OBE Curriculum and EFL Learning: A Comparative Study between Khulna University and NUBTK

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ABSTRACT

The alignment between OBE curricula and EFL learning outcomes plays a crucial role in shaping students' language proficiency and academic success. This study aims at exploring the effectiveness of OBE in EFL context at KU and NUBTK through a comparative analysis of 80 undergraduate students' perceptions. And their perceptions were collected through a survey questionnaire. The results suggest that KU students perceived clearer learning outcomes, better English proficiency, and a more structured integration of course materials. The effectiveness of feedback mechanisms, critical thinking enhancement, and real-world applications was also perceived to be higher at KU. In contrast, NUBTK students exhibited more varied responses, with a higher proportion of neutral perceptions, suggesting inconsistencies in curriculum implementation. Despite these differences, both institutions showed no statistically significant variation in reading and writing skill development, indicating comparable effectiveness in these areas. However, KU students perceived significantly stronger improvements in speaking confidence and analytical skills, reinforcing the notion that well-structured OBE implementation enhances student learning experiences. Nevertheless, to address the limitation of this study, future works should explore faculty perspectives, conduct longitudinal studies, and include qualitative methods. Moreover, institutions should refine their OBE frameworks to ensure that students acquire the linguistic and cognitive skills necessary for academic and professional success.

ARTICLE INFO

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the implementation of an Outcome-Based Education (OBE) system in pedagogy has been a matter of concern in many countries since various institutions are trying to convert the goals of education into real world achievements. At its core, OBE enhances a student-centred education which focuses on certain outcomes that will enable students to be successful both personally and professionally (Spady, 1994). By concentrating on identifying the goals first and what needs to be done toward achieving these goals, OBE is designed as a responsive framework to address accountability, transparency and effectiveness in education. In the case of learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL), the OBE principles provide an excellent chance to increase language skills, and at the same time, develop critical and creative thinking as well as problem solving skills.

The dynamics of Bangladesh higher education have changed remarkably in the last few years with reforms in the curriculum becoming a priority, both on global and local fronts (Rahnuma, 2020). In this regard, the institutions have also been quick to incorporate OBE in order to produce graduates who are skilled and competent enough to face the challenges of the 21st century. Nevertheless, the adoption of OBE in Bangladesh also has its share of issues, most notably the differences in institutional capability, resource endowments and stakeholder willingness (Milon et al., 2024). Thus, this study focuses on two leading institutions, Khulna University and Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna (NUBTK), with the aim of exploring how OBE principles are integrated into their EFL programs and to assess the alignment between curriculum goals and learning outcomes. In the course of this study, these institutes are used as units of comparison in order to define what the best practices are, what the challenges are and what actions should be taken in order to enhance the accomplishment in meeting the goal of language competence.

In Bangladesh, English language has probably become an indispensable need in-day to day communication due to its increased use among people all across the globe and its direct relevance during academics, professionals, and social activities. Proficiency in English does not just define one's academic achievement but it also largely defines one's employment opportunities and career progression (Roshid & Chowdhury, 2013). As a result, there has been a growing demand in Bangladeshi universities for EFL programs that are adaptable to different groups of students. In this context, EFL curriculum designs based on OBE principles should have potentialities of merging theoretical principles with practical applications. By focusing on measurable outcomes, OBE ensures that students happen to achieve specific competencies in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, alongside other higher-order skill like critical thinking, which is required for effective enabling activities like cross-cultural communication.

Accordingly, this study focuses on Khulna University and NUBTK because they are among the first universities in Bangladesh to implement Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in the EFL context. As early adopters, their experiences offer valuable insights into how OBE principles are applied to language learning in both public and private institutional settings. Investigating these two universities will help identify the opportunities and challenges of OBE in EFL instruction, informing future curriculum design and policy development for other institutions transitioning to OBE in Bangladesh.

Therefore, the understandings obtained from this study help identify whether the OBE framework yields measurable improvements in EFL proficiency and engagement across different institutional settings. This is crucial for policymakers and curriculum designers, as it provides empirical data to evaluate the alignment between intended learning outcomes and actual student performance in English language learning. Secondly, the study bridges a significant gap in comparative research on public versus private university implementation of OBE in Bangladesh. The findings will inform educational stakeholders such as the University Grants Commission (UGC), university administrators, and EFL instructors on the contextual challenges, institutional readiness, and pedagogical effectiveness of the OBE approach in varying academic environments. Furthermore, for EFL learners, the study underscores how curriculum structure, assessment strategies, and learner autonomy differ under the OBE paradigm, potentially influencing their motivation, competence, and real-world language application. Understanding these impacts can contribute to more student-centered and outcome-aligned teaching practices. Finally, the research enriches the academic literature on curriculum development and language education in South Asian contexts, offering a foundation for future comparative studies and cross-institutional educational reforms. By highlighting best practices and areas for improvement, this study serves as a valuable reference point for both practitioners and researchers working at the intersection of language learning and educational innovation.

Despite the growing adoption of OBE in Bangladesh, limited research explores its impact on EFL learning. Few studies examine how OBE shapes language instruction (Rahman & Phyak, 2022; Yasmin & Yasmeen, 2021, Haque & Hasan, 2023), and comparative analyses between public and private universities are especially scarce. The differing contexts of Khulna University and NUBTK highlight the need to investigate how OBE influences EFL outcomes across institutional types.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) is a student-centric approach that emphasizes clearly defined learning outcomes to guide the educational process (Spady, 1994). Rooted in the idea that education should equip students with competencies to succeed in real-life situations, OBE highlights measurable goals for

knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Killen, 2007). The approach requires a paradigm shift from traditional teaching practices, which often focus on content delivery, to an emphasis on outcome attainment (Biggs & Tang, 2011).

The OBE approach subscribes to four principles which are: focus, design-in-reverse or backward, high expectations and expanded opportunities (Spady, 1994). Focus clarity helps to ensure that students and teachers know the expectations and helps in targeting instruction. Design-in-reverse helped instructors so that the goals they formulate will have a definite pattern that will include curriculum instruction and assessment. High expectations encourage learners to strive for their optimal performance and expanded opportunities help meet varying needs of the students.

Learning EFL, English as a Foreign Language, is a very important sector of education in the global context. EFL pedagogy, Richards and Rodgers (2014) argue, focuses on language learning processes that include listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The ideal objective is to acquire communicative competence that includes grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competencies (Canale & Swain, 1980). However, EFL learners often face unique challenges, including limited exposure to authentic language use and diverse cultural norms associated with English-speaking contexts (Brown, 2007). Effective EFL teaching methodologies integrate cognitive, affective, and social factors to support language acquisition (Ellis, 2008).

Outcome-Based Education (OBE) has become a revolutionary methodology in international higher education, prioritizing measurable learner outcomes over conventional input-based practices. Khan et al. (2023) investigated students' preparedness for OBE in the context of Bangladesh's engineering students, highlighting students' awareness and perceived easiness as key enablers, but institutional support and teachers' commitment had little influence. This calls for specific training and resource provision. Accordingly, Haque's (2025) case study of geotechnical engineering illustrated cognitive domain alignment with course outcomes (COs) to improve learning, yet showed discrepancies in student performance due to a lack of prerequisite knowledge. This resonates with issues in EFL environments, where lower-level language competencies may likewise impinge upon OBE effectiveness. Additionally, Akramy's (2021) qualitative investigation in Afghan universities found instructors' ambivalent attitudes toward OBE, underlining the transition from teacher-centred to student-centred learning. Whereas some academics welcomed OBE's emphasis on Bloom's Taxonomy and interactive learning, others listed congested classrooms and lack of training as drawbacks. These results resonate with possible differences between KU (a public university with long-established resources) and NUBTK (a private university with a focus on technology), and highlight institutional support and instructor training as instrumental for effective OBE incorporation into EFL curricula.

Malaysia's adoption of OBE principles in higher education provides insights into its application in EFL contexts. Results show that when learning outcome was set and task-based pedagogy was implemented student completion rates improved (Leong, 2022) leading to improvement in language skills. Nevertheless, systematic weaknesses such as inadequate training of teachers and distribution of educational resources are key factors still in focus (Chowdhury & Das, 2022). Furthermore, the CEFR framework exemplifies the successful alignment of OBE principles with EFL instruction. By standardizing language proficiency levels, CEFR has facilitated curriculum design, assessment, and certification across Europe (Council of Europe, 2020). Its widespread adoption underscores the importance of clear, outcome-based standards in language education.

Likewise, Milon et al. (2024) introduce the transformative promise of OBE in Bangladeshi higher education with a focus on student-centeredness, which promotes critical thinking, flexibility, and employability. Through their qualitative study, it is known that although teachers understand advantages of OBE like improved instructional design and active learning of students, constraints like a lack of training, a lack of resources, and large class sizes are obstacles to effective implementation. Likewise, Trisha et al. (2025) study the perceptions of academics towards OBE readiness and reveal a discrepancy between theory and practice. The authors emphasize institutional support, staff training, and infrastructure for closing the gap and facilitating smooth implementation of OBE. Together, these studies allude to the disconnection between the ideal of OBE and the practice of it in Bangladesh. However, a critical gap remains: comparative analyses of OBE's impact on discipline-specific learning, such as English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

METHOD

This is a quantitative study. This approach to research guarantees objective and quantifiable assessment of EFL results under OBE, and statistical comparison of the two institutions is possible. This process adds validity and allows for generalizable inferences across institutional settings. Thus, a structured survey was conducted using a Google Form with 15 questions based on a 5-point Likert scale allowing for standardized responses that facilitate statistical analysis.

A stratified random simple sampling technique was used to collect a representative sample from two different academic years, i.e., participants from the 2nd year 3rd year of undergraduate English Studies at both universities. This was for the purpose of ensuring proportional representation and identifying variations in students' experience of the OBE curriculum as they advance in their programs. Stratification made sure that opinions from students at various levels of study were obtained, and randomization reduced selection bias.

The data were collected from 80 students in total, with each institution contributing 40 participants. All participants volunteered for this study. Anonymity

and confidentiality is strictly maintained, and all data are stored securely and used solely for academic purposes. The only selection criterion used is that the students should not have taken any EFL course previously implemented in an OBE curriculum prior to joining either KU or NUBTK. This ensures that any experience in OBE-based EFL learning of all the respondents have necessarily been at either KU or NUBTK, hence holding constant the contaminating variable from previous experience.

The collected data are analysed through Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) which enables descriptive statistical analysis. This technique is employed to summarize and interpret the quantitative data collected from participants. This includes the use of percentages to illustrate response distributions and category frequencies, offering a clear picture of students' perceptions and experiences with OBE-based EFL instruction. These descriptive statistics form the foundation for more advanced comparative analysis, including chi-square tests. And, MS Excel was used to visualize findings through figures, enhancing the interpretability of results.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION
Results

The collected data provides insights into students' perceptions regarding the alignment of their EFL courses with the OBE framework.
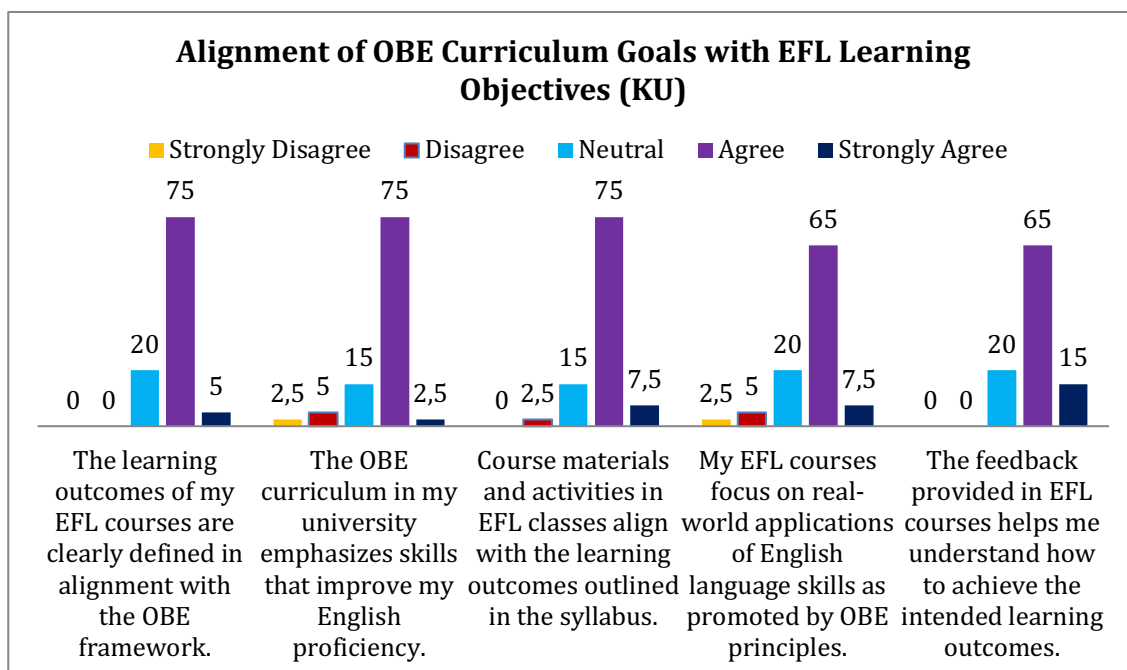

Figure 1. Alignment of OBE curriculum goals with EFL learning objectives (KU)

The analysis of the survey data reveals that most students believe their EFL courses are well-aligned with the OBE framework. A large majority (75%) agreed

that the learning outcomes are clearly defined, with an additional 5% strongly agreeing. Only 20% remained neutral, and no students disagreed. This suggests that the course objectives are effectively communicated and structured in a way that aligns with OBE principles.

Regarding the emphasis of the OBE curriculum on English proficiency, 75% of students agreed, while 15% remained neutral. A small percentage (2.5% strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed), indicating that some students feel the curriculum does not directly focus on improving their language skills. This highlights the need for further refinement in integrating English proficiency development into the broader curriculum.

Other appreciated issues included correspondence of course materials and activities to the learning outcomes: 75% agreed and 7.5% strongly agreed, while 15% remained indifferent and 2.5% disagreed. Though this insinuates a general view that the students find the course materials useful, the majority may actually not see a clear connection between the course content and the stipulated learning outcomes; hence, this might also be a good area for curriculum improvement.

When evaluating the real-world application of English language skills, 65% agreed, and 7.5% strongly agreed that their courses focus on practical language use. However, 20% were neutral, and a small percentage (2.5% strongly disagreed, 5% disagreed) felt that real-world applications were lacking. This suggests that while practical usage is emphasized, more experiential learning opportunities could enhance students' confidence and preparedness for real-world communication.

Lastly, feedback in EFL courses was perceived positively, with 65% agreeing and 15% strongly agreeing that it helps them achieve learning outcomes. No students disagreed, though 20% remained neutral, suggesting that feedback mechanisms are effective but could be further optimized to ensure all students benefit. Overall, while the data indicates strong alignment with OBE principles, there is room for improvement in making real-world applications more explicit and refining instructional materials.
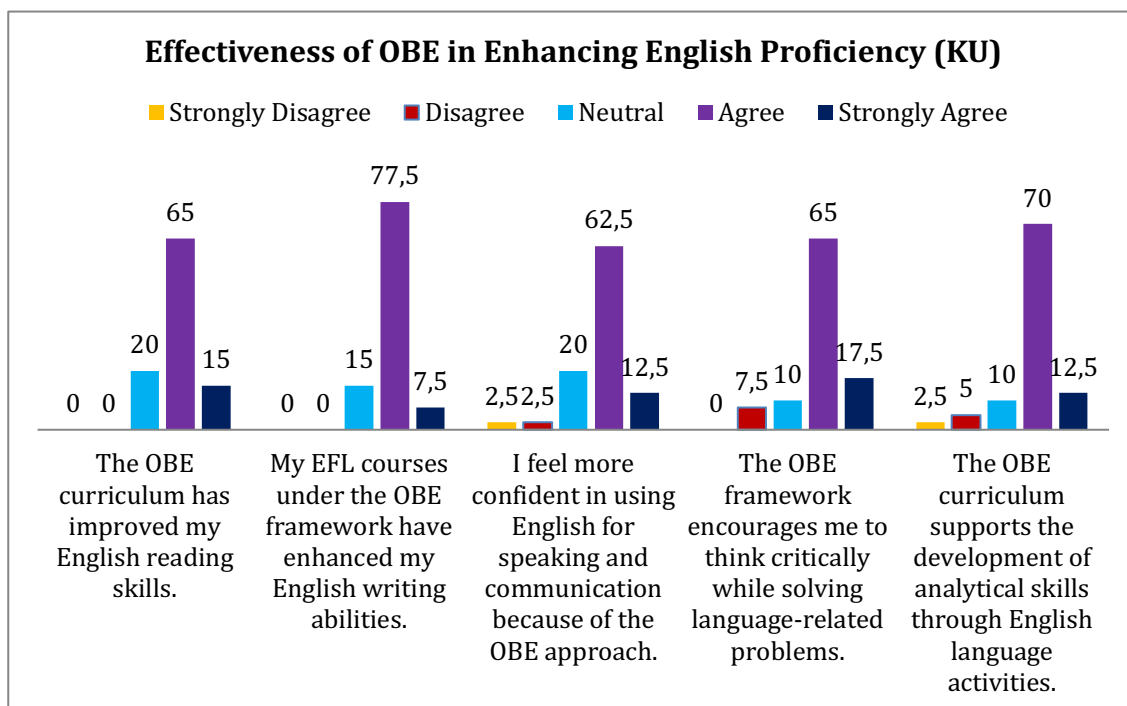
Figure 2. Effectiveness of OBE in enhancing English proficiency (KU)

The survey results indicate that the OBE curriculum has significantly contributed to improving students' English reading skills. A majority of students (65%) agreed with this statement, while 15% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 20% remained neutral, and no students expressed disagreement. This suggests that the curriculum is effective in developing reading proficiency, though a small portion of students may not have experienced noticeable improvement.

Regarding English writing abilities, 77.5% of students agreed that their EFL courses under the OBE framework have enhanced their writing skills, while 7.5% strongly agreed. However, 15% remained neutral, indicating that a minority of students may not feel a direct impact on their writing proficiency. The complete absence of disagreement suggests that, overall, students perceive the OBE framework as beneficial for their writing development.

Confidence in speaking and communication also received a positive response, with 62.5% agreeing and 12.5% strongly agreeing that the OBE approach has helped them become more confident. Nevertheless, 20% remained neutral, while the percentage of those that disagreed and strongly disagreed was only at 5%. This would thus suggest that while the majority feel an improvement in their communication skills, some students may need more support or opportunities for speaking practice.

A total of 65% agreed that the OBE framework has provided them with opportunities for critical thinking while solving problems related to the language, and this statement is strongly agreed by 17.5% of the total population. Nonetheless, 10% were undecided, and 7.5% disagreed. It implies that although the framework

is mostly effective in cultivating critical thinking, there should be improvement in its application to benefit all students equally.

Ultimately, the OBE curriculum's impact on analytical skills through English language activities was well-received, with 70% agreeing and 12.5% strongly agreeing. However, 10% remained neutral, and 7.5% disagreed or strongly disagreed. These results suggest that the majority find the curriculum effective in developing analytical skills, but a small percentage may not see a direct connection between English activities and analytical thinking. Overall, the data highlights the effectiveness of the OBE framework in enhancing various language skills while identifying areas for further improvement.
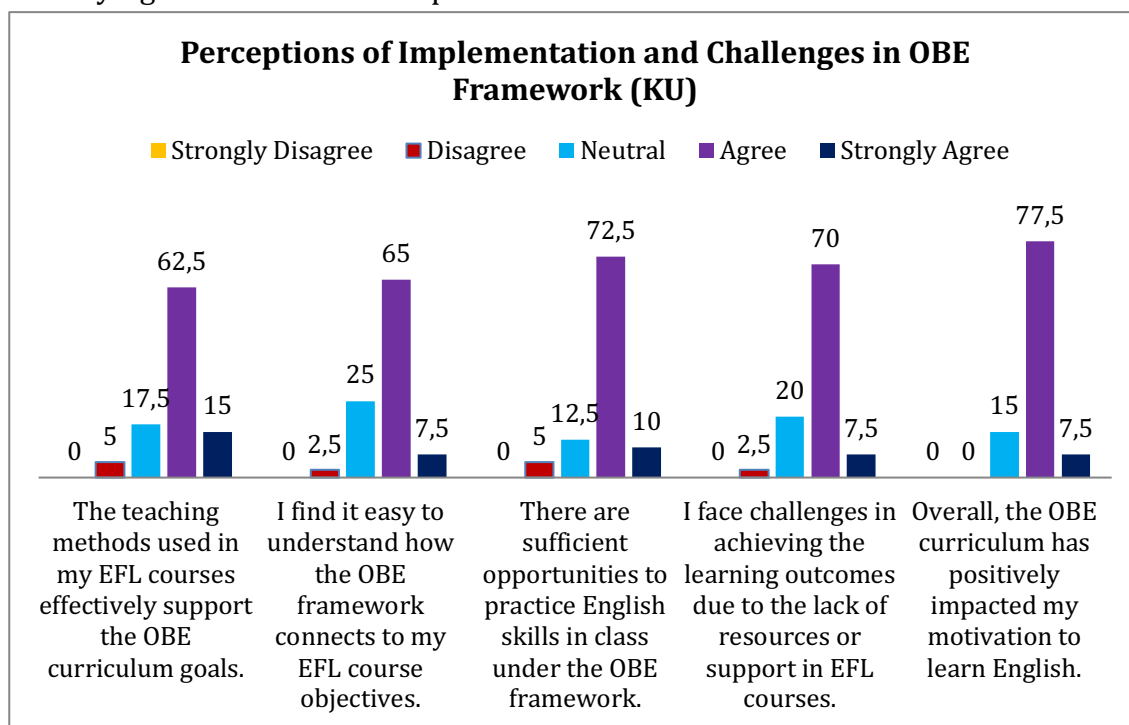

Figure 3. Perceptions of implementation and challenges in OBE framework (KU)

The survey data reveals that most students believe the teaching methods used in their EFL courses effectively support the OBE curriculum goals. A significant 62.5% agreed, while 15% strongly agreed. Meanwhile, 17.5% remained neutral, and a small 5% disagreed. This suggests that the instructional strategies align well with OBE principles, but some students may require more clarity or engagement to fully recognize their effectiveness.

Regarding the connection between the OBE framework and EFL course objectives, 65% of students agreed, and 7.5% strongly agreed. However, 25% remained neutral, and 2.5% disagreed. While the majority find the link between OBE and their EFL studies clear, a notable proportion of neutral responses suggests that further clarification or orientation may help students better understand how the framework influences their learning.

Opportunities to practice English skills under the OBE framework received strong positive feedback, with 72.5% agreeing and 10% strongly agreeing. Only 5% disagreed, while 12.5% remained neutral. This indicates that most students feel they have sufficient opportunities to develop their English proficiency in class, though some may still need additional practice sessions or interactive activities to maximize their learning experience.

Challenges related to resource availability and support in achieving learning outcomes were reported by a minority of students. While 70% agreed and 7.5% strongly agreed that they face difficulties due to limited resources, 20% remained neutral, and only 2.5% disagreed. This suggests that while most students encounter some challenges, improvements in resource allocation and academic support could further enhance their learning experience.

Finally, the overall impact of the OBE curriculum on students' motivation to learn English was overwhelmingly positive, with 77.5% agreeing and 7.5% strongly agreeing. A smaller 15% remained neutral, but no students disagreed. These findings indicate that the OBE approach plays a crucial role in encouraging students to engage with their English studies, reinforcing its effectiveness in fostering motivation and learning outcomes.
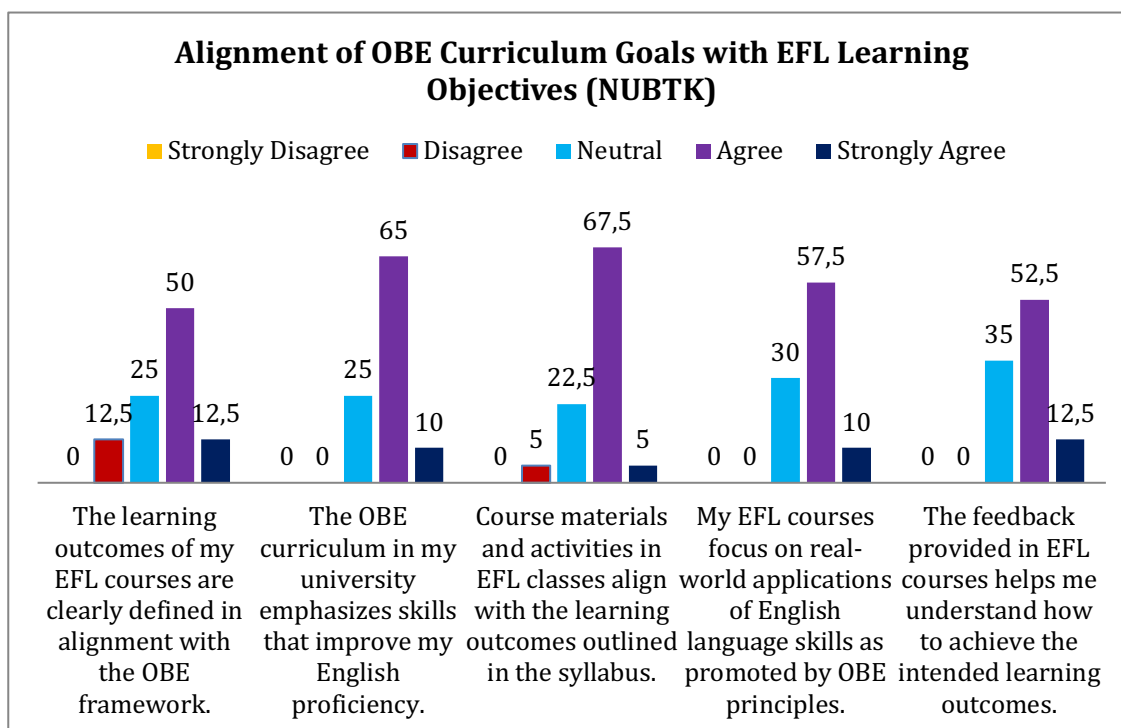

Figure 4. Alignment of OBE curriculum goals with EFL learning objectives (NUBTK)

The analysis of the survey data highlights that most students recognize the alignment of their EFL course learning outcomes with the OBE framework. Half of the respondents (50%) agreed with this statement, while 12.5% strongly agreed. However, a significant portion (25%) remained neutral, and 12.5% disagreed. This

suggests that while the majority find the learning objectives clearly defined, some students may require additional clarification or guidance to fully grasp the connection between EFL course outcomes and OBE principles.

Regarding the emphasis of the OBE curriculum on improving English proficiency, 65% of students agreed, and 10% strongly agreed, indicating a strong positive perception. However, 25% remained neutral, suggesting that a portion of students may not directly associate the curriculum's focus with their English language development. The absence of disagreement in this category reinforces the overall effectiveness of the curriculum in enhancing language skills, though further emphasis on language development could benefit all students.

The alignment of course materials and activities with learning outcomes was widely acknowledged, with 67.5% agreeing and 5% strongly agreeing. However, 22.5% remained neutral, and 5% disagreed. This suggests that while most students perceive a strong correlation between course content and the outlined learning objectives, some may not clearly see how instructional materials contribute to their overall learning progress, pointing to a potential area for curriculum refinement.

When evaluating the real-world application of English language skills in their courses, 57.5% agreed, and 10% strongly agreed. However, 30% remained neutral, indicating that a significant number of students may not feel that their coursework adequately prepares them for real-world language use. The complete absence of disagreement suggests that while the OBE approach does incorporate practical applications, further emphasis on experiential learning and real-world tasks could enhance students' confidence and readiness.

Eventually, the effectiveness of feedback in helping students achieve learning outcomes received mixed but generally positive feedback. A total of 52.5% agreed, and 12.5% strongly agreed, while 35% remained neutral. This high percentage of neutral responses indicates that while feedback is beneficial, its delivery or clarity might not be consistently effective for all students. Strengthening feedback mechanisms and ensuring more personalized, constructive guidance could help students better understand their progress and how to meet learning objectives more effectively.
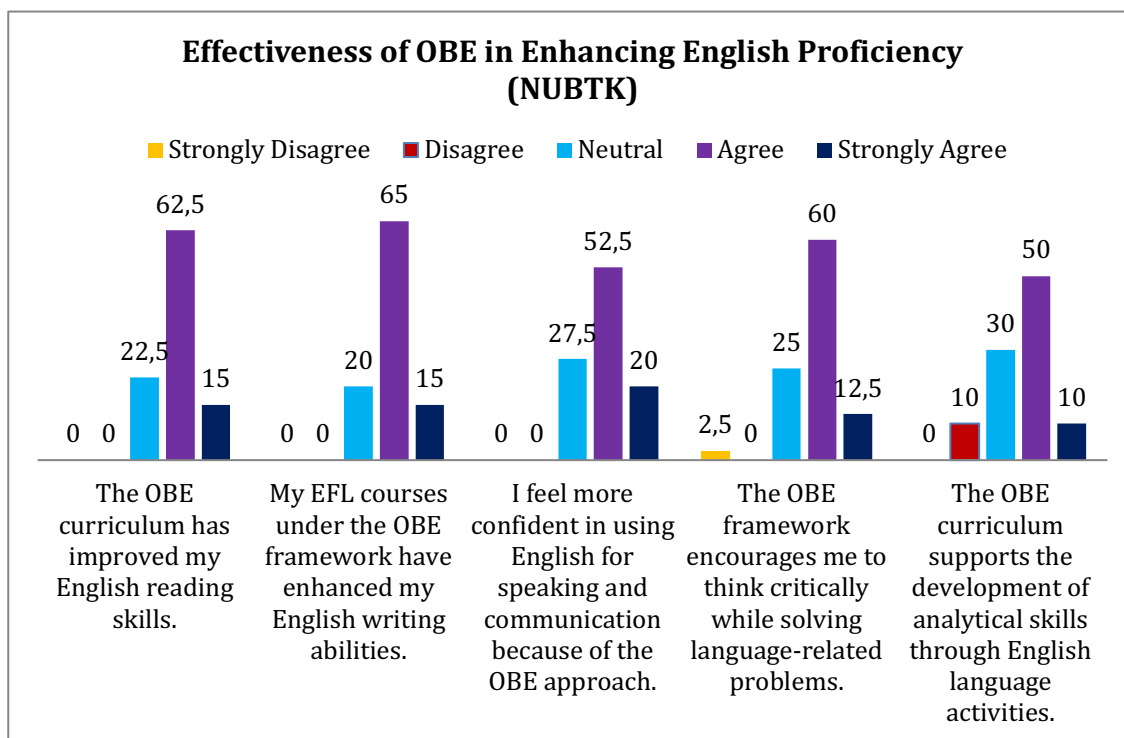
Figure 5. Effectiveness of OBE in enhancing English proficiency (NUBTK)

The survey data suggests that the OBE curriculum has had a significant positive impact on students' English reading skills. A majority of students (62.5%) agreed with this statement, while 15% strongly agreed. However, 22.5% remained neutral, indicating that while most students recognize improvements in their reading proficiency, some may not have experienced noticeable progress. The complete absence of disagreement suggests that, overall, the curriculum effectively supports the development of reading skills.

The strengthening of the ability to write in English through the OBE system was highly supported as 65% agreed and 15% strongly agreed. While 20% were undecided, this means that even though most did benefit from the curriculum; some students might still need more help or specific lessons in writing. The lack of disagreement also shows how well the OBE system has worked to improve the skill of writing.

Under the OBE framework, speaking and communicating in English again showed some variation: 52.5% agreed and 20% strongly agreed, while an unusually high 27.5% of students remained neutral about this matter. This would therefore infer that even though a good number of students feel they are more confident using English for communication, some of them may not be that fluent in speaking or need further real-life opportunities for practice. The lack of opposition indicates that, despite the challenges experienced, the OBE framework therefore promotes the development of communication skills.

The role of the OBE framework in promoting critical thinking while solving language-related problems was acknowledged by 60% of students who agreed and

12.5% who strongly agreed. However, 25% remained neutral, and 2.5% strongly disagreed, indicating that while most students see a positive impact, a small fraction may not feel that the OBE approach adequately fosters critical thinking. This suggests a need for further integration of problem-solving activities within EFL courses to ensure all students benefit from critical thinking development.

By and by, the development of analytical skills through English language activities received slightly lower agreement levels, with 50% agreeing and 10% strongly agreeing. A significant 30% of students remained neutral, and 10% disagreed. This indicates that while half of the respondents recognize the OBE curriculum's role in enhancing analytical skills, a notable portion either does not see a direct connection or feels that more structured activities are needed. Strengthening the curriculum with more analytical tasks could help address these concerns and maximize its effectiveness in skill development.
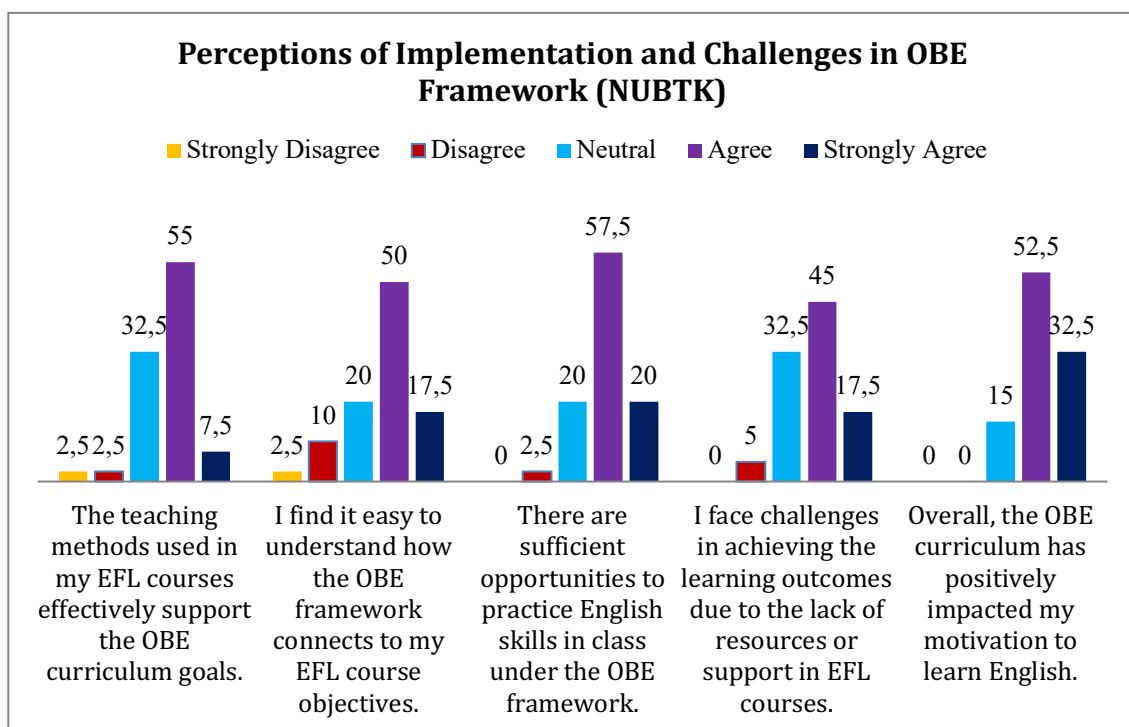

Figure 6. Perceptions of implementation and challenges in OBE framework (NUBTK)

The analysis of the survey data reveals that most students perceive the teaching methods in their EFL courses as effectively supporting the OBE curriculum goals. A majority (55%) agreed with this statement, while 7.5% strongly agreed. However, a notable 32.5% remained neutral, and a small percentage (5%) expressed disagreement. This indicates that while most students find the teaching approaches aligned with OBE principles, a significant portion may not fully recognize or experience this alignment in their learning process. Further

improvements in instructional strategies may help enhance student engagement and comprehension of OBE principles.

Concerning the clarity of the OBE framework's connection to EFL course objectives, 50% of students agreed, and 17.5% strongly agreed, demonstrating a positive perception overall. However, 20% remained neutral, and 12.5% disagreed (10% disagreed and 2.5% strongly disagreed). This suggests that while the majority understand how the OBE framework applies to their EFL studies, some students may need additional guidance or explanations to fully grasp these connections. Enhancing transparency in course objectives and providing more explicit links to OBE principles may help bridge this gap.

Opportunities to practice English skills in class under the OBE framework were acknowledged positively by students, with 57.5% agreeing and 20% strongly agreeing. While 20% remained neutral, only 2.5% disagreed. From the high degree of agreements recorded, students perceive that in general, the course is interactive, providing great opportunities to build upon one's skills. With many having neutrality about the questions asked, students need further and ample practice that must be covered by classroom interactivity and communications that should enrich their studies within a stronger curriculum framework.

A mixed group expressed challenges in resource or support insufficiency toward the realization of learning outcomes. While 45% agreed and 17.5% strongly agreed to this, 32.5% remained neutrals, while 5% showed disagreement. This distribution, therefore, shows that an almost equal amount of students who face either resources or support difficulties may or may not do so. The relatively high percentage of neutral responses suggests that resource availability may be different for different students or different institutions. Helping to alleviate some of these concerns by ensuring equity in materials and support structures can help improve the learning experience.

At last, the OBE curriculum's impact on students' motivation to learn English received highly positive responses. A majority (52.5%) agreed, and a strong 32.5% strongly agreed, indicating that the curriculum has played a significant role in enhancing student enthusiasm for learning English. Only 15% remained neutral, and no respondents disagreed, reinforcing the effectiveness of the OBE approach in fostering motivation. These findings suggest that the curriculum successfully engages students in their English learning journey, although further efforts to sustain and strengthen motivation through innovative teaching strategies could be beneficial.

Discussion

The findings revealed that the focus principle, which emphasizes clarity and transparency in learning outcomes, appears to be more strongly upheld at KU. Students at KU largely recognized their course goals as well-articulated and clearly

aligned with the overall objectives of the OBE framework. The high proportion of students expressing agreement with this alignment indicates a concerted institutional effort in curriculum articulation and transparency. In contrast, while students at NUBTK also largely recognized this alignment, a noticeably higher percentage expressed neutrality or uncertainty. This suggests that, although the intended learning outcomes may indeed be present in the curriculum documents, their communication or operationalization might not be equally explicit or comprehensible to all learners.

This disparity may relate to the design-in-reverse or backward design principle of OBE, which calls for constructing curricula by first defining the desired outcomes and then designing instruction and assessment backwards from those endpoints. KU's stronger feedback from students regarding alignment may suggest that the instructional design is more clearly mapped to measurable and observable competencies in the EFL context. Existing literature supports the importance of backward design in language curricula (Macalister & Nation, 2010), highlighting that when learning goals are backward-mapped from proficiency targets, students are more likely to perceive their learning as relevant and outcome-driven. At NUBTK, although the foundational structure of backward design appears present, the student responses imply that its enactment may be somewhat implicit or uneven across course sections, thereby reducing perceived clarity.

A comparison of the curricula through the lens of high expectations, a hallmark of OBE which involves expecting all learners to achieve meaningful outcomes, shows nuanced results. At both universities, participants largely believed that their EFL programs placed appropriate emphasis on English proficiency. But, the intensity of this belief appeared more widespread and assured at KU. The presence of a minority of dissenting voices at KU may reflect a healthy academic environment where learners critically assess pedagogical delivery. Nevertheless, both institutions demonstrate an implicit commitment to cultivating language proficiency as a core academic competency. Yet, high expectations in language programs require a balance between academic rigor and learner support, and the neutral responses from both institutions' students indicate room for enhancing scaffolding strategies, perhaps through differentiated instruction or clearer articulation of success benchmarks.

The effectiveness of expanded opportunities is seen in how institutions provide learners with multiple chances and formats to achieve desired outcomes. KU appears slightly more effective in integrating real-world applications of English into its EFL instruction, which points to a stronger enactment of this principle. Practical language usage, including speaking and writing for real-life contexts, was generally affirmed by KU students. This emphasis suggests that KU has developed instructional mechanisms that help learners contextualize their language skills

beyond academic settings. In contrast, although NUBTK students also recognized the importance of real-world applications, a substantial portion remained non-committal, indicating that the experiential components of the curriculum may be present but not as prominently featured or not equally accessible across cohorts.

When examining writing skills, which require the synthesis of grammar, coherence, vocabulary, and organization, the influence of backward design is evident in both institutions. KU shows a slightly stronger perception of progress, which might indicate a more refined calibration of assessments and instructional activities with the desired writing competencies. The feedback from students suggests that the writing components are effectively structured, with no significant resistance or dissatisfaction in either university.

Oral communication, arguably the most interaction-intensive skill, reveals a more nuanced difference between the two institutions. Students from both KU and NUBTK reported increased confidence in speaking, but a higher proportion of neutral responses from NUBTK suggest a disparity in perceived adequacy of expanded opportunities. OBE, as envisioned by Spady (1994), calls for creating diverse chances for students to demonstrate mastery through repeated and varied practice. KU's responses may indicate a curriculum richer in participatory, communicative contexts whereas NUBTK may need to deepen such practices to engage all learners equally.

The development of critical thinking, a key objective in EFL pedagogy and a representation of high expectations in OBE, was affirmed by the majority in both cohorts. KU again demonstrates slightly more confidence among its students, which may reflect how language activities are scaffolded to move beyond surface-level learning. This difference, though subtle, might point to the integration of metacognitive tasks, argumentative essays, or problem-solving scenarios that stimulate cognitive engagement at KU. NUBTK's broader range of neutral responses does not indicate ineffectiveness but perhaps signals a variability in students' exposure to or recognition of such tasks.

The trend continues in the analysis of analytical skill development, where KU students again report stronger perceived gains. While half of NUBTK's students affirmed improvement, a sizeable group remained uncertain, suggesting either a lack of direct association between English tasks and analytical thinking or possibly insufficient emphasis on these skills in classroom practice. This distinction may reflect the differential implementation of backward curriculum design wherein learning outcomes guide not only content but also assessment strategies. KU's more cohesive outcomes might stem from a tighter alignment between analytical skill goals and the communicative or interpretive tasks used to assess them.

Students at KU demonstrated a stronger consensus regarding the alignment of instructional methods with OBE objectives. This indicates a relatively higher degree of pedagogical coherence and intentionality in how the curriculum is delivered. In

contrast, while the majority at NUBTK also affirmed this alignment, a significant portion expressed ambivalence. This suggests that the curriculum's learning goals may not be consistently communicated or internalized across all classrooms. Besides, students at both universities generally concurred that their EFL course goals are consistent with the OBE system. Yet, the percentage of neutral or disagreeing responses was greater at NUBTK. This indicates a potential mismatch in the connection of learning outcomes to instructional content or testing.

Across the two institutions, students acknowledged that the OBE curriculum had a positive effect on their English learning motivation. Importantly, no students at either institution disagreed, confirming the motivational validity of the OBE framework. However, KU students demonstrated a marginally stronger agreement, which could be reflective of a stronger culture of academic aspiration. This could be suggestive of institutional norms supportive of academic self-efficacy and learner independence. Although NUBTK students were also positive, the comparatively higher incidence of neutral responses could be indicative of differences in levels of implementation fidelity or classroom environment.

In terms of institutional challenges, the data unveiled commonalities in resource constraint concerns, albeit more accentuated at NUBTK. Whereas both student groups reported limited support and resources as challenges, a decidedly higher percentage of NUBTK students either agreed with or were neutral to these challenges. This mixed trend indicates that whereas a portion of students at NUBTK might have adequate support, another portion faces significant constraints perhaps due to infrastructural inconsistency, faculty overload, or uneven learning material dissemination. NUBTK's variability in student experiences therefore necessitates greater consistency in institutional resource planning and deployment. Far from seeing this as a weakness, however, this can be posited as a development opportunity for enhancing equity between cohorts.

Notably, although KU respondents slightly edged that of NUBTK in various perceptual dimensions, the latter institution demonstrated firm foundations across all fundamental aspects of OBE implementation. This is an appreciable feat, especially in a comparative study where institutional histories, faculty competencies, and resource contexts could be different. Both universities seem to have adopted the transformative spirit of OBE, going beyond conventional rote pedagogies towards a more outcomes-based, student-centred language learning experience. Indeed, this is a paradigm shift in Bangladeshi higher education, where curricular reforms are becoming increasingly benchmarked against global standards.

CONCLUSION

Like a river carving its path through the landscape, the OBE curriculum at KU and NUBTK flows with the intent of shaping students' English proficiency. However,

just as rivers vary in depth and direction, the effectiveness of OBE in enhancing EFL learning differs between the two institutions. While both universities adhere to OBE principles, the findings reveal disparities in curriculum alignment, instructional delivery, and student perception, highlighting both achievements and areas for growth.

The study indicates that KU students generally experience a more structured implementation of OBE, leading to a higher perceived improvement in language proficiency, particularly in writing and analytical skills. The integration of real-world applications and feedback mechanisms appears to be stronger at KU, aligning with Spady's (1994) assertion that OBE thrives when learning objectives are explicitly defined and instructional strategies remain consistent. In contrast, NUBTK students, while recognizing the benefits of OBE, express a comparatively weaker perception of curriculum effectiveness, suggesting inconsistencies in course alignment and assessment practices. These variations are statistically significant, reinforcing the idea that institutional differences in faculty expertise, pedagogical methods, and academic support influence OBE's success.

Other notable differences between the two institutions concern developing critical thinking and analytical skills. The students of KU were more unanimous over how OBE develops these skills. It, therefore, denotes that the KU curriculum presents more opportunities for students to engage in analytical reasoning, problem-solving, and critical discussions, all hallmarks of higher-order thinking in language learning. The consensus on most of the statements is considered to be on the low side at NUBTK, which implies that its OBE curriculum is relatively less well-attuned to develop these competencies or the respondents fail to achieve the goals. This also leads to comprehend that OBE can only function well when institutions are able to embed critical thinking exercises within the curriculum.

Even while the study identifies a number of positive outcomes of OBE implementation in both universities, it does point to a set of challenges. The small sample size, which was only 80, is a core limitation of this study. This cannot be representative of the diversity that characterizes students across faculties and departments. Even though the stratified random sampling technique used in this study ensured that the samples were proportionally representative across two academic years, a larger sample size might be necessary for a comprehensive understanding of OBE's impact across disciplines. This is an altogether self-reporting-based study wherein survey data, though usefully subjective, cannot substantiate any objective learning outcomes. Adding qualitative data through classroom observation, faculty interviews, or content analysis of student assessments will give more insight into the real impacts of OBE practices.

To conclude, results, therefore, bring out the commendable strides of both KU and NUBTK in the implementation of OBE in EFL learning while the need for refinement is required. Just like a sculptor continuously perfects his masterpiece, so

too would universities be in constant assessment and adapting their approach to ensure that OBE, in fact, prepares students with linguistic and analytical skills they would need in real life. With focused enhancements, both institutions have the potential to further develop their curricula in creating a more cohesive and effective learning experience for students.

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