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Beyond Formal Instruction: Co-Curricular Pathways to English Proficiency and Holistic Student Growth

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ABSTRACT

Globally formal instruction alone is considered inadequate for developing communicative competence and holistic learner growth. In many developing countries such as Bangladesh, Vietnam, and India, co-curricular activities (CCAs) have been proven as vital complements to traditional EFL pedagogy. In the Bangladeshi EFL context, classroom-based formal instruction often falls short of ensuring communicative competence and holistic development. To bridge this gap, co-curricular activities have emerged as complementary pathways, fostering language proficiency and nurturing learners' broader personal growth. The study critically explores the role of co-curricular activities (CCAs) (i.e., language clubs, cultural activities, and academic competitions) in developing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency of Bangladeshi secondary level learners. The findings support that CCAs should be fully and effectively implemented in education and education policy so that there is a more dynamic approach to teaching EFL. CCAs enhance language acquisition while stimulating intellectual, social, and emotional growth by offering real-life opportunities for language practice in pressure-free environments. For this, policy changes, resource mobilization, and professional growth of teachers must be addressed so that CCAs can become a part of the educational system to improve both language proficiency and ensure the overall development of the students.

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1. Introduction

The role of co-curricular activities (CCAs) has become very much important in the secondary school educational system, especially in acquisition of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). English is considered as the key to success in academics and careers in Bangladesh and therefore, has become a national agenda on improvement. Nevertheless, the conventional classrooms cannot usually provide the humanistic, situation-oriented frames within which the students can be able to develop their skills in learning the language to its full extents. Co-curricular activities connected to language clubs, sports, cultural programs, and academic competitions offer a great chance to students to interact with English in a natural environment and improve their linguistic and personal growth.

CCAs play a significant role in overall development of students including cognitive, social, emotional as well as ethical development. These activities do not only teach a new language but also educate the necessary skills to be a leader, speaker, and a team worker. As Alwi and Channa (2024) stated, co-curricular programs play a significant role in ensuring an all-round education, enhancing emotional intelligence and interpersonal skills in students, therefore, being prerequisites to their personal and professional development. Research has revealed that the use of these activities promotes self-perceived productive skill in English and motivational influence, leading to high academic involvement (Han, 2023). Also, co-curriculum can enhance thinking skills and rational thinking, and students are ready to cope with everyday challenges in real life and school life (Shakil et al., 2024).

The usage of language in the real life via CCAs gives students a chance of experiencing English in real-life situations. As Nguyen (2024) wrote, English language clubs and extracurricular activities proved to have a substantial effect on the development of speaking, listening, and writing abilities of students. The activities also nurture fluency and confidence since the students are exposed to real life situations where they can apply their language skills. Moreover, the communicative and collaborative learning strategies, which are a prerogative of the CCAs, promote active use and interaction with peers, which make a critical role in language learning (Alcivar Loor et al., 2024; Salamanti et al., 2023).

In spite of these advantages, the use of CCAs is disparately viewed as an addition to the conventional academic disciplines, thus ending up having extreme usage of the subject in most educational systems, including that of Bangladesh. After discussing the power of co-curricular activities, Power and Erling (2014) state that in many cases, the importance of exam preparation overshadows a co-curricular activity. The problem is augmented by the low number of resources and especially in rural regions and by the absence of teacher education on how to use CCAs in their teaching learning processes (Pettersen, 2022). The education system does not seem to appreciate the benefits of CCAs towards increasing language proficiency with the conventional academic activities having the priority instead.

The engagement of co-curricular activities has been linked with the development of speaking, listening skills as well as confidence when using English and the feeling of motivation to learn English (Ramalingam & Islam, 2024). CCAs are useful in minimizing the anxiety level that usually goes with formal language learning, offering a relaxed atmosphere (MacIntyre & Gregersen, 2012). This is also in line with the Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984) by Krashen that states that a good emotional surrounding enhances learning of a language.

Besides, CCAs also facilitate thinking, problem-solving, and cooperative learning that supports cognitive development. Such activities, as Mohamad & Esa (2014) claimed, assist the students in building up intellectual skills supplementing academic learning. B. and Ilankumaran (2024) also stated that student-centered learning can be helpful in terms of supporting the development of these skills, as it is imperative to adopt a more dynamic and interactive process of teaching language learners to encourage them to be more engaged in the process of learning and comprehend the material. Moreover, research demonstrates that introducing multimodal learning strategies to CCAs results in the improvement of the engagement and language proficiency shown by students to a considerable degree (Salamanti et al., 2023).

The advantages of the CCAs go beyond the knowledge of language, giving the way to the development of necessary social skills and self-consciousness. Similar to the recommendation, proposed by Pettersen (2022), local English Language Teaching (ELT) practices need to be defined by a more inclusive and locally responsive approach, in combination with the inclusion of co-curricular activities to meet both local conditions and international interests. The given strategy helps develop the skills of students as agents capable of entering and operating in the most

adversarial social and occupational settings and succeeding in a world that appears to be growing in connectivity (Channa, 2024).

With all the glaring advantages CCAs may not be integrated into the educational system without issues. The wide-scale use of co-curricular programs is impeded by resource constraints and imbalance in access to these extracurricular activities across schools, in particular, rural ones (Power & Erling, 2014). Moreover, it is the lack of appreciation of CCAs by the policymakers and educators who usually focus on the traditional academic material. Nevertheless, inclusion of the CCAs within formal curriculum may offer a more active and exciting way of language learning and a well-balanced personal definition.

This study contributes by critically synthesizing evidence on CCAs in the Bangladeshi EFL context, highlighting both linguistic and holistic outcomes. The paper proceeds as follows: the literature review situates CCAs within existing research and identifies gaps; theoretical insights are integrated within these discussions. The methodology explains the systematic selection and analysis of studies, followed by results organized around four research questions. The discussion interprets findings in relation to practice and policy, ending with recommendations and directions for future research.

The significance of this study lies in its dual contribution to both English language education and holistic student development. While the Bangladeshi secondary curriculum emphasizes exam-oriented instruction, learners often lack opportunities to develop communicative competence and soft skills essential for real-life contexts. Co-curricular activities such as debating, storytelling, cultural programs, and language clubs offer a dynamic platform for practicing English in authentic settings. This study not only documents the linguistic benefits of such practices but also explores their socio-emotional impact, aligning with Sustainable Development Goal 4 (Quality Education). By situating the research within the broader discourse of EFL pedagogy, the study highlights its relevance beyond Bangladesh, particularly for contexts where resource constraints and traditional pedagogy limit communicative engagement.

2. Research Objective and Perspective

This research examines how co-curricular activities can be integrated into EFL education for developing EFL proficiency of learners at secondary schools in Bangladesh. To achieve the paper goal in discussing the manner in which CCAs can be integrated in the curriculum to aid a holistic development, the attention will be drawn especially on the part of language acquisition and the motivation aspect. The questions that guide the research are as follows:

- i. How do CCAs lead to EFL proficiency development amid students in secondary schools?
- ii. What are the overall implications of integrating the CCA in the EFL curriculum of Bangladesh?
- iii. How do co-curricular activities contribute to the holistic development of students?
- iv. What are the challenges to the successful incorporation of CCAs and how would they be solved?

This paper expresses the view that although teaching EFL in a traditional classroom environment is desirable, there is also more to be said about teaching EFL by using the rich potential of co-curricular activities.

3. Literature Review

3.1 Co-Curricular Activities and Language Learning

Co-curricular activities (CCAs) play a great role in enhancing language acquisition especially on the English as a Foreign Language (EFL) settings. It lends a real life quality to students' language practice and assists in development of speaking, listening and writing skills in a less tense and more thought provoking way. As an example, debates and drama clubs, or language games can be some of the activities to engage students to connect to the language on a deeper level, contributing to their fluency and confidence, which are fundamental aspects of language acquisition (Kim, 2021; Ghajarieh et al., 2024).

In Bangladesh, there is not much research with regard to the use of CCAs in EFL education, but the little research that has been done suggests the possibilities of CCAs in developing language skills. Vocabulary, comprehension and critical thinking enhancement activities are named as activities due to which literature clubs, essay writing competitions, and group discussions are created. These CCAs promote the idea of use of the language outside of textbooks and official classroom activities, which entail highly valuable practice and enhances their

comprehension (Pramono et al., 2023). Moreover, role-playing and group discussions tend to improve speeches and build cooperation between learners, which refers to cooperative learning (Botamo & Senthilkumar, 2024; Jakavonyte-Staskuviene, 2021).

Furthermore, inclusion of interactive-learning tasks in language teaching has also been observed to enhance the implication of student engagement and proficiency regarding the given language greatly (Vanjinayaki & Gayathri, 2024). CCAs minimize language anxiety and encourage students to make additional efforts in studying English more confidently, thus, support language growth by establishing a dynamic and supportive learning environment (Qorie et al., 2024). In general, CCA needs to be incorporated into language programs, as it can develop the linguistic ability as well as motivate students.

3.2 Motivational Benefits of Co-Curricular Activities in Language Learning

Student motivation is of greater significance to learning a language since co-curricular activities (CCAs) create an interesting environment and encouragement. According to the Motivation Theory propounded by Gardner (1985), it is important to highlight that in the case of second language acquisition; intrinsic motivation is very necessary and CCA is a playful and interactive user conditions that lead to intrinsic motivation. CCAs provide relief to the stress of such formal exams in the country like Bangladesh that has a high-pressure culture where English is perceived by most people as an intimidating academic subject. Role-play, games, and drama allow students to rehearse the language environment and eliminate the feeling of avoidance and create an atmosphere of emotional strength (Aguirre & Vasquez, 2024; Mori et al., 2023).

Self-Determination Theory puts an emphasis on fulfilling the needs of students in the domains of autonomy, competence and relatedness in order to increase motivation (Wei, 2025). CCAs accommodate these needs as they give a student opportunity to practice through interactive, engaging activities, developing a feeling of control in their learning progress, stimulating their self-esteem and engaging them in the language. Research findings have established that, fun activities, including gamification and role-playing, have substantial effects on the motivation of students and their language proficiency (Adzmi et al., 2024; Saad et al., 2024). This is in line with the Printer (2024) perception that an inspirational curriculum that adds interactive tasks is the key to maintaining the interest and dedication of students to the language study.

Besides, the idea of Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) is considered crucial when it comes to the motivation of students. It was also indicated that positive feelings, including enjoyment and active participation of language learning activities produces better results in learning, self-confidence, and overall language performance (Guo, 2024; Zhang et al., 2025; Zuo, 2024). CCAs can be defined as an effective resource in language learning, as in it, students can have an atmosphere of feeling like they want to practice English outside of the classroom and develop language skills as well as themselves.

3.3 Collaborative and Cooperative Learning Approaches in Co-Curricular Activities

Co-operative and collaborative learning strategies in co-curricular activities (CCA) bear a lot of fruit in the process of language acquisition and especially in the process of oral communication training. These are the techniques associated with collective work where groups are used in organizing, discussion, debate and role-playing of students, among others, which creates an earmarked environment where the students sharpen their language skills. A study of Alcivar Loor et al. (2024) highlights the efficiency of these strategies in real classroom conditions within which students cooperate mutually and interact with each other, as a result of which their level of speaking proficiency in English also increases. These strategies should be a combination of structured and teacher-directed activities, emphasizing social skills, soft skills and cognitive skills (Kato et al., 2015; Yusuf & Hidayat, 2023). CCAs also develop interaction, cooperation and teamwork among students, enabling them to get peer feedback to correct mistakes (Main, 2020; Davis, n.d.).

In CCAs a teacher serves the role a facilitator who simultaneously promotes interaction among the students and the sense of individual responsibility in group activities (Main, 2020). This positive learning system based on community interaction is called social interdependence that encourages collaborative activity and positive learning among students (Yusuf & Hidayat, 2023). The combination of these strategies in CCAs helps develop a more interactive and productive language acquisition atmosphere and gives students the necessary abilities to either succeed at school or live a healthy life (Kato et al., 2015; "Cooperative and collaborative learning," 2023).

3.4 Empirical Updates

Recent scholarship emphasizes the importance of non-formal learning environments in enhancing communicative competence (Rahman, 2021; Chowdhury & Karim, 2022). Studies in comparable EFL contexts demonstrate that language clubs and debate societies significantly improve learners' speaking fluency and confidence (Nguyen, 2020; Alam & Sultana, 2023). Moreover, research highlights the socio-emotional benefits of co-curricular participation, including teamwork, leadership, and resilience (Lee, 2021; Farooq, 2024). These insights collectively reinforce the need for integrating empirical perspectives into discussions on EFL pedagogy in Bangladesh.

3.5 Critical Gap

Although several studies have documented the influence of co-curricular activities on language learning, most of them focus on general academic achievement or motivational aspects, with limited attention to their role in fostering English proficiency in South Asian EFL contexts. Furthermore, previous research often provides descriptive accounts rather than critical analyses of how such activities integrate with formal instruction to promote holistic development. In the Bangladeshi context, empirical evidence remains scarce, particularly regarding how co-curricular practices address linguistic, cognitive, and affective dimensions simultaneously. This study seeks to bridge this gap by critically examining the ways in which co-curricular activities complement formal instruction and contribute to both English language proficiency and holistic student growth.

3.6 Theoretical Insights

Three theoretical approaches have been used to explain the ideas presented in this article and address the CCAs and EFL proficiency. Vygotsky Sociocultural Theory (1978) is one of the basic theoretical works that stresses the importance of social interaction in the process of cognitive development. Vygotsky also preferred language acquisition to consist of communication with others in relevant situations as this kind of learning is the most effective. The opportunities that such interactions are offered in CCAs as non-formal learning spaces are associated with the possibility of students to negotiate meaning and use language skills in life-like contexts.

The second theory is the so-called Affective Filter Hypothesis (1984) by Krashen which states that the emotional issues, like motivation or anxiety, play an essential role in the process of language acquisition. The affective filter can be reduced through the assistance of CCAs with ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable atmosphere. This gives a student more freedom to practice the English language and hence they get better results.

Lastly, Gardner (1985) has given a lot of emphasis to the roles of motivation in language learning through his motivation Theory. CCAs are also associated with the idea that they do not only make learning more motivating due to their engaging nature but they also meet the personal interests of the students making the process of learning a language more regulating and interesting.

4. Methodology

This study adopts a critical review methodology to assess the role of co-curricular activities (CCAs) in enhancing English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency in the secondary education context in Bangladesh. The primary focus is to explore how CCAs impact the holistic development of students, specifically regarding language acquisition, motivation, and emotional growth.

4.1 Selection of Literature and Inclusion Criteria

For this review, we examined studies published from 2010 to 2024 to ensure that the data was both recent and relevant to current educational trends. The review focuses on peer-reviewed articles, theses, and reports accessible via widely recognized educational databases such as JSTOR, Scopus, and Google Scholar. The inclusion criteria were as follows:

- **Time Frame:** Studies published from 2010 to 2024.

- **Language:** Only studies written in English to ensure accessibility and consistency in interpretation.
- **Context:** Research conducted in secondary school settings, particularly those that address the integration of CCAs into English language learning curricula.
- **Relevance:** Studies must directly relate to the use of CCAs to improve EFL proficiency or broader educational outcomes.

4.2 Screening Procedure

The initial search process yielded 35 relevant articles based on titles and abstracts. These were then reviewed against the inclusion criteria. After eliminating articles that were not directly related to CCAs, or those not focused on English language proficiency, the final selection comprised 20 studies, which were downloaded and stored in a reference management software, Zotero, for systematic organization. The chosen articles were critically analyzed, and in cases where there was uncertainty regarding the relevance of certain studies, a second reviewer was consulted.

4.3 Data Analysis

This review utilized thematic analysis to examine the functions and implications of CCAs in enhancing English proficiency. To answer the research questions of the study, the selected works were coded according to the themes, such as:

- **Enhancement of English Language Proficiency:** Exploring how CCAs can improve basic language skills
- **Motivational Factors:** Investigating how CCAs encourage students to learn English language
- **Holistic Development:** Analysing the impact of CCAs on students' cognitive, emotional, and social development

Data was then organized using Excel to facilitate comparative analysis across studies. Thematic categories were evaluated to identify recurring patterns and gaps in the literature. Additionally, a narrative synthesis approach was used to interpret findings, ensuring a comprehensive overview of the current research landscape.

4.3.1 Coding and Theme Development

The coding process, based on themes and reviewed by an expert, ensures its transparency and reliability. In the beginning, to highlight recurring themes, open coding was used and then they were clustered broadly to be aligned with the research goals. For example, statements such as “*debate competitions enhance articulation and critical thinking*” were first coded under “critical thinking” and then grouped into the broader theme of cognitive development. A codebook was maintained and updated throughout the process to ensure consistency, and earlier codes were revisited for reliability. Additionally, the thematic mapping was reviewed by a second researcher to minimize bias and strengthen the trustworthiness of findings.

4.4 Limitations

One limitation of this study is the exclusion of grey literature (non-peer-reviewed research) and studies conducted in languages other than English. This review also does not address the methodological diversity of the studies reviewed, as they predominantly employed qualitative approaches, leaving a gap in mixed-methods or experimental designs. Therefore, future research may explore these areas for a more rounded perspective.

5. Results

This part shows the results of the critical analysis of the chosen studies, answering the main research questions regarding the impact of the co-curricular activities (CCAs) on the improvement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) proficiency in Bangladesh. The findings are organized around three primary research questions: the impact of CCAs on language skills, their motivational benefits, and their contribution to holistic student development.

5.1 Research Question i. How do CCAs lead to EFL proficiency development amid students in secondary schools?

The reviewed studies consistently show that CCAs significantly enhance various language skills, particularly speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Below is a comprehensive table summarizing the impact of specific CCAs on these skills, supported by several key studies:

Table 1*Impact of Co-Curricular Activities on Language Skills*

Co-Curricular Activity	Language Skills Enhanced	Examples from Studies
Drama Clubs and Role-Playing	Speaking, Listening	Nguyen (2024); Alcivar Loor et al. (2024) – Significant improvement in fluency and listening comprehension.
Debate Competitions	Speaking, Critical Thinking	Pramono et al. (2023) – Enhanced articulation, argumentation skills, and critical thinking in English.
Essay Writing Competitions	Writing, Vocabulary	Botamo & Senthilkumar (2024) – Improvement in writing structure, vocabulary use, and grammar mastery.
Literature Clubs	Reading, Writing	Shakil et al. (2024) – Improved reading comprehension, analytical skills, and engagement with complex English texts.
Group Discussions and Study Groups	Listening, Speaking, Critical Thinking	Ramalingam & Islam (2024); Wei (2025) – Boosted comprehension and fluency in discussions, critical engagement with texts.
Spelling Bees and Language Games	Vocabulary, Pronunciation	Solhi & Shirvan (2023) – Enhanced vocabulary retention and pronunciation clarity through interactive games.

These findings underscore the diverse ways CCAs support language acquisition by providing engaging, non-formal opportunities for practicing language skills in authentic settings.

5.2 Research Question ii: What is the overall implications of integrating the CCA in the EFL curriculum of Bangladesh?

The integration of CCAs into secondary education has been shown to significantly boost students' motivation to engage with English. The table below outlines the various motivational benefits attributed to different CCAs, drawing from a variety of studies:

Table 2*Motivational Effects of Co-Curricular Activities*

Co-Curricular Activity	Motivational Benefit	Examples from Studies
Drama Clubs and Language Games	Intrinsic Motivation, Engagement	Han (2023); Wei (2025); Mori et al. (2023) – Increased student engagement and intrinsic motivation in learning English.
Group Projects and Collaborative Learning	Autonomy, Competence	Ramalingam & Islam (2024); Wei (2025) – Boosted students' confidence and sense of ownership over their learning.
Cultural Exchange Programs	Relatedness, Cultural Awareness	Qorie et al. (2024); Alwi & Channa (2024) – Students experienced stronger connections to the language and cultural diversity.
Language Clubs and Competitions	Intrinsic Motivation, Enjoyment	Guo (2024); Solhi & Shirvan (2023) – Foreign Language Enjoyment (FLE) reported as a key motivator for continued participation.

Peer Tutoring and Mentorship Programs	Social Relatedness, Confidence	Bañez (2024); Al Ajmi & Al Adawi (2023) – Peer relationships and mentorship increased self-esteem and motivation to learn.
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CCAs provide a rich environment for students to experience both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, fostering a positive relationship with language learning while alleviating the anxiety associated with traditional classroom settings.

5.3 Research Question iii: How do co-curricular activities contribute to the holistic development of students?

In addition to language skills and motivation, CCAs contribute significantly to students' overall cognitive, emotional, social, and ethical development. The table below provides a comprehensive view of the broader developmental impacts of participating in CCAs, supported by various research studies:

Table 3

Holistic Development Outcomes of Co-Curricular Activities

Co-Curricular Activity	Area of Holistic Development	Examples from Studies
Group Projects and Debates	Cognitive Development, Critical Thinking	Shakil et al. (2024); Davis (n.d.) – Development of problem-solving, argumentation, and critical thinking skills.
Leadership Roles in CCAs	Leadership, Emotional Resilience	Pettersen (2022); Alwi & Channa (2024) – Improved leadership skills, emotional resilience, and team management abilities.
Cultural Activities and Events	Social Competence, Cultural Awareness	Shakil et al. (2024); Solhi & Shirvan (2023) – Exposure to diverse cultures improved intercultural competence and social awareness.
Community Service Projects	Social Responsibility, Empathy	Alwi & Channa (2024); Pramono et al. (2023) – Students exhibited greater empathy, responsibility, and community involvement.
Sports and Team-Building Activities	Physical Health, Teamwork	Mohamad & Esa (2014); Kato et al. (2015) – Enhanced teamwork, social skills, and stress reduction through physical engagement.
Peer Mentoring Programs	Emotional Support, Social Skills	Bañez (2024); Zhang et al. (2025) – Strengthened emotional well-being, social skills, and peer support networks.

The above findings point out the fact that CCAs promote a diversity of personal and social skills, and these skills are a part of the overall development of any student. The skill to cooperate, lead and empathize in different conditions prepares students with the means to succeed not only in language learning but also in their future life.

5.4 Research Question iv: What are the challenges to the successful incorporation of CCAs and how would they be solved?

Though CCAs can foster EFL proficiency and ensure holistic development of the learners, there are many challenges while taking steps to make integration. But the challenges can be solved through strategic initiatives. The below table discusses the challenges and offers probable solutions based on the reviewed literature.

Table 4

Challenges in Implementing Co-Curricular Activities for EFL

Challenge	Description	Proposed Solutions	References
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Resource Constraints	Lack of necessary resources (funding, infrastructure, facilities) especially in rural schools that limits the effective implementation of CCAs.	Resource mobilization, policy backing, and support for rural schools to ensure equal access.	Power & Erling (2014); Pettersen (2022)
Lack of Teacher Training	Teachers may lack the skills and training needed to effectively integrate CCAs into their teaching methods and curriculum.	Comprehensive teacher training programs that include the use of CCAs in language learning.	Shakil et al. (2024); Power and Erling (2014)
Limited Recognition by Policymakers	Policymakers often overlook the benefits of CCAs, prioritizing traditional academic subjects over co-curricular ones.	Advocating for policy changes that emphasize the inclusion of CCAs in the national curriculum, with appropriate funding.	Pettersen (2022); Alwi & Channa (2024)
Overemphasis on Exam Preparation	CCAs are often sidelined due to the focus on exam preparation and traditional academic learning methods.	Integration of CCAs as part of formal curricula alongside traditional subjects to balance academic and co-curricular learning.	Ramalingam & Islam (2024); Pettersen (2022)
Unequal Access Across Schools (Urban vs. Rural)	There is a significant gap in the availability and access to CCAs, particularly in rural schools.	Ensuring that all schools, regardless of location, are equipped with the resources and infrastructure for CCAs.	Power & Erling (2014); Pettersen (2022)
Lack of Policy and Structural Support	There is insufficient policy backing and structural framework in place to facilitate the integration of CCAs into the educational system.	Developing national policies that recognize the importance of CCAs and provide a clear framework for their implementation.	Pettersen (2022); Alwi & Channa (2024)

The above findings mention the challenges and recommend solutions for successful integration of CCA based English curriculum.

5.5 Critical Analysis of Findings

The evidence provided by the reviewed studies has a clear indication that CCAs exert a complex effect on the formation of students, as far as the secondary education environment is concerned. They enhance proficiency at language by providing interesting and context-oriented practice possibilities. Moreover, CCAs bring about motivation through the provision of students with meaningful and fun learning experiences to the extent that they transcend conventional classrooms. Lastly, CCAs also foster the growth of the whole student since they develop cognitive, emotional, and social skills necessary in the achievement of lifelong success.

Nevertheless, there were a number of obstacles on the way to full integration of CCAs. These encompass inadequacy of resources and infrastructure especially those found in the rural schools and the enhancement of training more of the teachers to provide a coordinated manner of implementing CCAs in their teaching programs. Dealing with these barriers will be essential in maximizing the potential benefits of CCAs to all the students.

6. Discussion

The evidence of this review shows the paramount nature of co-curricular activities (CCAs) in terms of its importance in advancement of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in secondary school education system in Bangladesh. Although classroom learning in a traditional setting cannot be neglected, CCAs provide opportunity to explore the unknown, to be active and interactive, challenging participants in the use of the language, critical analysis and personal development.

6.1 Impact of Co-Curricular Activities on English Language Proficiency

It has been noticed that CCAs play a remarkable role in enhancing language skills, speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Through drama clubs, debate competitions and language games, students can practice and develop English like real-life contexts that enhance fluency and confidence (Alcivar Loo et al., 2024; Ramalingam & Islam, 2024). CCAs reduces pressure among students when they are involved in speaking and writing tasks (Pramono et al., 2023; Nguyen, 2024). These activities also advance vocabulary learning, reading comprehension, and critical thinking processes, contributing to the holistic language development of the students (Shakil et al., 2024; Botamo & Senthilkumar, 2024).

6.2 Motivational Aspects of Co-Curricular Activities

CCAs can also be used to increase motivation to learn English in a student. These are by themselves interesting activities which provide students with fun, significant connections with the language. Underlying the Self-Determination Theory, activities such as role-playing and language clubs as they evidence, meet the needs of a student by promoting autonomous decisions, competency to act, and a sense of relatedness that make the students more intrinsically motivated (Wei, 2025). CCAs in Bangladesh, where English is a commonly-feared subject, help teach in non-frightening and stress-free learning experiments that lower anxiety levels and increase fun as a language learner (Han, 2023; Pettersen, 2022). This motivation increase is also associated with developed skills of language proficiency and permanent engagement (Mori et al., 2023; Zuo, 2024).

6.3 Holistic Development through Co-Curricular Activities

In addition to language competence, CCAs foster the development of students in general. Research also shows that such activities support social, emotional and cognitive development. CCA leadership positions also increase emotional strength as well as responsibility and self-identity (Alwi & Channa, 2024; Pettersen, 2022). Furthermore, group activities such as discussions and peer mentoring develops interpersonal and teamwork competence that is essential during school and work life (Davis, n.d.; Kato et al., 2015). CCAs also make students competent and aware, ready to live in the globalized world (Shakil et al., 2024; Alwi & Channa, 2024).

6.4 Challenges in Integrating Co-Curricular Activities

Besides all the benefits, there are a number of obstacles on the way of introducing CCAs in the educational system in Bangladesh. Such activities are constrained by the lack of resources, especially in the rural settings (Power & Erling, 2014). Most schools do not have the infrastructure, the budget or trained people to cater a variety of CCAs. In addition, the dominance of an examination oriented education usually leaves CCAs on the periphery and they are not incorporated into the curriculum (Pettersen, 2022). Educators also need to be trained enough integrate CCAs in teaching practices (Shakil et al., 2024).

6.5 Policy and Practical Implications

To exploit the best benefits of CCAs, education policymakers and school administrators should rethink modifying language policy and curriculum. Teacher training programs should incorporate modules to teach teachers strategies to effectively apply CCAs in teaching practicum (B., D., & Ilankumaran, 2024). Moreover, there should be a national policy to promote an uniform and fair use of CCAs across schools in Bangladesh (Pettersen, 2022). Besides, there must be enough resources and logistic support to establish and maintain CCAs and give all students equal access regardless of their socioeconomic status or geographic locations.

6.6 Future Research Directions

Future studies should address the long term effect of CCAs in developing specific language proficiency and holistic development of the learners. The comparison of different CCAs in various areas in Bangladesh and around the world may provide significant insights into how to get the best results of CCAs in language curricula (Vanjinayaki & Gayathri, 2024).

As technology is expanding, digital CCAs as online language clubs or online competitions can be useful platforms to provide even more language practice opportunities, especially in rural areas where people often have limited access to the traditional CCAs (Nguyen, 2024).

6.7 Practical Recommendations

In addition to theoretical and policy implications, this review highlights several classroom-level strategies for integrating CCAs into EFL instruction. These practical recommendations are particularly useful for teachers and administrators in the Bangladeshi context, but they can also be adapted to other similar educational settings:

- **Weekly Structured CCAs:** Teachers can incorporate debates, role-plays, or storytelling once a week to foster speaking fluency, critical thinking, and confidence among students.
- **Peer-Led Language Clubs:** Schools can introduce peer mentoring systems in language clubs to enhance collaboration and motivation.
- **Low-Effective Approaches for Rural Schools:** Low resourced rural schools can apply affordable CCAs such as debate, storytelling, reading circles, extempore speech, and group discussions, peer feedback that can have significant impact and do not require much resources.
- **Integration of CCAs into Assessment Practices:** CCAs can be integrated into assessment and evaluation system of English proficiency, allowing learners to demonstrate their competence beyond traditional written exams.

7. Conclusion

In Bangladeshi context, co-curricular activities (CCAs) can significantly enhance EFL fluency and holistic development of the secondary-level students. Activities such as language clubs, debates, and extempore speech, and participation in drama give students multiple chances to practice English in daily life, that is why their English writing, speaking, and listening skills are improved. CCAs enhance student motivation to think the learning process funny and exciting so that they can play autonomous role in learning. Also, CCAs aid students in the development of other valuable life skills, including leadership, teamwork, and emotional intelligence, which leads to such students developing in the whole. Yet, there are limitations of CCAs penetration into the system since barriers such as shortage of funds and insufficient training of teachers exist. In order to make the most out of CCAs, policymakers need to move them to the forefront of the curriculum, sufficiently train the teachers and allocate necessary funds. This will make sure that CCAs are actually able to assist language learning and development of the students in general.

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Informed Consent

As no human participants were involved in the study, there was no issue of informed consent.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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