

# Addressing Challenges in Communicative English Language Learning (CELL) among Tribal Students in Bangladesh: Insights and Solutions

QUAZI FARZANA YESMIN

MANJET KAUR MEHAR SINGH\*

*School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia*

\*Corresponding author email: [manjeet@usm.my](mailto:manjeet@usm.my)

---

<b>Article information</b>	<b>Abstract</b>
<p><b>Article history:</b> Received: 9 Feb 2025 Last revised: 16 Mar 2026 Accepted: 18 Mar 2026 Available online: 30 Mar 2026</p> <p><b>Keywords:</b> Communicative English Language Learning (CELL) Tribal students English as a Foreign Language Language learning challenges</p>	<p><i>This study examines the challenges faced by tribal students in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh in achieving proficiency in Communicative English Language Learning (henceforth, CELL). In Bangladesh, English as a Foreign Language (EFL) is predominantly taught as an academic subject, which limits its practical application in real-life communication. This challenge is particularly pronounced among tribal students in the CHTs, where linguistic diversity, geographical remoteness, limited educational resources, and economic struggles create barriers to language acquisition. This mixed-methods study examines the challenges faced by higher secondary tribal students in the Khagrachari district regarding the four core language skills within the context of CELL, using research instruments such as questionnaires, focus group interviews, and classroom observations. Thirty tribal students participated in surveys, complemented by two focus group interviews for deeper insights. The findings reveal persistent listening, speaking, reading, and writing struggles attributed to limited English exposure, cultural differences, and inadequate instructional materials. Rural students encounter even more significant difficulties due to restricted resources and fewer opportunities for English engagement outside the classroom. Grounded in Vygotsky's social constructivism (1978), which emphasizes social and cultural interactions in learning, the study highlights the need for interactive and collaborative CELL approaches to address these challenges. To mitigate these challenges, the study suggests implementing culturally responsive teaching methods, enhancing access to diverse and contextually relevant learning materials, and incorporating structured communicative activities such as role-plays, group discussions, and practical exercises. These interventions aim to improve the English proficiency of tribal students, facilitating their academic achievement and social integration in an increasingly competitive linguistic landscape.</i></p>

---

## INTRODUCTION

Traditionally, language teaching focused on grammar and vocabulary; however, the rise of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) has shifted this focus towards interactive learning

and practical application, emphasizing communicative competence over rote memorization (Littlewood, 2012). CLT emerged as part of a broader global shift in language education that prioritized functional communication rather than structural accuracy alone.

In many EFL and postcolonial education systems, such as Bangladesh (Hossain & Al Hasan, 2023), English language teaching has been shaped by historical, political, and educational transitions following British colonial rule (Saleheen, 2025). As a former British colony, Bangladesh might be expected to show faster adoption of communicative-based language teaching approaches. However, colonial educational legacies in Bangladesh have traditionally reinforced teacher-centered instruction, rote memorization, and examination-oriented learning, which have slowed the implementation of communicative language teaching reforms (Jahan, 2023). These historical influences continue to shape classroom practices in Bangladesh, where English is often taught as an academic subject for examinations rather than as a language used for daily real-life communication.

CLT aims to improve learners' abilities to use English in real-life contexts, gaining popularity in various Asian educational systems to enhance practical language skills (Vongxay, 2013). Additionally, Communicative Language Learning (CLL) promotes communicative competence through interactive methods such as discussions and role-playing (Hymes, 1972; Penfield, 1987). Combining these strategies, particularly within Communicative English Language Learning (CELL), has improved students' English communication skills (Kirkwood & Rae, 2011; Taridi & Sanjaya, 2018).

Despite the benefits of CLT and CELL, challenges remain in their implementation, especially in countries like Bangladesh, where traditional teaching methods prevail, particularly in rural areas (Mahmud, 2024; Rahman, 2015). While educators and policymakers acknowledge CELL's potential to improve communication skills, these methods have not consistently enhanced students' English proficiency (Kirkwood & Rae, 2011; Taridi & Yamin, 2016).

### **CELL by tribal students in Bangladesh**

Bangladesh is home to over 54 tribal communities in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs), where more than 41 Indigenous languages coexist alongside Bengali (IWGIA, 2021; Rashid, 2018). According to the Population and Housing Census (2022), approximately 1.65 million tribal people live in Bangladesh, with more than half (55.76%) residing in the three CHT districts—Rangamati, Khagrachari, and Bandarban (The Business Post, 2022). This region, home to around 1.6 million people, includes nearly one million individuals from eleven tribal communities whose languages, traditions, and cultural identities contribute to national diversity (Tancred, 2019). Despite this diversity, tribal students continue to face educational inequalities, particularly in English language learning.

In Bangladesh, CELL has been introduced through national curriculum reforms to promote communicative competence. However, empirical studies show that CELL implementation remains largely theoretical rather than practical in many rural and tribal institutions (Ali & Walker, 2014; Hamid & Baldauf, 2011). Although curriculum documents promote communicative

teaching, classroom instruction in many Bangladeshi schools and colleges continues to rely on teacher-centered pedagogy, memorization, and examination-based assessment. In CHT, this implementation gap is more pronounced due to geographical isolation, limited teaching materials, and a shortage of trained English teachers capable of applying communicative pedagogy (Begum et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2024).

In practice, CELL-based activities such as group discussion, role play, peer interaction, and authentic communication tasks are rarely used consistently in tribal-dominated schools. English is often taught as an academic subject for examination purposes rather than as a functional communication tool for daily interaction (Rahman, 2015). Tribal students generally have limited exposure to English outside the classroom due to restricted access to English-speaking environments and limited English-language media exposure (Tancred, 2019). Many tribal students also learn English as a foreign language after acquiring their indigenous language and Bengali, which can increase linguistic processing challenges during communicative classroom activities.

Social and cultural factors further influence CELL participation. Tribal students may experience lower confidence in classroom interaction due to differences in cultural communication norms, limited exposure to English, and classroom practices that prioritize individual written assessment over oral communication (Yesmin & Singh, 2025). These factors reduce learner engagement in communicative activities and weaken opportunities for developing practical English proficiency.

Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism provides a theoretical explanation for improving CELL implementation among tribal learners. The theory emphasizes that knowledge is constructed through social interaction and collaborative learning (Vygotsky, 1978). Applying Vygotskian principles through structured peer interaction, scaffolding, and teacher-guided communicative tasks can help tribal students gradually develop English communication skills despite limited exposure outside the classroom.

Therefore, improving CELL implementation in Bangladesh requires not only curriculum reform but also teacher training, resource allocation, and culturally responsive pedagogy to support tribal students' communicative competence and educational inclusion.

### **Implementation and challenges of cell in Bangladesh**

The implementation of CELL in Bangladesh is grounded in global developments in communicative language teaching that emphasize functional language use rather than structural grammar learning (Hymes, 1972; Nunan, 2001). In Bangladesh, CELL was introduced as part of national curriculum reforms during the late 1990s and early 2000s through the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) to improve students' communicative competence and move away from traditional grammar-translation methods that had dominated English education since colonial times (Ali & Walker, 2014; Amin, 2022; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

Although CELL is considered a national curriculum policy, its implementation remains inconsistent across different regions and school contexts. In theory, CELL promotes

learner-centered teaching, authentic communication, and real-life language use. However, in practice, many classrooms still follow teacher-centered instruction, rote memorization, and examination-oriented assessment systems. These traditional practices limit opportunities for meaningful communication in English classrooms and weaken the practical application of communicative language learning principles (Ali & Walker, 2014; Amin, 2022; Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

The implementation challenges are particularly visible in marginalized and geographically isolated regions such as the CHTs. This region is home to diverse tribal populations with distinct linguistic and cultural identities (IWGIA, 2021; Rashid, 2018). According to national census data, a large proportion of tribal communities live in the CHT districts, where educational access and English exposure are comparatively limited (Tancred, 2019; The Business Post, 2022). These sociolinguistic realities influence how students engage with CELL-based instruction.

From a language skill perspective, CELL emphasizes the balanced development of listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, consistent with communicative competence theory (Hymes, 1972). Listening and reading are considered receptive skills, while speaking and writing are productive skills (Masduqi, 2016; Sreena & Ilankumaran, 2018). Listening is particularly important because it provides essential input for language acquisition and requires active cognitive processing for comprehension (Karahana, 2022). Speaking is a complex productive skill that requires fluency, grammatical accuracy, and vocabulary control for spontaneous communication (Nunan, 2001; Wang et al., 2024). Reading and writing skills are essential for academic success in EFL contexts, where English is often used for educational advancement rather than daily communication (Suvin, 2020).

Despite these theoretical goals, tribal students often experience limited opportunities to practice English communication skills. Many tribal learners use indigenous languages at home and learn Bengali as a second language before learning English as a foreign language, which can create additional linguistic challenges in communicative classrooms. These factors reduce student confidence in speaking activities and limit participation in interactive classroom tasks (Yesmin & Singh, 2025).

Research also indicates that socio-economic conditions significantly affect CELL implementation. Schools in rural and tribal regions often face shortages of learning materials, trained English teachers, and technological teaching aids. These limitations restrict the use of interactive communicative activities and reinforce traditional teaching practices (Ali & Walker, 2014; Amin, 2022). As a result, students often focus more on examination performance rather than on developing practical communication skills (Hamid & Baldauf, 2008).

From a theoretical perspective, Lev Vygotsky's Social Constructivism provides a framework for understanding these challenges. Vygotsky (1978) emphasized that learning occurs through social interaction and collaborative knowledge construction. In the context of CELL, collaborative learning tasks and guided teacher support can help students develop English communication skills despite limited exposure outside the classroom (Shurovi, 2014). This approach is

particularly relevant for supporting tribal students who face linguistic and cultural barriers in mainstream classroom environments.

Overall, while CELL has been adopted as a national language education policy in Bangladesh, its practical implementation remains uneven. Addressing teacher training gaps, improving learning resources, and adopting culturally responsive teaching strategies are necessary to improve English language learning outcomes among tribal students in Bangladesh.

### Conceptual framework

According to Vygotsky’s (1978) Social Constructivism theory, learners learn a second or foreign language effectively through constant social and cultural interactions. Social interactions may include classroom practices, students’ interactions with their peers and teachers, while cultural interactions may include the influence of the tribal students’ native languages, local dialects, their own cultural norms and practices, and exposure to English. For example, Marjerison and Yang (2022) observed that differences in motivations for English language acquisition among speakers of various dialects are closely connected to classroom social interactions and practices, emphasizing the role of social networks in shaping learners’ motivation. On the other hand, cultural interactions also play a crucial role in language learning, as norms, practices, and varying exposure to English shape student engagement. Hamid and Baldauf (2013) emphasize valuing diverse English varieties over standardized norms, arguing that recognizing students’ linguistic and cultural backgrounds fosters inclusivity and enhances classroom engagement. These social and cultural interactions directly influence learners’ language skills, i.e., receptive and productive skills. The present study investigates the challenges that the tribal students encounter in CELL, which arise from social and cultural interactions and directly affect their language skills in different ways.

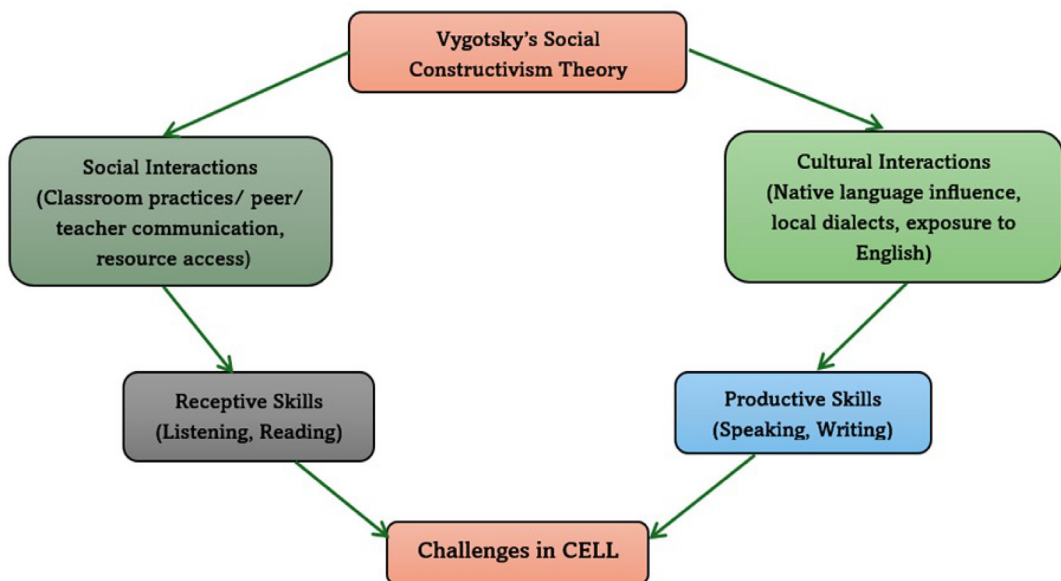


Figure 1 Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 illustrates how Vygotsky’s Social Constructivism Theory frames social and cultural interactions as influencing receptive skills (listening, reading) and productive skills (speaking, writing), which collectively lead to the challenges faced in CELL.

### Research objectives

The present study delineates two primary objectives aimed at enhancing the understanding of CELL among higher secondary tribal students in the Khagrachari district of Bangladesh:

- i. To identify the multifaceted challenges that tribal students in the CHTs face in developing receptive skills, i.e., listening and reading, within the context of CELL.
- ii. To identify the multifaceted challenges that tribal students in the CHTs face in developing productive skills, i.e., speaking and writing, within the context of CELL.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research design and sampling

This investigation employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies to comprehensively explore the challenges faced by tribal students in their English language learning endeavors. The study focused on higher secondary tribal students residing in the Khagrachari district, situated within the CHTs of Bangladesh. A random sampling technique was followed to select two colleges representing diverse urban and rural educational environments. Specifically, one college was in an urban area, while the other was in a rural context. The participant cohort comprised thirty tribal students, fifteen randomly selected from each institution.

Since the participants were aged 16–17, rigorous ethical procedures were followed. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the college authorities, and informed consent was secured from the students’ guardians with the assistance of the respective institutions. This ensured that the participation of all students was voluntary, safeguarded, and in compliance with ethical research standards.

### Data collection instruments and procedures

The data collection process adhered to the explanatory sequential design framework articulated by (Creswell et al., 2003), which delineates a two-phase approach encompassing quantitative and qualitative data collection, as summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1**  
**Data collection instruments and procedures**

Phase	Study Method	Instruments
Phase- I	Quantitative	Questionnaires
Phase-II	Qualitative	FGIs Class observation

## Questionnaires

The ten-item questionnaire was adapted from the works of (F. Islam & Akhter, 2020; Islam et al., 2019; Ismeti, 2022; Khasawneh, 2021). A five-point Likert scale ranging from “Strongly Agree” to “Strongly Disagree” facilitated nuanced responses. To ensure the integrity and authenticity of the data collected, the researcher personally distributed the questionnaires during campus visits, provided necessary guidance, and collected the completed surveys immediately in a conducive environment.

## Focus Group Interviews (FGIs)

The second data collection phase involved conducting focus group interviews (FGIs) to gather qualitative insights. Two sessions were organized (one in each college), each comprising six students, ensuring all twelve students’ participation. The semi-structured interviews, conducted in a supportive and comfortable setting, aimed to explore students’ experiences with CELL, the challenges they face, and the coping strategies they employ. The interviews were guided by nine questions adapted from previous studies (e.g., Alam, 2016; Getie, 2020). Thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes, and follow-up questions were utilized to elicit comprehensive responses, thereby enriching the understanding of the specific challenges and coping mechanisms experienced by tribal students in urban and rural contexts.

## Class observation

The class observation component was designed to gather empirical data regarding the challenges faced by tribal students in their pursuit of communicative English at the two selected colleges, one in an urban area and the other in a rural setting. The observation checklist was adapted from established methodologies in prior research (e.g., Farooq, 2015; Islam et al., 2019; Ismeti, 2022; Khasawneh, 2021; Tootkaboni, 2019) to ensure relevance to the specific educational context of the CHTs. This observational data provided critical insights into the instructional dynamics and contextual factors influencing the learning experiences of tribal students.

## Data analysis and interpretation

### Quantitative analysis (Questionnaire)

This section analyzes the data collected from 30 tribal students in the Khagrachari district in the CHTs. It focuses on the difficulties tribal students encounter in learning communicative English in listening, reading, speaking, and writing comprehension.

**Table 2**  
**Reliability statistics**

Cronbach’s Alpha	Cronbach’s Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.833	.839	10

Table 3 presents the reliability of the questionnaire items. Cronbach’s Alpha for the 10-item scale was 0.833, indicating high internal consistency in measuring the difficulties tribal students face in EFL learning. Since values above 0.7 are acceptable and above 0.8 are considered good, this result confirms the reliability of the scale. The standardized Alpha value rose slightly to 0.839, further supporting the consistency of the items. Overall, the coefficients demonstrate that the items are well correlated and provide a coherent measure of students’ EFL learning challenges.

To summarize, the item statistics indicate that EFL learners in this sample had a moderate and uniform perception of difficulty in listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. Based on the data collected, the following table and pie charts illustrate the challenges tribal students face in learning English.

**Table 3**  
**Summary of challenges faced by tribal students**

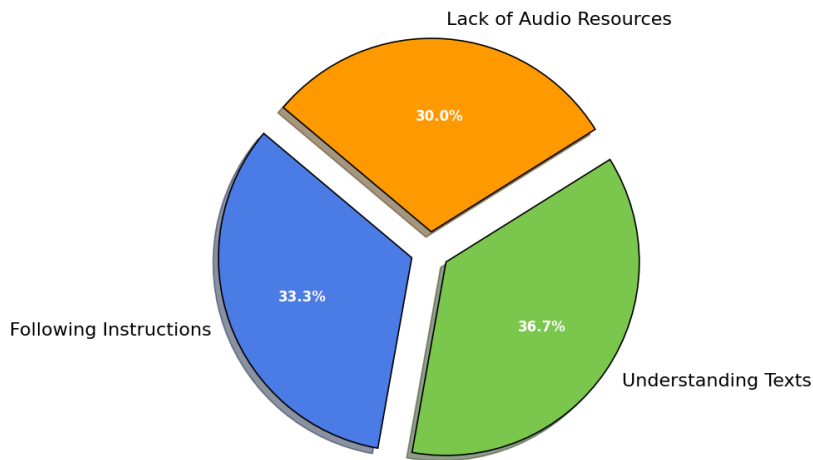
Skill	Statement	Response	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<b>Receptive Skills</b>						
<b>Listening</b>	1. I face difficulties in following the instructions of EFL teachers while listening in English.	SA	10 (33.3%)	2.87	1.07	Neutral (tending toward Agree)
		A	10 (33.3%)			
		N	6 (20.0%)			
		D	4 (13.3%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	2. I face difficulties in understanding the texts when listening in English.	SA	12 (40.0%)	2.97	1.11	Neutral (tending toward Agree)
		A	10 (33.3%)			
		N	3 (10.0%)			
		D	5 (16.7%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	3. There is a lack of sufficient audio materials for listening practices in the EFL classes.	SA	8 (26.7%)	3.67	1.03	Agree
		A	10 (33.3%)			
		N	9 (30.0%)			
D		1 (3.3%)				
SD		2 (6.7%)				
Total		30 (100%)				
<b>Reading</b>	4. I face difficulties in reading English texts fluently.	SA	8 (26.7%)	3.83	0.98	Agree
		A	13 (43.3%)			
		N	5 (16.7%)			
		D	4 (13.3%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	5. I face difficulties in understanding the meaning of the reading materials.	SA	7 (23.3%)	3.87	0.93	Agree
		A	15 (50.0%)			
		N	5 (16.7%)			
		D	3 (10.0%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			

Skill	Statement	Response	Frequency (%)	Mean	SD	Interpretation
<b>Productive Skills</b>						
<b>Speaking</b>	6. English speaking in the EFL classes gets less importance.	SA	6 (20.0%)	2.70	1.03	Neutral (slightly Disagree)
		A	13 (43.3%)			
		N	7 (23.4%)			
		D	4 (13.3%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	7. I face difficulties in forming correct sentences in English.	SA	12 (40.0%)	4.03	1.00	Agree
		A	11 (36.7%)			
		N	4 (13.3%)			
		D	2 (6.7%)			
		SD	1 (3.3%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	8. I face difficulties in making proper English pronunciation.	SA	10 (33.3%)	3.97	0.99	Agree
		A	14 (46.7%)			
		N	3 (10.0%)			
D		2 (6.7%)				
SD		1 (3.3%)				
Total		30 (100%)				
<b>Writing</b>	9. I face difficulties in expressing my thoughts in English writing.	SA	10 (33.3%)	4.03	0.89	Agree
		A	12 (40.0%)			
		N	7 (23.4%)			
		D	1 (3.3%)			
		SD	0 (0.0%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			
	10. I face difficulties in spelling correctly in English writing.	SA	12 (40.0%)	3.97	0.94	Agree
		A	7 (23.3%)			
		N	6 (20.0%)			
		D	4 (13.3%)			
		SD	1 (3.3%)			
		Total	30 (100%)			

Table 3 provides an in-depth overview of the challenges faced by tribal students in learning EFL, specifically across the key language skills, receptive skills (listening, reading), and productive skills (speaking, writing). The data is based on respondents' agreement with statements reflecting common difficulties these students encounter. Each section of the analysis includes frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation, and interpretation, providing insight into both the severity and prevalence of these challenges. By examining the findings through the lens of the four essential skills, Table 3 illustrates the specific barriers encountered by tribal students. Responses are measured on a Likert scale of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD), with percentages shown in parentheses. A detailed analysis of the outcomes for each skill is presented below.

## Receptive skills

### (i) Listening challenges



**Figure 2** Listening challenges

#### ***Following instructions***

The data indicate that tribal students encounter substantial difficulties comprehending English language instructions provided by EFL teachers, with 66.6% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with this assertion. While this challenge is prevalent, it is not uniformly severe, as evidenced by a mean score of 2.87 and a standard deviation of 1.07. This suggests that while comprehension issues exist, they may vary in intensity among students. The underlying causes of this challenge likely include limited exposure to the English language and insufficient opportunities for listening practice, both of which are critical components of effective language acquisition.

#### ***Understanding texts***

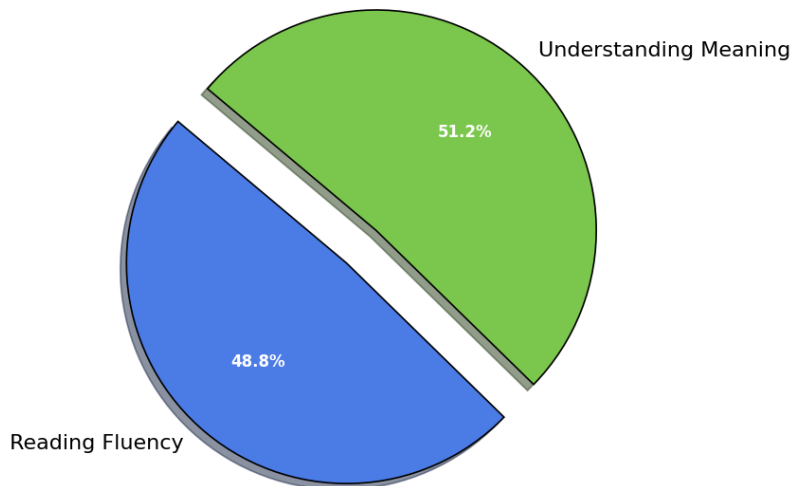
A further complication arises in the realm of understanding spoken texts. A notable 73.3% of respondents reported that tribal students struggle to comprehend oral English texts, reflected in a mean score of 2.97 and a slightly higher standard deviation of 1.11. This finding indicates that comprehension difficulties extend beyond mere instructional contexts, impacting students' ability to grasp content delivered through auditory means. To address this gap, targeted support mechanisms must be implemented to enhance students' listening skills, facilitating better spoken English comprehension.

#### ***Lack of audio resources***

The availability of audio resources for listening practice also emerged as a significant concern. Approximately 60% of respondents indicated a perceived lack of adequate audio materials in EFL classrooms, with a mean score of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 1.03. The absence of

sufficient auditory resources deprives students of essential practice opportunities, which are vital for developing their listening abilities. This deficiency likely exacerbates the challenges tribal students face in auditory learning, underscoring the need for improved resource allocation in educational settings.

**(ii) Reading challenges**



**Figure 3** Reading challenges

***Reading fluency***

Reading fluency is another significant area of concern for tribal students. The data reveals that 70% of respondents agree that these students struggle with reading English texts fluently, as indicated by a mean score of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 0.98. Reading fluency encompasses reading texts swiftly, accurately, and with appropriate expression. Students may find it challenging to keep pace with classroom readings or independent study materials without adequate fluency, potentially leading to academic disadvantage. A notable percentage of respondents (13.3%) who disagreed suggests variability in student performance, indicating that while fluency issues are common, some students may exhibit more substantial capabilities.

***Understanding meaning***

Understanding the meaning of reading materials presents an even more pronounced challenge. With 73.3% of respondents agreeing that tribal students struggle to comprehend the texts they read, it is evident that comprehension difficulties are pervasive. The mean score of 3.87 and a low standard deviation of 0.93 indicate this issue is consistent across the student population. These comprehension challenges may stem from a lack of vocabulary, unfamiliar sentence structures, or insufficient background knowledge of the topics being addressed. Without robust comprehension skills, students may fail to grasp the content of their readings fully, adversely affecting their academic performance and self-confidence in the subject.

## Productive skills

### (i) Speaking challenges

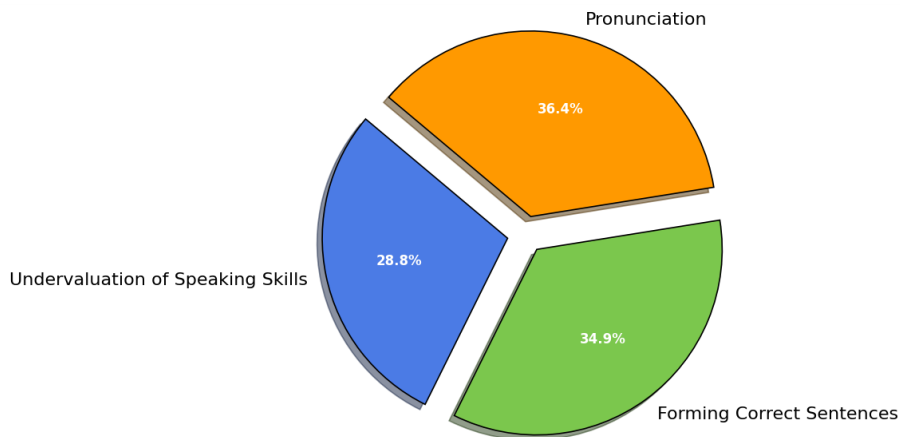


Figure 4 Speaking challenges

#### ***Undervaluation of speaking skills***

The development of speaking skills appears to pose challenges for tribal students, particularly in relation to the perceived limited emphasis on oral communication during classroom instruction. A total of 63.3% of respondents agreed that speaking receives less importance in their EFL classes ( $M = 2.70$ ,  $SD = 1.03$ ). While this finding reflects students' perceptions rather than a direct evaluation of the formal EFL curriculum, it suggests that classroom practices may not sufficiently prioritize structured speaking activities. This perceived lack of emphasis may reduce opportunities for meaningful oral interaction, practice, and feedback, which are essential for developing fluency and communicative confidence. Consequently, limited classroom focus on speaking could contribute to students' difficulties in spontaneous communication and everyday conversational use of English.

#### ***Forming correct sentences***

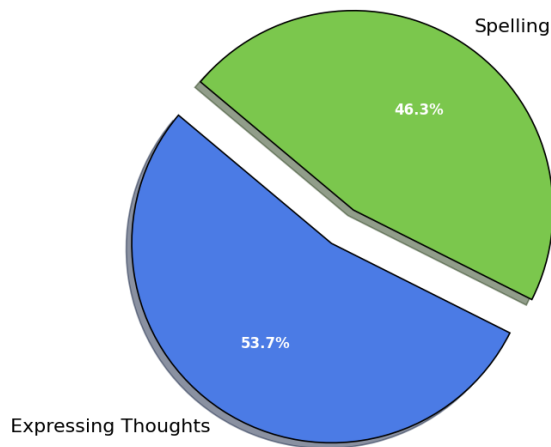
A more acute challenge pertains to the formation of grammatically correct sentences. 76.7% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that tribal students struggle with sentence construction in English, highlighting a significant barrier to effective communication. The mean score of 4.03, coupled with a low standard deviation of 1.0, underscores the gravity of this issue. Mastery of sentence structure is fundamental to language fluency, and the difficulties encountered by tribal students in this area may stem from linguistic discrepancies between their native languages and English, compounded by limited opportunities for structured speaking practice.

#### ***Pronunciation***

Pronunciation also poses a critical challenge, with 80% of respondents agreeing that tribal students experience difficulties in producing accurate English pronunciation. The mean score

of 3.97 and the standard deviation of 0.99 suggest that this demographic has widespread pronunciation issues. These challenges indicate a potential lack of phonetic training and corrective feedback within the classroom environment. Pronunciation difficulties undermine students' speaking confidence and impede their ability to comprehend spoken English, as the interdependence of listening and speaking skills is well established.

**(ii) Writing challenges**



**Figure 5** Writing challenges

***Expressing thoughts***

In writing, tribal students encounter particularly significant challenges in articulating their thoughts. A substantial 73.3% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that students struggle with written expression, as reflected by a high mean score of 4.03 and a low standard deviation of 0.89. This indicates that writing represents a significant hurdle for tribal students, potentially due to limited practice opportunities, lack of confidence, or difficulties translating thoughts from their native languages into English. Proficient written communication is essential for academic success, and students who struggle to express their ideas clearly in writing may face barriers across various subjects.

***Spelling***

Spelling also emerges as a notable challenge, with 63.3% of respondents agreeing that tribal students experience difficulties in spelling correctly in English. The mean score of 3.97 and a standard deviation of 0.94 highlight that this issue is moderately severe. The complexities of English spelling, characterized by irregular rules and the influence of pronunciation, may contribute to the difficulties faced by tribal students in this area. Inaccurate spelling can impede writing clarity and reading comprehension, underscoring the need for targeted support in language learning.

The data highlights the multifaceted challenges tribal students face in CELL. Notably, difficulties in listening and speaking are pronounced, with students struggling to comprehend instructions

and construct grammatically correct sentences. Pronunciation issues further hinder their speaking abilities, while inadequate audio resources exacerbate listening comprehension challenges.

Additionally, tribal students encounter significant barriers to reading fluency and comprehension, which affect their overall academic performance. Writing difficulties, particularly in expression and spelling, further complicate their ability to communicate effectively and perform well in assessments. These challenges underscore the urgent need for enhanced support and targeted interventions.

The findings reveal a strong consensus among students regarding the high difficulty of foundational skills, especially in writing and comprehension. This indicates shared fundamental problems impacting CELL in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, probably associated with restricted exposure to English and resource limitations, including inadequate instructional materials and a shortage of qualified teachers.

### **Qualitative analysis (Focus group interviews)**

There were 5 questions for both FGI groups. The responses of two FGIs were analyzed using the framework developed by (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The analysis followed a structured six-step process: familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and compiling findings. This approach allowed the researcher to document insights from the FGIs, identify common challenges and perspectives regarding English language learning, and ultimately reveal the multifaceted difficulties tribal students face in acquiring English skills. The findings underscore the need for targeted interventions to address speaking, listening, reading, and writing deficiencies influenced by sociocultural backgrounds and resource availability, as described below.

#### **Q1. What skills are the most challenging for you in CELL?**

Both FGIs revealed that listening and speaking were the most difficult skills, though reading and writing also posed challenges. Students described listening as hard because they were not used to the speed of spoken English. As one FGI2 participant shared, "*Listening is the most difficult because English is spoken so fast.*" Speaking was equally stressful, with students admitting they lacked practice and felt anxious about making mistakes. A student in FGI1 explained, "*Speaking is the hardest for us because we don't practice enough and we're afraid of mistakes.*" These accounts show how listening comprehension difficulties also undermine speaking confidence, making the two skills interdependent.

#### **Q2. What challenges do you face in listening skills?**

Listening was consistently described as the most problematic skill. Three main issues emerged:

**Limited vocabulary and accent variation:** A primary obstacle identified was the students' limited vocabulary, which severely impeded their ability to follow spoken English. This limitation

often resulted in frequent misunderstandings and interruptions in comprehension as students struggled to grasp the meaning of words and phrases that were unfamiliar to them. Students explained that their small vocabulary and unfamiliarity with different accents made listening very difficult. One FGI2 student noted, *“We struggle to understand because of different accents and not knowing enough words.”*

**Confusion with similar-sounding words:** Many students expressed difficulty distinguishing between similar-sounding words, further disrupting their comprehension and making it challenging to maintain the flow of discourse. This confusion not only affected their understanding but also contributed to a sense of frustration and alienation during listening exercises. Participants also highlighted the difficulty of distinguishing similar-sounding words in fast speech. As one FGI1 student put it, *“When people speak quickly, the words sound alike, and we cannot catch the meaning.”*

**Fast-paced speaking with unfamiliar words:** The rapid speech patterns of recorded audio materials and natural speakers emerged as a significant barrier. Students frequently reported losing track of the content being presented due to their inability to keep pace with the speed of delivery. This challenge underscores the need for instructional materials accommodating varying listening proficiency levels. Both groups stressed that rapid delivery and unfamiliar vocabulary made it almost impossible to follow. An FGI2 participant explained, *“Listening is difficult because people speak fast and use words we don’t know.”*

These findings suggest that listening challenges stem from both linguistic gaps (vocabulary, phonetics) and contextual factors (speed and accent exposure).

### **Q3. What challenges do you face in reading skills?**

Although reading was considered less difficult than listening or speaking, both groups still described important challenges:

**Unfamiliar vocabulary:** The rapid speech patterns of recorded audio materials and natural speakers emerged as a significant barrier. Students frequently reported losing track of the content being presented due to their inability to keep pace with the speed of delivery. This challenge underscores the need for instructional materials accommodating varying listening proficiency levels. Students often struggled to understand texts containing new words. An FGI1 participant explained, *“Reading is difficult when we see words we don’t know.”*

**Pronunciation problems:** Mispronunciations during reading aloud disrupted fluency and posed additional hurdles to comprehension. The inability to pronounce words correctly affected the reading flow and hindered students’ understanding of the text. Reading aloud was stressful because students were unsure how to pronounce new terms. One FGI2 student said, *“We cannot pronounce many new words correctly.”*

**Lack of fluency:** Many students exhibited hesitancy while reading, often pausing or reading each word individually. This fragmented approach disrupted the reading flow and obstructed

their comprehension of the text's more significant meaning. Several admitted that they read slowly and hesitantly. As a participant from FGI2 explained, *"We stop too many times while reading, so it is not fluent."*

These difficulties show that reading problems are linked to the same underlying issues seen in listening and speaking, limited vocabulary, and weak pronunciation.

#### **Q4. What challenges do you face in speaking skills?**

Speaking was identified as the most anxiety-provoking skill, shaped by both language deficits and socio-cultural factors.

**Vocabulary difficulties:** A limited vocabulary emerged as a critical barrier to effective speaking. Students repeatedly reported misinterpreting spoken English or struggling to follow conversations due to inadequate lexical knowledge. This deficiency frequently resulted in frustration and inadequacy, particularly when encountering unfamiliar language during discussions or audio recordings. Students admitted that they lacked the words to express themselves. An FGI1 student commented, *"We want to speak, but we don't know enough words."*

**Pronunciation difficulties:** Significant pronunciation challenges were primarily attributed to the students' native languages and local accents. These factors complicated the listener's ability to comprehend spoken English, as mispronunciations often obscured meaning and hindered effective communication. Students stated that often they mispronounced those they knew, as students from both FGI groups said, *"We don't know the pronunciation of many words, and our pronunciation is wrong, especially when it is a new word."*

**Grammar issues:** The prevalence of grammatical errors further hindered students' ability to construct accurate and meaningful phrases during conversations. Such mistakes often rendered their contributions unclear or fragmented, diminishing overall clarity and making it difficult for listeners to follow the discourse. Several found it difficult to build correct sentences. As one FGI1 participant put it, *"Writing and speaking are hard because we make grammar mistakes."*

**Fear of mistakes and low confidence:** Many students were deterred from participating in English-language interactions because they feared receiving criticism or feeling ashamed when they made mistakes. This fear eventually hampered their progress, causing hesitations and fewer opportunities for spoken English practice. Students reported feeling nervous and shy when asked to speak. An FGI2 student explained, *"We feel shy and afraid of making mistakes."*

**Lack of motivation:** Some students were notable for their lack of motivation to practice speaking English. This disinterest stemmed from their perception that English was irrelevant to their daily lives, compounded by a fear of making mistakes. One participant from FGI2 stated, *"I don't get any reason or motivation to speak in English while I can communicate with my surroundings in my native language."* Such reluctance to engage in language practice stunted their growth and development in speaking skills.

**Family background:** Students' families' educational backgrounds further constrained their exposure to English. Many students reported that their parents were not well-educated and did not speak English, which discouraged the use of the language at home and negatively impacted their confidence and communication skills. Students from both FGI groups stated, *"Our family members do not understand English and do not encourage us to speak in English."*

**Influence of local accents and dialects:** Local accents and dialects considerably impact students' English pronunciation, frequently making it difficult for others to understand them. This difficulty affected their confidence, making them even less inclined to converse in English. One student from FGI1 said, *"I think my native language is enough for me to communicate with others."* Another student from FGI2 said, *"When I speak in English with me teachers or my friends from different tribes, they do not understand me because of my native accent. So I don't want to speak in English."*

**Cultural differences:** Disparities in communication practices and styles led to miscommunications and made verbal interactions challenging. One participant from FGI1 stated, *"In our community, we don't usually speak English, so it feels strange and difficult when we have to use it in class,"* while another participant from FGI2 said, *"Sometimes the way we talk in our culture is different, so expressing ideas in English is not easy."* These cultural differences exacerbated students' difficulties in acquiring proficient English communication skills.

**Lack of practice opportunities:** The limited opportunities for English practice in their surroundings, particularly in rural areas, posed a significant impediment. In these contexts, English is rarely spoken, restricting exposure to the language and diminishing opportunities for meaningful practice. A significant barrier to improving speaking abilities was the absence of institutional and social opportunities for English practice in social or educational settings. Both groups admitted that English was rarely practiced outside the classroom. One FGI2 participant said, *"We don't practice speaking English much, so we don't improve."*

These excerpts highlight that speaking problems are shaped not only by linguistic barriers but also by psychological and cultural factors, such as fear, anxiety, and limited use of English in daily life.

#### **Q5. What challenges do you face in writing skills?**

Writing was considered somewhat less intimidating than speaking, but still problematic due to language and organizational issues.

**Limited vocabulary:** Rural students often struggled to understand and utilize new vocabulary in their writing assignments, which limited their expressive potential and diminished the quality of their written work. Students struggled to find the right words. An FGI2 participant explained, *"Our writing is weak because we don't know enough words."*

**Grammar and sentence structure:** Frequent grammatical errors, including improper subject-verb agreement and tense usage, weakened the clarity and coherence of students' written

communication and often obscured their intended messages. Students acknowledged making frequent grammatical mistakes. A participant from FGI1 said, *“Writing is hard because we cannot make correct sentences.”* Therefore, students found it difficult to properly communicate their thoughts when their written remarks were ambiguous or confusing due to poor sentence structure.

**Critical thinking and organizing ideas:** Tasks requiring critical thinking and analytical skills proved challenging for many students. Gaps in their ability to synthesize information and construct structured arguments indicated a need for specialized assistance in these areas. A participant from FGI2 mentioned, *“Sometimes I do not get the idea what to write and how to write.”* Moreover, students encountered difficulties with organizing ideas as well. Both groups found it difficult to structure their ideas logically. As an FGI1 student put it, *“We have ideas, but we don’t know how to organize them.”*

Thematic analysis of the two FGIs revealed that challenges spanned both receptive and productive skills. Listening was the most difficult receptive skill, hindered by fast speech, unfamiliar vocabulary, and accent variation, while reading was affected by limited vocabulary, poor pronunciation, and lack of fluency. Among productive skills, speaking was especially problematic due to grammar and pronunciation issues, low confidence, and scarce practice opportunities, whereas writing was weakened by poor vocabulary, grammar errors, and difficulties in organizing ideas. Overall, these findings show that tribal students’ struggles in CELL are multifaceted, shaped by linguistic gaps, psychological barriers, and limited exposure to English in their sociocultural contexts.

### **Qualitative analysis (Class observation)**

The findings from class observations reveal that tribal students, irrespective of their urban or rural backgrounds, encounter significant challenges in mastering the four fundamental English language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. These challenges are multifaceted and deeply rooted in the students’ socio-cultural and educational contexts.

### **Receptive skills**

#### **(i) Listening skills**

Listening comprehension presents a significant challenge for tribal students. Many struggle to understand spoken English during lectures and require clarifications in Bengali or their native languages, which disrupts instruction and limits their exposure to English. The inconsistent exposure to spoken English further exacerbates comprehension difficulties, making it hard for students to connect concepts and distinguish between similar-sounding words. This situation highlights the urgent need for enhanced auditory resources and increased exposure to diverse English-speaking contexts.

## **(ii) Reading skills**

Reading fluency and comprehension pose significant challenges for tribal students. Many students experience slow reading rates and difficulties with pronunciation, which hinder their overall understanding of texts. While some students exhibit higher proficiency, they often struggle with complex texts and nuanced language. These challenges highlight the need for structured reading programs with diverse materials tailored to different proficiency levels. Such programs could enhance reading abilities and boost students' self-confidence in their literacy skills.

## **Productive skills**

### **(i) Speaking skills**

Effective communication in English is a significant concern for tribal students. Many students prefer using their native language or Bengali, which limits their opportunities to practice English. Although some students demonstrate more confidence, they still face challenges in grammar, fluency, and discussion participation. The absence of interactive English usage and psychological and cultural barriers hinder their engagement in spoken communication. This situation underscores the need for environments that promote active practice and reduce the fear of making mistakes, ultimately enhancing speaking proficiency.

### **(ii) Writing skills**

Writing presents consistent challenges for tribal students, with common issues including poorly constructed sentences, grammatical errors, and frequent spelling mistakes. Many students struggle to articulate their ideas effectively due to limited vocabulary and insufficient academic writing experience. Although some students may be better equipped, they struggle to express complex thoughts clearly. These findings underscore the need for targeted instruction that focuses on writing structure, vocabulary development, and idea generation, tailored to the specific needs of tribal students.

## **EFL classroom environment**

The class observation review indicates that the EFL classroom environment is often unwelcoming for tribal students, largely due to limited opportunities for meaningful English exchanges with teachers and peers, coupled with linguistic barriers and low student motivation. These challenges not only restrict the development of receptive skills, such as listening and reading comprehension, but also hinder productive skills, particularly speaking and writing. As a result, students struggle to engage in effective communication, practice their language abilities, and build confidence in using English. To create a more supportive environment for CELL, it is essential to implement strategies that strengthen both receptive and productive skills. Activities such as guided listening and reading tasks, alongside group discussions, role-playing, and collaborative writing exercises, can promote active participation and foster greater learner confidence.

## DISCUSSION

The triangulated findings of this study, derived from student questionnaires, FGIs, and class observations, provide a comprehensive understanding of the challenges faced by tribal students in the CHTs in acquiring the four essential English language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The analysis reveals a complex interplay of structural impediments that significantly influence the learning experiences of these students, with varying degrees of difficulty observed in contexts. The following sections illustrate how the integration of quantitative and qualitative data enhances our understanding of these challenges:

### Receptive skills (Listening and reading)

Listening and reading are foundational to language acquisition, yet the findings reveal that tribal students encounter significant challenges in both domains. In listening, the main challenges stem from unfamiliar accents, fast-paced speech, and difficulties distinguishing similar-sounding words. This suggests that students' auditory discrimination and exposure to diverse spoken English are underdeveloped. In parallel, reading difficulties largely revolve around fluency and comprehension, constrained by inadequate vocabulary and limited access to authentic reading materials. Together, these results indicate that insufficient exposure to English input, both auditory and textual, has weakened students' capacity to process and internalize language meaning effectively.

### Productive skills (Speaking and writing)

In contrast, the challenges in productive skills are more closely tied to cultural, psychological, and structural factors. Speaking emerges as the most difficult skill, with the majority of students lacking confidence due to fear of mistakes, pronunciation issues, and limited opportunities for oral practice. The reliance on Bengali or indigenous languages in classroom discussions underscores the dominance of local languages in shaping communication patterns. Writing also presents considerable challenges, with students struggling to structure their ideas, apply grammar accurately, and use an adequate range of vocabulary. These difficulties point to insufficient scaffolding in developing higher-order language production, as well as gaps in instructional practices.

When comparing receptive and productive skills, it is evident that while both domains are hindered by limited resources and exposure, the challenges in productive skills appear more severe and multifaceted. Listening and reading difficulties largely arise from technical and resource-related constraints, whereas speaking and writing are compounded by cultural attitudes, psychological barriers, and pedagogical shortcomings. The triangulated findings demonstrate that receptive skills are impeded by external limitations (e.g., lack of materials and exposure), while productive skills are more strongly shaped by internal and contextual factors (e.g., confidence, cultural influences, and instructional gaps).

These findings are consistent with earlier studies conducted in the broader Bangladeshi context (Kirkwood & Rae, 2011; Nuby et al., 2020; Rahman, 2015), which reported implementation

gaps in CLT, including limited resources and insufficient teacher preparation. However, the present study extends this body of research by focusing specifically on tribal learners, a population that has been largely underrepresented in prior investigations. While previous studies examined systemic challenges at a national level, this study highlights how such challenges manifest within marginalized communities where additional socio-cultural and educational constraints may intensify their impact. The findings, therefore, do not merely replicate earlier research; rather, they contextualize national-level implementation issues within a linguistically and socioeconomically distinct learner group.

Furthermore, by examining receptive and productive skills simultaneously, the study provides a more nuanced understanding of how perceived instructional limitations in speaking may interact with broader skill development, reinforcing the interdependence of language skills as discussed by Nan (2018), Sadiku (2015), and Taridi and Sanjaya (2018).

Furthermore, the findings draw attention to the layered challenges experienced by tribal students, including socioeconomic constraints and limited educational resources. While such issues are not unique to this context and are observed in many educational systems globally, the present study situates these challenges within a linguistically and culturally distinct minority group that has received limited empirical attention in EFL research. Rather than suggesting exclusivity, the study demonstrates how broader structural constraints intersect with minority status to shape students' perceived difficulties in language learning. This contextualized evidence contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how national-level instructional limitations may disproportionately affect marginalized learner populations. In line with the work of Faisal and Ali (2021) and Khan et al. (2024), this study emphasizes the need to address psychological hurdles and feelings of alienation in the classroom due to cultural barriers.

These findings underscore the urgent need for a dual-focused intervention strategy that addresses both receptive and productive skills while embedding culturally relevant approaches to learning. On the receptive side, expanding access to diverse auditory and reading resources can strengthen students' input processing abilities, whereas on the productive side, pedagogical innovations such as interactive speaking tasks, guided pronunciation drills, and structured writing support can foster confidence and accuracy. At the same time, the results endorse collaborative and culturally responsive learning strategies aligned with Vygotsky's social constructivism theory, emphasizing the role of social and cultural interactions in language development. By improving resource accessibility and incorporating activity-based, participatory learning, educators can create an environment that not only enhances communicative competence but also empowers tribal students to engage more effectively in academic and social contexts where English is required.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the analysis, the following coping strategies can be suggested to improve the communicative English skills of tribal students:

- i. Incorporate Multimedia Resources:* Integrating audio and video resources, such as podcasts and educational videos, can significantly improve students' listening comprehension and

familiarity with spoken English. These multimedia tools provide diverse linguistic inputs that engage various learning styles and help students understand different accents and speech patterns (Ketamon & Sudinpreeda, 2024).

- ii. *Focus on Oral Skills:* Prioritizing oral skills development is crucial for building students' confidence in speaking English. Structured activities like conversation practice, role-plays, and targeted pronunciation exercises create a supportive environment for practicing speaking. Encouraging peer interactions and group discussions further promotes fluency and spontaneity in communication (Spies & Xu, 2018).
- iii. *Writing Workshops:* Establishing writing workshops that emphasize grammar, sentence formation, and creative writing can enhance students' written expression. These workshops should include guided practice, peer reviews, and constructive feedback to refine writing skills across various academic, narrative, and descriptive styles (Kim, 2015).
- iv. *Reading Programs:* Encouraging regular reading of English books, newspapers, and online content fosters reading fluency and comprehension. A diverse reading program can stimulate interest and expand vocabulary, while reading circles or book clubs promote discussion and critical thinking. Literature circles, which are cooperative learning strategies, involve small groups of four or five participants with varying reading levels. This approach encourages students to engage with texts through group discussions and analyses (Azizah et al., 2024).
- v. *Culturally Relevant Materials:* Introducing materials that resonate with students' cultural contexts can enhance engagement and motivation. Utilizing texts and examples that reflect their backgrounds validates their cultural identity and fosters a meaningful connection to the language. This is particularly important for marginalized or underrepresented groups who may not see themselves reflected in traditional learning materials. By incorporating culturally relevant materials and perspectives, teachers can help create relevance and a relationship between the content and the students' lives, thus improving their motivation and engagement (Besonia et al., 2023).
- vi. *Teacher Training:* Investing in teacher professional development is essential to equip educators with effective methodologies, including CLT. Training should emphasize strategies focusing on communication, active learning, and student-centered approaches. This enables teachers to create engaging and effective English lessons tailored to the unique needs of tribal students. Du et al. (2024) discuss digital storytelling and its positive effects on student engagement and motivation in learning English, the relevance of this reference in the context of teacher professional development for CLT methodologies is tenuous and does not directly support the claim being made.

## CONCLUSION

This study shows that tribal students in the CHTs face significant challenges in CELL, with productive skills (speaking and writing) posing greater difficulties than receptive skills (listening and reading). Receptive skills are constrained by limited exposure, restricted vocabulary, and difficulty processing fast-paced or unfamiliar input. In contrast, productive skills are hindered by cultural and psychological barriers such as fear of mistakes, lack of confidence, and weak grammar, alongside limited practice opportunities.

To address these challenges, receptive skills should be strengthened through greater access to authentic input, while interactive speaking and writing tasks are essential for developing confidence and competence in productive skills. Embedding culturally relevant materials within collaborative learning environments, consistent with Vygotsky's social constructivism, can enhance engagement, motivation, and a sense of community vital for holistic development. Recognizing tribal students' specific economic and social barriers is crucial for effective intervention. By aligning CELL with Vygotsky's principles, an inclusive framework can be established that respects students' diverse backgrounds and fosters both communicative competence and academic success.

This study contributes by documenting the learning challenges faced by tribal students in the selected context, offering localized evidence that may inform future discussions on inclusive language education and CELL-related practices in similar educational settings. Such studies can inform tailored strategies that empower students and expand their academic opportunities in a globalized world. Future research should investigate the CELL challenges tribal students in the CHTs face across diverse sociocultural contexts and assess the effectiveness of culturally responsive practices, as such exploration is vital for advancing equitable and inclusive language education.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Certain portions of the article were paraphrased and restructured with the assistance of artificial intelligence tools to improve their readability and coherence. AI was used to process the original content and produce a more fluid presentation while maintaining the original meaning and scholarly intent.

## THE AUTHORS

**Quazi Farzana Yesmin** is a PhD researcher in Applied Linguistics at the School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. Her research spans gender studies, technology-integrated ELT, and inclusive education, with a strong focus on advancing communicative English language learning for marginalized and tribal communities in Bangladesh, promoting social equity.

[q.fysharna@gmail.com](mailto:q.fysharna@gmail.com)

**Manjet Kaur Mehar Singh**, PhD, is an Associate Professor and Deputy Dean at the School of Languages, Literacies & Translation, Universiti Sains Malaysia, Malaysia. She specializes in research on academic literacies, international students, language and literacy development, multicultural education, and higher education. Her work also explores how diverse learners navigate and succeed in global academic contexts.

[manjeet@usm.my](mailto:manjeet@usm.my)

## REFERENCES

- Alam, M. M. (2016). Challenges in implementing CLT at secondary schools in rural Bangladesh. *IIUC Studies*, 13, 93–102. <https://doi.org/10.3329/iiucs.v13i0.37649>
- Ali, M., & Walker, A. L. (2014). “Bogged down” ELT in Bangladesh: Problems and policy. *English Today*, 30(2), 33–38. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0266078414000108>
- Amin, A. M. (2022). Communicative English in Bangladesh: Where are the communicative elements? *MEXTESOL Journal*, 46(4), 1–12.
- Azizah, N., Idris, F., & Rizal, M. (2024). Students’ engagement in reading through literature circle. In H. J. Prayitno, Y. Sidiq, & N. Ishartono (Eds.), *Proceedings of the 3rd International Conference on Education for All (ICEDUALL 2023)* (pp. 315–324). Atlantis Press. [https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-226-2\\_28](https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-226-2_28)
- Begum, H. A., Perveen, R., Chakma, E., Dewan, L., Afroze, R. S., & Tangen, D. (2018). The challenges of geographical inclusive education in rural Bangladesh. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 23, 7–22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2018.1514729>
- Besonia, A., Garcia, M., & Smith, L. (2023). Culturally relevant supplemental e-learning materials in teaching purposive communication. *TEM Journal*, 12(2), 150–160. <https://doi.org/10.18421/tem122-06>
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/11735>
- Creswell, J. W., Clark, V. L. P., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advances in mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 209–240). SAGE Publications.
- Du, T. M., Nguyen, T. N., & Le, N. A. (2024). Improving first-year English-majored students’ speaking skills through using digital storytelling. *International Journal of Language Instruction*, 3(2), 29–44. <https://doi.org/10.54855/ijli.24323>
- Faisal, M., & Ali, R. (2021). Barriers to communicative language teaching in rural Bangladesh: An empirical study. *Language Education Review*, 15(1), 89–104.
- Farooq, M. U. (2015). Creating a communicative language teaching environment for improving students’ communicative competence at EFL/EAP university level. *International Education Studies*, 8(4), 179–188.
- Getie, A. S. (2020). Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language. *Cogent Education*, 7(1), Article 1738184. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2020.1738184>
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B., Jr. (2008). Will CLT bail out the bogged down ELT in Bangladesh? *English Today*, 24(3), 16–24.
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B., Jr. (2011). English and socio-economic disadvantage: Learner voices from rural Bangladesh. *Language Learning Journal*, 39(2), 201–217. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2011.573687>
- Hamid, M. O., & Baldauf, R. B. (2013). Second language errors and features of World Englishes. *World Englishes*, 32(1), 1–24. <https://doi.org/10.1111/weng.12056>
- Hossain, M., & Al Hasan, R. (2023). Educational technology (EdTech) in English as a foreign language (EFL) in Bangladesh: Necessities, innovations, and implications. *Studies in Linguistics, Culture & FLT*, 11(3), 102–129.
- Hymes, D. (1972). On communicative competence. In J. Pride & J. Holmes (Eds.), *Sociolinguistics: Selected readings* (pp. 269–293). Penguin.
- Islam, F., & Akhter, F. (2020). EFL learners’ reading strategies at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. *Journal of ELT and Education*, 3(4), 116–123. <https://jee-bd.com/journal/34162020>
- Islam, M. S. (2019). The impact of socio-economic factors on English language learning in Bangladesh. *Asian Journal of Education and Training*, 5(2), 123–130.

- Islam, M. Z., Rahman, A. F. M. M., & Alam, M. K. (2019). Teaching EFL writing at the SSC level in Bangladesh: Challenges and considerations. *International Journal of Advanced Research*, 7(8), 855–860. <https://doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/9571>
- Ismeti, E. (2022). The challenges of learning English as a foreign language in communicative approaches in higher education. *Prizren Social Science Journal (PSSJ)*, 6(2), 32-42. <https://doi.org/10.32936/pssj.v6i2.326>
- IWGIA. (2021). *The Indigenous world 2021: Bangladesh*. <https://www.iwgia.org/en/bangladesh/4201-iw-2021-bangladesh.html>
- Jahan, E. (2023). *Exploring new curriculum in extended English classroom in Bangladesh* [Doctoral dissertation, BRAC University]. BRAC University. <http://hdl.handle.net/10361/22817>
- Karahan, B. (2022). Examination of the relationship between the usage frequency of listening/viewing strategies of middle school students and their listening anxiety. *International Journal of Education and Literacy Studies*, 10(3), 49–54. <http://dx.doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijels.v10n.3p.49>
- Ketamon, T., & Sudinpreeda, K. (2024). Improving English proficiency in Southern Thailand’s public junior high schools using local video resources. *Ho Chi Minh City Open University Journal of Science: Social Sciences*, 14(2), 78–90. <https://doi.org/10.46223/hcmcoujs.soci.en.14.2.2890.2024>
- Khan, M. E. I., Yesmin, Q. F., Alam, A. M.-U., Moslehuddin, T., & Akter, T. (2024). Marma students’ well-being with EMI in higher education in Bangladesh. *Hong Kong Journal of Social Sciences*, 63, Article 25. <https://doi.org/10.55463/hkjss.issn.1021-3619.63.25>
- Khasawneh, M. A. S. (2021). Language skills and their relationship to learning difficulties in English language from the students’ point of view. *Shanlax International Journal of Education*, 9(4), 128–135. <https://doi.org/10.34293/education.v9i4.4082>
- Kim, J. (2015). Preparing English learners for effective peer review in the writers’ workshop. *The Reading Teacher*, 69(4), 413–422. <https://doi.org/10.1002/trtr.1358>
- Kirkwood, A. T., & Rae, J. (2011). A framework for evaluating qualitative changes in learners’ experience and engagement: Developing communicative English teaching and learning in Bangladesh. *Evaluation & Research in Education*, 24(3), 203–216. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09500790.2011.610504>
- Littlewood, W. (2012). Communication-oriented language teaching: Where are we now? Where do we go from here? *Language Teaching*, 47(3), 349–362. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444812000134>
- Mahmud, R. (2024). Perceptions of tertiary level students about peer feedback in writing classes in Bangladesh. *International Journal of English Linguistics*, 14(6), 160–166. <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijel.v14n6p160>
- Marjerison, R. K., & Yang, S. (2022). Dialects, motivation, and English proficiency: Empirical evidence from China. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 13, Article 999345. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.999345>
- Masduqi, H. (2016). Integrating receptive skills and productive skills into a reading lesson. *Proceedings of the 2nd International Conference on Teacher Training and Education, Sebelas Maret University*, 2(1), 507–511.
- Nan, C. (2018). Implications of interrelationship among four language skills for high school English teaching. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 9(2), 418–423. <https://doi.org/10.17507/jltr.0902.26>
- Nuby, M. H. M., Rashid, R. A., Rahman, A. R. M. M., & Hasan, M. R. (2020). Communicative language teaching in Bangladeshi rural schools. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 8(2), 622–630. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2020.080235>
- Nunan, D. (2001). *Second language teaching and learning*. Foreign Language Teaching and Research Press.
- Penfield, J. (1987). *The media: Catalysts for communicative language learning* (1st ed.). Addison-Wesley.
- Rahman, M. S. (2015). Implementing CLT at higher secondary level in Bangladesh: A review of change management. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(2), 93–102. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1083841.pdf>
- Rashid, S. (2018). *Ethnic education, language and cultural diversity in the Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHTs) of Bangladesh: An analysis of the role of NGOs from SDG 4 perspective* [Paper presentation]. Asia-Pacific ICH NGO Conference, Hue, Vietnam.

- Sadiku, L. M. (2015). The importance of four skills reading, speaking, writing, listening in a lesson hour. *European Journal of Language and Literature Studies*, 1(1), 29–31.
- Saleheen, M. S. U. (2025). *The professional development of English language teachers in Bangladeshi universities under neoliberal reform: Perspectives of teachers and students* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Manitoba]. University of Manitoba MSpace Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/1993/39512>
- Shurovi, M. (2014). CLT and ELT in Bangladesh: Practice and prospect of speaking and listening. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, 5(6), 1263–1268.
- Spies, R., & Xu, K. (2018). Scaffolded academic conversations: Access to 21st-century collaboration and communication skills. *Intervention in School and Clinic*, 54(3), 145–150. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1053451218762478>
- Sreena, S., & Ilankumaran, M. (2018). Developing productive skills through receptive skills: A cognitive approach. *International Journal of Engineering & Technology*, 7(4.36), 669–673. <https://doi.org/10.14419/ijet.v7i4.36.24220>
- Suvin, S. (2020). Complexities of writing skill at the secondary level in Bangladesh education system: A quantitative case study analysis. *English Language Teaching*, 13(12), 65–75.
- Tancred, A. L. (2019). *Many tracts one community: UNICEF's work in the Chittagong Hill Tracts*. UNICEF Bangladesh. <https://www.unicef.org/bangladesh/sites/unicef.org.bangladesh/files/2019-09/CHT-report-LR-August-20-website.pdf>
- Taridi, D. M., & Yamin, D. M. (2016). Evaluation program: The communicative English language learning (CELL) with CIPP. *Scholars Bulletin*, 2(10), 574–580.
- Taridi, M., & Sanjaya, M. E. (2018). Communicative English language learning program with CIPP: An evaluative study. *Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research*, 253, 452–457.
- Tootkaboni, A. A. (2019). Teachers' beliefs and practices towards communicative language teaching in the expanding circle. *Revista Signos*, 52(100), 265–289. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-09342019000200265>
- Vongxay, H. (2013). *The implementation of communicative language teaching (CLT) in an English department in a Lao higher educational institution: A case study* [Unpublished master's dissertation]. Unitec Institute of Technology.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). *Mind in society: The development of higher psychological processes*. Harvard University Press.
- Wang, W., Mohammad Rezaei, Y., & Izadpanah, S. (2024). Speaking accuracy and fluency among EFL learners: The role of creative thinking, emotional intelligence, and academic enthusiasm. *Heliyon*, 10(18), Article e37620. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e37620>
- 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), Article 2539988. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2331186X.2025.2539988>

## APPENDIX A

### Class Observation Checklist (C1)

Review Section	Yes/No/ Occasionally	Comments
<b>1. Challenges in Language Skills</b>		
a) Students have trouble listening to English-language lectures in class.	Yes	Many students seem disengaged during lectures.
b) Students have weaknesses in following instructions in English.	Yes	Instructions often need repetition in Bengali.
c) Students have a poor ability to connect sentences by listening.	Yes	Students struggle to summarize lectures.
d) Students have difficulties distinguishing similar words by hearing.	Yes	Misunderstandings occur frequently.
e) Students are reluctant to speak in English with their teachers.	Yes	Most students prefer speaking in Bengali.
f) Students are reluctant to speak in English with their peers.	Yes	Peer interaction in English is minimal.
g) Students have a poor ability to express their thoughts orally.	Yes	Students often hesitate to share ideas.
h) Students have a poor ability to form correct sentences while speaking.	Yes	Many sentences lack structure.
i) Students are unable to participate in group discussions in English.	Yes	Participation is very low.
j) Students are not able to comprehend different reading texts in English.	Yes	Students often struggle with vocabulary.
k) Students have difficulties pronouncing words while reading a text.	Yes	Pronunciation errors are common.
l) Students are not fluent in reading.	Yes	Reading speed is slow, impacting comprehension.
m) Students have difficulties summarizing a reading text.	Yes	Summaries often lack clarity.
n) Students are not able to write correct and meaningful English sentences.	Yes	Written work is often poorly structured.
o) Students' vocabulary level is insufficient for academic writing.	Yes	Vocabulary is fundamental.
p) Students have difficulties generating ideas while writing.	Yes	Writing lacks depth and originality.
q) Students have difficulties spelling words while writing.	Yes	Spelling mistakes are frequent.
<b>2. Overall Environment for CELL</b>		The EFL classroom setting is unwelcoming for tribal students because there are limited possibilities for English language exchanges with teachers and classmates and a lack of student enthusiasm and willingness.

## APPENDIX B

### Class Observation Checklist (C2)

Review Section	Yes/No/ Occasionally	Comments
<b>1. Challenges in Language Skills</b>		
a) Students have trouble listening to English-language lectures in class.	No	Most students engage well with lectures.
b) Students have weaknesses in following instructions in English.	No	Instructions are usually clear, with few issues.
c) Students have a poor ability to connect sentences by listening.	No	Generally, students can summarize effectively.
d) Students have difficulties distinguishing similar words by hearing.	No	Rarely observe issues with distinguishing words.
e) Students are reluctant to speak in English with their teachers.	No	Students often engage comfortably in English.
f) Students are reluctant to speak in English with their peers.	No	Peer discussions in English are common.
g) Students have a poor ability to express their thoughts orally.	No	Students express themselves clearly.
h) Students have a poor ability to form correct sentences while speaking.	No	Generally, sentence structure is solid.
i) Students are unable to participate in group discussions in English.	No	High participation in group discussions observed.
j) Students are not able to comprehend different reading texts in English.	No	Reading comprehension appears strong.
k) Students have difficulties pronouncing words while reading a text.	No	Minimal pronunciation errors observed.
l) Students are not fluent in reading.	No	Most students read fluently.
m) Students have difficulties summarizing a reading text.	No	Summaries capture key points effectively.
n) Students are not able to write correct and meaningful English sentences.	No	Writing is mostly correct and meaningful.
o) Students' vocabulary level is insufficient for academic writing.	No	Vocabulary is appropriate for academic contexts.
p) Students have difficulties generating ideas while writing.	No	Students generate ideas well.
q) Students have difficulties spelling words while writing.	No	Spelling is generally accurate.
<b>2. Overall Environment for CELL</b>		The EFL classroom setting seemed unwelcoming due to linguistic barriers and a dearth of meaningful English language connections with classmates and teachers.