

EDITORIAL

While publishing the previous issue 27 in December 2019, the editorial committee set a target to present write-ups of English teachers of all levels - from primary to tertiary. The current issue successfully reaches the target, including write-ups by teachers of different levels that exhibit the **novel experiences of teaching online due to Novel Corona Virus**. BELTA Newsletter committee extends their sincere gratitude to the contributors.

Initially clueless of where to start and how in March 2020, BELTA is operating its regular activity through Zoom meetings and other online communication platforms now. Furthermore, its recently launched research wing is working on multiple research projects on the experiences of teaching and learning English online in Bangladesh. BELTA is also informed of the chapter coordinators' efforts to conduct online teaching and/or webinars during this difficult time.

BELTA Newsletter is a result of a team effort of the President, all the contributors and the newsletter team including Rabeya Binte Habib, Ferdoushi Rahman, Ahmed Bashir and Dr Mian Md. Naushaad Kabir, each of whom, deserves special thanks for the regular publication of BELTA Newsletter. Interested contributors for the upcoming issues are requested to check the Newsletter section on the website that provides details on general procedures, submission guidelines and a submission link. Please visit the following link for more details: https://www.belta-bd.org/index.php?action=page&page_id=48

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Greetings from BELTA President!

Let me begin with an inspiring quote that has given me strength during these unsettling times:

“You may not always have a comfortable life. And you will not always be able to solve all the world’s problems all at once. But don’t ever underestimate the impact you can have, because history has shown us that courage can be contagious, and hope can take on a life of its own.” —Michelle Obama

It gives me immense joy to write to you about the indomitable spirit of BELTA. Our fascinating members have accomplished great feats even amid the global pandemic that has uprooted our lives. While some have developed outreach programs to help with coronavirus awareness, some have led food donation drives, while others have adapted and imparted knowledge about online teaching platforms. The BELTA research wing has also embarked on an exciting large-scale research initiative wherein they will probe and evaluate the quality of English language online instruction in Bangladesh’s private universities. Each member’s engagement with their local and wider

community has inspired many others and together we have kept BELTA vibrant and alive.

While we sacrificed the 9th BELTA International Conference with a heavy heart, we have not given up on our quest for knowledge and our thirst for professional development. Dr. Shaila Sultana tells us how she engages with literature online and assimilates it into her research while working from home. Dr. Arifa Rahman details her work-at-home routine where attending online webinars and workshops provide daily academic relief. The BELTA team’s diligence in maintaining the BELTA website is impressive and as usual, the editorial team has outdone itself collecting pieces of work from our members to weave the creative sections of our newsletter—a welcome entertainment in our stressful lives.

I am especially thankful to the editorial team and the contributors to the newsletter. I urge you to keep up your dedication to advancing your professional development and keep your curiosity and motivation alive. Together, we will overcome the challenges of today and emerge stronger.

*Dr. Rubina Khan

Professor, English, Dhaka University

ONLINE TEACHING DURING COVID-19

Reflection from Bangladesh Country Coordinator: THT

Patrick Dougherty*

I work at Akita International University—a small public university in the northern part of the main island of Honshu in Akita, Japan. Our school year in Japan begins, traditionally, on the first of April each year. This year, during the spring semester and due to the COVID-19 situation, we decided to teach all of our courses online. We also canceled all study abroad programs and basically closed our campus to students and unnecessary staff. People who can work or teach from home were also encouraged to do so. It's quiet in our hallways and classrooms. There is chatter coming from some offices as the resident holds a lesson or attend a meetings via Zoom. We are a unique public university in Japan because we teach our whole curriculum in English and, at any given time, 20%-25% of our student population on campus is made up of international exchange students.

We normally send an equal number of our own students abroad to complete their third year at one of our 200 partner institutions around the world. The study abroad year is a university graduation requirement and is, in many ways, the cornerstone of the students' experiences in our university program. To have to cancel it was tragic to us and we hope to have it up and running again next spring.

As I am a Dean, I only teach one course in the spring term. I am teaching using Zoom

and our Moodle program. I see faces on a screen and do most of what I normally would do in a classroom, but something is missing. I like the energy of a live classroom experience and it doesn't come through to me sitting at my desk and communicating via a computer screen. The teaching is getting done, the students are learning, but it isn't the same. Also, university is so much more than simply classes. There are clubs, activities, throwing Frisbee out on the open quad, staying up late debating the meaning of life with dorm mates, etc. There is a whole universe of experiences that my current students are not exposed to and, I think, yearn for in many ways. So, while we are doing our best to teach and to make our online courses interactive and energised, it becomes a challenge to help our students build a sense of community and belonging. There are things that need to be experienced in situ at the university. But we'll make it through, and our students and faculty and staff will be safe. Perhaps, importantly, we will look back at this as a learning opportunity, a chance we had to be resilient in the face of an adversity. It might make us stronger. I know that it will make us more appreciative of our life on campus and of the laughter in the hallways that we miss.



Picture: Patrick Dougherty at BELTA THT 2020

*Professor of International Liberal Arts
Dean of Academic Affairs
Akita University, Japan

Complete Automation of Education: COVID-stricken Academic Experience

Rabeya Binte Habib*

The COVID-thrashed world has seen many changes and unconventionality where academia is no exception. Corona pandemic has fast-forwarded tech adoption and the way we think, live and work and undoubtedly WFM (working from home) requires more hours of preparation to face a screen than to face students in traditional classrooms. Even before Bangladesh saw its first COVID-patient reporting on March 8, the writer was trained to be prepared for online teaching and was later part of the live assistance team of Human Resource Development Institute of her workplace that is always known for its smart education in the country and beyond — Daffodil International University (DIU).

On March 18, DIU went into complete online teaching using Google Meet. Google Classroom and other Google Apps were already in use since 2014 and Moodle as repository since 2015. However, as part of post-corona teaching policy at DIU, Moodle, termed as Blended Learning Center (BLC) at DIU, was redesigned and customised for full-fledged course conduction. BLC courses are designed by the course teachers for self-paced learning and assessments and are already in use from the beginning of the current semester: summer 2020. Various third-party apps are also used but learners will find them all in one station: BLC.

For assessment based on carefully prepared questions requiring learner creativity and problem-solving skills, BLC quiz and assignment are used through which learners can be assessed anytime anywhere keeping in mind the internet connections and power failure — common to Bangladeshi education context. DIU is already working on the upgradation of BLC which will add more to the creditability and reliability of online classes and assessment through gamification and state of the art features of online pedagogy.



Picture: *Boishakhai Adda Using Google Meet*

However, to remain human amidst the complete automation of education, we sometimes meet students for chit-chat and celebrations of Pohela Boishakh or Eid.

*Assistant Professor, Department of English
Mentor and Online Teaching Expert, HRDI
Daffodil International University

Classroom in a Pocket; New Normal!

Adiba Murtaza*

Due to COVID-19 sudden shutdown has engulfed the whole world where Bangladesh is not an exception at all. However, shutdown to everything is not shutdown to education. We, teachers at Southeast University, in this

most critical crisis period, have been providing education through online teaching. This situation brought me to explore how to adopt and adapt technological devices to meet students' needs and how to use these tools for language teaching with the help of online training/tutorial offered by SEU. As time goes by, all the teachers are gradually getting accustomed to teaching online using different technological tools. Most of our students attend their online classes using their smartphones; some have access to laptops or desktop PCs. If they fail to attend live online classes for any reason, they can watch recorded classes that are usually uploaded by teachers at the end of every session.



Picture: Adiba's Mobile Classroom

Shifting from age-old traditional classroom teaching to online teaching, from onsite classroom to Google Classroom, from whiteboard to computer screen, from face-face interaction with students to digital interactions through Google Meet has become a new experience for me, my colleagues and the students. At SEU, the majority of students are from outside the capital with limited internet connectivity; yet they enthusiastically

attended classes in a virtually interactive ambiance. Some of them had to join these online classes from their courtyard, sitting under trees, or beside fields just to ensure better network support. Despite the difficulties, they attended the classes enthusiastically.

As I continued my online teaching, I honestly feel I could build up a supportive learning environment in this new adjustment. Despite a few challenges like slow internet connection, occasional electricity disruptions, I have gained a different and rewarding experience. A central system of monitoring and constructive feedback mechanism has made our teaching more confidence-building as well as improving. The instant notifications of tasks, assessments, communication everything is available in the smartphone which happens to be in the pocket of both the teachers and students. Teachers are supporting students beyond the classroom. This has been a new reality in our context. Now the classroom is virtually in our pocket; a new normal indeed!

*Lecturer, Department of English
Southeast University

Online Teaching during COVID-19: Reflection

Md. Mohib Ullah*

Online teaching using both synchronous and asynchronous tools has been a "new-normal" with the changed situation due to COVID-19 pandemic. Tools that were once supplementary while teaching face-to-face have emerged as obligatory now. Teachers and learners are in a new trend of online-

only-mode of education system recently as there is no other alternate to impart education.

Even though I felt butterfly in my stomach initially to start teaching online, I gradually got accustomed to it. I have been using asynchronous tools such as WhatsApp, Messenger, Facebook, Google Classroom, Edmodo, etc. for long as teaching aid. But using synchronous tools such as ZOOM, Google Meet, etc. without prior training was quite demanding. I needed to resort to YouTube tutorials and also to peer-support to gain mastery over using these tools. Beyond that, there were some other issues i.e. students' lack of orientation and motivation to join the online classes, not having suitable devices to them, poor or unstable internet connection, unavailability of any central policy or guideline by UGC or university, anxiety and stress, etc. that made teaching online more challenging. Digital divide is evident though in some cases, a matter of hope is that more than 90% students are now joining the online classes.

It is crucial to formulate a good policy and guideline, impart training to teachers and students, ensure stable and speedy internet connection at urban and rural areas, provide free or cheap internet package/devices to the students, develop online materials and assessment policy, etc. to harness the best benefit from online teaching, I believe.

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PhD in TESOL, International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM)

Empowered English Language Teachers

Mir Sadia Siddequa*

Online resources empower teachers through permitting them to discover better approaches to teach English. A lot of teachers who use online resources see their pedagogy changing and becoming up to date.

Teachers can use Google Forms to gather information for planning and assessment. Internet reading can be used for authentic writing task, which might not be possible if the teacher only used a textbook. Google Docs help students. Some pedagogical materials for teaching vocabulary can be found on Websites like, Voice of America's Learning English. American English website has a section called 'Resources' where students can find lots of interesting texts for practicing reading. Fanfictions can be transformed into teaching activities to help students develop their English language skills. Teachers may refer Ted Talks to students for practicing listening skill.

*Lecturer, Department of English
World University of Bangladesh

Teachers in Lockdown!

Hosne Ara Khan*

In this lock down situation for almost three months teachers who have online access to their students are very lucky. I also had the opportunity to teach my nieces online, who are staying in Cox's Bazar. They are students of Shahid Anwar Girls School and College, Cantonment, Dhaka. Their father works for Save The Children and deputed in Cox's Bazar for the Rohingya population. So

the family decided to join their father and flew there.

Nusaiba- the eldest one is in class Nine and Manha, the youngest one is in class Five (English Version). I took online classes for both English Literature and Language and Social Studies. For essays, they sent me the screen shots and I sent them the corrected ones back. Sometimes, we discussed matters on FaceTime. Both sisters were satisfied with their studies online.

*Executive Member, BELTA
Teacher, Teacher Trainer and writer

ONLINE RESOURCES

Just a Click Away! Free Professional Development

Rezwana Islam*

The massive online open learning courses or MOOCs have been able to limit the distance between renowned trainers and high achieving trainees around the world. As a frequent online course taker, I have come across different types of courses for ELT veterans as well as new teachers. For free online courses, three learning platforms have been widely recognised by the teachers. These platforms are: Coursera, EdX and Futurelearn.

COURSERA

Top most universities and other organisations around the world offer courses through this online platform. ELT professionals can try courses like, *TESOL Certificate: Teach English Now*, *Academic English: Writing Specialization*, etc. The participants are as-

essed through quizzes, assignments and projects. In case of paid courses, financial aid is available. Although the duration of each course is mostly four to six weeks, these are repetitive. So, if you can't finish within allotted time, you can join the course again.

FUTURELEARN

Offered by British Council, Futurelearn offers a variety of courses for teaching and learning in English. Courses like *Professional Development for Early Career Teachers* have free version which offers access for a limited time while paid version offers long term access and a certificate. Auditing a free version of the course can be a great learning opportunity as it also gives you a chance to connect to the trainers during some live webinars.

EdX

A popular online platform is EDX. Founded by MIT and Harvard, this platform also offers courses on inclusive teaching, blended learning, etc. This platform focuses mainly on the teaching skill and strategy, classroom management and research skill. The courses can be audited for free or attended with financial assistance. The courses in EdX are not as repetitive as Coursera.

RESEARCHER ACADEMY

Elsevier's researcher academy provides online modules compatible for teacher-researchers. It helps us with different stages of research, starting from the very beginning to the end of research cycle. The small 3 hour modules also come with a certificate upon completion. Teachers can easily sign up with Google and start learning about research

preparation, writing for research, publication process etc.

IELTS TEACHER TRAINING

While exploring the world of IELTS teaching, “Understanding IELTS: Techniques for English Language Tests” in Futurelearn can certainly be a helpful course for teaching or taking IELTS examination. For a more professional certification, teachers can sign up for The “IELTS Teacher Training Program” in <https://ielts.com.au/>. This course is acknowledged by IELTS Australia for 40 Continuing Professional Development points.

Based on accessibility, availability throughout the year, signing up process, quality of content, type of assessment, cost, duration, and availability of certificates, some courses can be more suitable than the other ones.

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Elsevier Researcher Academy - Unlock your research potential. Retrieved 10 February 2020, from

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DID YOU KNOW?

'Swims' reads the same **even when turned upside down**. Additionally, a word that reads the same forward and backward **is** called a palindrome, for example, noon and radar. Google

Did you Know?

'Train' comes from a French verb that meant "to draw; drag." It originally referred to the part of a gown that trailed behind the wearer.

Source:

Word History, Merriam Webster

BELTA TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

BELTA-BC Teacher Development Programme

BELTA Teacher Development programme in partnership with British Council, Dhaka was held at British Council, Fuller Road, Dhaka on 21st January, 2020. This professional development programme was facilitated by Ms. Tania, CELTA Certified Teacher Trainer of British Council & Mr. Tee Sharpe, Deputy Teacher Centre Manager, British Council Teaching Centre, Bangladesh. There were two sessions taking place simultaneously.

The sessions were designed to help teachers to know what “Professional Development” is and how does it help teachers to grow professionally. The First session was on “Action Research & Reflective Practice”. Teachers can reflect on their own teaching-learning practices, do action research by maintaining a teacher’s diary. The second session was on “Cambridge CELTA”. It was intended to give an overall view on Cambridge CELTA course. When, How & Who can attend the CELTA course.



Participants with the trainers at BELTA-British Council Professional Development Session

Action Research Workshop @ ULAB

On December 14th, 2019, Centre for Language Studies (CLS) University of Liberal Arts (ULAB) hosted a half-day workshop entitled Action Research: Principles and Practices conducted by Dr. Arifa Rahman for language practitioners and researchers.



Facilitator: Professor Dr Arifa Rahman, with the Participants

All 24 workshop participants represented over 12 organizations, including The FAMS International School & college, Chowra Girls' High School, The Aga Khan School Dhaka, Govt. Women's College, Govt. Viku

Mymensingh college, Dhaka University, IML, BRAC University, ULAB, to name a few.

The workshop was part of the Centre for Language Studies (CLS) at ULAB. The purpose of the workshop was to bring together a variety of educators to learn and identify opportunities for action research. Dr. Arifa Rahman highlighted, through the use of case studies, and hands on activities the importance of action research for improved effective teaching and learning including benefits of conducting action research and differences between formal research and action research. Participants actively participated in the workshop. Dr Shaila Sultana handed over a token of appreciation to Dr. Arifa Rahman after the workshop.

COVID19 VOCABULARY!

Expand your vocabulary range with these new Corona words:

Coronabrain: When all you can think about is the Corona virus

Covidfever: Like cabin fever

Procrastibaking: What I've been doing instead of grading papers

Coronababies: We'll have them in our classes in about 18 years and nine months

Hairpocalypse: My current hairdo, which probably won't improve if I let my daughter give me a quarancut

JOMO: Joy of missing out; the opposite of FOMO, fear of missing out

Zoombies: (Zoom + zombie) What teachers feel they've become after conducting classes all week on Zoom

Zoomsmen: your groomsmen in a Zoom wedding

Covedient: (Covid + obedient) describes people who are obedient to stay-at-home orders

Zumping: Dumping a romantic partner via Zoom

Covidiot (Covid + idiot): A person who acts like an irresponsible idiot during the Covid-19 pandemic, ignoring common sense, decency, science, and professional advice leading to the further spread of the virus and needless deaths of thousands.

Covismart: (Covid + smart) To adhere to public health regulations and social distancing in order to curb the spread of covid-19 virus.

Covidiocracy (Covid + idiocracy): the government or control of society or industry by an elite of covidiot.

Moronavirus (Moron + coronavirus): a slang for publicly criticizing someone for now following health and safety guidelines

Zoom-booming: this is when uninvited guests to a virtual meeting disrupt it with various obscene, violent, or offensive images or words.

Quarantini: (Quarantine + Martini) a slang term for a cocktail people drink at home while under quarantine during—and because of—the coronavirus. The term is a blend of quarantine and martini, a cocktail made with

gin or vodka and dry vermouth, usually served with a green olive or a twist of lemon peel.

Virtual happy hour: a cocktail hour, but instead of being at a bar, someone might drink a quarantini at home

Blursday: an unspecified day because of lockdown's disorientating effect on time

WFH: working from home

Corona cut: When making the final decision on who your going to shelter in place with.
Coronacation: (Coronavirus + vacation) getting paid to be off of work and having nothing to do or nowhere to go.

Quarantine & Chill: the COVID-19 version of "Netflix & chill"

Corona Bae: also known as a "quarantine bae," this is someone you start dating virtually (or finding yourself attracted to when you ordinarily wouldn't) while in self-isolation.

BCAC: BCAC stands for Before Corona Virus and After Corona Virus. This refers to December 31st 2019 which was the first recorded day of Corona Virus.

Covinoid: (Covid + paranoid) an extreme paranoid person, induced by COVID-19 scare.

Quaranclean: (Quarantine + clean) The extensive house cleaning done to pass the time when under quarantine at home.

Quaranstream: (Quarantine + stream)
Streaming media while under Coronavirus quarantine.

Covid-0: back when Covid never existed

Coronial: the generation born between December 2020 and March 2021, as a result of the enforced quarantining of their parents due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Zoomblur: a condition caused from a constant stream of zoom calls, losing sense of time, self and purpose.

Courtesy: Professor Dr Rubina Khan
(Sources: Urban Dictionary, 2020 &
Prof. Melinda Reichert
University of Toledo, Ohio)

International Women's Day@ BELTA

With the theme, "Each for Equal", the current Executive Committee members of BELTA had observed the International Women's Day on 8th March, 2020 in the auditorium of Canadian University of Bangladesh, Banani. Advised by the immediate past President of BELTA, Professor Harunur Rashid Khan, Ms. Shamsi Ara Huda convened the program with two dynamic team members Ms. S. Nasrin Chowdhury and Ms. Adiba Murtaza. Within a very short notice, the team arranged the program inspired by the positive responses of the other EC members. The aim of the observance was to recognise the unconditional contribution of the dedicated Adviser, Dr Arifa Rahman and the President Dr Rubina Khan of BELTA. Presided over by Ms. Hosne Ara Khan, 18 members of the current BELTA Executive Committee along with 6 life-time members of BELTA celebrated the occasion together.

The lively cultural performance of the EC members especially the recitation of Dr Shaila Sultana made the evening a memorable one. The event ended with cutting a cake, handing over tokens of love and a light refreshment.



Picture: *BELTA Leaders Giving Women's Day Theme Pose*

At the end of the event, there was a short meeting where all the members voted for choosing 'Plan B', i.e. postponing BELTA International Conference, 2020 due to the news of sudden outbreak of COVID 19 Pandemic in Bangladesh.

BELTA President@AINET

Dr. Rubina Khan, President, BELTA & Professor, Department of English, University of Dhaka, participated in the 5th All India Network of Teachers (AINET) International conference. The conference theme was "English in Multilingual Contexts". It was held on 10-11 January 2020 at Vasavi College of Engineering, Ibrahimbagh, Hyderabad, Telangana, India.

Around 400 teachers from different states of India and other parts of the world attended in this two-day long, lively and well-organized conference. It offered participants the opportunity to attend two plenary sessions, 29 workshops, 135 paper presentations and 38 poster presentations on varied topics related to the field of English language teaching and learning. Alongside gaining new insights into ELT and professional development, the participants enjoyed networking, making new friends, sharing their views and knowing one another's culture.



BELTA President @ 5th AINET Int. Conference

Dr. Rubina Khan presented a paper titled 'Educational Technology in Bangladesh: Possibilities and challenges'. In her talk, Dr. Khan shed light on the challenges and possibilities of using educational technology in the Bangladeshi context from a critical perspective. She provided a brief overview of the educational technology projects operating in Bangladesh, for example, British Council's Connecting Classrooms project, Konnect, and Digital School and Access to Information (A2i) projects. She argued that although technology has the potential to enhance learning, the conflicts and tensions that arise due to technology use should be taken into serious consideration, and teachers must have a clear and well-defined purpose as they move toward using technology resources in the classroom.

Dr. Khan was also a discussant on the panel discussion session titled 'Educating the Asian/Bi/Multilingual: Lived Experiences', moderated by Professor Geetha Durairajan, EFL University, Hyderabad. She focused her attention on how bi/multilingualism exists and works in the Bangladeshi context.

Another participant from BELTA, Md. Elias Uddin presented a paper entitled 'Communication of Assessment Results in Bangladeshi Public Universities: Learner Perceptions'. In his presentation, Mr. Uddin shared the findings of his study that investigated the tertiary-level Bangladeshi students' opinions on how assessment results are conveyed to them, and what effects the existing practices have on their learning and career.

One important milestone that deserves a special mention is that at the AINET International conference the two teacher associations — Bangladesh English Language Teachers Association (BELTA) and AINET — signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for future collaboration in the promotion of ELT in both countries.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE DURING COVID-19

Fazzlul Karim*

If the technology is used properly, we will not feel real classroom because it makes a real classroom. I am an English Teacher of Chowara Girls High School. My students were not familiar with online classrooms. But most of them were able to use IMO app. All of a sudden, the announcement came

from the government that “every school, college and university will be closed for an undefined time. So, after the closure, my students called me and asked when the school will start again?”. I replied, “Government knows”. Then I ask them to watch the classes on TV on which they surprising replied to me, “We don’t understand. We don’t watch TV”. So, I planned to start the online classes by using IMO group and YouTube. So, I recorded my lectures and uploaded them on my YouTube channel and asked on the IMO group if they had any problem regarding the class. When they had queries, I would reply to those. Then, I also gave exam questions on IMO group; however, something was missing. So, I started taking classes using Zoom Cloud Meeting: a fantastic app.

However, it was tough to organise the class as I did not have a whiteboard and a good camera to conduct classes in a village setting like mine. So, I bought a mobile and a whiteboard. Although, my students were not active in all classes, I earned a rewarding experience though my attempts to conduct online classes.

*Organizing Secretary, BELTA Cumilla Chapter Assistant English Teacher, Chowara Girls High School

The list of Top 10 Nouns?

time	person
day	thing
man	world

year	way
life	hand

COVID-19 Experience at Sangsad TV

Ismat Ara Mamataz*

Like the other parts of the world, Bangladesh government has also declared a long-lasting closure to educational institutions due to COVID-19. All types of educational intuitions will remain closed until September 2020. To manage the situation, TV channel-based education has been introduced in our country as well. Ministry of Education in cooperation with Directorate of Secondary and Higher Education, Access to Information-a2i, ICT Division, Human Development Media and Prime Minister’s Office has taken an initiative to conduct classes on television and selected a number of subject based teachers, from primary, secondary, technical and madrasah, to fulfil the purpose. Considering most of the students inability to access internet, the ministry decided Bangladesh Sangsad Television to telecast the recorded classes by the selected teachers. This channel airs the classes naming ‘Amar Ghore Amar School’ from 9 am to 6 pm daily.

I am now working for Sangsad TV in accordance with the proclamation of the government in order to provide classes to the secondary level students. As part of it, I have to go to different studios for recording classes. I have to go out for the sake of our students’ future and everyone in the team is giving their best to lessen the negative impacts of Corona on education. We all are

working together maintaining social distance.



Picture: *From the studio while recording a class*

*Assistant teacher (English)
Government Laboratory High School, Dhaka

Accolade for BELTA Member, Dr. Nasreen Rahim at EVC, San Jose, California

Dr. Nasreen Rahim has been awarded and appreciated recently for her contribution to online education and online learning at her university. The following write-up about Dr. Nasreen was published in “Classified Professionals Appreciation Week” Newsletter at EVC.

“Instructional design & distance education: helping SJECCD transition to online learning”

As instructional technology faculty at EVC, on normal days Nasreen Rahim manages regular online courses as part of the College Online Exchange initiative and the state’s Open Educational Resources initiative. Under normal circumstances, this would fluctuate

ate between 20-30 online courses and Nasreen also provided regular training to faculty teaching online courses. Once COVID-19 forced our transition to fully online instruction, Nasreen stepped up and did some very heavy lifting to help with additional training to ensure faculty were prepared to teach online. She has also been working very closely with the Distance Education Committee. Rather than a typical workload of 20-30 online courses, Nasreen is now working with more than 200 courses and the faculty teaching those courses. “Nasreen has kept the focus on serving students and has identified ways that we could actually use these circumstances to improve and better serve our students,” said Dean Maniphone Dickerson. “She has a background in instructional design, online learning, and specifically mobile learning, so she brought a lot of experience that our students and our entire organization has benefited from.” Even during these difficult circumstances, Nasreen was able to plan and create an effective structure for training faculty. She identified super users who could be used to help train other faculty and found both short- and long-term solutions to the issues that needed to be addressed in order for us to keep our momentum going while operating remotely. Nasreen has become the face for distance education for both student services and instruction at EVC. But she is also very collaborative and to make sure no students or faculty are left out, she has opened her training to faculty from SJCC as well. While she has long been planning for more robust on-

line programming and planning for how to effectively and efficiently implement it, she never expected to be thrown into it in this manner, but has excelled despite the difficult circumstances.

POEM

I Do Not Celebrate

Syed Badrul Ahsan*

I do not celebrate this long night of unending terror;
I do not laugh as this grim procession of coffins
Goes past my door;

I do not cheer the new crescent of religiosity
When children are stopped from burying their
Parents in cemeteries close by and yet so distant;

I do not greet my friends as casualties of the dead
Pile up on the desk before me day after day;
I do not smile, for men and women I have known
Keep falling before the onslaught of the
Enemy we do not know and cannot run out of town;

I do not send out happy tidings to my
Neighbours when church bells do not ring and
Mosques are trapped in loud silence, when
Synagogues are locked and deities sigh loudly
In the desolation of temples.

I am not at peace with myself when

Life goes into pieces in the world around me;
I do not sing nor do I travel to melody land
When it is a relentless dirge I hear at
Daybreak and a requiem I am part of
At twilight.

I am not at liberty to speak of old love
For those new in love do not know if
Tomorrow they will wake up not dead;
I stand at my window for a sight of birds on
The trees out there, to no avail;

No, I do not observe festivals any more
For the glitter and brilliance of joy are
Long gone.

I do not build dreams these days, for nightmares
Overwhelm my thoughts in their cumulative
Ferocity.

I am trapped in the present but I am not
In the present;
I do not reminisce on the past, for
I try exhuming the future from those
Mass graves dotting the earth.

I cannot greet people when life
Wears the form and substance of swift death.
I do not decipher poetry in the light of the
stars;
I cannot spot high romance in the ethereality
Of the moon;
And the sun I do not see.

In the sounds of the sad breeze blowing through
The sadder trees on this blighted star of a
Planet, I pray and I wait . . . for
God to return to our locked down homes and
Our silent streets and our broken hearts . . .
To lead us by the hand, once again, to faith,

To a renewal of belief in divinity.

I wait . . .

As death stalks us, as the bodies fall, as
Exhausted gravediggers fill the earth with
What once were people.

I wait . . .

As the sounds of children's tears hit the
window panes;
As mourning clothes wives and husbands
and parents
And sisters and brothers in its black strait-
jacket.

*Journalist and Political Biographer

Teacher's Mental Health

How to Support Teachers' Emotional Needs Right Now *

Originally by Christine Cipriano and Marc Brakett **

The Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence in USA launched a **survey** to unpack the emotional lives of teachers during the COVID-19 crisis. The five most mentioned feelings among all teachers were *anxious, fearful, worried, over-whelmed, and sad*. **Anxiety**, by far, was the most frequently mentioned emotion.

The reasons educators gave for these stress-related feelings could be divided into two buckets. The first is mostly personal, including a general fear that they or someone in their family would contract COVID-19, the new coronavirus. The second pertains to their stress around managing their own and their families' needs while simultaneously

working full-time from home and adapting to new technologies for teaching.

Given the unexpected new demands our educators are facing, we might assume that how teachers are feeling now is entirely different from the emotions they were experiencing before the pandemic. **But is it?**

In 2017, the center conducted a similar survey on teachers' emotions. A national sample of over 5,000 educators answered the same questions about how they were feeling.

Back then, the top five emotions were *frustrated, overwhelmed, stressed, tired, and happy*. The primary source of their frustration and stress pertained to not feeling supported by their administration around challenges related to meeting all of their students' learning needs, high-stakes testing, an ever-changing curriculum, and work-life balance.

Emotions matter

An anonymous teacher who filled out their most recent survey described the balancing act like this:

There is this huge dissonance right now between the messages such as "be well" and "take care of yourself" at the end of emails, and "in this time of uncertainty." Yet we have to partake in multiple seminars, read links related to online instruction, legal requirements in special ed, due process, timelines, etc. Everyone needs to be reminded again about how the brain works.

They studied how emotions drive effective teaching and learning, the decisions educators make, classroom and school climate, and

educator well-being. They assert that educators' emotions matter for five primary reasons:

Emotions matter for attention, memory, and learning. Positive emotions like joy and curiosity harness attention and promote greater engagement. Emotions like anxiety and fear, especially when prolonged, disrupt concentration and interfere with thinking. Chronic stress, especially when poorly managed, can result in the persistent activation of the sympathetic nervous system and the release of stress hormones like cortisol. Prolonged release of this and other neurochemicals impacts brain structures associated with executive functioning and memory, diminishing our ability to be effective educators and undermining student learning.

Emotions matter for decision making. When we're overwhelmed and feeling scared and stressed, the areas of our brains responsible for wise decision making also can become "hijacked." In contrast, the experience of more positive states like joy and interest tend to help people evaluate individuals, places, and events more favourably compared to people experiencing more unpleasant emotions. Pleasant emotions also have been shown to enhance mental flexibility and creativity, which are key to navigating the novel and evolving demands of living through a pandemic.

Emotions matter for relationships. How we feel and how we interpret the feelings of others send signals for other people to either approach or avoid us. Teachers who express anxiety or frustration (for example, in their facial expressions, body language, vocal tone, or behavior) are likely to alienate students, which can impact students' sense

of **safety** in the classroom—and likely at home in a virtual learning environment—thereby having a negative influence on learning. Further, dysregulated emotions can undermine healthy relationships between teachers and parents. For most students, a successful distance-learning experience will require a solid partnership between teachers and families.

Emotions matter for health and well-being. How we feel influences our bodies, including physical and mental health. Stress is associated with increased levels of cortisol, which has been shown to lead to both physical and mental health challenges, including depression and weight gain. Both the ability to regulate unpleasant emotions and the experience of more pleasant emotions have been shown to have health benefits, including fostering greater resilience during and after traumatic events.

Emotions matter for performance. Chronic stress among teachers is linked to decreases in teacher motivation and engagement, both of which lead to burnout. Teachers who are burned out have poorer relationships with students and are also less likely to be positive role models for healthy self-regulation—for their students and their families. It's no surprise that teachers who are burned out are more likely to leave the profession, which impacts student learning and puts a huge drain on schools. You get the picture: When educators answer the question about how they feel at school—or, in our most recent study, as an at-home educator—we learn they spend a big part of their workday in a pretty dark place.

** Adapted from Greater Good Magazine

* Article published in April 30, 2020

BELTA in PICTURES



BELTA Leaders Cutting Cake @Intl' Women's Day Celebration



176th BELTA EC Meeting @Rubina Khan's



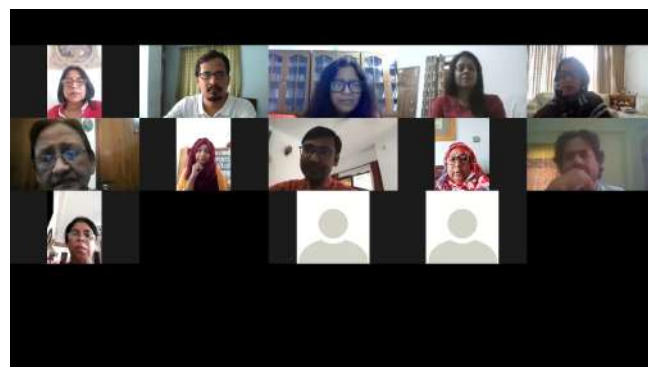
BELTA-BC Teacher Development Programme



177th BELTA EC Meeting @Arifa Rahman's Place



BELTA President @AINET Conference



178th BELTA EC Meeting through Zoom

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Contributions are welcome for BELTA Newsletter

GENERAL INFORMATION

BELTA Newsletter is aimed at practicing classroom teachers, administrators and managers. It is not a refereed journal, but a newsletter aimed primarily at members of BELTA.

Send your contributions to the BELTA Newsletter. Your write-ups on any ELT events, your experiences related to teaching or any tips on teaching are welcome. Please send them as a word file **within 250-350 words, font size 12 in Times New Roman**. We accept contributions all year round.

WHERE TO SEND YOUR WRITE-UPS

Write-ups and further questions should be directed to the editorial board at info@belta-bd.org keeping at least one or all members of Newsletter Editorial Board at CC.

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