

Marginalisation of Bangla at University-Level Academia: An Analysis with Theory of Reasoned Action

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Abstract

English has been investigated and criticised over centuries for its aggressive, invasive, and dominant nature, largely formulated by the British colonial enterprise and its legacy pertinent to the language. Given the coercion on minor cultures and languages in a non-native context, the use of English in education requires a detailed examination. The study critically examines the perceived superior position (e.g., tertiary educational institutions, social status hierarchy, and job market) of English and observes that a perniciously distorted perception of this language has permeated the minds of young learners in Bangladesh. This has raised grave concerns about the decadence of perception that influences students' consideration of pursuing a tertiary-level liberal arts degree in English. Applying the Theory of Reasoned Action framework, this study – consisting of 142 participants – has identified that students prioritise English over Bangla as a subject, regardless of their literary values. They tend to fervently encompass the English language and literature together. Such incorporation helps sustain the neo-colonial attitude towards English as a language and, this is why the native tongue Bangla fails to fascinate them, despite having one of the world's most treasured literary traditions. The discussion concludes that the overt promotion of English's benefits in this neoliberal era impairs the Bangla departments; therefore, English serves the learners only as a medium of global communication, not as a source of rich literary narratives.

Keywords: English in Bangladesh, language planning in Bangladesh, neo-colonisation and English, theory of reasoned action, tertiary education in Bangladesh

1. Introduction

As is the case in the majority of former British colonies, English is revered in Bangladesh and retains an enduring reputation. While English is not officially designated as a second language, all students must complete 12-year obligatory English lessons before beginning their tertiary-level degree. As of March 2021, the University Grants Commission of Bangladesh (UGC) lists 49 public, 107 private, and 3 foreign universities. Government acts mandate that these institutes and degree-granting colleges connected with the National University teach in English and that all of these institutions, quite surprisingly, require all students to take mandatory English courses. The National Education Policy's (2010) aim and vision are upheld in part because English is regarded as a superior language in this country. It should be noted that any student getting enrolled into an English department is generally thought to be of superior intellect based on the presumption that s/he has to explore one of the finest literatures in the world. Conversely, a generally-accepted notion is that students opt for studying Bangla literature only if there is no option left. Besides, a handful of these institutes offer Bangla as a Bachelor's degree programme since it is widely perceived that studying Bangla (also known by its exonym Bengali) yields less attractive career opportunities (Rahman, 2020), although Bangla literature has an opulent legacy and the language holds a prestigious position in the global linguistic domain, being the sixth most-spoken language in the world. Along with a large number of diasporic speakers (Alexander, Chatterji, & Jalais, 2016), it is spoken by 98% of the Bangladeshi population as the only state language. Yet, to keep pace with a world increasingly dominated by STEM fields (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics), the government is also highlighting STEM-focused education with only a few applicants enrolling in Bangla departments (National Budget Speech 2021-2022, chapter VIII, clause 85). Thus, Bangla, along with other subjects in humanities, undergoes a severe lack of funding for research and growth. Though all universities have been recently instructed to conduct a core course on Bangla literature, it is still uncertain whether it will produce the expected outcome.

Unexpectedly, prevailing practices fail to sustain both ends in the event of a large number of students enrolling into the English departments, who lack elementary language skills and, consequentially, struggle to equal the expectations set by the curriculum (Akteruzzaman & Sattar, 2020). Islam (2019) illustrates that most of the students are not passionate about literature or aesthetic values of language; rather they look for better ground in the job market. Relating this situation to the historical emergence of Bangladesh as a nation and turning into a curio in the hands of neoliberal hegemony, Mamun (2021) asserts that Bangladesh continued with the free flow of colonial education system after independence and fails to balance between the socio-political context and the cultural heritage. It can be theorised that such a tendency of treating English as a superior and Bangla as an inferior language is triggered by the impact of colonial hangover and market-oriented neoliberal education policy. Students are usually influenced by society's stereotypical psychological setup and consider that English is superior to Bangla, both as literature and language. Given the above-described situation, this study sought information on the following questions.

a. How do the learners decide on their university-level liberal arts degree and what are the

factors that play the most important roles in their decision-making process?

b. Where does Bangla stand in this case and how do they prioritise between English and Bangla?

c. How justifiable are those causes and how does the socioeconomic status of Bangladesh respond to such factors?

2. Literature Review

The treatment of English invites divided opinions where, on one hand, the relation between language contact and domination gets priority in the discussion. The repercussions of colonialism and the role of English from social, economic, and cultural standpoints govern such literature. English, both as a language and a mode of life, has a regressive effect over minoritised languages and cultures that transforms it into a powerful tool of imperialism in the form of neo-colonisation (Phillipson, 1992). Postcolonial critics (e.g., Cohn, 1996; Dua, 1996; Pennycook, 2002; Saravanan, 2008; Thiong'o, 1992) share the idea that English should not be premeditated without paying close attention to the intertwined potencies and tenacities. Habib (2005) believes that the foundation lies in the western notion of enlightenment where English, with the imperialistic motifs working behind, played a substantial role in ascertaining the political and ideological dogmatism in the "tricontinent", a common term denoting Asia, Africa, and Latin America collectively instead of the term "third world". Indeed, the role of language in the context of perpetuating colonial rule and establishing British-mandated education policies in the erstwhile colonies is undeniable. McLuhan (1964), however, blames the mass media for this dramatic proliferation of English through which a utopian portrayal of "the inner circle" (Kachru, 1985) is naturally promoted by national and international organisations leading to a perpetual inclination towards the adaption of English in every sphere of life (Nejad, 2011; White, 2016). Neoliberalism, multiculturalism, and globalisation add new dimensions to regulating these questionable ideologies in the dominated nations (Byram & Hu, 2013; Exley & Ball, 2013). With the onset of globalisation and neoliberalism, every language has to make space for the glottophagic or killer language, English, and continues to suffer from the risk of attrition (Chiti-Batelli, 2003). This McDonalised (Ritzer, 2013) language feeds the mechanisms of imperialism (Galtung, 1971) which has been denoted as genocide of subverted languages (Phillipson, 1992) and a form of neo-colonisation over the undermined cultures (Nkrumah, 1974).

On the other end, particular authorities hold the idea that there should be a normative and critical method while addressing a balance between language aggression and collateral transfer. Rahman (2005) and Rasheed (2012) argue that English is necessary from the global perspective and essential to match the contemporary market. Mühlhäusler (2018), for instance, recommends ecological language planning and layered scrutiny of existing plans so that a balance between modernisation and enlightenment can be reached. For the sake of diversity and inclusiveness, a watchful treatment of contact languages is indispensable (Dei, 2019) which can profoundly establish and control the power relations through global usage of

English without favouring a particular entity (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021). Given the universal need for a widely-acceptable lingua franca and linguistic diversity, Crystal (2013) stresses that English should not be rejected or held responsible based on its colonial legacy only. He reasons that a process of "hybridisation" is going on where, in the future, English will serve nobody and will assume the role of "world English". Pennycook (2006), talking about pluralism, proclaims that condemning English should be stopped and dispelling some myths will "depoliticise" it, prioritising the "ontological consistency of language" over any biased interpretation (p. 99). In the same spirit, Canagarajah (1999) details that control over policy and practice can be implemented to resist the unjustifiable elements of English and reach a mutual and inclusive coexistence. In the cases of translingual classrooms and transnational learning, any sort of polarisation in language planning is highly susceptible and unrewarding (Canagarajah, 2013; Robinson, Hall, & Navarro, 2020).

In Bangladesh, the coexistence of English and Bangla has never been a settled issue or a planned policy. From the inception of Bangladesh as a nation-state, English has undergone a serious existential crisis. After surviving under British rule for 190 years, enduring the subsequent imposition of West Pakistan's (now Pakistan) dictatorial military rule for 24 years (1947–1971), and participating in the language movement (1952), the newly-formed independent government was sensitive to native language and sanctioned Bangla as the only official language. The constitution endorsed an unequivocal application of Bangla in administration, judiciary, and education in an idealistic manner inspired by nationalism (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). The first education commission, Quadrat-e-Khuda Commission, was formed in 1972 and placed a report in 1974, reemphasising the implementation of the native language in all spheres of political and public affairs. It urged to mandate the practical application of knowledge and infrastructural development relating to language policy overpowering the British system of education that aimed at creating educated, yet psychologically subjugated, citizens through aristocratic and humanistic approaches (Seal, 1968). Sinha and Idris (2013) observe that Bangla started gaining control over the education system, particularly as the medium of instruction after 1971, replacing English and targeting nationwide flourishing of primary and secondary education to back the newborn state. Unfortunately, the decolonial and nationalist commitment during the liberation war suffered momentarily from the lack of priority and attention in later years. Failure to design a universal education policy and inability to fix the position of two languages culminated in a crisis.

Studies indicate that no significant measures have been taken for accommodating English properly and the stakeholders' failure to develop a balanced and effective language policy debilitates both languages. Hamid and Erling (2016) and Hossain and Tollefson (2013) ascertain that impulsive and incoherent language-specific acts and wanton predisposition towards nationalistic values and history have produced a backwash effect in securing a symbiotic presence of English and Bangla. Chaudhury (2010), referring to countries like China, Brazil, Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and Malaysia, opines that this problematic and diminishing state of these two languages is liable for producing less effective manpower at tertiary levels as proficiency in English has a direct impact on securing a career. A study on

Bangladeshi graduates in the Australian job sector by Roshid and Chowdhury (2013) projects that in various ways, “one’s English language skills did influence their prospects of employment” (p. 78). Ara (2020), delineating the historical backdrop of both languages, states that English, inhabiting extensively in education, media, legislature, and corporate sectors, is in a limbo between a foreign and a second language and implores in favour of English to be bestowed with a second language status. Hasan and Rahaman (2012) point towards the significance of Bangla as this juncture of postcolonial realities. They refer to two contending views of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. One side of the argument expresses that prioritising L1 ensures cultural and national identity; while on the other hand, ministering English from a hegemonic position leads to a psychological and epistemic subjugation or re-colonisation on the other. Exploring the education policy of Bangladesh, Chowdury and Kabir (2014) propose that the stakeholders need to realise the practical aspects of English overcoming the inconclusiveness and contention to match with the global education policy and practice by bridging the gaps between nationalistic zeal and elitist aggression. As a closing remark, it can be claimed that the language movement of 1952, arguably the only blooded revolution for language, conflates Bangla with nationalistic values of the mass which is readily reflected in the education policies of the freshly-independent nation in 1971. It can be extrapolated from the above reviews that English cannot be evaluated without its historical connection with the British empire. Somehow, English is not merely a language or a means of communication anymore, it is a label or identifier in itself. Though English operates to perpetuate the faulty notion of development, enlightenment, class distinction, and modernisation, a critical evaluation is essential before eliminating the possibilities it might offer. Translingual approaches, native pedagogical paradigms, and cultivation of critical literacy may all be answers to the existing conundrum.

3. Methodology

3.1 Framework

This investigation hypothesises that Bangla literature has been reduced and devalued by the exaggerated reception of English as a language rather than the merits of its literary landscape which, eventually, stimulates a degraded outlook towards Bangla departments. Learning English isn't driven by its linguistic or literary qualities, but rather by a neo-colonial prospect that sees English as more credible. This exploratory inquiry examines and reveals the correlation between the adoption of English and Bangla as subjects for tertiary-level education in the context of colonial heritage and neoliberal realities. Learners’ decision-making processes and prioritising actions were analysed using responses accumulated through mixed-mode questionnaires. With the theory of reasoned action (TRA) model, the findings displayed that these questionable tendencies are neither unforeseen nor impulsive. Students in Bangladesh are manipulated by socioeconomic constraints to believe that English is a viable option, even if it is not practical or close to their expectations.

TRA, one of the most commonly utilised models for studying behavioural decision making, seeks to forecast people's conduct based on their views and intentions. In a broader frame,

TRA is used to develop a course of possible human actions by studying existing set of practices and behavioural choices adopted by others. Designed by Fishbein and Ajzen (2010, originally published in 1967), this framework proposes that any individual behaviour is motivated by “a variety of sources, such as personal experiences, formal education, radio, newspapers, TV, the Internet and other media, and interactions with family and friends” (p. 20). TRA mainly functions on two broader levels: attitude and subjective norms (Nguyen, et al., 2018) where attitude refers to a person’s impression of certain behaviour and subjective norms indicate social pressure or approval within a certain community (Becker, Randall, & Riegel, 1995). Both the actions can be positive or negative, and normative beliefs, as well as normative social stimuli, have a direct impact on subjective norms. The study on coupon usage by Shimp and Kavas (1984) proposes that human decisions are greatly influenced by familial and household conditions whereas Armitage, Conner, and Norman (1999) posit that, despite having some limitations, cognition and behavioural outcomes can be directly correlated to psychological state and TRA can help predict such acts. With appropriate customisation and the addition of applicable variables, this model can act as a significant indicator of people’s attitudes and intentions (Budd & Spencer, 1985). Commenting on the construct validity of TRA, Vallerand, Deshaies, Cuerrier, Pelletier, and Mongeau (1992) point out that attitude plays a stronger role as a determinant of behaviour and this model can aid in developing an expected outcome, if not in predicting the precise behaviour. Later, TRA has been integrated with Social Cognitive Theory (Tedesco, Keffer, & Fleck-Kandath, 1991) and has proved to be insightful in foretelling the human path of action in various circumstances, e.g., consumer behaviour (Ellinger & Traichal, 2000), unethical conduct (Chang, 1998), and healthcare responses (Terry, Gallois, & McCamish, 1993). In its modern form, TRA is considered a key element of the theory of planned behaviour (TPB) and reasoned action approach (RAA) and has been attributed to several micro factors illustrated in fig 1.

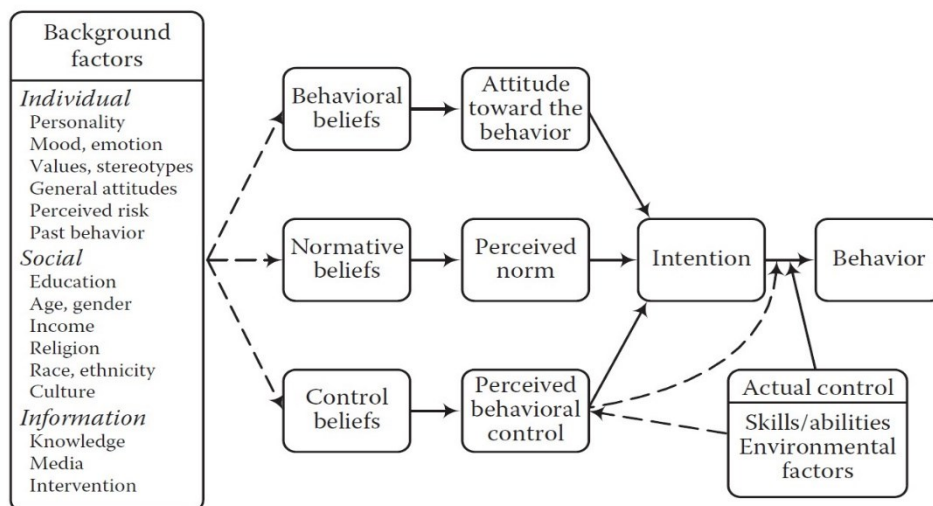


Figure 1. Schematic Presentation of the Reasoned Action Model (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010, p. 22)

3.2 Hypothesis Formation

The following hypotheses were formed prior to the development of questionnaires.

Hypothesis 1 (H₁): H₁ addresses the “behavioral beliefs” that denote particular behaviour based on subjective probability. The hypothesis sustains that “Several factors influence learners’ decision while choosing their department”. Null Hypothesis (H₀) suggests that “No such factors exist” and the Alternative Hypothesis (H_A) bears that, “There are certain influential factors”. “Factors” rely on the variables namely inherent motivation, the notion of linguistic vs. literary applications, and evaluation of Bangla.

Hypothesis 2 (H₂): H₂ refers to the “normative beliefs” which include any individual’s idiosyncratic deliberation on the treatment of performed action by others. It delimited that “The ranking of languages is motivated by existing practices”. H₀ signifies that “This is their choice and the external environment does not contribute to such development” and H_A claims that, “Numerous elements impact their assessment extrinsically”. Variables are the levels of significance given in their secondary levels, familial practices, and indirect regression resulting from societal norms.

Hypothesis 3 (H₃): H₃ identifies the factors involving the “control beliefs” or participants’ understanding of factors that might accelerate or hinder any specific behaviour. H₃ is formulated as “Due to the unstable socioeconomic status of Bangladesh, learners are drawn towards English”. H₀ upholds that “Such motivation is innate” and H_A proclaims that “External dynamics stimulate their perception”. Variables include more options or chances, cost-benefit analysis, job security, easy access to institutions, globalisation, and multilingualism.

3.3 Population and Sampling

At present, English is taught as a mandatory subject in all major streams (Bangla-medium, Bangla-version, English-medium, and Madrasah) of secondary and higher secondary education. Bangla medium incorporates the principal share of learners where teachers use books provided by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and it has two subsets named Bangla version (books written in Bangla) and English version (the same books in English). Bangladesh Madrasah Education Board oversees the madrasahs where Islamic ways of life are taught along with other subjects, and English medium schools follow international curricula, the Cambridge framework typically. However, social marginalisation has led to a class division allocating the first one to the middle and lower-middle class, the second one to the grassroots and the marginalised class, and the last one to the elite class. The Daily Star reports a total of 2,767,067 students (1,367,377 in 2020 and 1,399,690 in 2021) sitting for HSC (Higher-secondary School Certificate) or equivalent examinations. Non-probability sampling technique (convenience sampling) was used to gather data across the whole country.

All the 142 respondents (82 males and 60 females) were preparing for university entrance tests among which 108 (76.06%) passed in 2021 and 34 (23.94%) in 2020. Students from all 8 divisions have been approached. Out of which, 39 responses were derived from Chittagong

(27.46%), 30 from Dhaka (21.13%), 23 from Khulna (16.20%), 20 from Rajshahi (14.08), 9 from Barisal (6.34%), 9 from Sylhet (6.34%), 7 from Mymensingh (4.93%), and 5 from Rangpur (3.52%). The largest fraction (104 students/73.24%) was taught using the NCTB Bangla curriculum and the rest came from other streams (English Medium: 14/9.86%, NCTB English Version: 11/7.75%, Madrasahs: 9/6.34%, and Foreign/Others: 4/2.82%). Among them, 68 (47.89%) had a science background whereas 45 (31.69%) and 29 (20.42%) had humanities and business backgrounds respectively.

Table 1. Descriptive Presentation of Demographic Data

Demographic Data			
		Frequency	Percentage
Concentration	Science	68	47.9%
	Humanities	45	31.7%
	Business	29	20.4%
Background	NCTB Bangla Medium	104	73.2%
	English Medium	14	9.9%
	NCTB English Version	11	7.7%
	Madrasah	9	6.3%
	Foreign/Others	4	2.8%
	Chittagong	39	27.5%
	Dhaka	30	21.1%
Region	Khulna	23	16.2%
	Rajshahi	20	14.1%
	Barishal	9	6.3%
	Sylhet	9	6.3%
	Mymensingh	7	4.9%
	Rangpur	5	3.5%
Year of Passing HSC Examination	2021	108	76.1%
	2020	34	23.9%
Gender	Male	82	57.7%
	Female	60	42.3%

3.4 Instrumentation

A questionnaire was designed following a mixed method with three parts where the first one collected demographic categorical data with two filtering questions. For the first hypothesis, a 5-point Likert Scale Questionnaire (1 = never, 2 = possibly, 3 = neutral, 4 = yes, and 5 = obviously) with 10 items was utilised to gather numerically graded data on subjective preferences that appeared in the second section. The third segment had 10 qualitative questions, with items 11 to 15 for the second and 16 to 20 for the third hypothesis. Those responses were later categorised into broader representations and quantified for data analysis.

3.5 Data Collection and Analysis

Printed questionnaires were distributed among students residing in the same locale where the researchers are based and the rest were sent either via email or Google Forms. Informed consent had been attained in all cases and anonymity and confidentiality of the respondents had been guaranteed. SPSS 26 was used to analyse the data and create tables for illustration. 27 respondents who failed to pass the HSC examination or were not preparing for the liberal arts departments were filtered out.

Likert Scale data had been analysed using a nonparametric test (one-sample with a test value of 3 and 95% confidence interval) and quantified datasets were studied through descriptive statistics (frequency distribution) and chi-square test since the latter had varied value levels and number of responses.

4. Findings

Findings from the Likert Scale rejected the null hypothesis of H_1 since the analysis yields a statistically significant p-value (Conover, 1999; Kraska-Miller, 2013) confirming that numerous factors affect the learners' beliefs. Owing to such influences, English greatly outweighs Bangla. While participants reported an interest in pursuing a literature degree, their attitudes are shaped by a false idea that English is a language, not a literary stream. Differences in their response, compared to items 2 and 4, reflect their reluctance toward taking Bangla as a promising path for a tertiary degree. Bangla fails to ascertain its significance as a mother tongue as well for various elements drive the learners towards the appropriation of English (discussed in the subsequent tables).

Table 2. Presentation of Likert Scale Data

Nonparametric One-Sample Hypothesis Test Summary				
(N = 142, Test Value = 3, Confidence Interval = 95%)				
	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error Mean	Sig.
1. Likeness to pursue a degree in literature	3.6338	1.25748	.10553	<.001
2. Preference for English literature (with other options available)	3.6549	1.13015	.09484	<.001
3. Preference for English literature (with no options available)	3.4507	1.21210	.10172	.000
4. Preference for Bangla literature (with other options available)	1.6338	.86278	.07240	.000
5. Preference for Bangla literature (with no options available)	1.9366	1.16214	.09752	.000
6. Willingness to choose Bangla literature over English	1.6972	.89117	.07478	.000
7. Fascination towards English as literature	2.4014	1.33719	.11221	<.001
8. Fascination towards English as a language	4.4789	.77842	.06532	.000
9. Fascination towards Bangla as literature	2.1197	1.27431	.10694	<.001
10. Fascination towards Bangla as a language	2.6056	1.43886	.12075	<.001

Null hypotheses of H₂ and H₃ were also rejected based on the level of significance (Marchant-Shapiro, 2014; Reynolds & Reynolds, 1977) which reflects that dominant social exercises and Bangladesh's socioeconomic position play key roles in propelling the participants' decisions towards a certain direction.

Table 3. Summary of Item 11 to 15

Compiled Frequency Distribution Table (Item 11 to 15)						
		Treatment of English by the school and college teachers	Treatment of Bangla by the school and college teachers	School and college teachers' outlook toward English compared to Bangla	Parents' outlook towards English compared to Bangla	Participants' outlook on Bangla
N	Valid	142	142	142	142	142
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Median		2.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000	1.0000
Std. Deviation		1.13948	.86431	.40028	.77713	.44293
Range		4.00	3.00	2.00	3.00	2.00
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		5.00	4.00	3.00	4.00	3.00
Sum		313.00	251.00	164.00	220.00	172.00
Chi-Square Test Results						
Chi-Square		46.803	71.465	179.380	116.873	146.930
Asymp. Sig.		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table 4. Presentation of Frequency (items 11 to 15)

Individual Frequency Table (Item 11 to 15)			
	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
11. Treatment of English by the school and college teachers	Focused on reading and writing mostly	51	35.9
	Only emphasised the communicative aspects	38	26.8
	Supplied materials for memorising	28	19.7
	No encouragement to read literature	23	16.2
	Others	2	1.4
12. Treatment of Bangla by the school and college teachers	Making students read the text aloud in turns	51	35.9
	Prescribing guidebooks for rote learning	38	26.8
	Asking to prepare generalised notes for cramming	28	19.7
	Others	23	16.2
13. School and college teachers' outlook	English was always prioritised	122	85.9
	Persistent reinforcement on freehand English	18	12.7

towards English	writing and memorisation of Bangla notes		
compared to Bangla	Others	2	1.4
14. Parents' outlook	Practising English is always encouraged	88	62.0
towards English	Emphasis is given on reading English	31	21.8
compared to Bangla	materials (newspapers and magazines) more than Bangla		
	Private tuitions are arranged for learning English	22	15.5
	Others	1	.7
15. Participants' outlook toward Bangla	Our mother tongue	114	80.3
	Our ancestors fought for it	26	18.3
	Others	2	1.4

Table 5. Summary of Item 16 to 20

Compiled Frequency Distribution Table (Item 16 to 20)						
		Purpose of an undergraduate degree	Applicability of a literature major	Role of language (English vs. Bangla) in this regard	Reasons that make the preferred language significant	The most significant feature of a language
N	Valid	142	142	142	142	142
	Missing	0	0	0	0	0
Median		1.0000	2.0000	1.0000	2.0000	2.0000
Std. Deviation		.75698	1.10069	.83297	1.33118	1.04508
Range		3.00	4.00	3.00	5.00	4.00
Minimum		1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Maximum		4.00	5.00	4.00	6.00	5.00
Sum		203.00	289.00	246.00	318.00	284.00
Chi-Square Test Results						
Chi-Square		171.746	69.408	71.465	86.507	74.197
Asymp. Sig.		<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001	<.001

Table 6. Presentation of Frequency (items 16 to 20)

Individual Frequency Table (Item 16 to 20)			
	Responses	Frequency	Percentage
16. Purpose of an undergraduate degree	To get a job	102	71.8
	To live a better life	21	14.8
	To know more	17	12.0
	Others	2	1.4
17. Applicability of a literature major	By teaching how to speak English	61	43.0
	By offering a degree	36	25.4
	By validating my position as an applicant/candidate	25	17.6
	By expanding my vocabulary for future career	19	13.4
	Others	1	.7
18. Role of language (English vs. Bangla) in this regard	Creating more global job opportunities	72	50.7
	Enhancing literary aspects of my writing	37	26.1
	Being taught in most universities	32	22.5
	Others	1	.7
19. Reasons that make the preferred language significant	Essential for job	59	41.5
	Important for higher education	31	21.8
	Makes me smart	22	15.5
	Necessary for talking to people	20	14.1
	Handy for travelling abroad	9	6.3
	Others	1	.7
20. Most significant feature of a language	Global acceptance	61	43.0
	Career prospects	35	24.6
	Connecting with more people	32	22.5
	More speakers	13	9.2
	Others	1	.7

Internal consistency was tested using Cronbach's alpha. Respective values produced by Likert Scale data and quantified data are 0.927 and 0.974. These ranges were marginally higher than the levels suggested by Tavakol and Dennick (2011) which might had resulted from the number of items in the questionnaire. However, internal consistency was accepted since this minor divergence could be neglected (Hulin, Netemeyer, & Cudeck, 2001; Nunnally, 1978).

Table 7. Presentation of Reliability Test Results

Reliability Statistics			
Category	Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardised Items	N of Items
Likert Scale data	.927	.909	10
Quantified data	.974	.983	10

5. Discussion

The findings display that status quo praxes, e.g., peer pressure, familial position, secondary education, social regression, media, and apprehension of financial deficiencies in future careers contribute significantly to Bangla's continued attrition. The learners have a disproportionately low level of interest in Bangla, both as a language and literature, as a result of their over-emphasis on English. This leads them into a complicated phase in which they abandon Bangla and dive headfirst into English, unaware of the language's or literature's purposes or applications. English is idolised for a variety of reasons, but Bangla exists solely as the mother tongue from an idealistic viewpoint. In their secondary levels, the diminutive treatment of Bangla and faulty approach to teaching English convince them language resides separately and as they are not encouraged to explore or read literature, their subjective norms are shaped subconsciously producing a fake sense of English. The way English is dealt with in the secondary levels creates a hallucinatory effect that cannot bridge the gap between language and literature. Conversely, the negligence towards Bangla, since it is their native tongue, generates a norm that correlates to their acceptance at the higher levels. The domain that has not attracted interest for twelve years is very unlikely to get any in tertiary education. For sustainable development concerning foreign trade and export, English should not be ignored at national and individual levels. However, the conscious preference for English over Bangla raises serious concerns. In a sense, English represents power while Bangla, which is absent in the sectors where glamour and power dominate, implies a sense of feebleness. Bangla is not treated with dignity though the people hold a hollow emotion for it, mostly centred upon the mother language and heritage issues. The interplay of these background factors helps create inherent motivation towards the perpetual acceptance of English whereas the social elements like disproportionate favouritism and familial practices cast them into perceived norms.

Policies and measures taken by the authorities play another conclusive role in this regard. Criticising Bangladesh's education planning, Hasan (2019) states that "... the country is following the social demand approach instead of the manpower planning approach in the development of tertiary education" which is highly problematic as the country needs graduates who can compete in the market. With 11.2% unemployed graduates (Rahman, et al., 2019), Biswas's (2020) warning about the market readiness of graduates demands timely and critical attention. The most recent step undertaken by UGC to impart outcome-based education across all the disciplines could help tackle the issues. Nevertheless, it can potentially yield fruitful outcomes only if the policy is implemented with a thorough plan complemented by infrastructural and logistic support. On another note, the three-stream system (Science, Arts, and Business) of education is extremely divisive that hinders the nation from "... building a common foundation of knowledge, shared experience and values among the young people" (Ahmed, 2018). It is a general picture that the most meritorious students will go to the science group. The average students will choose business studies, and the rest will take humanities. Although efforts have been made to introduce a unidirectional education policy, none has been materialised. Such divisions at the secondary level create a far-reaching impact on the students' intellect and confidence. Asadullah (2016) believes that

such compartmentalisation takes a drastic shape in higher education with the creation of two broad categories, public and private institutions. Even access to the English medium schools is a status marker and benchmark of modernisation (Akteruzzaman & Islam, 2017). Due to the influence of English-medium schools, many traditional Bangla-medium schools and colleges are now introducing English version curricula. Dhaka Tribune (31 January 2021) reported that the government is planning to open English-medium schools in every district in association with the British Council. Such Eurocentric attitudes may create a backwash effect, in the form of perceived control, through the replication of incoherent western notions about development, globalisation, and multicultural engagement (Abbott, 1992; Kiely, 2004; Willis, 2011). Eventually, it might lead to a form of "cultural alienation", assimilating the indigenous culture to suit the purposes of "the colonizer's mentality" (Cabral, 1994, p.57) and re-enacting the age-old filtration theory of education (Annamalai, 2010). Bangladesh needs to realise a contextualised and critical model of development other than abruptly embracing the western ones (Inayatullah, 1976) and initiate working on a framework that can decolonise the system (Thornton, 1978) from the policy designed and solidified by the British Empire. With an unrestricted propensity toward colonial practices and ideologies (Fanon, 2001), English aids in perpetuating the Anglocentric insolence, creating a "sense of smallness, deficiency and otherness" about Bangla (Siddique, 2017, p. 22) in the minds of the subdued non-English speaking population.

It is also to be contemplated that in an era where education has become a commodity, quality of education is a significant determinant as regards preference. It is undeniable that English-medium schools are better performers in Bangladesh. Comparatively enthusiastic and commendable learners join these schools and parents believe that "English medium education can ensure a quality status for their children in future" (Hassan, 2019). Abdullah (2021), conversely, expresses that the curricula of these schools and the synthesis of gained insights have a negative effect on Bangladeshi culture and literature. Hassan (2011) observes such demarcation as a "social divide" and the implication of such a wavering state is implicitly responsible for retaining this ever-growing disparity or a renewed form of divide-and-rule policy. In fact, for a developing country like Bangladesh, securing a career through education is deemed to be an investment towards the future and English is the mostly-sought resort for the people. A utilitarian outlook like this is further proliferated with the government's endorsements, e.g., embracing a neoliberal policy at tertiary levels in 2006 backed by the World Bank aiming to create a market-based human resource to meet the twenty-first-century demand. Under this twenty-year project, technology-focused universities will be established throughout the country by 2026. Thus, international influence, funding, the rise of English-medium schools, and an uncontrolled implementation of policies eventually compel Bangla to be replaced and allocate room for English, transforming the native language itself into a subaltern one in its own setting (Huque, 1997; Rahman, Hamzah, Meerah, & Rahman, 2010).

6. Conclusion

By way of collecting data from students and reviewing extant literature on the field, this study unravels that the extraordinary and enthusiastic preference for English has a substantial impact on Bangla, which can potentially and eventually weaken the native language and its academic practices. In the Bangladeshi context, English is learnt, or swallowed, as an apparatus for survival, a tag for better jobs, or a banner for superior social status but not as an opportunity to get acquainted with the world of fine literature. Studying English without prioritising the literary tradition can create a challenging situation where the learners can fail to comprehend the scholarly and rhetorical standpoints. Through the use of TRA model, it can be reflected that the existing system has a potential character in guiding such tendencies. With an inability to differentiate between the lines of cultural integrity and global connectivity, students are just following communal stereotypes. The policymakers need to realise the necessity of a balanced state between these two languages by taking initiatives to reframe the relevant strategies. The research limits itself only to the survey of current applicants for tertiary liberal arts degrees. Further studies can be conducted in a wider timeframe and comparisons can be illustrated between English and other liberal arts departments.

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