leer, J., & Parvin, S. (2015). Language use and literacy skills: READ baseline assessment and situational analysis, Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh. Save the Children.
9. Gay, G. (2018). Culturally responsive teaching: Theory, research, and practice (3rd ed.). Teachers College Press.
10. Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B. (2008). Will CLT bail out the bogeyman? *English Today*, 24(3), 16–24.
11. National Curriculum and Textbook Board. (2010). National Education Policy 2010. Government of Bangladesh.
12. Power, T., McCormick, R., & Asbeek-Brusse, E. (2017). A quasi-experimental study of the classroom practices of English language teachers and the English language

proficiency of students in primary and secondary schools in Bangladesh. *English in Action*.

13. Power, T., Shaheen, R., & Burton, S. (2012). *English in Action: School-based teacher development in Bangladesh*. *The Curriculum Journal*, 23(4), 503–516.
14. Rahman, A., Kabir, M. M., & Afroze, R. (2006). Effect of BRAC-PACE training on English language teachers of rural non-government secondary schools. BRAC Research and Evaluation Division.
15. Rahman, M. M., & Pandian, A. (2018). A critical investigation of English language teaching in Bangladesh: Unfulfilled expectations after two decades of Communicative Language Teaching. *English Today*, 34(4), 43–49.
16. UNESCO. (2024). Why multilingual education is key to intergenerational learning. UNESCO.
17. UNICEF Bangladesh. (2019). Many tracts, one community: UNICEF's work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts. UNICEF Bangladesh.
18. Yesmin, Q. F., & Singh, M. K. M. (2025). Navigating social and cultural barriers: Challenges and implications for Tribal students' communicative English language learning in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts. *Cogent Education*, 12(1), 2539988. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2539988>
19. Yesmin, Q. F., & Singh, M. K. M. (2026). Addressing challenges in communicative English language learning (CELL) among tribal students in Bangladesh: Insights and solutions. *rEFLections*, 33(1). <https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v33i1.288179>

