

**Grammar Translation Method (GTM): An effective and feasible method in  
Bangladeshi context**

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***In the name of Allah***

***The Most Compassionate***

***The Most Merciful***

## Table of Content

	page
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: Literature review	4
2.1. Key features	5
2.2. Techniques	6
Chapter 3: Implementation	9
3.1: Observations of classes	9
3.2: My first experience in a classroom as a teacher	10
3.3: Choosing Topic	11
3.4. Arranging the classroom:	12
3.5. Learning a new topic	12
3.6. Teaching Grammar	13
3.7. Reading activities:	14
3.8. Memorization and writing:	15
3.9. Listening activities:	16
3.10. A special student	16
3.11. Speaking test	17
3.12. Error correction and feedback by GTM:	17
3.13. Student-Teacher Relationship	18
3.14. Students are progressing	19
Chapter 4: Recommendation	20
Chapter 5: conclusion	21
References	23



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## **Abstract**

A widely used method for language learning in Bangladeshi schools is Grammar Translation Method (GTM). Grammar Translation Method is a very traditional method, and I think in more or less in all medium schools it is mainly used. I also use Grammar Translation Method for teaching the students. From my point of view in our Bangladeshi culture especially beginner level of students need appropriate use of both native language (L1) and target language (L2). And for that reason Grammar Translation Method is suitable. Also in Asian part of the world the parents are very conscious about their child's results. And GTM method also helps students to get good grades in English. Also students need to know the meaning of different words and GTM helps to fulfill that. I taught the students by GTM method which included some more activities, and I think those techniques helped them a lot. So by a good feedback, well guidance from a teacher, effective error correction could give a student's progression and fluency. From my internship result I found that by GTM method and with my other efforts students developed a lot in their academic results and also in speaking fluency by target language (L2) where both are equally important.

## **Chapter 1: Introduction**

I am Marzana Rahman. I have done my internship from an English version school named St. Mary's international which is situated at Moghbazar. It is a five storied white color building. It is a newly built school established on 2010. There are two shifts morning and day I was in morning shift classes. Mainly I took English classes from kg1 to class 2, first I was a T.A. then they gave me the opportunity to take classes as a regular teacher. The duration of each class was 50 minutes three days in a week. The principal sir was my supervisor he was very helpful and cooperates with me a lot. I was like a part of their school he also told me to join all their school meetings and other activities for gathering experience.

Before starting my classes I observed some other classes in this school and I noticed that teachers use both target language (L2) and native language (L1) to teach or explain something to the students. Teacher followed grammar translation method (GTM), and I found that was suitable for the student, because Grammar translation method (GTM) allow teachers to use L1 in classroom for teaching L2.

The aim of my internship was to make the students interactive, communicative, by L2 and also make them able to get good grades in English, since English is an international language we all know the necessity of knowing English, and I think by GTM method students speaking and writing ability would develop if we apply more speaking activities.

Grammar translation method (GTM) is a very traditional and typical method in our country. And most of the schools of our country apply this method. In this method a teacher is the main communicator of a classroom. All the activities and classroom tasks are given by teacher and student just memorize those and give examinations. But in my internship I used



Grammar Translation Method (GTM) but I also included some other activities like speaking, creative writing etc. and to me these techniques helped the students a lot

Then comes the academic parts at first the atmosphere between me and the students was quiet uneasy, but eventually it got normal. I noticed that since they were beginner level of students they just started learning English. And also they had a set of syllabus and two exams in a year, class test, oral test and much more. And they had literature with work and also a grammar book. When I started speaking in English I notice some of them did not understand anything as a result they were not being interested to communicate but some of them responded a lot. But at first my job was to create a friendly environment so that they could all be a part of the discussion. So I translated my all my sentences in L1 for the students to understand better. Like in my first week in one class I told them to talk about their pet, because they had one chapter and I gave them pre task by asking them some question. Then one student asked me what a pet is (In L1)? Then I asked me who can tell me what a pet is then the girl who was very attentive and responsive and answered **I have a pet cat, its name is jimmy**. Then I continued this discussions with some of the students and after that I told them, "**now have u understand what a pet is**", they replied yes. Then I explained this to them in L1 at first then in target language. I had to be concerned about the time management because they had three months in hand before their final exam and I had to complete their syllabus. So by observing their situations and level I decided to teach them by grammar translation method (GTM) method. I think that in Bangladeshi concept GTM is applicable and whatever students learn from school is by Grammar translation Method. I also observed the other classes of that school like class five, seven, and eight and I found that teachers were pretty typical they were only focused in completing the syllabus and they taught

by GTM method then gave exercises comprehensions, question answers etc. So I decided to work on GTM.

Mainly it is used in primary and secondary level of schools in Bangladesh. When students need their basics to be strong they learn English by GTM which teaches the structure of grammar and in higher level of studies we find the other methods which are much unknown to them and then students suffer with problems and get demotivated.

## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Grammar Translation Method was first introduced in Germany especially in Prussia. Hence it was also called Prussian Method. This method is the oldest method of foreign language teaching, having existed for more than 2000 years which dominated European and foreign language teaching from the 1840s to the 1940s and is being modified and used in different countries of the world today. But this method was immigrated for teaching language in Bangladesh during colonial period which is being used till today.

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Grammar translation method was called the classical method since it was first used in the teaching of the classical language, Latin and Greek (Chastain 1988). The origin of this method lie in an attempt to teach languages by grammar and translation where the learners have to gather knowledge of foreign languages by studying a number of grammatical rules and applying these knowledge to the interpretation of texts with the use of a dictionary. Through the study of the grammar of target language, students would become more familiar with the grammar of their native language and that is familiarly would help them speak and write their native language better. (Larsen- Freeman, Diane).

The principal aim of the grammar translation method was to make language learning easier and the central feature was the replacement of traditional texts by exemplary sentences (Kumar Mondal, Nitish).

## **2.1. Key features:**

The key features of the Grammar translation method are as follows:

- (1) Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
- (2) Much vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
- (3) Long elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
- (4) Grammar provides the rule for putting words together and instructions often focuses on the form and inflection of the words.
- (5) Reading of difficult classical texts is begun early.
- (6) Little attention is paid to the content of the texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
- (7) Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue
- (8) Little or no attention is given to pronunciations.



## **2.2. Techniques:**

The teaching techniques in grammar translation method are as follows-

- (1) Translation: Translating target language, usually a literary passage to native language.
- (2) Reading comprehension: Finding information in a passage, making inferences and relating to personal experience.
- (3) Antonyms/synonyms: finding antonyms and synonyms for words or sets of words.
- (4) Cognates: learning spelling/sound patterns that correspond between L1 and the target language.
- (5) Deductive applications of rules: understanding grammar rules and their exceptions, and then applying them to new examples.
- (6) Fill in the blanks: filling in gaps in sentences with new words or items of a particular grammar type.
- (7) Memorization: memorizing vocabulary lists, grammatical rules and grammatical paradigms.
- (8) Vocabulary practice: students create sentences to illustrate they know the meaning and use of new words.
- (9) Composition: students write about a topic using the target language.

Stern (1992) in his book "Issues and Options in Language Teaching" indicates "a contrastive analysis, just as the comparative linguistics studies, is indeed very important for the second language learner. Therefore translation in one form or another can play a certain part in



language learning”. Brown (1994), in his *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*, states “It does virtually nothing to enhance a student’s communicative ability in the language

Cunningham (2000) in his paper “Translation in the Classroom- a Useful Tool for Second Language Acquisition” indicates “while there may indeed be some negative effects from using translation, there is a place in the learning environment for translation. Translation can contribute to the students’ acquisition of the target language, at all levels”.

Austin (2003) in his paper “The Grammar Translation Method of Language Teaching” states “As a teacher, I liked using the grammar translation method because I could assume the intelligence of my students; I could talk to them like the intelligent people that they are, and we could talk about the grammar and vocabulary that I was teaching. In another method, I would have had to use simple language and familiar phrases to communicate in the target language, and even then, I could not be sure that my students knew and understood what it was that they were saying.”

Mondal (2012) in his paper “Assessment of English Teaching Methodologies at Secondary Level in Bangladesh” states that Though a number of teaching methods were used at secondary level, the present method named “Communicative Language Teaching” used on the Secondary education in Bangladesh which was not suitable for the current text book of English,

where interaction between the teachers and the students were lacked of and two skills like reading and writing were applied only.

Brown (1994:53) attempts to explain why the method is still employed by pointing out: “It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests of grammar rules and of translations are easy to constructs and can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities, so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies, translations, and rote exercise.

Sometimes students’ behaviors also object the interactive and integrative management of an ELT classroom. Teenaged students could be “unruly” (Brown 179) being in the freedom of pair and group activities “where disciplines is the major issue” (Brown 179).

### **Chapter 3: Implementation**

As part of my graduation at BRAC University, I was supposed to do an internship which was a requirement of my graduation too so I did my Internship at **St. Mary's International School** at fall 2012. For the first two weeks I was made an assistance of another teacher. Then after examining and after observing my capability they had given me the opportunity to take regular classes as a subject teacher in English literature of kindergarten 1 (K.G.I)

#### **3.1. Observations of classes:**

I was appointed as an intern in St. Mary's international school. Before starting my internship I observed other teachers' classes and found that the teacher used to stand in front of the board and give lectures. I found they taught the students by target language (L2) and native language (L1) as well. Sometimes the teacher explained any lines in bangla and sometimes in English. Students also used to talk in bangla whenever they need to ask any question. Teachers were not offended when the students asked question in bangla. Students were very much dependent on the teachers. Teachers solved most of the exercises on board and students copied those in their class work copies. I also noticed that teachers gave home tasks on diary, the students memorized those at home and teacher gave class work and checked, also gave written feedback. The teacher's feedback was very attractive different stars, colorful stickers, etc were posted on their copies. And I found students were very much motivated through these. Their sitting arrangement was typical but not fixed, whoever came first they will sat in front rows and whoever came late sat at last rows. One thing attracted me most that those who were very



talkative and naughty, teacher asked them to sit besides the teachers table. The classroom environment was suitable for both students and teachers. There were cartoons, pictures posted on the wall. The classroom was well organized with air conditions, fans, light and also the classrooms were neat and clean.

### **3.2. My first experience in a classroom as a teacher:**

I worked as an intern under Pijush Halder the chairperson of the school. He told me about the administration and also about the students. They have their own syllabus and routine. The school followed semester system and in each year there are two semesters and I worked in the final semester. I took the classes of K.G.1 and classes of K.G.2. in each class the numbers of students was 15-20. The time allocated for each class was 40 minutes.

The first day was a mesmerizing experience for me as a new teacher in this school as my dream had come true. Since they were very small and I was new teacher so I had to be very friendly with them in the first few weeks.

Then eventually everything was settled in the classroom and one by one I had come to know their name but I realized some of them answered very clearly in English that ‘my name is .....’ but some of had answered in Bangla after my observation of the classroom the first 2 weeks I started to take their regular classes. They had one text book named “**The Radiant Way**” and work book “**The Radiant way series book**”. After a few more days the previous class teacher had handed me over their syllabus, and asked me to complete that within 3 months because after 3 months they would be sitting for their final exam, This was quiet challenging for me because along with my internship’s work I now had to prepare them for their final exam by teaching them their lessons, making lesson plan, checking copies, attending meetings, making

question papers and all these etc. after some weeks I realized they were in my track and they asked me questions and tried to be interactive by target language (L2) because I applied some strategy to motivated the students.

### **3.3. Choosing Topic**

As we know that language is not only the medium for interaction but also the device to explore our thinking. And for beginner level students it is very necessary to know both the language. As we are Bangladeshi we need to know appropriate use of both the two language. Also all parents and teacher want from the students to get good grades. And after thinking about that I decided to teach them by Grammar Translation Method. In the very first class I asked the students to try to speak in English in my classes no matter whether they are not fluent and not always correct. But they should try because from their mistakes they will learn the language form and use. I also told if you (the students) did not understand anything, and if you (the students) could not use English language (L2), no problem you can use in bangla language (L1). But do not be quiet. These were not the techniques for grammar translation method (GTM) but these were my own strategy to motivate all the students in same manner.

After observing them for a few classes I decided to teach them through GTM method, because their teaching style was very typical. They only memorized their lessons but never tried to understand them. They were only aware of finishing their syllabus on time and get good grades. But they could only do better if I could change their learning styles and make them more fluent in English and make them understand its importance. So I translated each and every bangla line in English.



### **3.4. Arranging the classroom:**

Since I was teaching small children, the classroom had to be attractive to them because children's are usually attracted to beautiful and colorful pictures, drawings, etc. So I decorated the classroom with posters and drawing of the students and with some of my own. They appreciated my paintings and even gave me complements in Bangla. Since my main motivation was to teach them English, So I directed them to always speak in English. Their sitting arrangement was typical, there were rows where students sit and also there were gaps between the rows for teacher to move around the class. The classroom was comfortable both students and teacher there were enough lights, fans, air condition.

### **3.5. Learning a new topic**

First I had to adopt to the student level of teaching when I started teaching them from their text book "**Radiant Way**" I had to advance with the chapter "**Mother sing to**" Since it was something totally new to them so at first I asked them who could sing from among you all, Raise your hand please then I realized that they could not understand the language I was speaking in. So I translated into Bangla. Eventually they understood me then I continued reading the lesson, translating each and every line in Bangla So that it could be easier for them to understand. Since my main motivation was to teach them English and make them more fluent in it. I think I was gradually getting to my destination. For example from my point of view an effective way to teach them the spelling from the chapter and allow them to identify the spelling from this own book. By this method they would be able to memorize the spellings more quickly and make no mistakes while writing them. Then I asked them to make sentences with the spellings which they

identified. Since they were pretty weak in English so they first told me the Bangla sentences and I helped them to translate it into target language.

### 3.6. Teaching Grammar

Grammar is one of the major factors for learning English. It is because of this, that the students will be allowed to speak and write English correctly and so far teaching grammar I used their course book "**The Radiant Way Work Book**" where there were different types of exercises like fill in the blanks, True false, Re arranging, Picture descriptions etc. For example with the help of the exercise fill in the blanks I tried to make them understand where to put **have/has**. But I noticed that some of them could not understand my lecture. So for those specific students I converted the target language into L1 with the help of which they were also to understand everything clearly. By GTM I taught them where to put auxiliary verbs like **am/is/are/were** etc, in other exercises. Most of the time I used inductive use of grammar and sometimes I used deductive use of grammar for their better understanding. For example inductive use of grammar is when I taught them direct rules of sentence structure and any other grammatical items, and sometimes I gave them one sentence like "**Pat wants to go home**" I asked them to identify the sentence structure that is deductive use of grammar.

Another grammar item was **make sentences** through which the students could improve this sentence structure. In these types of exercises I preferred board work because in this way the student and their fellow classmates would be able to know their mistakes and get aware of it. For example I gave them a word "**eat**" with which I asked them to think of a sentence and write it on



board by one after another. Everyone was able to write a sentence in this own style like **“I eat rice”, I eats coke” “I eat chocolates” etc.** But most of the sentences were grammatically incorrect like **“eats” drink.** So I helped them and made them understand the structure of the sentence where to put **S** or a **S’**. According to this text book and their syllabus I introduced them with a new exercise known as rearrangement. first I made them understand the meaning of the word rearrange and in that particular exercise I gave them some sentences like **ran, Mother, to Pat** they were successful in making the small sentence structurally correct, but there having quiet a lot of difficulty with the long sentences like **“Sam, Pat, and, in, go, van, the’** but after making them understand each and every word they were able to rearrange the sentence. Including these they also had True false, Picture description and crossing out the misspelled word. To attempt these exercises I had to clear their concept in both target and L1, with the help of which they were able to do the exercises by themselves.

### **3.7. Reading activities:**

Reading is as important as the other activities for beginner level of students. A good reading is also necessary to do comprehension. After reading and writing the whole lesson I asked each and every student to stand up and read each paragraph of the whole lesson one after another. Then if they did not understand any line after going through the text attentively I explained to them the lines in the target language and eventually into L1. Then randomly picking a few students I asked them to read out the text loudly in front of the whole class for the students to understand better. Not only that but they also read out the poem in rhythmic tunes which is a type of reading too. Reading in this manner would help them to understand the lesson, better



pronunciation the difficult word correctly, make their English more fluent. And not only that it also helps the teacher to judge that particular students reading ability and grade him or her.

### **3.8. Memorization and writing:**

Memorization is a major aspect of Grammar Translation method. In GTM method the teacher gives something to memorize students and students have to memorize those and have to write. In my classes I also gave the answers to memorize but in different way. At first I asked the students to write on their own from the text, they first wrote answers using books and obviously there were lots of mistakes and then I wrote answers in board and they copied that and memorized.

In Grammar Translation Method there is a link between memorization and writing. I also gave them (the students) composition writing but first they have to write then I corrected that and they memorized. For example there were many words meaning which was given by me and they have to memorize those. For making sentences I gave them (the students) chances to be creative to write their own sentences. The students had composition writing but not in typical way I gave them (the students) any topic they did that at home as a homework after doing that I checked their (the students) writing. But there were some composition topic which they had to memorize, those were given by me, for example rainy season, Independence Day, victory day, our country etc those topics a student must to know. These all activities carried marks. They (the students) had small comprehension activities, I preferred that they did this by their own; in these activities they could use their creativity but not memorization.

According to me students need both memorization and creative activities. Memorization helps the students to write properly and to get good marks. Creative writing is also important for

expressing the students' idea for using language. And comprehension and composition activities are good tasks for practicing creative writing. In my classes I gave importance both the two criteria.

### **3.9. Listening activities:**

As the students were learning through GTM method so they had no specific listening activities. But from my point of view dictation was a kind of listening activity because in this task the students have to listen to the words very carefully and then write that particular line correctly along with the correct spelling. Through this activity the students will become more attentive. This listening strength would be able to catch up and understand what the teacher is talking about.

### **3.10. A special student:**

It is very unfortunate for a child to be autistic. Autism is one of the most painful and heart breaking thing for that parent with her/his child. So I also had a hard time and a heart breaking experience with an autistic child in my class. Actually she was the oldest among all the students; she could not speak and had a quiet hard time with her fellow classmates. But the thing which attracted me the most was her motivation, her will to study hard. For these kinds of students GTM is important. As she had problems in communications so I used to speak with her in L1, she understands L2 but it takes time to make her understand. By this method she did well and gets good grades in English. As she did not talk properly so in speaking test I gave her to



translate Bengali line into English. It was really very impressive when I saw how she tried her level best to participate and to cope up with the other students. This special child brought tears in my eyes and so I also tried my level best to make her understand to make her capable and to make her the best among all the students.

### **3.11. Speaking test**

It is important and necessary for students to speak English fluently since it is an international language. So I introduced them with a test. In this test student had to approach to me one after another and answer the questions that I asked them fluently in English. The mark of this test was out of ten and this mark was added to their final marks. This test helped me to know how well they spoke and also helped me to correct their mistakes.

### **3.12. Error correction and feedback by GTM:**

Corrections are very important for students because through task a student would get to know about his/her mistakes and correct themselves. From my opinion the student should be able to correct the mistakes by themselves but the rule of the school was easy, like the subjected teacher had to correct the spelling and the student had to write it thrice besides the corrected spelling. It was a much easier method as the corrected spelling was already written. So I prefer the students to make the correction by themselves because in that way they would never do the same mistake again. Though in GTM method the class is controlled by teacher so when I taught them I used to ask questions about the specific lesson randomly and listening to the answer I pointed out their mistakes and corrected them, then again in another way if the answer was

incorrect sometimes I selected another student to give the correct answer, that was very disappointing to the students who could not answer as they felt insulted for not answering correctly. Mostly in this method if a student make errors or do not know the answer the teacher should be able to tell the correct answer.

Every student had a pair of two copies in all subjects. All their assignment C/W and H/W were checked by me and then it was sent to the headmaster's assistance who took a look in every student's progression. Later these copies were sent back home by the students for their parents observation to see how well their child was getting of at school. Feedback is very important for a student's motivation getting good grades, star marks, and good compliments makes the students more motivated to work hard and in other words more greedy to do more good results.

### **3.13. Student-Teacher Relationship:**

In GTM method a class should be controlled by the teacher but it does not mean to dominate over the class and become strict. But it varies from class to class as they are beginner level of learners so a teacher should come to their level. Sometime teacher should behave strictly and sometime friendly to motivate their learning ability.

The relation between a teacher and a student should always be honest, kind, respectful; a teaching should be lenient and kind towards the students. A friendly environment is necessary for a student to learn and grow so the teacher should have a friendly behavior with which she could attract the students and teach them their lesson. A soft hearted teacher is also a learning motivation of a student otherwise misbehavior and punishment could make the student scared of

the teacher and the student could suffer mental distress. On the other hand he/she would not be able to communicate to the teacher. A student as well should be respectful towards the teacher; she/he should love her so that interactions could be made. The teacher should not be biased about any student and should help those more who are shy and less communicative.

Punishment is sometimes necessary to control a class because children are supposed to be naughty. But this naughtiness should not lead to misbehavior. So sometimes I had to be quiet strict so that I could control the students in my class. Punishments like standing up, not to have tiffin during the tiffin break; detention etc was imposed on the students so that they were within my reach.

#### **3.14. Progression of students**

My observation during the last month of my internship made me realized that the students were now developing this speaking and writing skills were better than before. They were now able to write sentences by themselves and could even speak in English quite well. The mistakes in their couples were decreasing. They could now use auxiliary verbs; they read the lessons and make the pronunciation properly. This had made me realized that I was successful as a teacher and I was very happy with my teaching ability. My internship from my point of view was a successful one.



#### **Chapter 4: Recommendation**

GTM is extremely an effective method for Bangladeshi students because from the very beginning of their study life they know both the target language and native language. From my perspective GTM method is the best method because in this method the student is being able to know the meaning of the whole lesson and to me knowing the perfect meaning helps the person to get or understand that certain thing more quickly. For example we can adopt with the Hindi language very quickly because it is similar to our own and most importantly we can understand the meaning of each and every word since the language is quiet similar. Also in GTM method students are mostly memorizing answers so their memorization ability is better, and in further education sometimes it is needed for memorize any answers or anything so this memorizing ability will help in that time.

Besides these all advantages there are some drawbacks for example, GTM lagged behind a student to their fluency. All the activities are mostly based on reading and writing so students feel uncomfortable when they go higher education. Also over memorization hampers a student's own creativity.

So to me, yes it is necessary to be fluent, to be expressive by target language, and GTM method can fulfill in both language. Only we need to increase more speaking activities in GTM method and these speaking activities in GTM method should be practiced and develop it much better.

## **Chapter 5: Conclusion**

After three and half months I have completed my internship. After completion I have gathered a lot of experience both as a teacher and as a student. I gathered experiences as a full time teacher, because they treated me as a regular one. The faculty members and along with the principal helped me a lot, besides academic purpose we had built a friendly atmosphere which attracts me most. I got good feedback from the parents and Principal Sir.

I used Grammar Translation Method to teach them and when I left I realized the students improved a lot through their result and speaking they at least tried to speak in target language (L2). The students' interaction ability increases. I just did not teach the students through the GTM method but also my effective feedback and error correction also helped the student to increase their level. I also took some steps to control classes effectively. I was creating a friendly environment and the students were also good except some. I enjoyed teaching my students. That was what I wanted and the time was very short for beginner level of students for getting some result from them. And I thought I could fulfill my target.

I know that it is not so possible for a teacher to create a student's speaking fluency with target language (L2) only by using Grammar Translation Method (GTM). But in our country's and cultural perspective teacher used GTM but there should be some activities for example speaking activities, students communications, creative writing etc, then a student will learn something which will be better for the students as well as his/her parents. And if we notice we could find that in most of the schools of our country, teachers use grammar Translation Method (GTM). And it is not very easy for a teacher to apply any new method in classes for students especially in school level of students, because parents only want result from their child. If a

teacher was only concerned about students speaking fluency without finishing their syllabus then the teacher might fall into a trap. In our country the English Language Teaching (ELT) method is new without few nobody is concerned about this method so it takes time to establish all the methods in our country.

And in my opinion it will be always fruitful if we are concerned about the student's level and teach them properly, whatever method we apply it should be always in a positive way for a students, and students need to adopt these. And I was very happy with my teaching ability, with the students, with the entire teacher who helped me a lot. It was a great experience and it will help me to go ahead in my future. Through this authentic experience I also improved my knowledge of learning and teaching. And hopefully after some years we would see a change in Bangladeshi education culture by all the different types of methods.



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