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Growing Importance of ICT in ELT for Effective Pedagogy during COVID-19 Pandemic in Bangladesh

Research Paper

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Abstract

Many recent studies have already shown that the usage of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) can function more effectively to facilitate the teaching and learning processes by enriching the aptitude of the teachers and the students respectively. Presently, the pandemic COVID 19 scenario reassures that ICT in English Language Teaching (ELT) as a part of pedagogy might play a pivotal role to develop English teaching proficiency. At this backdrop, this paper aims at studying the importance of applying ICT in ELT as a part of pedagogy to assess students' present state of English and the subsequent development module emphasizing special attention to the COVID 19 situation. The participants of this study are 65 students, 15 parents, and 20 teachers of different levels from various institutions of Bangladesh covering public, private, and military-run institutions. The authors conducted the survey among the stakeholders based on a questionnaire to find out the understanding level of ICT based education in ELT and its practical application followed by a suggestive development program. Thereafter, semi-structured interviews were also conducted for the understanding of the growing importance of ICT in ELT as a part of pedagogy in Bangladesh during the pandemic COVID 19.

Keywords: ICT, Pedagogy, ELT, Practical applications, Pandemic situation

1. Introduction

At the beginning of the year-2020, no nation of the world could ever figure out that a virus named Covid-19 would bring everything of our life to a stalemate condition. The situation originating due to Corona Virus has exposed all of us in front of an unprecedented crude reality. The whole world is experiencing a phenomenal change not only in the health sector but also in a social setting, in the political dimension, in religious rituals, and so on. Through media, the world has witnessed a direct influence of the Covid-19 in the education sector. With utter surprise, we are observing that at all stages of the education sector, from primary level to

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university level, online Classes overtook the ever-known traditional pedagogical system. These extraordinary unusual changes took place in the educational sector inconceivably within the shortest possible time of merely three-four months. Surprisingly, we have witnessed the varied opinions of the World Health Organization (WHO), the scientists, and the statesmen as to when normalcy in our educational sector would return. Worrying is this piece of information and the associated uncertainties in this regard. Is the educational system, particularly the ELT as a part of the pedagogy in Bangladesh, ready to embrace this massive change so readily? It is a broad daylight fact that in general, we have serious shyness, rather limitation, in English. There is a gulf of difference for any student between taking lessons directly from the classroom teachers contrary to attending Online Classes. Accepting the pandemic, it is of paramount importance as to how the current model of imparting lessons can move ahead with a faster pace until the unpredictable time ahead. Given such an undeniable scenario of the global educational system, this article is very much a time worthy and delves into finding the growing importance of ICT in ELT as a part of pedagogy in Bangladesh. The necessities of advanced technology in daily life suggest students enroll themselves in different courses with its variety of sub-disciplines for an attractive career choice. ELT is such a means that requires its practitioners to learn and use a variety of soft-skills including academic and non-academic written and spoken communication from a different range of sources. Though students have to pursue English courses designed to improve their linguistic abilities, often it may not sufficiently satisfy the students' overall needs and well-being in the long term. Moreover, the recent pandemic COVID 19 has changed the trend of teaching-learning state to a newer dimension. The pedagogy of individual teacher needs to be reshuffled for changing the attitude of learners and for better assimilation. This paper will assess the feasibility of ELT with the help of ICT by the pedagogy suited appropriately during the outbreak of the COVID-19 situation.

2. Defining the scope of ICT in ELT in pedagogy

At the very outset, it might be a pre-requirement for this paper to define what is intended to mean as ICT in ELT. In the simplest sense, ICT includes a process of communication by using any technologically oriented device such as a computer, mobile phones, apps (e.g., Zoom, Face-time, etc.), different social platforms, YouTube, radio, television, satellite system, etc. with internet facilities. The modern world has vividly felt the requirement of ICT as a part of pedagogy and the sound knowledge of English in the academic and professional atmosphere. ICT tends to expand access to education as it has created and augmented opportunities and challenges for the teachers and learners in multifarious ways. Nowadays, various electronic devices, e.g., computer, television, overhead projector, mobile phone, multimedia, and web-based applications are being widely used in the ELT. At present, a growing tendency of using ICT in language teaching and learning with the help of e-devices is not uncommon in the context of Bangladesh. Some commonly used ICT tools associated with searching and managing knowledge include Communication and Collaboration Systems such as group e-mail, teleconference, video conference, chat, IMO, forum, Edmodo, groupware calendar, log, Podcast, group decision support system, etc. Similarly, Documents management systems, Content management systems, internet, Search engine, computer, and Google manager. Similarly, the teacher can integrate mobile phones, e-mail, social networking sites, messenger, mobile apps, online dictionaries, google classrooms, tabs, CDs, DVDs, and other highly accessible data based sub-systems in language teaching and learning (Poudel, 2018). As this is a new trend, motivation has to be required for all concerned including authorities, learners, teachers, and guardians. Besides, it's a fact that nowadays the availability and access of electronic devices are so easy and those devices have become the stuff of everyday life. Thus, they can enhance the feeling of confidence and belief in their abilities by using those devices as learning tools.

Nowadays, because of the COVID-19, the teachers of ELT in Bangladesh might rediscover the reality that the online course materials of ELT can be accessible at anytime and anywhere. The ELT teachers by Zoom-conferencing classrooms might interact simultaneously with ease and convenience. It is also evident that the ELT no longer depend exclusively on classical classroom-based education and printed materials. The ELT teachers might use numerous resources with the help of ICT and as a result, the purpose of the English language teaching might be acquired by using PPT, audio-video clips, visual presentations, etc. Sánchez assumes that teachers of ELT might use ICT successfully as it assists in transforming a teaching environment into a learner-centered one as learners are vigorously intertwined in the learning processes in ICT classrooms. ICT, therefore, provides the teachers of ELT with more educational affordances and prospects. Realizing this fact, Bangladesh has also incorporated different credited and non-credited English courses in the academic curriculum from primary to tertiary level as well as in various professional sectors in Bangladesh. It is assumed that most of the teachers and students are now well aware of the fact that apart from academic excellence, proficiency in English is of utmost importance in exploring one's professional career. Employers look for candidates who have good academic qualifications along with good command over English (Bhuiyan, 2019). It might be argued that the dream of Digital Bangladesh creates the scope of developing the proficiency of English by using ICT. The term 'pedagogy' defines the 'method and practice of teaching', which encompasses 'teaching styles' and 'teaching theory'. Pedagogy of teaching refers to the way of delivering the context by the teachers. Teachers plan a lesson based on their teaching preferences, experience, and the context that they teach in. It has been observed by many academic researchers that the present COVID-19 scenario compels teachers to adopt ICT for imparting lessons of ELT.

A report made by the National Institute of Multimedia Education in Japan proved that an increase in the use of ICT in education with integrating technology to the curriculum has a significant and positive impact on students' achievements The results categorically showed that students continuously exposed to technology through education have better 'knowledge', presentation skills, innovative capabilities, and are ready to take more efforts into learning as compared to their counterparts (Linways, 2017). This study focuses on English Language Teaching using ICT as a part of pedagogy where curriculum, duration, atmosphere, background knowledge, requirement, the attitude of the institution, attitude of the teachers, attitudes of the learners, and few other facets are discussed.

3. Objectives

The study intends to focus on ICT based ELT to fulfill the following two main objectives:

a. To examine the role of ICT in the teaching-learning of the education curriculum of Bangladesh.
b. To investigate the growing importance of ICT based ELT during the pandemic outbreak of COVID-19 in the context of Bangladesh.

4. Literature Review

A good number of studies have been examined throughout the world regarding the growing impact and prospect of ICT based education, the necessity of ELT, and the changes in pedagogical practices as a result of using ICT in education. Both in Bangladesh and international research areas, some researchers argue that adopting ICT based education from the traditional one required huge investment (Law, Pelgram & Plomp, 2006). However, some other researchers assume, the absence of proper understanding and technological know-how among the teachers and students in developing countries is one of the main obstacles which is negatively impacting the necessity of switching to the ICT based education and the importance of required

infrastructures (Tedla, 2012). Effectual ICT practice can improve the overall quality of education in real-life situations. However, it is argued by some academic researchers that the most convenient method of ELT in the modern world might be achieved by using ICT as ICT teaching and learning can occur anytime and anywhere (Dudeney & Hockley, 2012).

Patel and Patel (2017) explained the necessity of embracing ICT based education along with constraint capacity building of pedagogy and they have also stressed the challenges of ICT in outcome-based teaching and learning pedagogy. The researchers also described the education goal and financial realities. Bhuiyan (2019) considered that in this era of globalization, students have to explore his work field beyond the country level; consequently, they might mix up with the experts of other countries.

Although, it is commonly claimed that every country might have contrasting views and understanding regarding the growing importance of ICT in ELT (Wong & Dubey-Jhaveri, 2015). However, there are very limited efforts to understand the growing importance of ICT in ELT as a part of pedagogy in Bangladesh, especially, in the context of Covid-19, this growing importance of ICT in ELT might be found more relevant than ever. This ongoing study is an effort to fulfill the existing knowledge gap in recognizing the growing importance of ICT in ELT in the context of Bangladesh.

5. Limitations

Like many other research works, this study has certain limitations too. The first constraint was the pandemic COVID-19 itself and on many occasions, it impeded the survey and conducting of the physical interview. Another restraint was the time limitation. As a consequence of the prevailing Corona situation, limited numbers of samples are planned for the survey. Had there been more participants in the study, the study would have been more accurate in its findings and recommendations. It is understood that the participants of the present study cannot be representative of the entire population.

6. Methodology

6.1. Research Design

A mixed-method has been used to fulfill the purpose of the study. Participants were asked questions and data had been collected through questionnaires. Thereafter, semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and learners to get meaningful perceptions of the practical situation.

6.2. Participants

For the proper justification of this study, 100 participants were selected from different educational institutions. Among this, there are 65 students, 15 parents, and 20 teachers of different levels from various institutions of Bangladesh covering public, private and military-run institutions. The participants were selected by informed consent and all of them have agreed that the data might be used for the study. The objectives, aim, and purpose of the study were explained in detail to the participants. All the information collected for this study was analyzed carefully. After the interviews and the analysis of the interviews, feedbacks were taken from the participants to recheck that the views of the interviewees were represented properly.

6.3. Ethical consideration

Special attention has been paid to ethical concerns for conducting the survey and the interviews. For conducting the survey and interviews, written and informed consent from the participants were taken. The education culture of Bangladesh is to a large extent sensitive and there are vulnerable groups to exploitation without adequate safeguards. Therefore, the dignity, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity of the participants are maintained throughout the study.

However, the researchers have tried to ensure reciprocity and were unbiased while analyzing the outcome of the primary data.

7. Findings and Discussion

7.1. Integration of ICT at National Education System in Bangladesh

There is a group of researchers who opine that the effective use of ICT in education might make the whole education system modern and significant (Tedla, 2012). The policymakers of Bangladesh have also held the same view that the use of ICT might make the overall education fruitful and it might also help to ensure Outcome-Based Education (OBE). As a result, the national ICT policy of Bangladesh framed in 2009 professed ICT as a means of all-inclusive development of the national education system.

It is widely believed that the future of ICT based education lies in accommodating the changing views of technology and its teaching and changing views of professional development. The National Education Policy (2010) aimed at bringing essential reforms in curriculum, pedagogy, and teachers' capacity building where ICT would be an effective tool. The use of information and communication technologies in the education system in harmony with other countries, make it modern and work-oriented. After knowing the revolutionary effect of ICT in the education sector at the global level, the policymakers of Bangladesh caressed the inevitability of using the ICT in the education system and because of that the education in the mode of ICT oriented learning was introduced in Bangladesh, e.g., nowadays, in Bangladesh, the multimedia classroom has been started in four thousand and five primary schools and thirty-three thousand secondary, higher secondary and higher-level institutions. It is moving at a faster pace. The resultant effect is that currently 2l lakhs teachers are engaged with this system and 7.5 million students are getting better classroom performance of teaching-learning techniques.

7.2. How ICT Changes Teaching and Learning Practices in Education

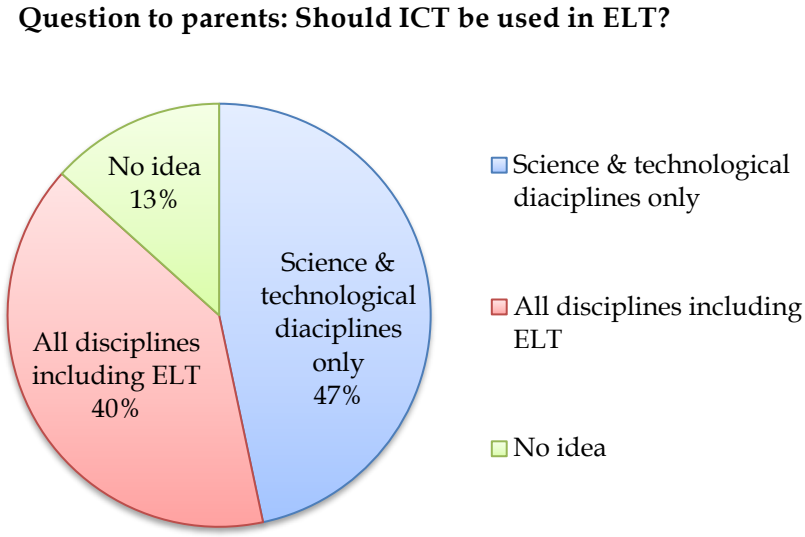
The use of modern educational technologies in the domain of teaching and learning might help to bring positive changes to the approaches of the students towards learning as technological know-how is exciting and at the same time it is a part of innovative pedagogy. It is assumed by the academic researchers that the effective use of ICT in education has been linked with the upward shift in the quality of people's lives by improving teaching and learning. This is why a greater number of educational institutions are increasingly integrating ICT in their education system. Through this unique teaching method, students gain a genuine learning experience, collaboratively constructing their knowledge and applying their learning in a real-world context.

The use of ICT techniques in the teaching and learning processes has a positive influence on students' learning capabilities as well. It is established that students reflect positively towards work and education when they are using computers to complete tasks given to them, encouraging and motivating them to soak in the knowledge. Students who used technology to learn in school have increased self-esteem and self-confidence (Jain, 2017).

The classroom is now changing its look from the traditional one, e. g., from one way to two-way communication. Now education is based on child-centric education where teachers should prepare to cope up with different technologies for making teaching/ learning interesting. For effective implementation of student-centric methodologies, the role of ICT becomes an appropriate tool as it enabled better and swifter communication. It is an effective tool for information acquiring-thus students are encouraged to look for information from multiple sources and they are now more informed than before (Bhattacharjee & Deb, 2016).

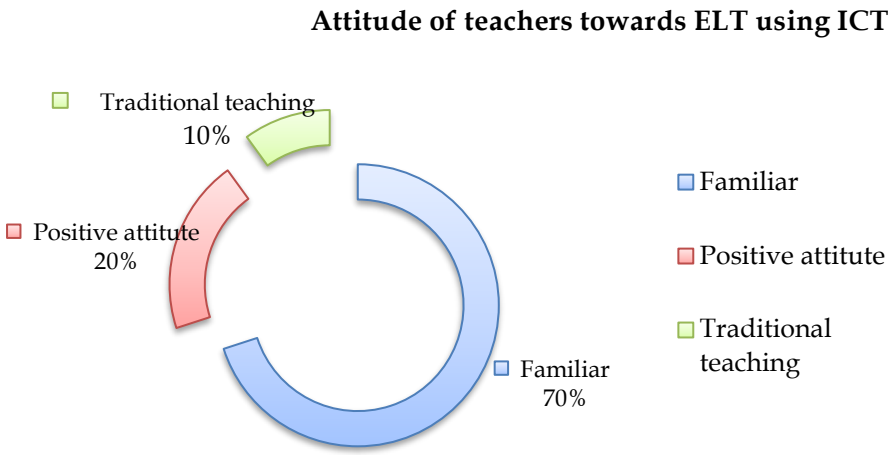
7.3. The Attitude of Parents towards ICT Based ELT

The parents of our country conceive different sort of opinions regarding the use of ICT in education. Urban and rural guardians apprehend separate understanding. Again, few guardians contemplate that only science related subjects may be taught using ICT. In general, it is viewed that necessity of using ICT for ELT has got less priority to some of the parents. But, in the prevailing COVID 19 situations, parents have completely shifted their notion from their earlier position. 15 parents have been asked the question "Should ICT be used in ELT?" From the participants few were from rural, few from urban, some have children at secondary level and some at tertiary level. Parents came up with different answers which are depicted in the graph below. On the contrary, the same question was asked to the students and resource personnel where all of them are in favor of ICT based education.



7.4. The Attitude of Teachers towards ICT Based ELT

Our teachers are aware of the fact that the country, as well as the whole world, demands the requirements of ICT based education for several reasons. Our education system is also seriously stepping towards technology-supported education. Through the survey, it has also been revealed that more than 70% of teachers have awareness of using ICTs in ELT and they have a positive attitude in the integration of e-devices in classroom teaching and learning. Those teachers can integrate the technologies in the classes supported by e-devices like computers, e-mail, internet, and multimedia. They also perceive that an innovative teacher can easily integrate and is familiar with the use of ICT in their class. 20% of teachers are yet to adjust themselves with this process, but they retain a positive attitude to adopt ICTs for teaching the English language. It is a matter of concern that 10% of teachers are not interested to teach English language using ICT. Presumably, they are still interested to follow only the lecture method, which is mostly teacher-oriented. They want to restrict themselves in traditional classroom teaching without any aid of ICTs. Like few parents, they also need the motivation to accept the current trend. If we think of the present Corona Pandemic situation, there is no other alternative to accept ICT for ELT.



7.5. The Attitude of Learners towards ICT Based ELT

Given the ongoing menacing threat of the pandemic, the use of ICT makes classroom activities more interesting and pragmatic. Digitally tuned, the students of the current generation are well aware of the necessity of integrating ICT in ELT. The present Pandemic COVID 19 situation makes the learners more associated with ICT based education. Learners have easy access to all the gadgets related to education and they can be connected at their convenient time or any given time. The connection between attitude and the level of ICT application such as the Internet can be assumed that if a student has a positive attitude towards ICT or Internet use, he will tend to take advantage of the information and communication technology. The ability to use or operate the ICT is a form of response to the attitude of a student who supports the use of the Internet as a medium of learning in the campus (Sudiran, 2016).

Survey has demonstrated positive attitudes of the participants toward ICT use in their instruction. They expressed their positive views concerning the beneficial influence of technology on learning processes. Learners have opined that the use of ICT facilitates efficient and productive learning and promotes the increase of motivation among learners Zhelezovskaia (2016). According to learners, ICT based ELT involves every student in the process of learning. As a result, it prevents students from taking a passive stance in the lesson.

7.6. Attainment of ELT Using ICT

The importance of traditional 'teaching leadership' and 'practice' in the classroom can't be denied. In contrast, the growing importance of ICT and pandemic COVID 19 has shifted the role of a teacher where he is utilizing ICT and performs as a facilitator. Traditionally, teachers are the ones with knowledge and expertise in a particular field. They impart that knowledge through a variety of means to their students.

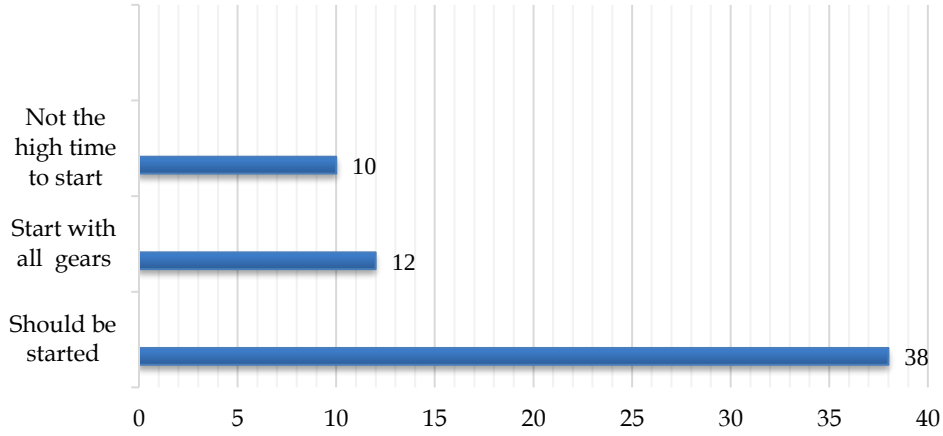
The teachers, aided by ICT, can challenge students' understanding and thinking, either through whole-class discussions or individual/small group work. ICTs are seen as important tools to enable and support the move from traditional 'teacher-centric' teaching styles to more 'learner-centric' methods. Usually, the contents are provided before the class and the learners get prepared with their queries. ICT can be used to reinforce existing pedagogical practices as well as to change the way teachers and students interact. ELT, without using ICT, for the learners of Bangladesh has lost appeal because of its stereotype method. On the other hand, the same context with the use of ICT tools, overhead and LCD projectors, television, electronic

whiteboards, guided "web-tours", where students simultaneously view the same resources on computer screens, are seen to be of mixed effectiveness. This may promote class understanding and discussion of difficult concepts especially through the display of simulations (Infodev, 2015). The main goal of ELT is aimed at developing language skills. Specific software and material available online facilitate teachers' and students' development. Several studies have vividly revealed that different repetitive tasks offered in the ICT based ELT promote the development of grammar skills and vocabulary. It brings benefits to teachers' instruction, and quick access to technology saves academic time. Besides, it assists in performing different tasks easily and efficiently. Teachers have an opportunity to vary their lessons using presentations, video illustrations, audio and visual aids, graphics and animation.

7.7. Challenges of ELT Using ICT

Integrating technological devices and ICT based tools in ELT has been a major concern in present-day pedagogy. Looking towards our classrooms, there lies the pitfalls in integrating ICT at the classroom, for instance; lack of required infrastructure for the digital classroom, unavailability of ICT tools for the teachers and learners, difficulties to bear the establishment cost of ELT using ICT, the uninterrupted power supply may not be ensured in remote areas, management of providing required training to the teachers and students, the problem of arranging training for the development of teaching material, etc. In the same way, there can be a problem of finding out expert teachers to handle their teaching with ICT (Poudel, 2018).

Considering the above deficiencies, 50 students were asked whether it is feasible to switch over ICT tools for ELT or not. The chart clearly depicts their thoughts-



8. Recommendation

The outbreak of COVID-19 has brought almost all aspects of life to a standstill whereas education is never locked down during this pandemic situation. Stuck at home amid the nationwide shutdown, teachers, and students across the country are compelled to switch over their pedagogy of ICT for ELT through which certain strategies pop up or making it effective in the academic curriculum. The growing importance of ICT application in the education sector destines the government to strengthen its education curriculum by reforming and facilitating the use of ICT applications. It is to be noted that there is no one size fits all especially when it comes to learning. Different groups may have different priorities and may rely on different resources basing on context. There are also special considerations to think about for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities. Several students might not have access to high-speed

broadband. However, this current study would recommend the following points to adopt for the integration of ICT based ELT.

a. Adherence to government policy for switching over the ICT based education during pandemic COVID-19.
b. Funding opportunities to be unwrapped for facilitating digital learning.
c. ICT integrated classroom tailoring with the environments for the contrivance of ELT.
d. Importance to the rapid expansion of ICT in ELT and boosting investment in ICT infrastructure.
e. Bringing educational institutions under uninterrupted power supply along with internet coverage.
f. Offering training to create resourceful ELT professionals.
g. Ensuring e-devices required for ICT based ELT.
h. To create personalized e-contents and share those to students for the benefit of learners and generating an e-learning platform
i. Content source to be linked to learners.
j. Intentional inject of gamification (a recent buzzword in education) for a clear learning objective in mind.
k. Enjoyable-contents thorough engaging narratives and high-quality animation for an interactive session.
l. Mapping the strong and weak points of the teaching-learning process to identify the learner's progress.
m. Establishing social networking among teachers, students, and parents to bring all concerned on the same footing.
n. Immunize a positive attitude and motivation towards ICT based ELT.
o. Launching an ICT laboratory/ section in all institutions with the required equipment.
p. Introducing multimedia and other digital classrooms- gadgets in all rural and urban educational institutions.
q. Refresher training to be arranged for teachers and learners by expert hands.
r. Maintenance and repairing cell for the e-learning platform to be set up in all the districts and sub-centers in all the Upazilas.

9. Conclusion

The entire gamut of education, during the prevailing COVID-19 situation, is expected to go through a radical transformation where ICT will be a familiar means for ELT professionals. This study has attempted to find out the growing importance of ICT in ELT as a part of pedagogy in Bangladesh to assess students' present state of English and the subsequent development module of their English proficiency emphasizing special attention to the COVID 19 situation. Implementation of ICT opens up a great variety of opportunities to offer lessons in creative and interesting ways. It also facilitates developing learners' presentation and managerial skills which are essential for real settings. Besides, ICT enlarges learners' scope of the English language and raises awareness of the aspects of culture associated with different kinds of pronunciation, traditions, customs, and everyday life (Kabir, 2017). It is true that integrating ICT based tools and technologies are not easy in real practices as many challenges relate to resources, access, cost efficiency, skills, and expertise to operate and manipulate. Despite the challenges, ICTs create opportunities for both English teachers and learners as it takes away the geographical restrictions where the teachers and students can be connected from home or from anywhere. We should not forget that the time has come now that the brick houses are required to be turned into click houses and chalk and talk methods should be accompanied by the chatting, posting, and sharing devices. Digital literacy has become the cry of day where attention should be given on

ICT based integrated instruction in ELT (Poudel, 2018). Therefore, to get the maximum output of the ICT in the language classroom, Bangladesh has to address technical and pedagogical issues simultaneously. The use of ICT in educational settings during the pandemic situation acts as a catalyst for language learning. Thus, future studies on ICT-based ELT may be conducted with different angles and different variables which may lead to different results.

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