

## Teaching English Literature in Online Class at the University Level in Bangladesh: Challenges and Solutions

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**ABSTRACT:** *In literature teaching, online class during Covid-19 like crisis time has added a new dimension to the era of digital Bangladesh. The purpose of this article is to explore the challenges and solutions to teaching English literature in online classes. To conduct this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used to collect data and to discuss. Data has been collected from 17 teachers and 88 students of different kinds of public and private universities through online platforms. Data has been analyzed with the help of Google Forms. The findings of this study have revealed how online classes are conducted. It also shows that face-to-face interaction, extra pressure, internet problem, collecting texts, health problems, and creating literature friendly environment are the major challenges in teaching English Literature online in Bangladesh. The article also has explored the solutions to those challenges and discussed them in the Bangladeshi context.*

**Keywords:** *Online class, English Literature, Covid-19, University- level, Problems.*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

English Literature is one of the most popular subjects in government colleges and universities in Bangladesh. It is often taught here to learn English language skills. It is an outcome-based and also career-oriented subject in Bangladesh. Teachers often use different methods in teaching English at the university level in Bangladesh. Teachers and students, most of the time, are to depend upon text-based teaching methods in English literature classes. Though over time the internet has made it easier to find different materials online, most teachers are still used to text-based methods in English Literature classes in developing countries like Bangladesh. Though the internet has been used for nearly thirty years in Bangladesh, the present

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government's recent campaign of Digital Bangladesh has brought about a new light of opportunity in online teaching. The Covid-19 pandemic situation and lockdown have intensified the scenario of taking online classes throughout the country. Another point is that generally teaching and learning a foreign language is a difficult task for both the teachers and the students (Hussein, 2016). Online teaching and learning have created both new opportunities and new problems among students specially in Covid-19 pandemic situation (Coman et al, 2020). Online Teaching of English Literature has recently added more difficulties than before particularly for teachers and students in Bangladesh.

The teachers and the students of English Literature are trying to adapt themselves to online classes but various challenges like infrastructure and resource constraints, lack of teachers and students training, lack of national motivation, neo-phobia and techno-phobia, lack of proper device and proper internet connectivity are faced during online classes. The world of teaching and learning English literature has been evolving with both new challenges and opportunities. To overcome challenges in online teaching English literature, teachers are trying their best to find out solutions and are intended to adopt new techniques, strategies, and methods to make online English Literature classes more effective and enjoyable.

This study is to find challenges and will discuss the best way of taking English Literature classes online, the different materials used by most teachers and students in online English Literature classes despite challenges. It will also discuss some solutions suggested by the participants of the study. It is felt that the study will help the teachers and students specify the challenges so that they can find out some possible solutions to their challenges. This study will also show its readers some possible ways to make online literature classes more enjoyable and effective. It will also help the teachers create a literary-friendly environment in online classes and help the students think rationally and visualize a literary text.

### **2. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This paper is going to analyze the following questions:

1. How is Online English Literature class conducted at the university level in Bangladesh?
2. What are the challenges found in teaching English Literature online?
3. What are the possible solutions to the challenges?

### **3. AIMS & OBJECTIVES**

The broad objective of this paper is to analyze the challenges with the

possible solutions in online teaching English Literature at the University Level in Bangladesh. To fulfill this aim considered three objectives are:

1. To explore the way of conducting online English Literature classes at the university level in Bangladesh
2. To examine the challenges in teaching English Literature online.
3. To find and analyze the possible solutions to the challenges?

#### **4. LITERATURE REVIEW**

Ian Lancashire (Lancashire, 2009) focused on the technologies used in the online teaching of literature and language. He also discussed the benefits of using technologies in online teaching literature and language and the drawbacks behind this. He also referred to the practical use of these technologies. A professor from India, Rajkumar Pachigalla (Pachigalla, 2010) stated that the Internet is very useful for teaching literature. Teachers can use it for gathering information for their classes, including teaching plans and materials for classroom use. He also mentions that people are using the internet for nearly three decades but most of the teachers of literature are used to traditional teaching methods. On the other hand, YouTube can be used as an effective tool in literature classes. The use of YouTube in studying English is interesting; beneficial and gives students the chance to understand the literary texts. The effect of the YouTube program was measured by using an achievement test, which comprises 10 questions based on novel comprehension (Al-zyoud Khalid, Kabilan Muhammad, 2018).

E-learning has become a necessity in higher education though there are some challenges faced by academics in higher education. In this regard technology, teacher, and student challenges are the most crucial (Nurul Islam, Martin Beer, Frances Slack, 2015). MS Islam (2019) refers to one of the most important learning tools by “Google Classroom”. He discussed briefly how this tool can help university students to learn English. He focused on the challenges behind using this tool by collecting the opinions of the State Islamic Institute of Kendari, Indonesia because this university made it compulsory to use Google Classroom in all courses. (Nur Alim, Wa Linda, Fahmi Gunawan, Md Saad, 2019) Finally, the problems faced by the students in online teaching during Covid-19 are not only academic but also psychological. They also portray the actual scenario of the students’ learning during this pandemic. (Claudiu Coman, Laurentiu Gabriel T, îru, Luiza Meses, an-Schmitz I, 2020) Online education in its various modes has been growing steadily worldwide due to the confluence of new technologies, global adoption of the Internet, and intensifying demand for a workforce trained periodically for the ever-evolving digital economy. Online education is on track to become mainstream by 2025 (Palvia, 2018). The COVID-19

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pandemic forced universities around the world to shut down their campuses indefinitely and move their educational activities onto online platforms. The universities were not prepared for such a transition and their online teaching-learning process evolved gradually. The students appreciated the software and online study materials being used to support online education. However, the students felt that online education is stressful and affects their health and social life. This pandemic has led to the widespread adoption of online education and the lessons we learn now will be helpful in the future (Pinaki Chakraborty, Prabhat Mittal, Manu Sheel Gupta, Savita Yadav, Anshika Arora, 2020). This study identifies the research gap in the online teaching of English Literature at the university level particularly in Bangladesh to investigate some challenges and also explore some solutions. Besides, it will be very helpful to conduct further research in this subject.

### **5. METHODOLOGY**

Research Methodology is a way of studying how the research is to be carried out and how the research data is collected and processed. The main aim of research is to find out the truth which is hidden, and which has not been discovered yet (Kothari, 2004). This paper has been conducted using both qualitative and quantitative methods to study the problems and challenges in online English Literature classes. It also uses both primary data and secondary data. Primary data has been collected through a questionnaire on the topic Teaching English Literature in Online Class at the University Level of Bangladesh: Challenges and Solutions. 17 teachers and 88 students from both public and private universities in Bangladesh participated in this survey online. The researchers provided a questionnaire consisting of multiple-choice and open-ended questions in Google Forms. Secondary data was collected from some journals, books, and articles to review the literature related to the research topic. In the finding and discussion part, the researchers took the help of Google Forms to show graphs, charts, and bars to analyze the collected data.

### **6. FINDINGS**

This section presents object-wise findings that were got after percentage analysis and content analysis of the survey through the pie charts. To fulfill the objectives of this study, a survey was set to ask some questions to the teachers and students of English Literature. 17 teachers and 88 students from different universities such as University of Information Technology and Sciences, University of Chittagong, Jagannath University, Sylhet University of Science & Technology and so on participated in the survey. Among them

52.9% teachers are female and 47.1% are male. Among the students, 62.5% are female and 37.5% are male.

### 6.1 Findings related to object

To attain the findings of object one, the researchers have conducted the survey with a question on the way of taking English Literature classes online. Chart 1 shows 58.8% of English Literature teachers use Google Meet as their way of taking classes and the rest of the teachers use Zoom, Facebook live, Messenger call, Imo. On the other hand, 93.2% students said that they use Google Meet for attending the classes. Regarding the participation of students in online classes, 23.5% teachers said that it is above 80%, another 23.5% teachers said that it is between 61-70% and other 23.5% mentioned it is less 60% but 17.5 % teachers refers that the participation is between 31-40%.

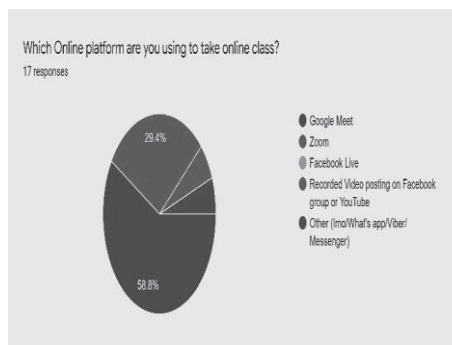


Figure 01: Teacher's response.

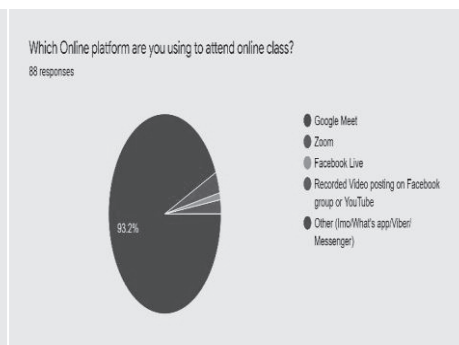


Figure 02: Student's response.

Most of the teachers use PDF and power-point in the classes but 81% of the students said that teachers usually share PDF most.

### 6.2 Findings related to Object Two

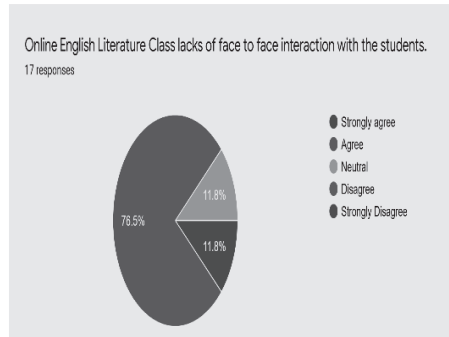
To get the findings of object two, the researchers set a questionnaire for students and teachers on challenges including face-to-face interaction, internet problems, class pressure, collecting literary texts, neophobia on sharing opinions, Health Problems, Lack of Literary Environment and assessment in online English Literature class and analyses the collected data through the pie charts in the Google Form

#### 6.2.1 Face-to-face interaction

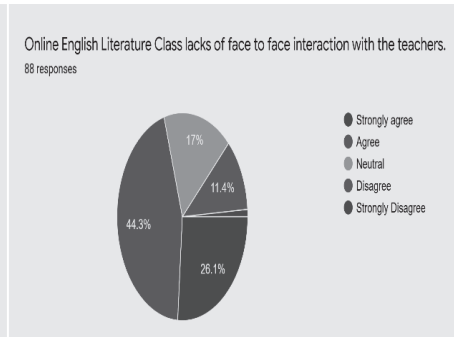
The findings of the study have explored that online English Literature classes lack face-to-face interaction between the teachers and the students. Most of the teachers (76.5%) and students (44.3%) agree on this point. While 11.8% teachers and 26.1% students strongly agree that there is very little scope of

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face-to-face interaction in online English Literature classes, 11.4% students disagree with the statement and 11.8% teachers and 17% students feel that they should be neutral.



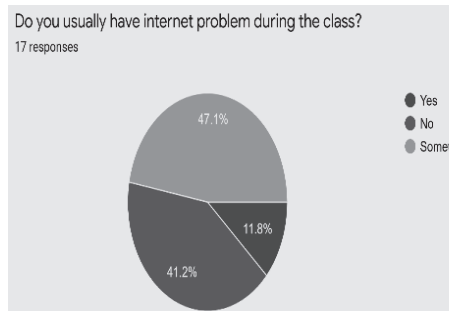
**Figure 03:** Teacher’s response.



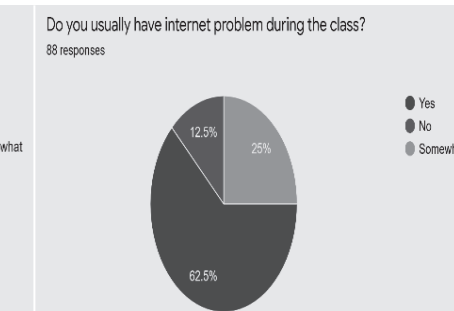
**Figure 04:** Student’s response.

**6.2.2 Internet problem**

Regarding the internet issue, the study has found that the internet problem is a big challenge to the online teaching of English literature classes. The survey has showed that 11.8% teachers and 62.5% students face internet problems during the classes. On the other hand, 41.2% teachers and 12.5% students face no internet problem and 47.1% and 25% participants respectively are sure of it. Despite using both Wi-Fi and cellular data used by 76.5% teachers and around 43.1% students, they both face problems during classes.



**Figure 05:** Teacher’s response.



**Figure 06:** Student’s response.

**6.2.3 Class pressure**

The findings show that taking an online class in English Literature is more challenging than a normal class. The class creates pressure on both teachers and students. There are many reasons behind this as 64.7% teachers acknowledge that it takes much more preparation than normal classes while 29.5% students mention that they need more concentration in online classes

than in normal ones. On the other hand, 58.8% teachers agree that online classes are more pressure-able while 11.8% strongly agree on this point and 23.5% have a neutral position on that. However, 27.3% students think that online English Literature classes are more pressure-able but the majority of them (30.7%) have a neutral opinion.

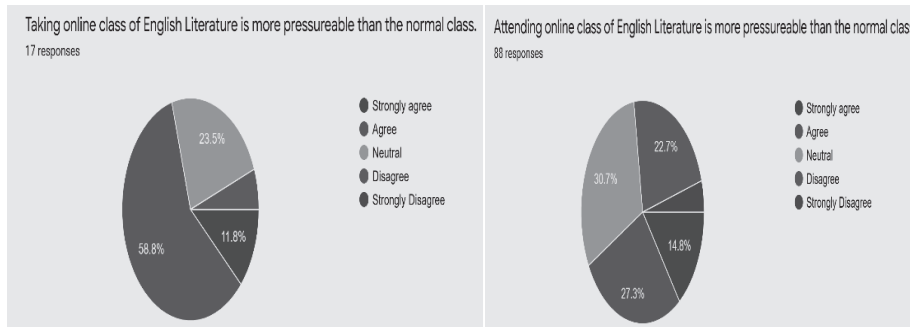


Figure 07: Teacher's response.

Figure 08: Student's response.

#### 6.2.4 Collecting literary texts

According to the findings of this study, it can be said that during this pandemic, teachers and students feel difficulty in collecting literary texts, notes, and printed materials. 58.8% teachers and 43.2% students find it problematic to collect literary texts. Though no teacher strongly agrees on this point, 15.9% students strongly agree with that. But 17.6% and 20.5% participants respectively do not find any difficulty in collecting literary texts during Covid-19. On the other hand, as there is difficulty in collecting literary text, 29.4% teachers and 46.6% students think that online class is leading the students to summary or story-based studying of English Literature. Another question was asked to all the participants whether the students of English Literature are losing interest in reading literary texts or not. 52.9% teachers and 44.3% students agree on the point.

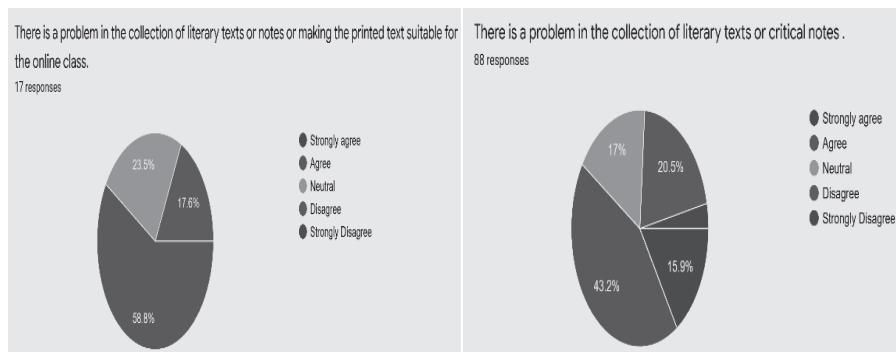


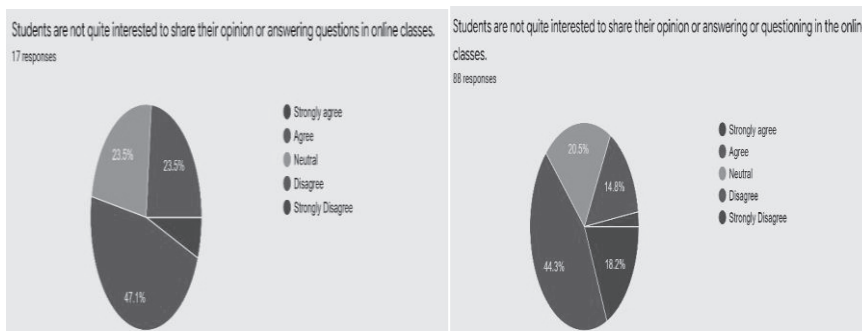
Figure 09: Teacher's response.

Figure 10: Student's response.

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**6.2.5 Neophobia of students to share opinions in Online classes**

It is found in the study that students are not quite interested to share opinions or answering questions in online classes. Both the teachers and students have agreed on the point and the percentage of the participants who have agreed is 47.1% and 44.3% respectively while 23.5% teachers and 14.8% students disagree on this point and 23.5% teachers and 20.5% students remain neutral on this. But some of them (5.9% teachers and 18.2% student) strongly agree on the point. 58.8% of teachers and 38.6% students express interest in online classes because there are no effective classroom activities in online classes.

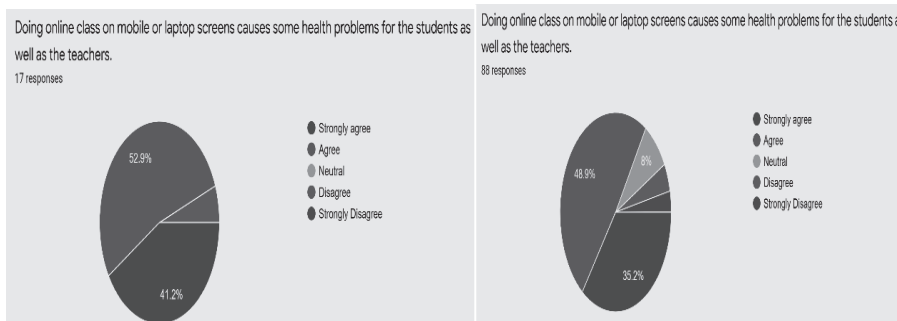


**Figure 11: Teacher's response.**

**Figure 12: Student's response.**

**6.2.6 Health Problem**

The findings refer to that during the online class, teachers and students must use laptops, computers, and mobile phones for a long time at a stretch. 52.9% of teachers and 48.9% students agree that looking at computers, laptops, and mobile phone screens for a long-time cause health problem. 41.2% of teachers and 35.2% students strongly agree on this point. But less than 6% of teachers and students disagree that it will not cause any health problems.



**Figure 13: Teacher's response.**

**Figure 14: Student's response.**

### 6.2.7 Lack of Literary Environment

The findings of the study reveal that as online Literature class lacks face to face interaction and it is more pressure-able than normal class, it is sometimes impossible to create a literary environment in an online class. 64.7% teachers and 53.4% students agree that it is sometimes impossible to do so while some of the teachers (5.9%) and students (21.6%) strongly acknowledged the point. 11.8% and 10.2% teachers and students respectively disagree on the point. On the other hand, nearly 17.6% and 13.6% of the total participants remain neutral.

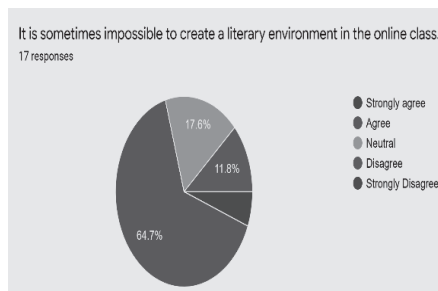


Figure 15: Teacher’s response.

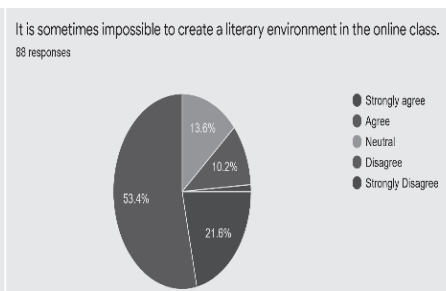


Figure 16: Student’s response.

### 6.2.8 Others

Except for the above-mentioned challenges, the findings of the study also get some other significant challenges regarding online teaching of English literature. Some teachers and students feel bored during the class, some of them face load shedding, some are disturbed by the sounds of their houses, and for some of them, it is quite impossible to concentrate for a long time. But one question has been asked to all the participants whether online class assessment of English Literature is more difficult than normal class or not. 17.6% teachers and 13.6% students strongly agree that it is more difficult than a normal class while 52.9% teachers and 35.2% students agree on the point. On the other hand, some of the teachers (11.8%) and students (25%) remain neutral on the point while 11.8% teachers and 22.7% students disagree.

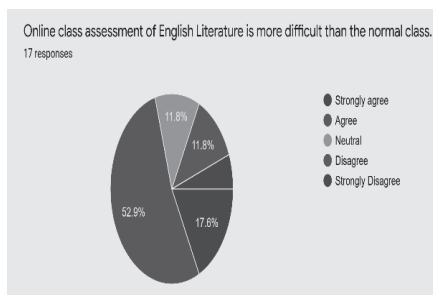


Figure 15: Teacher’s response.

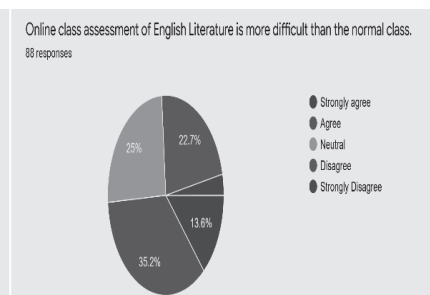


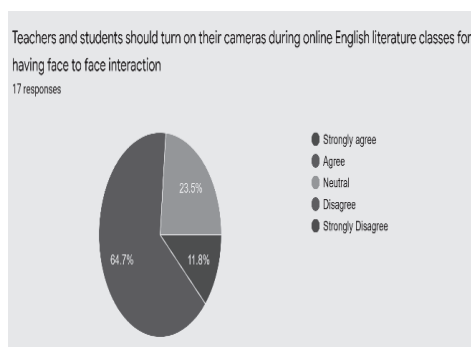
Figure 16: Student’s response.

### **6.3 Findings related to Object Three**

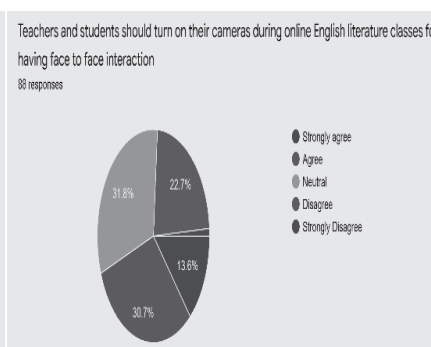
To get the findings of object three i.e., to find and analyze the possible solutions to those challenges, the questionnaire of the survey in the solution part wanted both teachers and students to refer to the solutions of the challenges. It is found that most of the teachers and students suggested some solutions to the problems.

#### **6.3.1 Solution to challenge**

According to the findings of this article, teachers and students think that online class lacks face to face interaction among them. A questionnaire was set to ask for the solutions to the above-mentioned problems. 64.7% teachers and 30.7% students agree that teachers and students should turn on their cameras during online English Literature classes to have face-to-face interaction while 11.8% teachers and 13.6% students have strong position on this point. But it is seen in Chart 18 that a large number of students are reluctant to turn on their cameras during online English Literature classes. Besides, 23.5% teachers and 31.8% students remain neutral on this question.



**Figure 2:** Teacher's response.



**Figure 3:** Student's response.

#### **6.3.2 Solution to challenge**

Regarding the solution to the internet problem, the study found that both the use of Wi-Fi and mobile data can be the solution to overcome that problem. Most of the teachers (47.1% and students (34.1%) have a strong position with the statement while 47.1% teachers and 44.3% students agree that both Wi-Fi and mobile data can be a solution because when Wi-Fi will not be available, mobile data can be alternative to continue the class. But less than 6% teacher and 17% students become neutral on this point while a very small number of students (4.6%) disagree that both of them are not essential to conduct the classes.





47.1% teachers and 23.9% students. Teachers (58.8%) and students (52.3%) mention that the teachers should relate the topics with students' day-to-day life by mentioning real-life events. To create an environment of literature and to get rid of monotony, teachers (58.8%) think that they should use different videos or movies scene related to the literary texts and it is also acknowledged by 42% students.

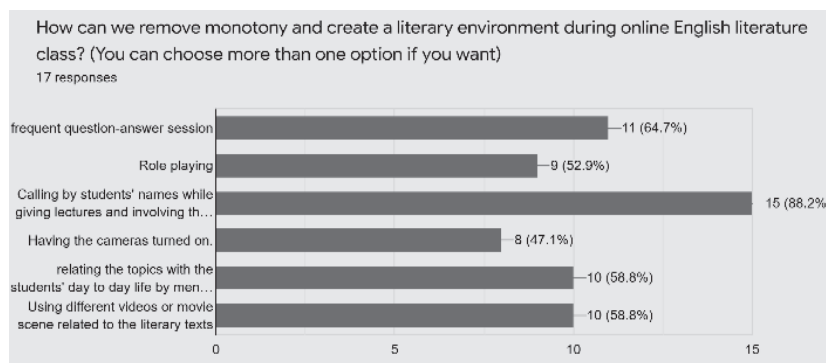


Figure 25: Teacher's response.

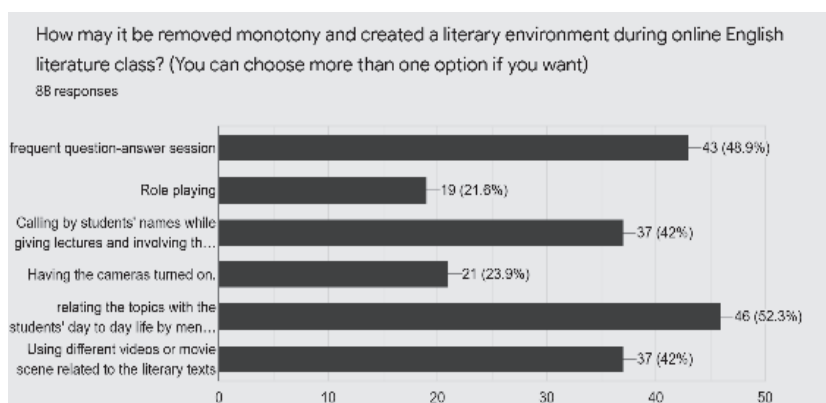


Figure 26: Student's response.

## 7. DISCUSSIONS

This article studies how the online teaching of English literature is challenging and what are the possible solutions to the problems in the context of present Bangladesh. Through the mixed method, the study examined the perception of the students and teachers of different kinds of public and private universities in Bangladesh. It is found that both teachers and students are facing some challenges during online English literature classes. Even the use of technologies in literature classes has been intensified by the Covid-19 pandemic. All stakeholders like teachers, students, and officers are trying

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their best to conduct their individual work online despite facing some problems during the work. (Loknath Mishra, Tushar Gupta & Abha Shree, 2020). They are trying their best to find some possible solutions to those problems so that they can make the classes more interesting, interactive, and beneficial for both sides. Though we ran a survey to find out the challenges in online English Literature classes and solutions to those challenges, we had a few questions to know how the teachers and students are taking and attending literature classes. While there are a lot of changes in terms of online class devices, technologies, and platforms, the study found that most of the teachers (58.8%) and students (93.2%) of the total participants are using Google Meet for taking and attending classes.

Some reasons behind this are that. Google Meet is a small app in size and it can run on the lower speed of internet and obviously, it is easy to use than other platforms. To conduct the classes, most of the teachers (76.5%) use both cellular data and Wi-Fi and most of the students do the same. The study also explores that more than 70% of the participants have agreed that online English Literature classes lack face-to-face interaction. There are some reasons behind this. Students feel neo-phobia to ask questions in class. They like to be silent in the whole class. In this way, they become inactive and only one-way communication is possible in the class. On the other hand, they think that turning on the cameras during classes can be a possible solution to get rid of this problem and it is agreed by 30.7% of students and 64.7% of teachers. After the cessation of the face-to-face class, some other challenges such as socio-emotional imbalance, financial burden, and personal adjustment both in the class and at home are faced by students in online English Literature classes (UNESCO IESALC, 2020).

This survey has also come out with some other problems and solutions. More than 70% of the teachers feel more pressure during online literature classes because teachers have to take more preparation for an online class than for an offline class. On the other hand, it is seen in the findings that more than 90% of the total participants think that they have health issues doing online classes. This can be a reason behind making online English Literature classes more pressure-able because doing online classes for a long time irritates the eyes and causes headaches to the teachers and the students. Besides, the survey has found some solutions too. Most of the teachers (52.9%) and students (44.3%) think that there should be a proper gap between the two classes. Another problem found by the survey is that students of online English Literature classes are losing their interest to read literary texts and are not interested to share their opinion. As we know, we are passing through a tough time during this Covid-19, and it is not quite easy to collect literary

text. This can be a reason for losing interest in reading literary texts. As there is no effective activity in online classes like normal classes confirmed by more than 60% of teachers and 70% of students, students are not interested in sharing opinions and questions-answer sessions. All the participants of the survey have offered some solutions to this problem. More than 60% of teachers and 55% of students think that motivation can be the way to increase interest in students so that they read literary texts and share their opinion in the classes. Research findings of (Shaha, 2020) advocated the proper counseling to engage the students in literature class actively.

There are some more solutions to this problem: frequent question-answer sessions, role-playing sessions, calling the students by their names during the classes, and sharing different videos about a particular story. After knowing about all these problems, it may be anticipated that online English Literature classes do not have a literary environment and it is acknowledged by more than 70% of teachers and students as well. The qualitative finding of this paper corroborates the findings of (Brandon, 2020) that there needs free access to any online literary materials. Internet is one of the most essential things that both teachers and students need to take or attend online classes. But sometimes the teachers and students of English Literature face some problems regarding the internet.

As the maximum number of students in Bangladesh face a financial crisis or they are not interested in online buying text, free access to online literary materials is essential. Every university can set up an E-library where students have free access to explore the literature world. More than 70% of teachers and 45% of students among all the participants face more difficulties in doing online class assessments because direct exams are not possible due to the coronavirus. After doing this survey, it seems to us that the perfect way of assessment during Covid-19 has not yet been found. But in one section of the survey, all the participants have recommended some more solutions for all the problems we have found so far. They are: motivating students by doing so many things, involving literary texts with real-life situations, the internet connection should be improved, teachers should friendly bondage with students, a minimized syllabus and short classes, and so on.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

The system of online teaching of English literature has already created a new opportunity in digital and upcoming developed Bangladesh. Although there are some challenges for Bangladesh to overcome in the sector of online teaching, there is also huge potential. During the lockdown period of Covid-19, online teaching and learning at the university level in Bangladesh has bloomed despite certain challenges. The article has identified some important

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findings on challenges and solutions to online teaching of English literature. The findings of this study show that both teachers and students face the challenges of proper interaction, stable internet connection, and availability of online study materials and assessment systems. They also feel pressure in coping with online teaching because there is no scope for creating an enjoyable literary environment. The study also recommended a stable internet connection, a short and revised syllabus, proper counseling, and friendly interaction as some solutions to the challenges. Besides, the administration of the institution and policymakers of government should focus more than before on eradicating the challenges that are faced in online teaching.

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