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ATTITUDES, INVOLVEMENT AND CHALLENGES OF CLASSROOM INTERACTION: INVESTIGATING THE PERCEPTIONS OF THE UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS OF ENGLISH, UNIVERSITY OF DHAKA, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

The current study examined the perceptions of classroom interaction of 40 final-year undergraduate students studying in the Department of English at the University of Dhaka in Bangladesh. The study aimed to investigate their attitudes towards classroom interaction, the extent to which they participated in it and the challenges they faced during classroom interaction. The study used a five-point Likert Scale questionnaire survey, which included 27 close-ended and an open-ended item. The data on the close-ended items were analyzed using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets (version 16.0.16924.20064.) and Google Forms (version 4.0.2). Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations and percentages) were calculated for each variable of the close-ended items. The open-ended data were analyzed thematically. The results revealed that the students had positive attitudes towards classroom interaction. They tended to participate more in student-to-student interaction than teacher-to-student interaction; however, the percentage of their participation in classroom interaction was not satisfactory. Inappropriate seating arrangement, limited time, dominance of a particular group of students, the teachers' preference of delivering lectures to communicative activities, overcrowded classrooms and affective constraints (e.g., lack of confidence, shyness and anxiety) were the major challenges that the students faced during classroom interaction. Recommendations were offered to teachers, students and institutional administrations to increase students' participation in classroom interaction. In addition, it acknowledged its limitations.

Keywords: Classroom Interaction, pedagogy, teacher-to-student interaction, student-to student interaction, effective learning, quantitative study.

INTRODUCTION

Classroom interaction is one of the most important concepts in Educational Studies. Especially with the advent of communicative language teaching (CLT) in the 70s and task-based language teaching

(TBLT) in the 80s, classroom interaction has started to be essential in education. Several studies have found the effectiveness of classroom interaction in learning, especially in language learning. According to Long's (1983) interaction hypothesis and Swain's (1985) output hypothesis, interaction helps learners develop their L2 competence by enabling them to negotiate meaning in the target language and have feedback based on which they modify their output. It also helps learners to develop their communicative competence. Ellis and Shintani (2014) consider classroom interaction an effective strategy for building communicative competence in learners. Despite its paramount importance in learning, there are several challenges in implementing effective classroom interaction. Several studies have tried to explain why some students face difficulties in classroom interaction, considering its importance.

In their quantitative study, Rashedi and Naderi (2012) found gender as a factor that influenced classroom interaction in the Iranian context. They found that male teachers interacted more with students of the same sex than female students. Also, in the study, male students were more interactive than their female counterparts. Anxiety from negative attitudes towards oneself was found to be another reason for the lack of classroom participation for students in Spain (Horwitz et al.,1986). However, a paucity of research has been conducted on the issues related to classroom interaction in Bangladesh. The purpose of the present paper was to investigate the attitudes, involvement and challenges the students of one of the prominent universities in Bangladesh faced during classroom interaction (teacher-to-student and student-to-student interaction), contributing to the research related to the classroom management system worldwide. It examined the perspectives of the final-year undergraduate students studying at the Department of English, University of Dhaka, towards classroom interaction. It aimed to provide necessary information derived from students' practical experiences about classroom interactions to institutional administrations, teachers and students to increase students' participation in classroom interaction.

RESEARCH QUESTION

This paper had set three research questions for the investigation to which it attempted to find answers:

1. What were their major attitudes towards Classroom interaction?
2. To what extent did the students participate in classroom interaction?
3. What were the major challenges they faced during classroom interaction?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Classroom Interaction
The term 'classroom interaction' has been an area of interest in pedagogy. According to Tsui (2001), "The term classroom interaction refers to the interaction between the teacher and learners, and amongst the learners, in the classroom" (p. 120). Sinclair and Coulthard (1975, as cited in Walsh, 2011) showed a three-part structure of classroom discourse known as IRF (Initiation, Response and Feedback). In this structure, a teacher initiates a topic or a question to which the students respond. Finally, the teacher gives feedback to the response. Acknowledging the importance of interaction in Second Language Acquisition (SLA), Ellis and Shintani (2014) asserted that interaction is "a source of input and opportunities for output, which foster[s] the internal processing that results in acquisition" (p. 195). Similarly, highlighting the importance of classroom interaction for ESL (English as Second Language) learners, Tuan and Nhu (2010) said that ESL learners need comprehensible input in the second language and should be set in a situation (e.g., classroom interaction) where they can use the language for communicative purposes. Studying two French students, Swain and Lapkin (1998) found that interaction in the form of dialogue helped them acquire linguistic knowledge. From the above discussion, it can be asserted that classroom interaction is an effective learning strategy in the classroom.

Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)
The language teaching field moved to an approach called the Communicative Approach in the late

1970s and early 1980s, shifting away from a linguistic structure-centered approach. This approach ultimately paved the way for a new language teaching method called Communicative Language Teaching or CLT. As the name suggests, communication was pivotal in teaching a language in class. The main goal of this method was to achieve 'Communicative Competence', a term coined by the North American anthropologist Dell Hymes in the late 1960s. It refers to the ability to use a language in its context appropriately and communicatively. In CLT, stress is given to communication. Students are provided with various opportunities in the classroom to interact with their classmates and teachers. Information gap activities, information transfer activities, role plays, problem-solving, and opinion-sharing activities are some of the activities in a typical CLT class (Richards & Rodgers, 1986). All these activities involve various kinds of communication among the students to learn a language. Classroom interaction, thus, becomes an integral part of CLT.

Sociocultural Theory

The importance of classroom interaction in education is backed by a strong theoretical basis. One such theory is a sociocultural theory proposed by Russian psychologist Vygotsky. In this theory, learning is seen as a social phenomenon where a child learns through interacting with people, events and objects (Vygotsky,1986). Vygotsky (1978) introduced the term zone of proximal development (ZPD), which refers to "The distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). According to Lantolf (2011), ZPD functions through collaborative meditation without which learning is unachievable (as cited in Ellis, 2015). 'Meditation' refers to a tool that supports learners and they cannot complete a task with their existing repertoire without it (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, as cited in Ellis, 2015). In other words, it refers to conscious interaction. This process can be metaphorically compared with a "scaffold". During the collaborative interaction between a student and a more knowledgeable peer (e.g., a teacher or more expert student), the more knowledgeable one initially provides and gradually removes it when the students can handle interaction independently without assistance. This process of learning is called "scaffolded learning" which is an important component of sociocultural theory.

Studies on Classroom Interaction

Considering the importance of classroom interaction in education, several studies investigated the challenges that students face in classroom interaction. In their quantitative study, Crombie et al. (2003) examined the perceptions of 510 undergraduate students of their classroom participation in Canada. The result suggested that among the students who considered themselves as active participants in the classroom, the number of females was lower than that of their male counterparts. Moreover, female students tended to have less favorable impressions of the male instructors than the male students who did not have such impressions of the female instructors.

Again, Sundari (2017) interviewed 20 experienced teachers from eight lower secondary schools in Jakarta, Indonesia, to explore their perspectives towards classroom interaction in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Most teachers consider large classrooms a barrier to classroom interaction since they cannot make every student speak in such classes most of the time. Content difficulty was found to be another reason that affected classroom interaction. Some teachers also found that the students' lack of proficiency in English hampered their participation in classroom interaction.

Mustapha et al. (2010) investigated the factors that discourage classroom participation by conducting a qualitative study on 81 undergraduate students in Malaysia. Among many factors, the study found the non-cooperative attitude of the classmates was the main reason discouraging classroom interaction. Negative attitudes of the teachers, students' limitations (i.e., lack of knowledge), inconvenient classroom settings and difficult classroom content were the second, third, fourth and fifth most influencing factors hampering classroom interaction respectively.

In their quantitative study on 75 university students studying Spanish as a foreign language, Horwitz et al. (1986) found the causes of anxiety that created communication apprehension in students,

hampering classroom interaction after examining the students' perceptions. The study found that 65% of the students were afraid to make mistakes in the classroom, which is the major cause of anxiety. The second major reason for anxiety was the fear of being left out because of the fast movement of classroom activities and speech (59%). Speaking in Spanish without preparation was the third main cause of anxiety (49%) among students. Other causes of anxiety were considering classmates better at different languages (38%), inability to understand teachers speaking Spanish (35%), considering classmates better Spanish speakers (31%), and speaking Spanish in front of other students (28%).

Adaba (2017) conducted a study on 45 students and 4 Teachers in Tullo Sangota Primary School, Ethiopia to assess the teachers' allocation of classroom interaction to develop oral skills and the problems students faced in classroom interaction. The study found that only 25% of the teachers use classroom interaction regularly. Time shortage was one of the main impediments for teachers in conducting classroom interaction. Moreover, the teachers scarcely used communicative activities in the classroom and limited themselves to textbooks, which hampered classroom interaction. For the majority of the students (88%), fear of making mistakes in English was found to be a challenge for the students to participate in classroom interaction. Lack of background knowledge, confidence, motivation, and a negative attitude towards classroom interaction were other reasons students avoid participating.

Hayahay and Alayon (2023), in their qualitative study, explored the teachers' perceptions of the challenges they faced in implementing classroom interaction in limited face-to-face classrooms in the new normal setting (post-COVID-19). The study was conducted on 10 teachers teaching junior and senior high school students in one public high school in Ozamiz City, Philippines. The study found that after the pandemic, the learning gap of the students, limited time allocated for the students, lack of student engagement in classroom activities and financial constraints on the part of the authority were the reasons for which the teachers faced difficulty in conducting classroom interaction.

Léger and Storch (2009) investigated the perceptions of classroom interaction of 32 students studying French at a university in Australia. According to them, fear of being judged by their classmates, lack of confidence, inadequate vocabulary and linguistic knowledge, inauthentic small group discussion (i.e., not speaking with native French speakers), and the dominance of a particular group of students in the classroom interaction were some of the hindrances for the students to communicate in the class.

It is evident from the literature review that classroom interaction plays an important role in learning, especially L2 learning. However, several studies in this field found several challenges in implementing interaction in the classroom. The majority of these studies considered only teacher-student talk. Moreover, such studies have scarcely been conducted in Bangladesh. Adding to the literature, the current study investigated the students' perceptions of classroom interaction (both teacher-student and student-student interaction), especially the challenges they faced during classroom interaction, in one of the universities in Bangladesh.

METHODOLOGY

Sampling
A total of 40 students of the Department of English, University of Dhaka, were sampled for the present study. The convenient sampling method was used to select the participants for this study. Among the participants, 20 (50%) were males and 20 (50%) females. All the participants were final-year undergraduate students from batch 14 of the department.

Instrument
The current study was predominantly a quantitative survey study. A questionnaire was used as a means of data collection. It comprised 29 items, where 28 were close-ended and one open-ended. The questionnaire was divided into four sections. The first section (A) contained one demographic question on gender. The rest of the questions were divided based on the three research questions of this study. The second section (B) contained four items on students' attitudes towards classroom

interaction. The third (C) section was designed with two questions to investigate the frequency of student participation in classroom interaction. The final section (D) contained 22 items on the challenges that students faced during classroom interaction. A five-point Likert Scale was used as a scale of measurement for this study. The scale ranged from *strongly agree* to *strongly disagree* for sections B and D and from *always* to *never* for section C. The responses were rated as *strongly agree* = 5, *agree*= 4, *neutral* = 3, *disagree* = 2, *strongly disagree* = 1 and *always*= 5, *often*= 4, *sometimes*= 3, *rarely*= 2, *never*=1. The questionnaire was reviewed by an expert in the education field to ensure its validity (content, construct and face validity).

Data Analysis
The close-ended data collected from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using Microsoft Excel Spreadsheets version 16.0.16924.20064. and Google Forms version 4.0.2. Descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) were calculated for the responses of the variables in sections B, C and D. The open-ended question in section D was analyzed thematically.

RESULT

Research Question 1
The results of research question 1 about the students' major attitudes towards classroom interaction are presented in Table 1. Descriptive statistics were employed on each item from section B of the questionnaire.

Table 1.
Students' Major Attitudes Towards Classroom Interaction (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
1	I think asking questions to teachers is important for learning.	47.5	45	7.5	0	0	4.4	0.63
2.	I think speaking with classmates in the classroom helps me understand a topic better in the class.	22.5	57.5	15	5	0	3.97	0.76
3.	Our teachers want us to ask questions to them in the classroom.	10	57.5	25	5	2.5	3.67	0.82
4.	Our teachers make us work in groups/pair for promoting student-talk in the class.	2.5	40	37.5	20	0	3.25	0.80

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree= 5

In Table 2, the results show that item 1 has the highest mean (M=4.4), where 92.5% (the sum of strongly agree and agree) of the students thought that asking teachers questions in the classroom is important for learning. Item 2 has the second-highest mean (M=3.97). 80% (the aggregated result of strongly agree and agree in item 2) of the students believed that speaking with fellow students in the

classroom helps to comprehend a topic.

Research Question 2
Table 2 presents the extent the students participated in classroom interaction. Descriptive statistics were employed on all the items in section C to find out the results.

Table 2.
Frequency of the Students' Participation in Classroom Interaction (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
6.	How often do you speak with your classmates in group /pair work in the class?	12.5	30	30	25	2.5	3.25	1.05
5.	How often do you initiate speaking with your teachers in the class?	0	17.5	55	27.5	0	2.9	0.67

Never= 1, Rarely= 2, Sometimes= 3, Often= 4, Always= 5

In Table 2, item 6 'How often do you speak with your classmates in group /pair work in the class?' has the highest mean (M=3.25). 42.5% (the aggregated result of always and often in item 6) tended to interact in group and pair work. Item 5 'How often do you initiate speaking with your teachers in the class?' has the second highest mean (M=2.9).

Research Question 3
In accordance with research question 3, Tables 3, 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.5 present the major challenges the students face during classroom interaction.

Table 3.
Students' Major Challenges During Classroom Interaction Regarding Cognition (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
7.	I feel anxious speaking with teachers in front of my classmates.	20	45	20	12.5	2.5	3.67	1.02
9.	I do not speak for fear of making errors/mistakes.	7.5	47.5	20	17.5	7.5	3.3	1.09

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
8.	In group interaction, I hesitate to speak with students I don't know well.	5	35	5	45	10	2.8	1.18
10.	I do not have enough knowledge of English to speak in the class.	0	5	15	55	25	2	0.78

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree= 5

In Table 3, item 3 'I feel anxious speaking with teachers in front of my classmates.' has the highest mean (M=3.7). 65% (aggregated result of strongly agree and agree in item 7) agreed in feeling anxious while speaking with the teacher in front of the class. Item 10 has the lowest mean (M=2), where 5% (aggregated result of strongly disagree and disagree) disagreed that they did not speak in the classroom for lack of knowledge in English.

Table 3.1.
Students' Major Challenges During Classroom Interaction Regarding Gender (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
13.	I think being male has given me extra confidence in speaking in the class. (Answer if male)	0	0	20	40	40	1.8	0.76
14.	I feel being female has made it difficult for me to speak in front of others. (Answer if Female)	0	5	0	65	30	1.8	0.69
11.	I feel uncomfortable speaking with teachers of the opposite gender.	5	2.5	0	50	42.5	1.77	0.97
12.	I feel uncomfortable speaking with classmates of the opposite gender.	0	7.5	5	42.5	45	1.75	0.86

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree= 5

Table 3.1 presents that items 13 and 14 have equal mean (M=1.8). 80% of males (the aggregated result of strongly agree and agree in item 13) disagreed that being male gave them extra confidence during classroom interaction, whereas 95% (the aggregated result of strongly agree and agree in item 14) disagreed that being female made it difficult for them to speak during classroom interaction. Item 12 'I feel uncomfortable speaking with classmates of the opposite gender' has the lowest mean (M=1.75).

Table 3.2.
Students' Major Challenges During Classroom Interaction Regarding Classroom Environment and Logistics (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
20.	Benches are not convenient for group/pair work.	62.5	32.5	2.5	2.5	0	4.55	0.67
19.	Class time is too limited for the students to get engaged in group/pair work.	17.5	60	12.5	10	0	3.85	0.83
18.	I am not comfortable to speak as I feel suffocated since my classroom is crowded.	17.5	32.5	30	17.5	2.5	3.45	1.06
16.	Students sitting in the front benches get more opportunity to speak with the teachers.	7.5	50	7.5	27.5	7.5	3.22	1.16
17.	Students sitting in the back are overlooked by the teachers for interaction.	2.5	32.5	30	20	15	2.87	1.11
15.	Most of my classmates are not supportive in group/pair interaction.	2.5	5	22.5	57.5	12 5	2.27	0.84

Strongly Disagree=1, Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Agree=4, Strongly Agree=5

Table 3.2 shows that item 20 has the highest mean (M=4.55), where 95% (sum of strongly agree and agree) agreed that the benches were inconvenient for group and pair work. Item 15 'Most of my classmates are not supportive in group/pair interaction.' has the lowest mean (M=2.27).

Table 3.3.
Students' Major Challenges During Classroom Interaction Regarding Pedagogic Tradition (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
23.	I think teachers prefer giving lectures more to initiating interaction with students.	17.5	47.5	22.5	12.5	0	3.7	0.91
22.	I am not used to speaking in the class as my previous institutions didn't encourage students speaking in the class.	12.5	42.5	12.5	27.5	5	3.3	1.15
21.	I am not interested in speaking in the class as it is not assessed in the exam.	2.5	22.5	20	45	10	2.62	1.02

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree= 5

Item 23 'I think teachers prefer giving lectures more to initiating interaction with students.' has the highest mean (M= 3.7) in table-3.3. Item 21 has the lowest mean (M=2.62), where 24% (sum of strongly agree and agree) students agreed that they were not interested in speaking as it is not assessed in the exam.

Table 3.4.

Students' Major Challenges During Classroom Interaction Regarding Classroom Hierarchy (Responses are Presented in Percentages and Means in Descending Order)

No.	Statements	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
24.	I think students with higher grades always take the floor to speak in the class.	20	52.5	12.5	12.5	2.5	3.75	1.00
26.	Because of their perceived 'social status', some of my classmates are not interested in speaking with other students.	10	47.5	15	22.5	5	3.35	1.09
25.	I think students with higher grades get special treatment from the teachers in teacher-student interaction.	12.5	35	20	27.5	5	3.22	1.14
27.	I am overlooked by the teachers and students for interaction because of my appearance.	7.5	5	27.5	27.5	32.5	2.27	1.19

Strongly Disagree= 1, Disagree= 2, Neutral= 3, Agree= 4, Strongly Agree= 5

In Table 3.4, item 24 has the highest mean (M=3.75), where 72.5% of students (the aggregated result of strongly agree and agree) thought that the students with higher grades tended to take the floor to speak in the classroom. Item 27 'I am overlooked by the teachers and students for interaction because of my appearance.' has the lowest mean (M=2.27).

27 out of 40 participants responded to the open-ended question in item 28 ' Is there any other challenge you face during classroom interaction?'. The results of the item are presented thematically in descending order below:

Affective Factors
Among the responses, 12 responses were found to contain various affective factors that affected their participation during classroom interaction. Two recurrent factors as such were 'anxiety' and 'shyness'.

Both of these factors were mentioned 3 times in the responses. One respondent said, "Anxiety has a role to play in barring me from speaking in the classroom… the very thought of speaking out loud comes with a creeping fear of making a fool out of myself.". Shyness was found to be another reason some students for not participate in classroom interaction. One student said, "...I feel shy and constantly think that as I am not a social or amiable person, I might fail to communicate lively. As a result, I can't make spontaneous interactions with teachers." 'Lack of confidence' (mentioned 2 times) was another affective reason for the students for not participating in classroom interaction. One student responded that lack of confidence was the reason for not being able to initiate a topic in the class. Fear of being judged for their regional accent was another challenge one student faced in classroom interaction. Thus, affective factors hampered the students' participation in classroom interaction in several ways.

Teachers' Attitude
Five responses from the students showed how the teachers' discouraging attitude had affected their participation in classroom interaction. One respondent said," Some teachers do not allow classroom interaction.". Another responded," Some teachers create [a] hostile environment in the classroom…". It made them scared of speaking in class. For one respondent, some teachers' interference while the students were speaking without letting them complete their speech created a problem for them to speak in the class. In addition, s/he said, "Teachers try not to [usually do not] accept any [critical] insights from the students as students are [not supposed to not have] critical thinking ability". Another student responded how some teachers strictly adhere to their personal views while being intolerant to different views and emotions of the students in classroom interaction. In the open-ended question, most respondents considered various affective factors such as lack of confidence, anxiety and shyness as the reasons they had not participated in classroom interaction.

Lack of Knowledge
Two students considered the lack of knowledge an impediment to classroom Interaction. One respondent said, "...while interacting with teachers I feel like I have [a] lack [of knowledge] of academic jargon to convey my thoughts…". Another said that the lack of knowledge (e.g., the knowledge of subject and language) had been a challenge for them to speak in class.

Classmates' Attitude
Two students faced problems in classroom interaction due to their negative classmates. One respondent said, "There are some predominant circles in the batch who try to dominate the whole class indirectly and sometimes mean to the students they do not like". While another said, "Everyone [the classmates] is judgmental".

Contextual Constraints
Classroom logistics (time) and large classrooms did not encourage classroom interaction for the two students. One respondent considered inadequate classroom time to be one of the barriers to participating in classroom interaction. Another student said that they had faced difficulties participating in classroom interaction when s/he had been compelled to sit in the back benches due to the large classrooms. Sitting in the back of the classroom, it had been difficult for them to see or hear the teacher.

DISCUSSION

Students' Attitude Towards Classroom Interaction
The current study indicated that the students had positive attitudes towards classroom interaction. Most students (above 90%) believed that interacting with the teachers and students in the classroom benefits learning. The student's attitude towards classroom interaction aligns with Vygotsky's (1978) ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development), according to which learning is facilitated when a learner interacts with a more knowledgeable individual (e.g., the teacher). However, this positive attitude contradicts the classroom practices. Although most students (more than 60%) thought that the teachers wanted them to ask questions in class, less than 50% of students agreed that the teachers

used practices (e.g., group and pair activities) to promote classroom interaction. One possible reason for this is the large classroom size, as Roy (2016) found that large classrooms were one of the major impediments to implementing group activities in the classrooms in Bangladesh context.

Students' Participation in Classroom Interaction

Moreover, the study revealed that although more than 40% of the students tended to participate in group/pair activities if conducted, only a few would initiate speaking with the teacher which had the lowest mean score. It means the students tended to engage more in student-to-student interaction than teacher-to-student interaction. However, in both student-to-student and teacher-to-student interactions, the percentage of the student's participation was less than 50%. It means there was still a lack of the students' participation in classroom interaction. These findings align with the finding of Hyland (2004) who found that speaking skill was the least practiced skill in the classroom.

Challenges of Classroom Interaction

In addition, the study found items on the challenges of classroom interaction having the top two highest mean scores were seating arrangement and time respectively. Both of them are related to the logistics of the classroom. According to the students, the seating arrangement in the classroom and limited classroom time discouraged group/pair work. In the open-ended question, one student responded that sitting in the back had deterred him/her from communicating with the teacher due to the large classroom. Also, several students did not get the opportunity to speak in class due to time shortages. These findings align with several previous studies related to the topic. For example, according to Barman et al. (2006), the seating arrangement discourages group/pair work in Bangladesh. Similarly, Mustapha et al. (2010) found that sitting in the back caused problems for the students who came late to the classroom in classroom interaction in Indonesia. Hayahay and Alayon (2023) found that limited classroom time affected classroom interaction in the Philippines. Traditional seating arrangements where students sit in rows of fixed benches facing the teachers might have caused this problem as they are not supportive for every student to communicate with the teachers and among themselves; especially in large classrooms. Moreover, one provable reason for limited time affecting classroom interaction is that the teachers focused more on completing the topics by delivering lectures than engaging students in classroom interaction (e.g., through group/pair work). The similarities between the studies show that the common problems that Asian students share in classroom interaction are related to inadequate logistics. The third major challenge was the dominance of a certain group of students having comparatively higher grades over classroom interaction. The current study revealed that most of the students usually did not get the opportunity to speak in class since only a particular number of students always spoke in the class who happened to have higher grades. In response to the open-ended question, one student said the same thing adding that the group of students showed a negative attitude to other students. Léger and Storch (2009) also found the dominance of a proficient group of students in group/pair work affecting other students' participation in classroom interaction at a university in Australia. One possible reason for this dominance affecting classroom interaction, with which Léger and Storch (2009) also agreed, is that the proficient students who perform academically well are more confident in speaking which sometimes leads to overpowering other students in terms of participating in classroom interaction. The fourth major challenge was the teachers' tendency to deliver lectures more than encouraging classroom interaction. It reflects the traditional role of a teacher in Bangladesh who is considered the central figure in the classroom to whom the students listen passively (Roy, 2016). This finding is supported by Adaba (2017) who found that the teachers scarcely used communicative activities in a classroom in Ethiopia. Limited time is a possible reason for the teachers to prefer giving lectures to communicative activities to complete the topics within time. The fifth major adversity was overcrowded classrooms. Several students opined that they felt suffocated in the overcrowded classroom. Consequently, they tended to stay away from any kind of interaction in the classroom. According to Iftekhar (2014), "Large class size is a big problem to CLT In Bangladesh" (p. 201). In Bangladesh, the large classes not only deter students from speaking in the class but also make some of the students feel uncomfortable speaking in a congested classroom. Finally, the open-ended data revealed that most students considered various affective factors such as lack of confidence, shyness and anxiety as the reasons they had not participated in classroom interaction. The data showed why the students

experienced such emotional strains. Fear of being judged by fellow students and teachers for reasons such as having a regional accent, introverted psyche and lack of knowledge of the topics taught in the class were reasons why some students did not participate in classroom interaction. Some students blamed the teachers for taking the role of a dominating figure in the class in the open-ended question which also might have caused anxiety and lack of confidence in the students. This scenario is very common in Bangladesh and other South Asian countries where classrooms are still teacher-centered and students always have to think multiple times before they contribute to the class as they are not considered to be active participants in the class most of the time. Liu (2009) found similar factors that influence classroom interaction in China. According to him, English proficiency (associated with confidence in the students), learning styles, personality (e.g., introverted and extroverted personalities), teacher's attitude etc. have significant influence on classroom interaction.

CONCLUSION

The current study investigated the perceptions, involvement and challenges the final-year undergraduate students of English at the University of Dhaka faced during classroom interaction. It was mostly quantitative research where participants were asked several close-ended questions along with an open-ended question. Data from the close-ended questions were analyzed by calculating descriptive statistics (percentages, means, and standard deviations) using Microsoft Excel and Google Forms, whereas data from the open-ended question were analyzed thematically. Most respondents believed that classroom interaction facilitates learning. Their positive attitude towards the importance of classroom interaction aligned with the attempt made in the 'Review of the Literature' section to establish the importance of classroom interaction. The students tended to participate more in student-to-student interaction than in teacher-to-teacher interaction: although the percentage of the students' participation in classroom interaction was not satisfactory. In terms of the responses to the close-ended questions, the study revealed that inappropriate seating arrangement, limited time, the dominance of a particular group during classroom interaction, the teachers' preference to deliver lectures to communicative activities and overcrowded classrooms were the major factors that affected the student's participation in classroom interaction. On the other hand, the responses to the open-ended question revealed that affective constraints such as anxiety, lack of confidence and shyness were the major reasons for some students that deterred them from participating in classroom interaction.

Recommendations
Based on the results and discussions, some recommendations were suggested in the current study to improve the classroom interaction conditions:

1. Teachers should use interactive activities in the classroom, such as asking questions (both displays, referential and critical questions) based on the lecture, assigning group presentations, and conducting discussions on the topics taught, to encourage students to speak in the class. Moreover, they can ask the students probing questions. This is a type of questions/statements that help teachers elicit more accurate answers from students. According to Eggen and Kauchak (2006), this type of question helps students support their answers while thinking more in-depth. Another way is repeating the question when no one answers to ensure everyone has listened and understood the question.
2. Teachers should ensure that every student gets an equal opportunity to speak in class. One way to do it is to ask questions to students from every section of the classroom (first, middle and last sections). Students should understand that being articulate is not necessarily related to higher grades. They should contribute to classroom interaction regardless of their academic grades.
3. Institutional administrations can rearrange their classroom seating and time arrangements to support classroom interaction. Instead of traditional seating arrangements, pod(pair) seating arrangements can be set in the classroom since this type of seating arrangement is advantageous for group/pair work.
4. For time management, extra time (e.g., 10/15 minutes) can be allocated for each class for

classroom discussion. Teachers should allow their students to express their thoughts and opinions in classroom discussions.

5. In large classrooms, the students should be divided into multiple sub-groups so that the burden on the teachers is mitigated and all the students can speak. Also, more classrooms should be built for the students as there is a shortage of classrooms in proportion to the number of students, a common phenomenon in Bangladesh.

6. Teachers should be more careful in choosing words while addressing their students. They should respect students as individuals, making them feel that their views and ideas also matter. Teachers should be flexible in dealing with the diverse ideologies of the students without imposing their personal views on them. They should scaffold the less confident students by initially motivating and helping them to interact in the class until they participate in the classroom interaction voluntarily. Moreover, all the students should understand that making mistakes is natural in learning. So, they should not judge each other if anyone makes mistakes and uplift one another in the class so that everyone in the class participates in classroom conversation.

Limitations
The limitations are mentioned below for further research:

1. The sample size was relatively small, including only 40 final-year undergraduate students. As a result, it is difficult to draw a general conclusion for a larger number of students. Further research can be conducted on the topic, including students from other years, to have a larger perspective of the students towards classroom interaction.

2. Moreover, the study only investigated the students' perceptions of classroom interaction. However, it is important to investigate the teachers' perceptions of classroom interaction (e.g., the challenges they face conducting classroom interaction) to examine the problem from both sides. This will provide the study with another dimension. So, further research can sample the teachers as well.

3. Also, to solidify the current study's results, variables relating to individual differences (e.g., learning style, aptitude, cognitive, metacognitive strategies), socio-cultural factors (e.g., cultural values, economic conditions), and the actual classroom behavior of the students should be addressed which were not addressed in the current study.

4. The results (mainly from quantitative data) did not elaborately clarify the problem, which qualitative data, such as interviews (semi-structured or unstructured) and observation, would have provided. Researchers can extend the study by conducting further research following a mixed methods design and triangulating quantitative (e.g., close-ended questionnaire and checklist) and qualitative (e.g., interview and observation) data to have an in-depth and elaborated understanding of the research problem.

Despite the limitations, the study can help improve the teaching practices, classroom environment and the student's participation in classroom interaction. However, additional research is needed to better examine the problem to gain both generalized and in-depth results.

NOTES

1. Display questions = "known-information question" by the teacher to elicit specific responses.
2. Referential questions = "information-seeking question" by the teacher to elicit responses the teacher doesn't know beforehand.

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