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English in Bangladesh and Linguistic Imperialism: Emergence of World Englishes
(Język angielski w Bangladeszu i imperializm językowy: powstanie światowych odmian angielszczyzny)

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ACKNOWLEDGMENT

DEDICATION

For my beloved dog, Bullet (killed, 2023)

Though we were separated by distance, I carried you with me in every moment of this journey. I missed you then—and in your absence, I still find strength in your memory.

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List of Abbreviation

AABE – African American Vernacular English
ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations
BdE – Bangladeshi English
BMI – Bengali Medium of Instruction
BrE – British English
DFID – Department for International Development
EC – Expanding Circle
EFL – English as a Foreign Language
EIAL – English International Auxiliary Language
EIA – English in Action
ELI – English Linguistic Imperialism
ELT – English Language Teaching
ELTIP – English Language Teaching Improvement Project
EMI – English Medium of Instruction
ESL – English as a Second Language
FG – Focus Group
FGD – Focus Group Discussion
HEI – Higher Education Institutes
IC – Inner Circle
IELTS – International English Language Testing System
IndE – Indian English
IOM – International Organization for Migration
L1 – First Language (mother tongue)
L2 – Second Language
LD – Language Decolonisation
LFE – Lingua Franca English
LM – Language Movement
LPP – Language Planning and Policy
LR – Linguistic Resistance
MOI – Medium of Instruction
NEST – Native English-Speaking Teacher
NEP – National Education Policy
NNS – Non-Native Speaker
NS – Native Speaker
OC – Outer Circle
PkE – Pakistani English
RP – Received Pronunciation
SE – Standard English
SESIP – Secondary Education Sector Investment Programme
SSBE – Standard Southern British English
TA – Thematic Analysis
VOT – Voice Onset Time
WB – World Bank
WE – World Englishes
WST – World System Theory

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The spread of the English language can be linked to its enforcement on various populations around the world, a process that started in the British Isles during the 16th century under a monolingual ideology (Phillipson, 2018). Studies on English linguistic imperialism (ELI) have recently taken on a more interdisciplinary perspective (e.g., Aydinli & Aydinli, 2024; Mackenzie, 2021). In the past decades, multiple researchers (e.g., Hamel, 2005; Mathew, 2022; Modiano, 2001a; Phillipson, 1992; Pupavac, 2012; Zeng et al., 2023) have extensively examined English domination from (post)colonial and neo-imperial perspectives. Scholarly interest in World Englishes (WE) has also significantly increased in South Asia (e.g., Bernaisch, 2012; Bernaisch & Koch, 2016; Jabeen et al., 2011) focused on the development and establishment of local varieties.

This thesis is an in-depth exploration of ELI, digital colonialism and WE in Bangladesh that accommodates multiple perspectives and evolving social realities (Creswell, 2014). Its perspective is grounded in a critical constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, recognising that reality is socially constructed and knowledge is shaped by human experience and interaction (Saunders et al., 2009; Collis & Hussey, 2003; Bryman, 2008). It specifically addresses English in Bangladesh as a post-colonial country, exploring factors like policy and pedagogy (Phillipson, 1992), inter/transnational and migratory identities (Banks, 2021; Kivisto, 2017), digital colonialism (Auh, 2024; Schneider, 2022; Salami, 2024) and Global North–South divisions (Arrighi, 2001; Grugel & Hout, 1999; Reuveny, & Thompson, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021). Given contemporary concerns about ongoing developments in generative AI (Albeihi & Rice, 2025; Carbajal-Carrera, 2025; Lewis et al., 2024), platform imperialism (Bannerman, 2022; Jin, 2015) and digital (neo)colonialism (Adam, 2019; Gravett, 2020; Nyaaba et al., 2024) in techno-feudal societies (Varoufakis, 2021), there is a critical need to re-examine perceptions of English's role in higher education, attitudes toward WE and the distinction of the phonological variation in Bangladeshi English (BdE).

English Linguistic Imperialism

English's current linguistic supremacy is connected to colonial history and (neo)imperialism, which Phillipson refers to as a 'contemporary phenomenon as a world language' (1992, p. 1). Phillipson also criticises English language teaching (ELT) pedagogy as 'economic-reproductive, ideological and repressive' (1992, pp. 67–69). The mechanisms of the (im)position of

English in the Global South are dynamic, interacting with national socio-political structures and contemporary global phenomena. Al-Kahtany and Alhamami have argued that in this domain, the real issue is not power itself, but the voluntary acceptance of English as a form of 'linguistic globalism' (2023, p. 25). Thus, the international use of English in education, governance and technology entrenches Anglophone countries as the 'imperial centres' (Durix, 2002; Hamel, 2006). Most recently, this has contributed to the emergence of the phenomena of English's global hegemony within generative AI. The ongoing imposition of Western ideologies on non-Western societies has been heavily criticised (Nyaaba et al., 2024) alongside the dominance of Western digital platforms (e.g., Google, Netflix, Facebook, YouTube) in the global information economy. These perpetuate unequal power relations between Western and non-Western countries, an imbalance that often extends into politics, economics and culture.

Observations on English's (post)colonial power first arose in the mid-twentieth century. Furthermore, Fanon (1961/1963) argues that colonial powers shape and control both cognitive processes and cultural forms of expression, which Bhabha (1994) characterises as creating groups of with mixed language and culture, influenced by linguistic domination. Walcott describes such groups as 'schizophrenic, wrenched by two styles' (1965)[1]. This inner conflict creates a (trans)formation of linguistic and cultural frameworks in their identities.

Criticisms of contemporary ELI first arose in the 1990s, with a noted ambivalence about its dual position as beneficial and imperialist. Pennycook (1990) highlighted the adoption of cultural and political assumptions in ELT and warned that ignoring them could lead to learners being assimilated rather than empowered. Phillipson (1992) criticised Anglophone nations for promoting English to impose their foreign policies and agendas in peripheral regions under the guise of 'language aid', whereas Pennycook maintained a more cautious view, characterising ELT as potentially 'natural, neutral, and beneficial' (1994, p. 9). Nevertheless, Said (1994) highlighted the deliberate omissions and exclusions of non-Western cultures in English education. Davies (1996) framed this dimension of English in former colonies as a byproduct of historical forces (i.e., colonial expansion and the modern global power of Anglophone nations) rather than a deliberate strategy. Canagarajah (1999a) meanwhile agreed with Phillipson (1992) regarding the inequitable education policies (both covert and overt) imposed from the imperial centre.

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[1] Walcott, D. (1965). The castaway. Jonathan Cape.

Concerns about the dominance of Western pedagogical models and ELT as a '"Trojan horse" for … Western culture and ideology' (Gao & Rapatahana, 2016) have continued into recent research. Global superpowers (including both political leadership and institutions) use English and thus influence its values and interests as part of 'neocolonial exploitation' (Pennycook, 2017, p. 326) and perpetuate economic colonialism (Pennycook, 2007a) in the Global South. Barrantes-Montero (2018) highlighted the unaddressed inequalities between developing and developed countries that are maintained when English teachers overlook certain social contexts. Despite English's capacity for local adaptation, this long-standing dialogue indicates the ongoing concerns about its equal potential as a (post)colonial instrument of domination.

In this context, ELI acts as a pivotal instrument of 'transnational power' (Canagarajah & Said, 2011) that maintains the 'overarching structure of asymmetrical North/South relations' (Phillipson, 1997, p. 239). It thus actively enables cultural, educational (including science and the media), economic and political hegemonies. To understand these impacts, the perceptions and experiences of key agents (i.e., students and teachers) in higher education should be examined. Recent studies (e.g., Pujasari & Hikmatullah, 2023; Roozafzai, 2025; Siddiqui et al., 2024) conducted in the Global South have found that both teachers and students feel that English is useful for attaining social recognition and socioeconomic status. They favour a more inclusive, flexible approach to English through a 'linguistic influentialism' (Roozafzai, 2025) that reduces the anxiety and guilt associated with linguistic imperialism and promotes a positive perception of English.

Other recent studies have focused on the experiences of alienation and migration stemming from contemporary ELT policies. Linguistic oppression in one's home country can cause feelings of alienation, a loss of cultural identity and difficulties accessing education (Nanis, 2024). Meanwhile, the primary reason for contemporary migration is inequality, which causes the large-scale emigration of skilled youth from the Global South to Anglophone countries for education and employment within the phenomenon of 'brain overflow' (Feyissa, 2022; Baldwin, 1970). Against this backdrop, the perceptions of students and teachers can suggest how English in (post)colonial and techno-feudal society (re)shapes power dynamics of core and periphery. This will reflect the complex, challenging relationship among language imperialism, linguistic identity and academic success in South Asian ELI (Samee & Akram, 2024).

World Englishes and Bangladeshi English

The widespread (im)position of English in the Global South by colonial and/or soft powers (e.g., globalisation, neoliberalism, techno-feudalism) facilitates local varieties of English(es) around the world (Kachru 1996; Jarosz & Witczak-Plisiecka, 2022). The adaptation of Standard English (SE) by native populations in former colonies has given rise to 'subvarieties', referred to as 'new Englishes' or 'mutation Englishes' (Mutt, 1977), including BdE. Furthermore, acceptance of these varieties has shaped English's role as a global language (Jenkins, 2009). WE thus reflect English's linguistic varieties, ownership and recognition on an international scale (Galloway, 2019). Moreover, contemporary virtual communication and intercultural relations have extended the concept of WE through more diverse perspectives (García, 2022; Galloway & Rose, 2018).

Given contemporary developments in WE studies (Canagarajah, 2013), there is a critical need to examine BdE's acceptance, status and evolutionary stage in higher education institutions (HEIs). WE have been found to empower non-native speakers (NNSs) to reshape English according to local sociocultural realities (Kachru, 1992b). However, non-standardised varieties, BdE included, are often stigmatised as 'illiteracies, or barbarisms' and presented as 'signs of stupidity, ignorance, perversity, and moral degeneracy' (Milroy & Milroy, 1999, p. 33). Frequently, they are nationally and internationally regarded as 'degenerate and unintelligible' (Anchimbe, 2009, p. 271). The global mission of SE is thus criticised as the promotion of the 'linguistic whiteness' of the British (Flores, 2016).

Rajagopalan (2004) claims that English 'belongs to everyone who speaks it, but it is no one's mother tongue', reflecting on how the spread of BdE has specifically enhanced the diversification of linguistic research beyond traditionally dominant varieties (cf. Kirkpatrick, 2007a). Such diversification can have a significant impact on language planning and pedagogy, as it allows for contextually appropriate teaching and assessment practices in local English-medium institutions (cf. Jenkins, 2009). Meanwhile, the nativisation of English and its adaptation into local contexts is an expression of local creativity in evolving cultural environments (Shim and Park, 2008). Smith (2007) describes this 'darkening English' as (post)colonial resistance to SE. It reclaims and reshapes English from the influence of the imperial centre and is mostly promoted by post-imperial and postcolonial writers.

Meanwhile, the ideology of native speakerism perpetuates ELI in the ELT context through the perceptions both native and non-native English teachers have of the Global South (cf. Silalahi, 2019). Moreover, the demand for increased attention to linguistic varieties in ELT requires a localised consideration of grammar, pronunciation and vocabulary (Bieswanger, 2008). In this context, accents significantly shape social perceptions among individuals and groups (Kozlowski, 2015; Giles, 1970). They can evoke negative judgments and reinforce stereotypes (Kinzler et al., 2009; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010; Neuliep & Speten-Hansen, 2013). Studies have indicated that accent acceptance frequently manifests within biases favouring one's own accent (e.g., Kinzler et al., 2009) for employment opportunities, educational quality and credibility (Gill, 1994; Kerstholt et al., 2006; Lev-Ari & Keysar, 2010). Such accent-related biases towards local English varieties can have a significant impact on social judgement and credibility in institutional and social contexts.

However, the very existence of English's many varieties challenges the legitimacy of privileging only 'native' English (Berger, 2014; Chaweewan & Boonsuk, 2025) and positions 'accentism' as a form of linguistic racism (Kaur et al., 2021; Levis & Zhou, 2017). This study has therefore systematically investigated the phonological features of BdE (Chapter 6). As this thesis argues, the ownership and recognition of BdE fosters a distinct local identity, validates the communicative practices of millions and resists linguistic imperialism.

Outline

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter 1 examines the theoretical foundations necessary for understanding the concepts of ELI, neo-imperialism and the politics of language agencies. It contextualises the status of BdE and places it within the broader framework of WE. Chapter 2 outlines the research design and methodological procedures used in the study. The instruments (focus group discussions [FGDs], interviews, surveys and audio recordings) are described in detail and their role in the data collection process is discussed.

Chapters 3–6 present and interpret the findings obtained from the data. Here, Chapters 3 and 4 focus on the thematic analysis of the students' and teachers' perceptions of English in HEIs in Bangladesh and offer their insights on the themes. Chapter 5 employs descriptive and inferential analyses to explore participants' perceptions of and attitudes towards BdE, specifically examining responses collected through a closed-ended questionnaire and verbal guise

techniques. Chapter 6 creates an acoustic analysis of BdE as a distinct English variety, specifically focusing on its unique vowel and consonant-related features. Finally, the concluding chapter summarises the research findings, identifies the study's limitations and makes suggestions for future research.

Significance and Contributions

The original contribution of this thesis lies in its integrative, thematic analysis with selected elements of grounded theory coding techniques in the study of linguistic imperialism. It explicitly links a statistical analysis of the paradigm of WE to the perceptions and attitudes prevalent in Bangladeshi HEIs. Specifically, it elucidates how contemporary digital and geopolitical transformations influence both the role of English as perceived within Bangladeshi academic contexts and the evolving phonological development of BdE. This novel focus will not only enrich scholarly understanding of language policies and planning in postcolonial contexts but also advance theoretical discourse surrounding linguistic identity construction amidst rapid technological and sociopolitical shifts.

CHAPTER ONE
THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Introduction

This chapter lays the theoretical foundations necessary to conduct empirical research on perspectives of ELI. It analyses the impacts of English (im)position on education, economic and culture. Moreover, the development, attitudes, and perceptions of WE are reviewed to provide a correlation with language hegemony. Finally, it concludes with sociohistorical perspectives on English in Bangladesh.

English as a (trans)national language has become more dominant for (inter/trans) national identity through migration (Banks, 2021; Kivisto, 2017) in technofeudal society (Varoufakis, 2021). Emerging AI, which is centred on English, is often criticised as a tool of 'digital colonialism' (Auh, 2024; Schneider, 2022; Salami, 2024) in the Global South. Moreover, the global hegemony of English is fuelled by digital (neo)colonialism in education, which imposes Western ideologies on non-Western societies (Nyaaba et al., 2024). Meanwhile, 'platform imperialism' (Bannerman, 2022; Jin, 2015) facilitates the dominance of a few Western digital platforms (e.g., Google, Netflix, Facebook, YouTube) in the global information economy. They thus perpetuate unequal power relations between North and South (Arrighi, 2001; Grugel & Hout, 1999; Reuveny & Thompson, 2007; Zhang et al., 2021).

In this thesis, 'colonial' refers to periods in which state powers exert control over external territories, enforcing economic exploitation, cultural dominance and systemic social hierarchies that privileged colonisers while marginalising Indigenous populations (Adjei & Mpiani, 2023; Montle, 2021; Osei-Tutu et al., 2021). In contrast, 'postcolonial' refers to periods following the independence of these territories, marked by efforts to dismantle colonial structures while grappling with enduring colonial legacies, termed 'coloniality' (Osei-Tutu et al., 2021). Postcolonialism, both as a historical phase and as an academic discourse, critically examines these influences, highlighting the persistent socioeconomic disparities and identity struggles faced by postcolonial nations (Cunningham, 2018; Lavallée & Lochard, 2018; Mann & Daly, 2018).

1.1 English Linguistic Imperialism

Descartes (1637) argued that the communication of nonhuman animals differs fundamentally from human language,[2] which emphasises that the ability to speak as a unique characteristic of humans (Di Vincenzo, 2024). Similarly, Chomsky (2014) noted that although most humans can acquire their native language, even the most intelligent nonhuman animals cannot master the basic structures of human languages. Language thus uniquely enables humans to interpret, explain and reshape their environment. Tagore (1917) believed that in the absence of language, humans would become isolated and deprived of their inherent humanity. Linguistic evolution is intrinsically linked to national history, underscoring the inseparable relationship between language and identity (Humboldt, 1999 [1836]). It functions as the primary repository of cultural and intellectual heritage. In addition, it is frequently characterised as the external manifestation of a nation's internal consciousness, which reflects its social psychology and worldview.

This section critically examines ELI by analysing English's global dominance and establishing its definitional parameters (Section 1.2.2). It describes the structural framework underlying ELI based on economic dependencies, commodification, donor organisations, institutional prioritisation and colonial legacy in language policies. It also examines the cultural dimensions of ideological colonisation, cultural dependency, language identity and the fetishisation of English. Furthermore, a subsequent neo-structural perspective can be created using the concepts of digital postcolonialism, technological dependency, cognitive imperialism, and the mechanisms of linguistic neo-imperialism through migration dynamics. It concludes with an assessment of the emerging resistance through nativised ELT and language decolonisation (LD) movements.

1.1.1 Global English and Its Influence

Language has been defined as 'a dialect with an army and a navy' (Weinreich, 1945, p. 13), which emphasizes its inherent political dimension. Structurally regulated by explicit norms and conventions, it remains dynamic, fluid and capable of crossing borders without physical violence. English is now the global lingua franca due to historical, cultural, economic (Crystal, 2003; Phillipson, 2008a) and academic factors (García, 2010). Due to British colonial history,

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[2] see https://www.google.pl/books/edition/Discourse_on_the_Method_of_Rightly_Condu/ZqKDkQYxF-cC?hl=en&gbpv=1

it has become a dominant language in science and technology, trade, finance and higher education (HE; Crystal, 2003; Fishman et al., 1977b; Graddol, 1997, 2006; Kachru, 1986, 1992a; Phillipson, 1992; Pennycook, 1994, 1998; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). Crystal (2003) claimed that this dominance is because English was fortuitously positioned at pivotal historical moments. Furthermore, Phillipson (2008b) argues that the global spread of English as a lingua franca is more accurately described as lingua frankensteinia to emphasise its destructive impact on linguistic diversity. Its reinforcement has been further facilitated by globalisation (Block & Cameron, 2002; Kumaravadivelu, 2006), the institutionalisation of ELT (Canagarajah, 1999a; Phillipson, 1992), voluntary adoption (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; de Swaan, 2001), post-World War II geopolitical shifts (Kaplan, 2001) and the construction of new identities (Kachru, 1988).

1.1.2 Defining English Language Imperialism

'Linguistic imperialism' here refers to the imposition of a dominant nation's (or region's) language on the population of a subordinate nation/region, either overtly or covertly. This imposition is driven by political forces and originates from broader structures of imperialism. The concept of ELI has been discussed in academic discourse for several decades. Among the first, Van Zyl (1987) used the term 'linguistic imperialism' for English teaching in the context of South Africa. Studies (Benesch, 2001; Johnston, 1999) argued that language teaching (i.e., English) is not a neutral act, rather involves political dimension. Phillipson (1992) defined ELI as the 'structural' and 'cultural' dominance of English. From this perspective, ELT is a premeditated and potentially vicious stage of linguistic imperialism (Kazemi et al., 2017, p. 226). Hamel (2005, p. 29) identified further key aspects of ELI as language spread, power relations, agency, and the wider linguistic processes related to empire expansion. Phillipson (2009b: 780) defines it as "The study of linguistic imperialism focuses on how and why certain languages dominate internationally, and on attempts to account for such dominance in an explicit, theoretically founded way".

The institutionalisation of European languages as official languages in the former colonies of Asia, Africa and South America is a concrete manifestation of linguistic imperialism. Achard (1988) argued that English serves imperialist purposes as a means of sociopolitical control and cultural hegemony. While this hegemony is rooted in historical imperialism, it now extends in the guise of globalisation and neoliberal reforms under multinational interests (cf. Calhoun, 1992, 1993, 2002; Wallerstein, 1989). According to Kachru (2017, p. 96), English spreads in various functional areas (i.e., demographic, and numerical, functional, attitudinal,

pluricentric and material), all of which further promote ELI. Colonialism entails four key pro-
cesses: penetration, fragmentation, marginalisation, and the promotion of supremacist ideolo-
gies (Phillipson, 2009a, 137). Phillipson argued that these processes continue to promote ELI
in (post)colonial contexts. This leads to both 'academic dependency' and 'academic imperial-
ism', through which Western Anglophone nations impose their dominance (Alatas, 2003; Ti-
kly, 2004; Zeiny, 2019).

Figure 1.1 provides the conceptual framework in which centralised powers extend their
political, military, economic, social and cultural dominance over peripheral regions (Galtung,
1982, 1990; Harvey, 2005; Phillipson, 1992, 1996; Pervaiz et al., 2019). At the apex of this
structure are mechanisms of influence (e.g., persuasion, coercion, exploitative bargaining) that
enable powerful states to expand and maintain hegemony, transitioning from overt colonialism
to more nuanced expressions of control, including neocolonialism and neo-imperialism.
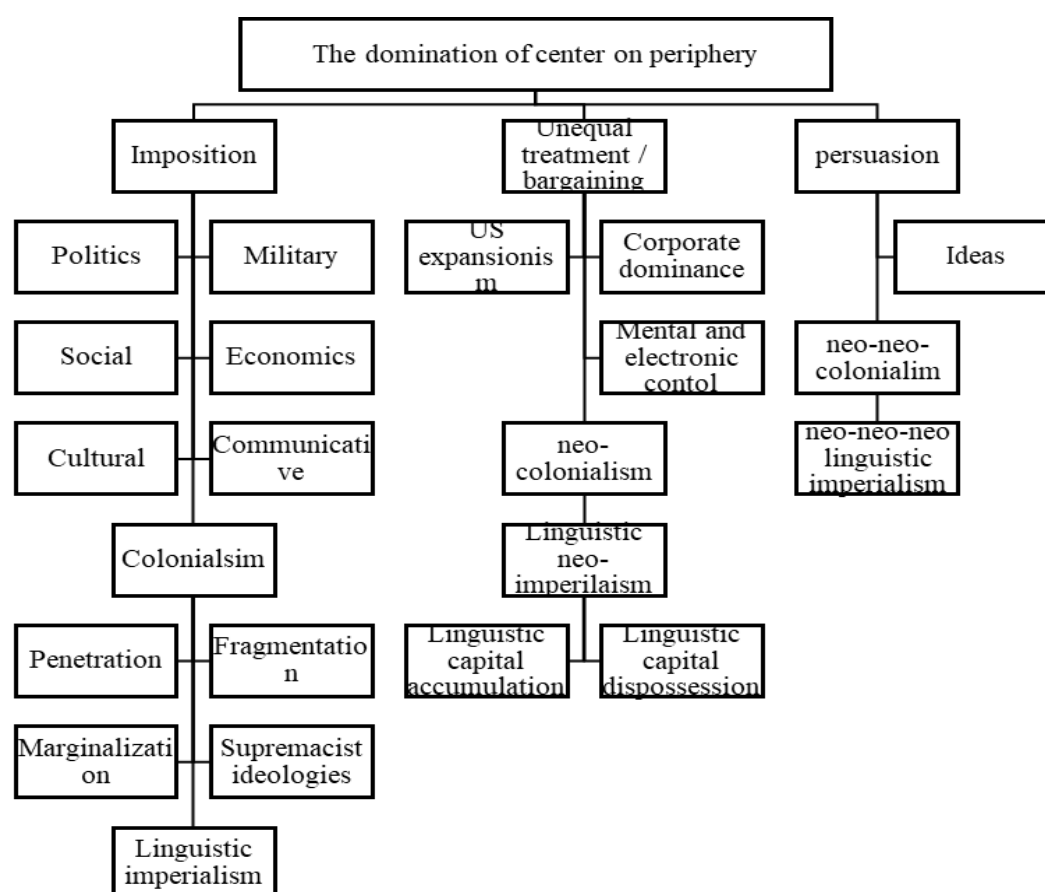
Figure 1.1: Theoretical Structure of Linguistic Imperialism

Note. Adapted From Galtung (1982, 1990), Harvey (2005), Phillipson (1992: 52–57; 1996), and Pervaiz et al.
(2019: 1–12)

However, many studies (Bisong, 1995; Canagarajah, 1999b, Fishman, 1996; Rubel-Lopez, 1996) have argued that Phillipson's (1992) argument was limited to colonial expansion and overlooks other key factors that influence the global spread of English and the sociolinguistic and pedagogical challenges in peripheral contexts. Davis (1996) critiqued it as a theoretically 'judgemental' and 'self-confirming hypothesis' that overemphasised English hegemony from a narrow historical perspective.

Phillipson's (1992) analysis positioned language as the central arena in which power is negotiated. He argued that linguistic imperialism is a form of linguicism, which 'involves representations of the dominant language, to which desirable characteristics are attributed, for purposes of inclusion, and the opposite for dominated languages, for purposes of exclusion' (Phillipson, 1992, 55). However, Spolsky (2004) argued that this linguicentric approach obscured the main problem of colonial domination. He suggested that the main problem is not colonial language policy—which negotiates between the use of a favoured language and the local vernacular as a medium of instruction (MoI)—but rather the overarching colonial framework in which one nation subjugates another. This colonial context leads to lasting inequalities that persist long after formal colonial rule has ended. In his view, it is 'imperialism per se', not the nuances of linguistic imperialism, that perpetuates these structural imbalances (pp. 84–85).

1.1.3 A Structural Framework

This subsection proposes a structural framework that describes English's political economy through key dimensions that characterise its dominance in peripheral contexts. This begins with economic dependency, emphasising the commodification of English as a marketable skill. The role of donor organisations and global governance illustrates how external influence reinforces language hierarchies. Institutional prioritisation, particularly in schools, reflects internalised preferences shaped by academic imperialism. Finally, I discuss the continued impact of colonialism on language policy and planning (LPP), demonstrating how historical structures continue to shape postcolonial language priorities.

1.1.3.1 Economic Dependence

In the global economy, English skills often exert considerable influence by enabling access to better-paid jobs in inter- and intranational markets. They have acquired considerable commercial value and been positioned as an indispensable tool in international trade and economic transactions (Grin, 2001).

Here, world-systems theory (WST; Wallerstein, 1974) explains global inequality by categorising a hierarchical economic system into core, semi-peripheral, and peripheral states. Frank (1978a, b) has argued that the underdevelopment of the periphery is not natural, but a result of colonial exploitation, which positions former colonies as suppliers of raw materials for dominant nation(s). The core countries control global trade, resources and decision-making, while the periphery countries provide labour (including through migration) and materials. In this context, English serves as a tool for the core countries to maintain their dominance in trade. The periphery adopts English to participate in trade, while the countries of the semi-periphery, such as India and South Africa, function as intermediaries and benefit from the use of English. Moreover, this economic cycle disproportionately favours those who are proficient in English (cf. Zeng et al., 2023). This hierarchy reflects a 'colonial attitude' toward English that is linked to economic mobility in postcolonial societies (Tupas, 2022). Phillipson's (1992) argument that linguistic imperialism perpetuates inequalities in the global capitalist system is thus consistent with WST.

English's economic importance is understood by its 'hypercentral' role in the global language hierarchy (de Swaan, 2001). This hierarchy divides languages into 'hypercentral, supercentral, and central and peripheral' based on scope and function, with English as a 'hypercentral language'. This status reflects not only the number of speakers, but also its role in socioeconomic and political structures and as transnational linguistic capital (Gerhards, 2014a; Rabbidge & Zaheeb, 2022). Therefore, it has become the standard medium for international negotiations and contracts in business, science and technology (Bel'Kiry, 2021, p. 33; Bermingham & O'Neill, 2022; Graddol, 2000, p. 8; Mair, 2013). This creates economic barriers for non-English speakers and nations, exacerbating inequalities and limiting access to global markets (De Netto et al., 2021; Gerhards, 2014a,b).

English's international dominance	1. International organizations and conferences
	2. Scientific publications
	3. International banking, trade and commerce
	4. Advertisement
	5. Cultural products and media
	6. International tourism
	7. Advanced education
	8. International safety (e.g., airspeak, seaspeak)
	9. International law
	10. Interpretation and translation
	11. Technological transfer
	12. Online communication

Table 1.1: English Predominance in Science, Technology and Business

Note. Adapted from Graddol (2000, p. 8) and Bel'Kiry (2021, p. 33).

Bourdieu (1980, pp. 113–120) theorised social space as a market in which people act according to capital. It is shaped by the distribution of economic capital, cultural capital (knowledge, skills and other achievements) and symbolic capital (accumulated prestige or honour; Phillipson, 1992). Within this framework, shared language enhances human capital by facilitating the transfer of skills across contexts (Friedberg, 2000) and improves labour productivity (Chiswick & Miller 2003, 2013; Esser, 2006). In the Global South, English holds instrumental economic value (Dahlman & Utz, 2005). For example, India's English education policy aims to attract foreign investment and exports (*Forbes India*, 2024).[3] Neoliberal ideologies have thus commodified English proficiency for economic mobility and social advancement (Aburous & Kamla, 2022; Khan & Haidar, 2024; Sharma & Phyak, 2017).

In the last few decades, international policies and agreements (e.g., the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade [1995], the Bologna Declaration [1999]) have reconfigured HEIs as a global commodity generating billions of dollars (Coleman, 2006). This shift has redefined institutional missions from autonomous research and cultural preservation to the consumer-oriented commodification of education (Kjeldstadli, 2010; Ljosland, 2008). Adopting this approach limits innovative ideas and forces universities to follow market-driven practices. Policymakers support this to remain competitive on the global stage (Scullion et al., 2011). This accelerates the use of English medium Instruction (EMI) in universities, positioning English as

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[3] https://www.forbes.com/sites/benjaminlaker/2025/01/01/talent-shortages-may-threaten-indias-economic-momentum/?utm_source=chatgpt.com

essential for internationalisation, institutional competitiveness and access to global education markets.

Neoliberal globalisation has consolidated the dual role of English as a commodity as a prerequisite for employment and benefited native speakers (NSs; Moradi & Fard, 2019). Thus, EMI reinforces socioeconomic inequalities in peripheral contexts (Ahmed & Hassoon, 2017). Holborow (2018) has suggested a tripartite commodification framework for this process from a Marxist perspective. First, labour processes exploit language skills as marketable resources. Next, neoliberal ideologies commodify English skills as an individual asset and attribute economic success to personal responsibility (Brown & De Neve, 2024). Finally, individuals and communities may resist this capitalist framework. Holborow's (2018) framework thus illustrates the interaction between language and neoliberal ideologies by redefining linguistic competences as economic assets (Heller, 2010; Percio, 2015).

Meanwhile, Ciscel (2002) has highlighted the 'linguistic opportunism' of English skills, which is driven by social and economic benefits rather than external coercion. These benefits lead rational actors to invest in English language learning due to expected economic returns, which is described as 'Homo economicus' (Simpson, 2018). Similarly, human capital theory supports education and skill acquisition as investments to enhance productivity and promote economic growth (Becker, 1975; Schultz, 1960, 1971). From this perspective, English proficiency is key to human capital. In the Global South, it is often associated with access to global knowledge economies, improved labour productivity and greater economic mobility (Hogan-Brun, 2017; Lucas, 1988). Studies have found a strong correlation between English skills and economic development, suggesting English is a prerequisite for active participation in the global economy (Agustiana et al., 2024; Li et al., 2022).

1.1.3.2 Donor Agencies and Governance

The political dimension of ELI manifests itself within global governance. A donor agency, usually a governmental, intergovernmental or non-governmental organisation, is an entity that provides financial, technical or material resources like financial assistance to support development, humanitarian or research initiatives in developing countries (cf. Binnendijk, 1989; Moya-Colorado et al., 2021). For example, the World Bank supported ELT in Vietnam to promote

economic development while hiding its underlying imperialist motives (cf. Dang, 2009; World Bank, 1997[4]).

The 'socialised soft power model' (Bae & Lee, 2019) describes a process in which English-speaking countries function as 'senders' that promote English as a global lingua franca to 'receivers' in the Global South. This phenomenon acts as a soft power mechanism facilitating globalisation. This extends its role beyond that of a language, becoming a tool to shape social structures in the interests of dominant countries. As Narkunas (2005) argued, the commercialisation of English as 'market English' highlights the need for alternative conceptual tools to resist these dehumanising, statist forces and challenge the neoliberal agenda that presents English as an economic necessity.

Phillipson (1992) criticised how international organisations like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund operate predominantly (and covertly) in English. Their linguistic bias reflects the interests of core countries, often to the detriment of peripheral economies (Aydinli & Aydinli, 2024). English proficiency thus becomes a prerequisite for meaningful participation in successful international diplomacy. Nations with limited English proficiency face significant obstacles in global forums, which reinforces their marginalisation and dependence on core countries (Munandar, 2015). This creates a cycle of dependency in which English acts as a political gatekeeper (Frank, 1967).

1.1.3.3 The Institutional Prioritisation of English

There are many reasons for the rapid spread of EMI in the Global South. Several scholars have found that the reasons include employability in the (inter)national market (economic, social and political forces), attracting international students through the Anglo-American publishing industry (Doiz et al., 2013; Griffiths, 2013; Hashim & Finardi, 2025; Hellekjær & Westergaard, 2003; Inbar-Lourie & Donitsa-Schmidt, 2013; Kuteeva & Kaufhold, 2024; Rose et al., 2022; Wilkinson, 2013).

EMI institutions are driven by globalisation, internationalisation and the commercialisation of education to play a role in the global academic and scientific market. This also occurs as a political normative framework for policy, quality and professionalisation (Akıncıoğlu, 2023, 2025; Bowles & Murphy, 2020; Galloway et al., 2020). Matters related to education and schooling institutions are deeply intertwined with the colonial past, with the primary aim of

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[4] http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/652071468153843688

creating as much distance as possible between itself and the rest of the population' (Banerjee & Duflo, 2011; H. H. Rahman, 2016). Fishman (1977b) analysed 102 non-native English-speaking countries and identified nine peripheral predictors of the spread of English alongside the dominant factor of British colonial history. The indicators included the widespread use of EMI in education, administrative functions, technological applications, advanced education, English-language newspapers, radio programmes and book publications (Figure 1.2).
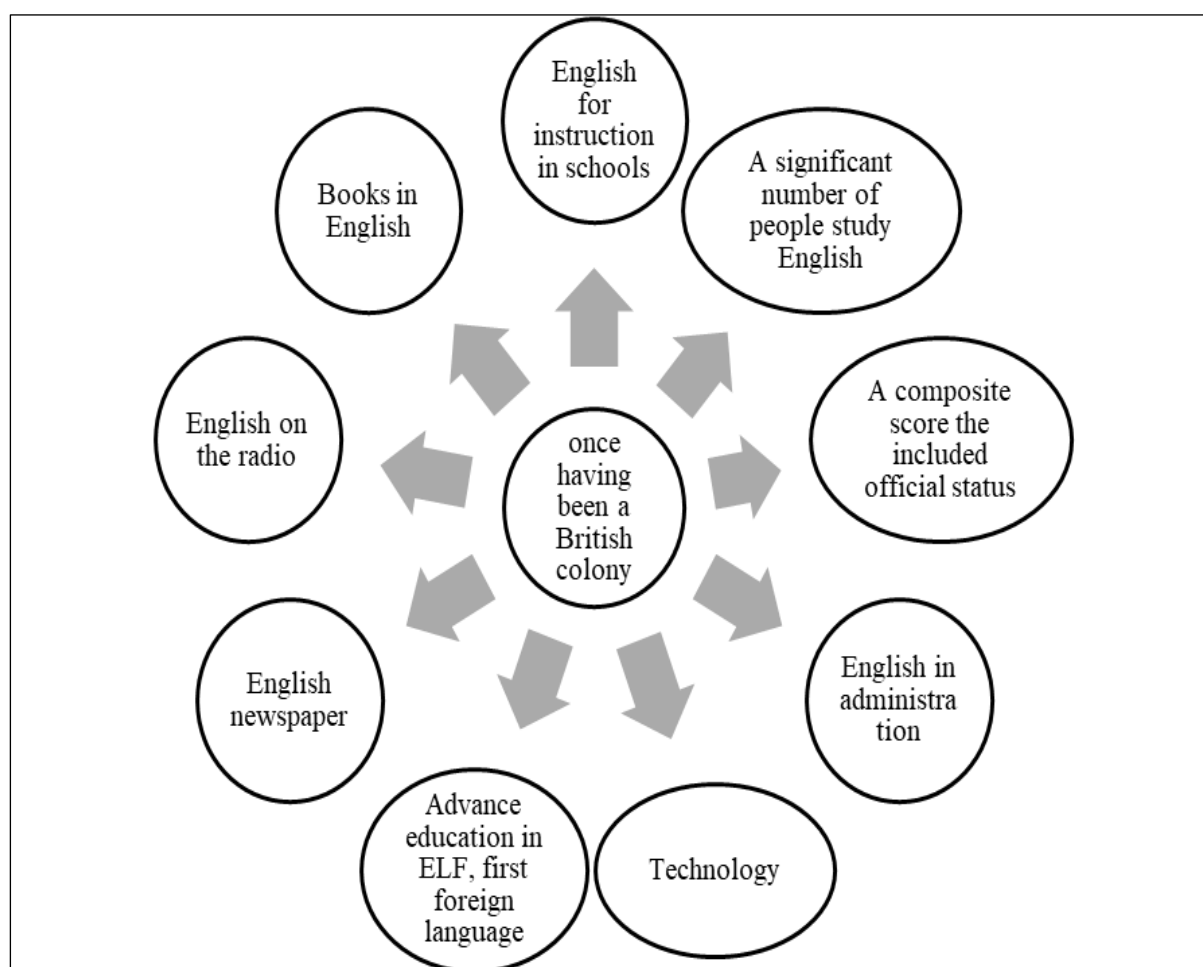
Figure 1.2: Centre and Peripheral Predictors of Global English Spread

Note. Adapted from Fishman (1977b) and Spolsky (2004).

Moreover, several studies (Choi, 2016; Fasold, 1991; Isik, 2008) have discussed the academic institutional mechanisms that perpetuate ELI through institutional and ideological means and the glocalization of ELT. Here, the ruling class of postcolonial countries always maintains a certain degree of separation from the general populace, through language, dress, education, and culture (Figure 1.3). Without such distinctions, effective governance and control over the masses become difficult to sustain. These languages are maintained by elite-controlled institutions that privilege the language of the colonisers. They also facilitate a one-way flow of

16

information from the dominant to the subordinate society, fostering linguistic dependency and weakening local creativity and self-esteem. Furthermore, dominant languages introduce new vocabulary that is not present in Indigenous languages and leads to lexical invasion and the gradual erosion of those languages.
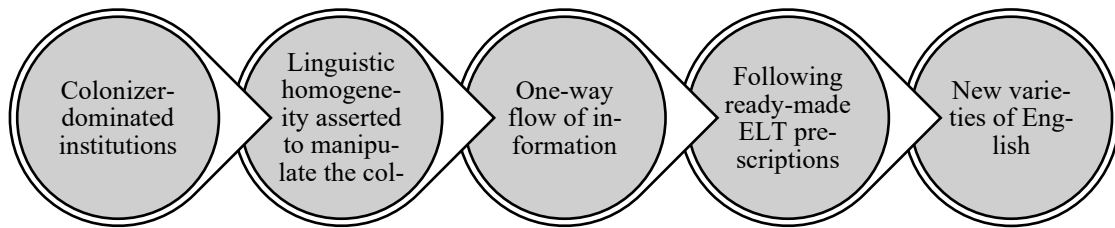
Figure 1.3: Linguistic Imperialism and Institutional Reproduction of World Englishes

Language also acts as a central instrument of maintaining and consolidating colonial power in education. English's global spread is reinforced by education for neoliberal goals of preserving socioeconomic hierarchies and academic and cultural dominance (cf. Mweli, 2018; Zeng et al., 2023). Evans (2008) noted how British colonial policy in Hong Kong privileged English over local language(s). Such practices strengthen perpetuate inequalities in local institutions (cf. Fung, 2021) as scholars from the Global South are forced to communicate in a language characterised by colonial heritage. EMI thus results in 'tacit institutionalised practices in academia' in English in academic discourse (Tietze & Dick, 2009, p. 119). Consequently, most academic papers are written in English (Ammon & MacConnel, 2002; Tietze & Dick, 2009).

Colonialism and imperialism are powerful systems that have historically controlled social, political, economic, and cultural life (Doyle, 1986). Eurocentrism, which has its origins in European dominance in the global capitalist system since the sixteenth century, created a white supremacist and universalist epistemological framework (Wallerstein, 1974). This systematically suppresses non-Western knowledge through 'cognitive extractivism' and 'epistemicide', whereby local epistemologies are appropriated or eliminated if they do not conform to European ideals (Ribeiro, 2023). Academic imperialism is thus the Eurocentric imposition of Western epistemological frameworks on global knowledge production, exemplified by the predominance of English as academic lingua franca. Its widespread use thus marginalises non-Western

epistemology (Schlechtweg et al., 2023). Sousa Santos (2012, p. 45) has argued that Eurocentric theories are inadequate for understanding the realities of the Global South, as they suppress alternative forms of knowledge through 'epistemicide'. Chakrabarty (2009) and Ribeiro (2023) have agreed, noting that while European thought shaped modernity, it is insufficient for explaining non-Western experiences and must be critically reassessed. Instead, new theories rooted in the epistemologies of the South must be developed to reflect and engage with such experiences more accurately. Broader theoretical perspectives have further detailed these issues. Quijano's (2000) concept of 'coloniality of power', Ellison's (1972 [1952]) 'Invisible Man' and Du Bois's (1989 [1903]) notion of 'double consciousness' describe the enduring effects of colonial racial and epistemological hierarchies.

Several studies have argued for the decolonisation of academic disciplines as a means of combating and dismantling persistent colonial structures in specific fields. For example, Stavenhagen (1971), Jackson (2023) and Rosenthal (2022) have critically examined the colonial legacy inherent in the discipline of anthropology. However, Gupta & Stoolman (2022) have found that 'white-norming' practices are still prevalent throughout academia, evident in unequal hiring, curriculum design and authorship. They define 'white-norming' as 'the many (unwitting, unremarked, unselfconscious) ways departmental practices assume that [a] faculty member is a white, upper middle-class, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied person' (Gupta & Stoolman, 2022). They suggested that indigenous collaborators should be recognised as equal partners in the creation of knowledge. Tuck and Yang (2012) have suggested that true decolonisation requires the challenge of specific settlement-colonial frameworks. They emphasised that resisting the adoption of colonial ideologies in education systems is crucial to combating epistemic injustice. These contributions thus demonstrate the ongoing process of challenging the colonial structures that continue shaping global academic discourse.

1.1.3.4 Coloniality in Language Policy and Planning

The global reality of linguistic imperialism is also evident in the continued dominance of various colonial languages in former colonies. This can be seen in countries formerly under British rule (e.g., Kenya, Nigeria, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, India), former French colonies (e.g., Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Madagascar, Haiti, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Benin, Guinea), former Spanish colonies (e.g., Ecuador, Cuba, Guatemala, Honduras, Bolivia, El Salvador, Nicaragua) and former Arab colonies (e.g., Sudan, Chad), where colonisers have imposed their linguistic ideologies on locals. This phenomenon has created diverse multilingual landscapes

in these countries but also means that indigenous linguistic diversity is often systematically suppressed in favour of colonial languages (Ravishankar, 2021). In these cases, political elites promote their own mother tongues as the ideal rather than Indigenous language(s). Instead of promoting inclusive sociolinguistic models based on multilingualism, these states use language as instruments of assimilation. The media and education systems are employed to further accelerate the domestication and institutionalisation of colonial languages and reinforce the ideological and structural legacy of linguistic imperialism.

In such contexts, LPP is deeply rooted in colonial mindsets. Tollefson (1991) argued that LPP is not neutral but can reinforce power structures by privileging a dominant language. Makoni and Pennycook (2007) argue that colonial administrations 'invented' languages by rigidly standardising fluid linguistic practices to serve governance. This imposition created artificial boundaries that privileged European languages and embedded Western ideologies (Graddol, 2006; Mühlhäusler, 2000).

Ricento (2000) proposed the primary stages of LPP formation in (post)colonial countries as emphasising decolonisation, structuralism and strategic planning, which allows the implantation of ELI. Although the process varies according to context, the predominance of English in education has helped displace indigenous languages (cf. Rafael, 1988). In Namibia, for example, English was designated as the only official language to foster national unity after independence, even though it was the first language for only a minority, thus marginalising other indigenous tongues (Mamdani, 2020; Pütz, 1995). In Sudan, Arabic's significant role in state formation has led to linguistic hierarchies that affect citizenship and identity (Abdelhay, 2010). Other, African politicians have taken measures for administrative reasons that marginalise multilingualism and restrict citizens to one or two dominant languages, for example, Kiswahili was promoted as the national and official language after independence to foster unity and national identity (Blommaert, 1999). Meanwhile, Sri Lanka's 'Sinhala Only Act' (de Silva, 1986) and subsequent ethnic tensions demonstrate how monolingual policies exacerbate social divisions (Canagarajah, 2005). Finally, despite the politically motivated initiatives of European Union bureaucrats, many indigenous European languages and dialects are themselves threatened with extinction.

Postcolonial LPP reveals the inherent tension between global imperatives and decolonial endeavours. For example, English and/or other former colonial languages continue in the

Global South for several practical considerations (Canagarajah, 2005). LPP must instead promote linguistic citizenship and Indigenous language practices (Makoni & Pennycook, 2007; Stroud, 2001). However, neoliberal politics complicate LPP discourse by commodifying colonial language(s) through private bilingual education. In this system, English is promoted as essential for global competitiveness (Makalela, 2018). For example, the introduction of bilingual intercultural education in Bolivia (Hornberger & López, 1998) reflects the complexity of decolonising LPP. Other studies have problematised the ways Western monolingual frameworks have historically constructed multilingualism (Makoni et al., 2023). In response, alternative approaches like translanguaging, rooted in Ubuntu philosophy, have been proposed as viable decolonial strategies (Makalela & da Silva, 2023; Phyak et al., 2023).

The notion of the 'modern nation-state' (Bhambra, 2007) demonstrates how postcolonial states adopt monolithic identities perpetuated by dominant languages (Makoni et al., 2023). Early models like Fishman's (1973) framework for language modernisation emphasised standardisation and corpus planning to criticise the imposition of monolithic structures over diverse linguistic landscapes. These perspectives emphasise the need for a decolonial language policy that recognises indigenous sociocultural contexts, supports multilingualism and dismantles the epistemic violence inherent in colonial frameworks.

1.1.4 A Cultural Framework

Language has a dual character; it functions both as an instrument of communication and as a repository of cultural meaning (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986). The loss of a language often brings with it the irrevocable loss of the unique cultural knowledge, practices and worldview embedded in that language. Culture is inherently dynamic and can function as an instrument of power (Hoijer, 1953), with language as a medium for expressing cultural reality (Kramsch, 1998). Dominant languages shape thought processes by creating a semantic framework that reflects cultural values through linguistic ideology. Hejazi and Fatemi (2015) have argued that cultural relativism underpins linguistic imperialism and supports the otherwise weak Sapir–Whorf hypothesis (Hoijer, 1954) that language influences cognition and behaviour through culturally derived semantic associations. Consequently, even in countries even without a British colonial history (e.g., Japan, South Korea, Finland), English is favoured while Indigenous languages are marginalised, highlighting the pervasive influence of dominant linguistic ideologies (Phillipson, 2009b). Lippi-Green's (2012) concept of 'linguistic subordination' here illustrates how

dominant groups enforce their ideologies of standard language to stigmatise non-standard and Indigenous languages.

Phillipson (2006, pp. 28–29) and Pennycook (2016) have argued that ELI is integrated with culture and facilitates globalisation in a neo-imperial world through ELT. Multiple studies (Phillipson, 1992, 2006; Isik, 2008; Kerfoot, 2017; Said, 1994) have discussed five interrelated dimensions to ELT's domination related to culture and extending to politics and economics. First, the monological market of ELT materials (Isik, 2008) promotes a unidirectional dissemination of pedagogical content that favours English-speaking contexts. Second, the centre-versus-periphery paradigm (Isik, 2008; Said, 1994) reinforces cultural hierarchies. Third, English serves as a conduit for socioeconomic mobility (Kerfoot, 2017), facilitating global access. Fourth, its role in political imposition (Phillipson, 1992) shapes international negotiations and policy discourses. Finally, corporate globalisation (Phillipson, 2006) positions English as the lingua franca of transnational commerce. Collectively, these dimensions demonstrate how English language dominance both embodies and perpetuates inequalities in postcolonial society.

Linguistic imperialism may also impact colonised cultures. Language and culture are intimately interconnected, not to mention mutually dependent (Brogger, 1992; Hejazi & Fatemi, 2015; Risager, 2007; Shahsavandi et al., 2010). Hejazi and Fatemi (2015) have positioned cultural boundaries as a factor affecting linguistic exchange. Woolf (1925) argued, for example, that while linguistic creativity waned in England, Americans continued to coin new words, echoing a trans-Atlantic shift in Anglophone cultural power. Furthermore, studies have indicated that the cultural exchanges facilitated by ELI include socio-psychological dimensions. For example, Valdes (1986) has argued that ELI promotes both psychological and cultural exchange by encouraging individuals to transcend their native languages to communicate. Bel'Kiry (2021) proposed Tunisia as an example of multilingualism resulting from ideological colonisation as the influence of both French and English continues to influence society (p. 36).

1.1.4.1 Ideological Dominance

Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) has argued that 'language was the means of the spiritual subjugation' during colonisation (p. 9), demonstrating that the decolonisation of the mind is much more arduous than political decolonisation. Here, language ideologies (LI) are the beliefs and attitudes toward a language (or its varieties) embedded in social structures (Kroskrity, 2022). For example, LI in postcolonial countries is shaped by history, culture and everyday social forces.

English has long been characterised as the language of modernity and global power. For example, Arnold (1869) claimed that the modern spirit demands that all nations adopt English. Nevertheless, local languages have a high cultural value and represent national identity. LIs are further influenced by government policies, economic needs and the daily practices of communities. Local beliefs intermingle with global ideas, creating a changing and sometimes contradictory order of language value.

As can be seen in the context of traditional English for academic purposes (EAP), society is often regarded as static, deterministic and materialistic (Pennycook, 2001). According to Giroux (1988), students often uncritically adopt the beliefs and rules that are positioned as essential for the functioning of society. This has supported the international spread of English (Benesch, 2001; Pennycook, 1999). Mendieta et al. (2006) argued that the imperial centre makes monolingual, monocultural and geopolitical attempts to regulate the advancement of research in peripheral countries by establishing English as the language for exchanging ideologies, knowledge and norms transfer (p. 24). Van Zyl (1987) termed this 'Converting to Natives'. English teachers are employed to export exclusively Anglocentric knowledge from the centre to peripheral students through their lectures and materials along with the support of modern technology (pp. 52–53). Phillipson (1992) thus described the global expansion of English as ideological manipulation, rather than as an imperial invasion of the past. For instance, SE is positioned as the intelligent, correct and prestigious form of English (cf. Garrett, 2010; Lippi-Green, 2012). It has thus been called the 'property of the privileged' (Honey, 1997, p. 53). As language ideology is related to power, a negative attitude toward any language(s) can create inequalities in access to education, employment and social interaction.

SE in ELT has been criticised as part of a neoliberal agenda that places Western norms and market-driven goals over linguistic diversity (Phillipson, 1992; Tsui & Tollefson, 2007). The shift to English frequently contributes to the decline of indigenous languages and intensifies processes of cultural marginalisation and language endangerment (Li et al., 2024; Majidi, 2013). For example, during the launch of Microsoft's *Encarta World English Dictionary*, Bill Gates famously proclaimed, 'One world, one dictionary' (Arnold, 2006; Jaimungal, 2013) a statement that has since been critiqued as emblematic of linguistic and cultural imperialism (Canagarajah, 1999b). Multinational corporations like Microsoft and Google institutionalise this dominance by standardising English in their technologies. Meanwhile, proficiency tests like TOEFL and IELTS link academic and professional success to SE proficiency, putting non-

English speakers at a disadvantage. These practices create a self-perpetuating cycle that undermines cultural autonomy and privileges Western norms. Within the imperial core, African American Vernacular English (AAVE), speakers face negative stereotypes from teachers and others, often being regarded as 'incorrect' or 'uneducated' (Yan & Ruan, 2024). This limits their opportunities and reinforces socioeconomic hierarchies. Such prejudices are driven by the ideological linguistic bias towards SE (Metz, 2018), which is consistent with the mechanisms of ELI.

Privileging SE is consistent with the dual mechanisms of structural and cultural domination (Phillipson, 1992). Pervaiz et al. (2019) have noted that English-language education systems in Asia have replaced Indigenous practices, demonstrating how ELI serves as an instrument of cultural homogenisation. Scholars (e.g., Aimie, 2024; Bouymaj & Pereira, 2022; Gross-Gołacka & Martyniuk, 2024; Zeng et al., 2023) have contended that globalisation exacerbates cultural homogenisation and poses a significant threat to both linguistic and cultural diversity. The spread of SE in (post)colonial countries is thus not neutral, but rather an imposition of power that inherently invites resistance (cf. Foucault, 1978). According to Wallerstein (2005),

> the fundamental argument is that the assertion of universal truths, which include universal norms, is a 'meta-narrative' or 'master narrative' (a global narrative) that represents an ideology of powerful groups within the world-system and that, therefore, has no epistemological validity (p. 124).

Multiple (local) varieties of English thus challenge SE and require a critical reassessment of linguistic norms (Godley & Loretto, 2013; Metz, 2018). Linguicism (Phillipson, 1992) meanwhile maintains power differentials by privileging English in educational and professional domains. Perley (2021) defined linguicism as a process that suppresses other languages and their speakers. Thus, ELI acts as a tool for privileged groups to maintain power structures by promoting a prestigious language (Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2023). Pervaiz et al. (2019) argued that linguicism is established in peripheral postcolonial contexts in two stages: first, English is ascribed high prestige and becomes a functional domain. Second, individuals who do not master it experience psychological harm and social marginalisation. This pattern, evident in countries like Bangladesh, culminates in linguistic hegemony, wherein speakers of the prestigious variety attain superior status (Pervaiz et al., 2019, p. 4).

Moreover, multiple studies (Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2023; Davies, 1996) argued that the dominance of English is not only due to imperialist forces, but also individual choices.

Gramsci (1971 [1929–1935]) conceptualised the 'Guerra di posizione' (war of position) to emphasise the subtle, prolonged battle for ideological supremacy through civil institutions rather than overt coercion. Moreover, Widdowson (1998) argued that the way local culture adapts and (re)models English challenges the notion of ELI as a unilateral process. As discussed previously, Pennycook (1998) argued that ELI overlooks the complexity of globalisation, in which English is localised and indigenised in different contexts in dynamic, multi-layered processes. Thus, ELI can be viewed through the linguistic dimension of this concept, wherein English establishes cultural and symbolic hegemony, marginalises local languages and traditions and reinforces dependency through media, religion and internalised authority, education and ideological apparatuses (Ives, 2006; Riley, 2010).

1.1.4.2 Cultural Dependencies

Culture acts as a primary marker of a nation's distinct identity. Galtung's (1971) model, extended by Phillipson (1992), illustrates how dominant nations monopolise resources and narratives to culturally marginalise peripheral nations. Moreover, Wallerstein's (1974) discussion of cultural hegemony reflected how the enforcement of EMI reinforces the normative values of the core nations. This dominance is also referred to as 'structural violence' (Galtung, 1971). Holliday (2006) claimed that in this context, British and American pedagogies threaten the identity and cultural integration of non-native English speakers. This is supported by Hejazi and Fatemi's (2015) study in Iran, which found that English as a foreign language (EFL) learners were more distanced from their own culture than non-EFL learners. This was attributed to the imposition of Western morals and conventions through EMI (Hejazi & Fatemi, 2015, p. 120; Rahimi & Sahragard, 2007). Thus, postcolonial countries often have a strong attachment to Anglophone cultures and consider them symbols of nobility while seeing their own cultures as inferior. Mannoni (1956, p. 218) suggested the term 'Caliban complex', based on the character from *The Tempest*, to describe the inferiority complex and dependency of postcolonial peoples. Isik (2008) added that the cultural pursuit of economic prosperity, social status and political influence among the middle and upper classes in postcolonial countries derives from the adoption of dominant languages among NNSs (Figure 1.4).
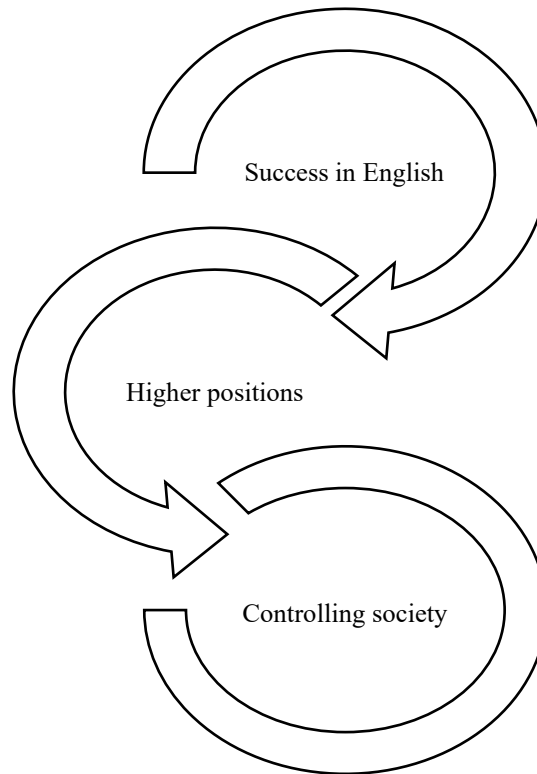
Figure 1.4: Motivation of Middle and Upper Classes to Learn English

Note: Adapted From (Isik, 2008).

The promotion of English has also led to cultural hegemony and the spread of Western values (Hemais et al., 2022). Mendieta et al. (2006, p. 24) argued that this constitutes epistemic symbolic violence, as it is driven by structural and ideological forces. Ravishankar (2020) also characterised linguistic imperialism as a 'colonial violence'. Sartre's (1964) concept of 'linguistic habits' meanwhile highlights the intrinsic link between language, thought and cultural worldview, a perspective Flores-Rodrigues (2012) and Ravishankar (2020, pp. 2–4) affirmed in discussions of marginalised non-European cultural expressions. Cooke (1988), Phillipson (1992) and Corcoran (2009, p. 5) compared the spread of English to a 'Trojan horse of imperialism' that privileges dominant groups while threatening Indigenous languages and cultures.

The widespread use of English epitomises cultural prestige and encourages NNSs to embrace it for modernity and progress. This subtle influence often leads to political change and social upheaval that favours the interests of Anglophone countries (Nye & Goldsmith, 2011). Nye (1990) called this influence soft power and defined it as the ability to impact others through attraction and persuasion rather than coercion. Studies (e.g. Hunt & Agnoli, 1991; Luna & Peracchio 2001; Schmitt et al., 1994; Schmitt & Zhang, 1998; Tavassoli & Han, 2001; Zhang

& Schmitt, 1998) have found that an English-rooted mindset significantly influences consumer perceptions, evaluations and decision-making processes in postcolonial contexts.

Lukes' (2005) third dimension of power—ideological control—illustrates how dominant groups shape individual preferences and perceptions to maintain existing power structures. This is further perpetuated by Anglophone media and entertainment, which promote global consumerism and influence consumption patterns worldwide (Byrnes, 2007; Buriro, 2023; Lysonski & Srinivas, 2015). For example, the dominance of English in education and business in the Global South encourages the adoption of Western consumerist values through global market demands and consumerist ideologies (Cleveland et al., 2022; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 2010).

This tension represents a longstanding concern in South Asian education about socio-economic systems that prioritise English (Ranjan et al., 2024). Viswanathan (1989) criticised how English education in colonial India consolidated social stratification and cultural dominance and acts as a conduit for Western ideologies (Zeng & Yang, 2024). English education, initially introduced to South Asia as a means of creating a loyal elite, marginalised Indigenous knowledge and fostered a linguistic hierarchy that persists to this day. This aligns with the broader critique of education systems as mechanisms for perpetuating power dynamics rather than neutral platforms for disseminating knowledge (Malhotra, 2018). Its dominance reinforces cultural dependence and systematically suppresses minority languages through 'linguistic terrorism' (Anzaldúa, 1987), leading to psychological damage and cultural alienation.

1.1.4.3 Language and Identity

Language can facilitate discrimination through the categorisation of individuals based on their linguistic identity (cf. Said, 1994). ELI, as a deliberate, power-laden construct, also defines social identities and reinforces systemic inequalities along these lines. According to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), language serves as a critical marker for group belonging and the postcolonial adoption of English delineates an in-group that marginalises non-English speakers. Access to English is often concentrated among the elite, thereby marginalizing non-dominant language speakers and limiting their social mobility (cf. Hogg & Abrams, 1988). This dynamic aligns with the 'grammar of social power' of social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999), in which English language becomes a tool of dominant groups to maintain their superiority and legitimise inequality in education, employment and social recognition.

Similarly, self-categorisation theory (Turner et al., 1987) proposes that internalising English as the norm directly influences individual self-conception, aligning personal identity with the perceived prestige and global utility of English. Building on this, social identity complexity theory (Roccas & Brewer, 2002) highlights the cognitive tensions experienced by individuals who navigate multiple cultural identities, suggesting that English's pervasive influence can force an identity reconfiguration. In multilingual and postcolonial societies, language serves as a key marker of 'in-groups' and 'out-groups', with dominant languages symbolising status, privilege and power. Identity is not fixed; rather, people negotiate it dynamically (Bailey, 2002, p. 4). Meanwhile, identity fusion theory (Swann & Buhrmester, 2015) suggests that a profound intertwining of personal and group identities can lead to extreme loyalty toward English-speaking communities, which in turn solidifies the status quo despite its adverse effects on linguistic diversity. ELI is thus both a tool and a consequence of social identity formation processes, sustaining a global hierarchy that privileges English at the expense of linguistic plurality.

1.1.4.4 English as 'Lingua Fetish'

In postcolonial societies, English advances a phenomenon that I have tentatively termed the English lingua-fetish, which is an intense preoccupation with cultural symbols associated with English, including dress, food, medicine and lifestyle. It incorporates Freud's (1905) concept of sexual fetishism and Marx's (1915, 1970) theory of commodity fetishism, in which symbolic objects are given disproportionate social value. In Bangladesh, for example, this phenomenon is evident in the declining use of traditional dress, which is excluded from institutional and formal occasions like graduations. Azad (2019) found that Western clothing is preferred in postcolonial contexts because it is associated with self-confidence and a modern identity. Similar patterns can be observed in consumption choices, naming practices and preferences for goods labelled in English (Banu & Sussex, 2001b) while the native language is often associated with social inferiority (Azad, 2019; Johnson, 2009). Alfarhan (2016) has observed that admiration for English culture arises from its perceived ability to confer a higher status. Therefore, the English lingua-fetish describes how language functions as an instrument of symbolic power, shaping identity, cultural orientation and institutional norms in postcolonial countries. Phillipson (1992) has also referred to such attitudes as 'mental slavery'.

1.1.5 The Neostructural Framework

Cultural elements facilitate the neocolonial processes of economic and political control while simultaneously giving rise to cultural dominance through these same processes. The neo-structural framework integrates dimensions such as digital post-colonialism (including digital neo-colonialism and techno-linguistic imperialism), technological dependency, platform imperialism and cognitive imperialism to explain the embedded power dynamics in global communication. A notable manifestation of this framework is also the hegemonic institutionalisation of English, as can be seen in regional organisations (e.g. ASEAN) in which English functions as a unifying lingua franca that displaces local languages and reinforces asymmetrical power relations to normalise neo-imperial practices (Zeng et al., 2023).

1.1.5.1 Digital Postcolonialism

Digital postcolonialism is a postcolonial framework developed within research into science and technology, particularly surrounding information and communication technologies (ICT). Studies on digital postcolonialism draw from work on migration, postmodernism and posthumanism and engage with diverse disciplines like philosophy, education, economy and the arts (Jandrić & Kuzmanić, 2015). They also include discussions of the 'digital divide' (Van Dijk & Hacker, 2003), 'digital occupation' (Tawil-Souri, 2012), 'techno-colonialism' (Madianou, 2019). Yılmaz (2025) argued that digital postcolonialism reproduces colonial power structures in the digital economy by subjecting developing regions to exploitative labour practices and economic dependency through the monopolised control of digital infrastructure and platforms by the Global North.

Digital postcolonialism also replicates colonial power relations between the Global North and South to reinforce the dominance of English as a digital lingua franca through technological domains. Technologies often reflect technolinguistic biases and Anglocentric norms that favour dominant languages. This leads to semantic distortions and reduces linguistic diversity (Helm et al., 2023, pp. 8–10). Such inequalities marginalise the worldviews and knowledge systems embedded in local languages. However, this reflects a form of technological determinism, in which technology is assumed to shape social and cultural structures unidirectionally without considering reciprocal influence (cf. Braybrooke & Jordan, 2017; Spivak, 1988).

Studies (e.g., Coleman, 2019; Kwet, 2019) have demonstrated that the practices of digital postcolonialism, characterised by the extraction and control of user data by Western corporations, mirror traditional colonial exploitation and sustain structural inequalities (Marker et al., 2019). Additionally, the notion of data colonialism (Couldry & Mejias, 2019) reflects how digital platforms create new forms of colonialism through continuous personal data extraction and exploitation. In recent decades, ELI has been significantly reinforced by contemporary practises of data colonialism (Mejias & Couldry, 2024; Mumford, 2022; Yan & Xu, 2024) and digital postcolonialism (Kwet, 2021; Marker et al., 2019) operated by Western corporations (e.g. Apple, Google, Amazon) through their communication networks (Mejias & Couldry, 2024). English is the dominant language of more than 60% of Web data as of 2021[5] and is the primary language for development and training (Schneider, 2022). This further reflects the power of the countries that promote English through colonialism and global dominance using data and other digital resources (Schneider, 2022). The normalisation of data exploitation thus exerts external control over digital infrastructures and information flows, often sidelining Indigenous data practices and sovereignty, which is termed as 'Platform imperialism' (Jin, 2013). A few powerful English countries thus control most digital platforms through language. Owning and spreading digital platforms then becomes a way to further dominate language itself.

1.1.5.2 Technological Dependencies

The internet increases the influence and strength of English through email and social media, online advertising, news reporting and political discourse (cf. Bel'Kiry, 2021; Crystal, 2006; Halliday, 2006; Hilbert, 2011; McLuhan, 1962; Özad et al., 2021). English determines global technological knowledge flows and reinforces inequalities in access to information and power (Appadurai, 1996; Castells, 2004) in 'technofeudal societies' (Varoufakis, 2021). As Kumar (2021, p. 214) exemplified in Indian university websites, English is heavily used to communicate academic information, reinforcing the link between language, power and knowledge access.

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[5] See https://hootsuite.widen.net/s/zcdrtxwczn/digital2021_globalreport_en

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┌─────────────────────┐
│  Widespread internet │
│         use          │
└─────────────────────┘
           ⬇
┌─────────────────────┐
│  Growth of the 'global│
│       village'       │
└─────────────────────┘
           ⬇
┌─────────────────────┐
│   English primacy    │
│        online        │
└─────────────────────┘
           ⬇
┌─────────────────────┐
│     Virtual ELI      │
└─────────────────────┘
```
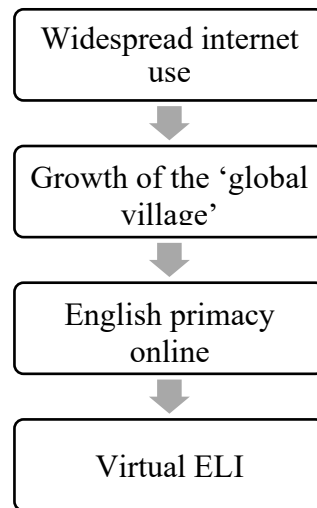
Figure 1.5: The Internet and Global English Spread

Note. Adapted from Crystal (2006), Hilbert (2011), McLuhan (1962), and Özad, Nazan Doğruer, Eyyam, and Meneviş (2021).

The ubiquitous role of English in technology has fostered a 'network society' that privileges the core countries, creating a dynamic of dependency in which peripheral regions are placed in a condition reminiscent of feudalism (cf. Adserà & Pytlikova, 2012; Castells & Cardoso, 2005; Coulmas, 1997; Frank, 1967, 1978, 2004; Mahutga, 2006; Phillipson, 1992; Varoufakis, 2021, 2023; Wade, 2002). However, Castells and Laserna (1989) suggest this is an entirely 'new dependency' that is a reconfiguration of global power, in which access to technology and the linguistic competence required to use it become interdependent.

1.1.5.3 Cognitive Imperialism

Cognitive imperialism describes the effects caused on individuals and peoples who are forced to live or be educated under Eurocentric colonialism and imperialism (cf. Fanon 1965; Memmi 1967, 2006). It is a form of cognitive manipulation used in social and education systems to devalue other knowledge systems and values, also known as a 'banking model' (Freire 2000), 'cultural imperialism' (Carnoy 1974), 'mental colonisation' or 'colonization of the mind' (Chinweizu 1987; Hotep 2003), 'culturalism', 'cultural racism', 'epistemic violence', 'cultural genocide' or 'cognitive assimilation'. Here, the focus of change is on consciousness and knowledge systems, rather than culture (Battiste, 2016). Battiste (2005) argued that 'cognitive imperialism denies people their language and cultural integrity by maintaining the legitimacy of only one language, one culture, and one frame of reference' (p. 9).

The growth of artificial intelligence (AI) creates a new kind of cognitive dominance. Santos (2024) has advocated for the use of epistemologies from the Global South to explore alternative modes of knowledge and challenge the underlying assumptions of contemporary AI systems. Today's AI development is based on a rigorous scientific approach that often leads to centralised, culturally limited results. As a result, complex social and cultural issues are treated as simple technical problems and other valuable knowledge systems and perspectives are sidelined. This also results in stark divisions between Western Europe and other global regions, exemplified by dichotomies like 'East–West, primitive–civilized, magic/mythic–scientific, irrational–rational, traditional–modern' and 'Europe and not Europe' (Quijano, 2000, p. 542).

1.1.6 The Mechanisms of Linguistic Neo-Imperialism

The evolution from linguistic imperialism to neo-imperialism demonstrates how English has evolved from an instrument of direct colonial control to a more covert mechanism of influence that perpetuates dominance across various domains. The concept of linguistic neo-imperialism builds on by Phillipson's (1992) foundational theories of linguistic imperialism. It also claims that the dominance of English reflects the structural and ideological legacy of colonial power now embedded in contemporary global economic and cultural systems (Lai, 2021).

Linguistic neo-imperialism goes beyond traditional colonial imposition, as language is maintained not only by former colonial powers but also by local elites and institutions (Zeng et al., 2023). In this context, English becomes a self-perpetuating hegemonic force maintained in postcolonial societies and noncolonial regions as part of socioeconomic progress. Phillipson (2009a) argued that English here acts as a 'capitalist non-imperial language' for the interests of corporate and central powers while reinforcing international empires on peripheral countries. Phillipson (2009a) conceptualised 'linguistic capital accumulation' as a four-stage process to extend English usage in various domains within peripheral countries, involving political argumentation for language decision making, language policy formulation, covert and overt language acquisition planning and language technology planning. For example, when parents use English at home, it is considered an effective way to build linguistic capital. In contrast, adopting English in business, family and education often leads to a gradual decline in native languages, a phenomenon known as linguistic capital dispossession. This transition from colonial linguistic control to modern linguistic dominance is also reflected in the prominent role of English in the production, processing and projection sectors (pp. 132–137). English can thus

serve both as a site of dispossession and as a source of capital accumulation. These interconnections perpetuate asymmetrical power relations, emphasising the critical role of language in shaping imperialistic practices.

Within neo-imperialism, English proficiency is crucial for success in both academic and professional domains. Globalisation further exacerbates this problem by positioning English as essential for socio-economic progress and internationalisation (O'Neill & Chapman, 2015; Todorova & Todorova, 2018; Zeng et al., 2023). Moreover, the globalisation of English, in tandem with economic globalisation, positions the language as a 'gatekeeper' for higher socioeconomic status (Lai, 2021; Spolsky, 2004). ELI is often criticised as an extension of neo-imperialism. In many postcolonial contexts, national educational policies prioritise English (Lai, 2021). According to Pervaiz et al. (2019), the adoption of Western educational norms through EMI tends to displace indigenous pedagogical practices, especially in Asian education. Consequently, ELI perpetuates historical imperialist patterns by privileging Western interests (Phillipson, 1992; Zeng et al., 2023). However, while these trends are consistent with the market-orientated integration of neoliberal globalisation (Calhoun, 1992), de Swaan (1993) argues that language shifts also reflect historical contexts, practical necessities and individual choices.

A prominent expression of neo-colonialism is in the process of international integration encompassing aspects like economics, trade, goods, culture and ideas. Globalisation has been unfolding for centuries (cf. Acocella, 2005; Chaichian, 2014; Kvamme, 2017; Osterhammel & Petersson, 2005; Panitch & Gindin, 2012). Kumaravadivelu (2003) asserts that the pedagogical practice of the 'marginality construct' sidelines everything related to colonised communities. Under neo-colonialism, people who are identified as NSs are often seen as superior to NNSs, reflecting attitudes from the colonial era.
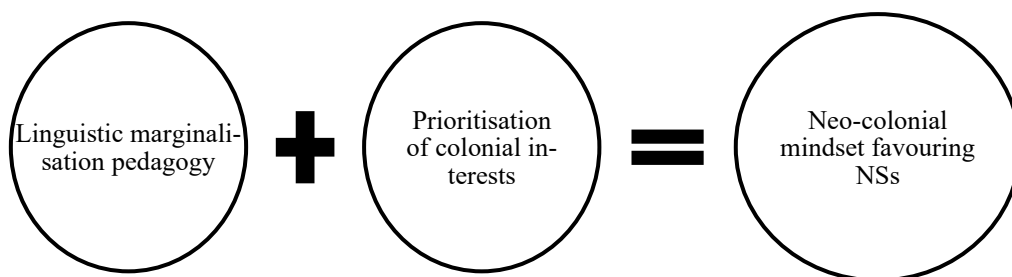
Figure 1.6: Socio-Psychological Mechanisms of Marginalisation through English Language Teaching

Note: Based on Kumaravadivelu (2003) and Jindarpitak and Teo (2016).

Similarly, Pervaiz et al. (2019) coined the term 'communicative imperialism' as a side production of linguistic neo-imperialism. The communication style of peripheral countries are promoted and determined by 'dominant consumerist American culture', creating an ideological shift in communication skills (Pervaiz et al., 2019, p. 3). Kachru (2017, p. 101) called it a 'linguistic fish', meaning that smaller languages are devoured by larger, more powerful languages. This phenomenon is also called 'language death' or 'linguicide', while English becomes a 'language of all seasons' (Kachru, 2017, p. 105) and enjoys 'language diffusion' (Brosnahan, 1963; Flaitz, 1988).

1.1.6.1 Linguistic Power and Agency

Phillipson's (1992) theory of ELI has been criticised for overlooking the impact of individual language choices (Griffiths, 2013). Other scholars have argued that the use of English often results from deliberate decisions by individuals, institutions and governments (e.g., Brock-Utne, 2007; Pennycook, 2001). Regardless, language actively shapes society and identity, thus strengthening power relations with a complex cycle, which can cause linguistic oppression on a micro- and macro-level (May 1985; Pennycook, 2001, p. 39). Moreover, the domination of a language can cause the unequal distribution of knowledge and resources to others (Giroux, 1988). In the Global South, English is used strategically as a site of power, and individuals deal with this by being active participants in its negotiation (cf. Fairclough, 1989; Foucault, 1980). Moreover, compulsory English education in postcolonial countries is a driving force of LI by state agencies and it privileges English covertly or overtly (cf. Gupta, 2024; McKinney, 2016). Phillipson (2008) argues that Global English can be understood as a '*product*' sold to geographically and culturally diverse periphery countries, a '*process*' that expands the ideology and politics of the centre through its agents (e.g., ELT professionals, state and government agencies) and a '*project*' of creating a global default language for communication (Phillipson, 2008b, p. 3, emphases in original).

Family Language Policy (FLP) describes how families manage language use, including the role of parents in shaping their children's language acquisition (Spolsky, 2012, p. 7). Stavans and Hoffman (2015, p. 215) have argued that FLP can determine the retention of a native or heritage tongue while retaining additional languages. Sevinç and Mirvahedi (2022) emphasise that a supportive family atmosphere can promote multilingualism by supporting both the acquisition of English and the preservation of heritage language. The dominance of English in the Global South influences parents to make autonomous, self-confident decisions about their

children's language use (cf. Dumka et al., 1996; Kuczynski, 2003). However, parents may actively encourage their children to take English lessons at the expense of their home languages (Kalayci & Ergül, 2020). Nevertheless, Smagulova (2017) has noted that parental ideologies are fluid and context dependent when negotiating with a new language.

Furthermore, children also have the power (overt or covert) to make choices and take actions that shape their own lives. In other words, children are active participants in their social and family environments rather than simply following instructions (cf. Kuczynski, 2003; Sorbring & Kuczynski, 2019). Furthermore, Said and Hua (2017) have suggested that children can influence their parents' decisions through cooperative discussions instead of a simple one-way process where parents decide for them. This collaborative decision-making may also support specific language practices within a home. For example, in families where multiple languages are spoken, these interactions can help to strengthen the use of English (cf. Kusters et al., 2021).

Butler (2014) and Cimarosti (2014) have therefore suggested the conceptual frameworks of paternal and child agency in English spread in peripheral countries. Here, the term 'paternal agency' is defined as parents' institutional support and promotion of English (cf. Schneider, 2011; Cimarosti, 2014, p. 213). In contrast, 'child agency' refers to the way younger generations adopt and localise English to meet their communicative needs (Figure 1.7). The interaction between these processes fosters both linguistic hybridity and creates intergenerational communication gaps, supporting the evolving, complex global position of English.
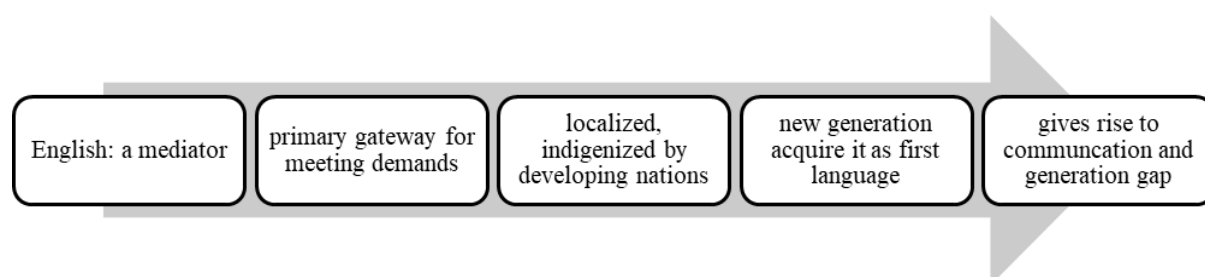
Figure 1.7: Role of Family Language Policy in English Adoption
Note. Based on Schneider (2011, 2) and Cimarosti (2014, 213).

Beyond the concept of agency, however, Curdt-Christiansen and Sun (2022) have argued that school agencies often exert pressure on families to prioritise English. The pressure on families then has a major influence on FLP. Parajuli (2022) therefore criticises ELT for perpetuating inequalities, especially in resource-poor countries. Wang (2022) highlights that parental insecurity around language leads to reliance on external resources like tutors and in-

creases emotional and financial burdens. As a result, families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds in the Global South often face significant barriers in access to quality English education (Chowdhury, 2024; Sanjurjo, Blanco & Fernández-Costales, 2018). Despite these challenges, Ali et al. (2021) observe that initiative-taking parental efforts like hiring tutors or enrolling children in language programmes, can improve English proficiency and open pathways to socioeconomic mobility. Nevertheless, Hiza and Paschal (2023) claim that the adoption of English as the primary language of instruction in schools often leads to the erosion of indigenous languages and hinders effective output in education. The balance between English in NEP is therefore crucial for the preservation of multilingualism and cultural heritage.

1.1.6.2 Migration and (Trans)Nationalism

Migration from the Global South to the Global North results from a combination of individual choices and the availability of opportunities. The use of a non-native language in transnational mobility contexts has been shown to diminish the effective use of human capital (Gerhards & Hans, 2013; Liu et al., 2020; Presbitero et al., 2023). Similarly, Horvath (1996) explains that peripheral regions often have an excess supply of labour, partly because of policies set by local elites connected to core nations. The idea of 'dependent capitalism' (Magnin & Nenovsky, 2022) describes how peripheral economies are controlled by the interests of dominant core countries. Examples of this include resource extraction in sub-Saharan Africa and trade terms that favour South Asia. These factors weaken local economies and shape migration decisions.

In migration studies, the dependency frameworks overlap with Appadurai's (1996) concept of 'ethnoscapes', or complex global networks created by migration flows between peripheral and central regions. For instance, English plays a dual role as an 'incentive for migration' and as an 'instrument of linguistic imperialism'. Migrants with English proficiency are attracted to Anglophone countries (Toomet, 2011). Shifts in language usage due to socioeconomic pressures and policies tends to impact younger people more, as they see English as having certain advantages (Batibo, 2005). The global spread of English through migration is thus an example of linguistic neo-imperialism. Dependency theorists like Frank (1978a, b, 2004) have argued that this linguistic dependency reflects an overall power imbalance, with the Global South often sacrificing local languages and cultural identities to accommodate English (Adserà & Pytlikova, 2015).

The movement of skilled people from the Global South to Anglophone countries demonstrates the problems of brain drain. Western countries have implemented measures to

attract skilled migrants due to their own declining birth rates and labour shortages. Students and academics from many countries of South Asia are seeking better prospects abroad, especially in Anglophone countries (Siddiquie & Jasim 2022). Thus, EMI in the Global South functions as a key mechanism of corporate imperialist expansion and brain drain. It allows the dissemination of British and American cultural narratives, neglecting the history, heritage and cultural traditions of local contexts and creating a native culture distanced younger generation.

Between 1990 and 2000, the migration of skilled labour to OECD countries increased by 70% alone, compared to an increase of 28% for unskilled labour (Docquier & Rapoport, 2004). For example, migration from Bangladesh began in the 1960s with skilled workers seeking training and work in Canada. Today, scholarships and other incentives attract students to countries where English language skills are required, such as the United States (US), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK) and Australia. For example, the number of student visas for Bangladeshi students in the US tripled between 2009 and 2021, while the number of applications in Canada increased by 270% between 2016 and 2019 (Siddiquie & Jasim, 2022). [6]

However, English as global academic lingua franca comes at an economic cost. For example, International English Language Testing System (IELTS) exams are expensive and must be retaken at regular intervals, which is a financial burden for students from the Global South. Between 2016 and 2021, the UK earned more than $771 million from Nigerian students who took the IELTS (Alagbe, 2022). This facilitates the flow of capital from marginalised to core areas. While remittances and diaspora networks benefit countries of origin to some extent, the loss of skilled labour through brain drain also weakens key sectors. For example, 40–50% of Bangladesh University of Engineering and Technology graduates migrate annually and rarely return, further shrinking Bangladesh's local talent pool (Siddiquie & Jasim, 2022).

English skills have become a prerequisite for migration, reinforcing sociolinguistic hierarchies and undermining local languages. English is regarded as a means of achieving economic advancement, but its prioritisation perpetuates a cycle of dependency that limits local development and cultural preservation. A balance must be struck between the benefits and drawbacks of immigration, requiring that structural and linguistic inequalities be addressed to disrupt this cycle of dependency.

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[6] See also Institute of International Education. (2021). Open Doors 2021 annual data release. https://opendoorsdata.org/open-doors-2021-annual-data-release/

1.1.7 Resistance to English Language Imperialism

In postcolonial contexts, language can serve as a strategic medium for resistance, identity and change. The loss of local languages in exchange for economic gain reinforces cultural domination and undermines linguistic identity, so resistance to linguistic imperialism is essential for the preservation of national and cultural integrity. Linguistic resistance (LR) refers to the ways individuals and communities use language as a form of opposition against dominant narratives, social constructs or oppressive systems. This concept encompasses a wide range of contexts, from subtle everyday interactions to large-scale cultural movements. Its mechanisms can be understood through various linguistic practices like language choice, discourse strategies and the promotion of alternative narratives.

LR operates in diverse contexts as a means of challenging power and asserting identity. Social networks enable resistance to cultural norms through counter-narratives (Astari et al., 2023). In Senegal, the deliberate preservation of local dialects by the Murid community represents a strategic form of LR to colonial linguistic dominance, a phenomenon epitomising a broader contestation of cultural imperialism (Moghadam & Barani, 2025; Ngom, 2002). In education, Afro-Brazilian linguistic practices can confront racism and promote resilience (Washington, 2024). Language can be used to resist inclusion and demonstrates how discourse can reinforce exclusion (Evans & Pfister, 2020). Nonstandard speech can meanwhile serve as resistance to linguistic racism in public spaces (Wang & Dovchin, 2022). Collectively, these examples demonstrate the flexible uses of LR.

1.1.7.1 Nativatising English Language Teaching

While ELT can spread ELI, it can also be used to generate counter-discourses and transform classrooms into arenas that resist dominant pedagogies and promote contextually relevant critical practices. Canagarajah (2003) argued that the adoption of English as a 'deterritorialised' (Blommaert, 2010) language enables teachers and students to develop pedagogies that subvert colonial paradigms and promote holistic education. Similarly, Pennycook (2010) suggested that critical pedagogy can incorporate external power relations into classroom dynamics and encourages teachers and learners to challenge prevailing assumptions, redress inequalities and contest the status quo. Modiano (2001b) has argued that EFL teachers worldwide need to be cautious in keeping their perceptions and speculations out of ELT and that a geographical, cultural and political form of English that is neutral and has no ownership should be promoted for wider communication to neutralise the impact of ELI.

Ritzer (1993) and Kachru (1992b) have agreed that, as a global language, English must be freed from its linguistic hegemony and capitalistic requirements of 'McDonaldisation' and 'Britishisation'. To maximise English's potential as a decentralised language for global communication, the heritage of colonisation must be disassociated from its language. Furthermore, several studies (e.g., Cook, 1999; Holliday, 2006; Jenkins, 2003; Kachru, 1992b; McKay, 2003; Modiano, 1999b; Seidlhofer, 2009; Widdowson, 1994) have noted that the cross-cultural acceptance of English as a versatile medium can displace NSs from their dominant position. Bazri et al. (2013) suggested that while foreign language learners should appreciate a target culture, this should be accompanied by the celebration of their own cultural and national identities. Language learning should support personal and professional development without neglecting one's own native culture.

Multiple studies (e.g., Alptekin, 2002; McKay, 2003; Modiano, 2001a, b) have proposed that EFL should be expanded to embrace more participants and positive attitudes. However, there is a lack of significant EFL methodologies and materials that could help regional EFL teachers increase their self-confidence and innovation and understand the requirements of EFL learners at a higher level. Isik (2008) proposed a mode of 'language-in-education planning' involving both native and non-native trainers, as well as versatile contexts, including local content and norms and the local needs of a common language. Language-in-education planning was developed to address these concerns (pp. 138–142). Other studies have suggested that materials should be selected based on their relevance to local cultural practices to challenge linguistic imperialism (Branigan, 2023; Razmjoo et al., 2025; Toledo-Sandoval, 2020). Pennycook (1994) and Canagarajah (1999b) opposed ELT being a 'business' or commodity, as well as the 'capitalist-positivist view' of the language. Furthermore, Pennycook (1994) argues against English's assumed neutrality, beneficial attitude and natural expansion. Furthermore, he underlines that ELT's capitalistic nature neglects the diversity of social, cultural and political aspects.

1.1.7.2 Language Decolonisation

LD is essential for resisting colonial power structures and their cultural and epistemic legacies. It includes eliminating colonial power and exposing its underlying structures. This process targets the institutional and cultural forces of language supremacy that maintained colonial dominance after independence (Ashcroft et al., 2013; Conde, 1998, p. 102). Agyekum (2018, p. 93) has suggested that LD involves both colonization and its reversal. Jaffe (2009, p. 534) defined

it as reversing colonial influence by transforming societies and questioning Western thought. McDonald (2003, 196–199) supported this, claiming that effective ELT must include diverse language varieties. He emphasised empowering speakers of alternative dialects through context-specific instruction, developing cognitive academic language proficiency and adopting a multi-dialectal, multiliterate approach that respects cultural realities. Huddart (2014) suggested that WE could challenge ELI. Hamid (2021, p. 15) argued that postcolonial Englishes are different from colonial English. For example, South Asian and African writers (e.g., Raja Rao, Ahmed Ali, Kamala Das, Chinua Achebe) reflect the global affiliation of English in literature. Nevertheless, others (Hamid, 2021, 15; Huddart, 2014; Mishra, 2020) have maintained that postcolonial English still benefits the elite and reinforces exclusive property relations.

Ngugi (1981, 194) has argued that the adoption of a foreign language as a national language can be detrimental to nationalism, cultural identity and freedom. He therefore suggested that Kenya should adopt Kiswahili instead of English. Ngugi (1986) and Kachru (2017) have both argued for the need to distance oneself from English to preserve native languages and cultural identity. Thus, Ngugi (1981, p. 83) made a clear distinction between English as an instrument of imperial dominance and native languages as a means of liberation.

The decolonisation of knowledge requires the recognition of the fact that Western epistemologies often support colonial ideologies and power imbalances. Postcolonial theory provides a framework for examining these issues by showing how historical and contemporary oppression is connected to knowledge production (Mains et al., 2013; Willey-Sthapit, 2023). Mains et al. (2013) found that dominant narratives, including those about migration, serve imperial interests and have called for a new understanding of identity that reflects the complex relationship between place and power. This perspective challenges the colonial gaze that distorts the realities of marginalised communities.

Although English remains essential for global communication (Hamid, 2022), its dominant form can support colonial ways of thinking. It is therefore necessary to transform English from a colonial instrument into an instrument of empowerment. Decolonisation requires a fundamental rethinking of language (e.g., Darvin & Zhang, 2023; Leonard, 2017; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). This process should create new narratives, vocabularies and grammatical structures that replace old colonial metaphors (Ndhlovu & Makalela, 2021). Eliminating the imperial remnants of English is essential for promoting meaningful economic, political and social change (Brush et al., 2022; Lønsmann & Mortensen, 2018; Pennycook & Makoni, 2019). The

decolonisation of language is crucial for the attainment of cultural, epistemic and political freedom in postcolonial societies. The transformation of English from a symbol of colonial domination into an instrument of empowerment is key to this process.

1.1.7.3 Language Movements

In multiple geopolitical contexts, language has been mobilised both as an instrument of state rule and as a medium of resistance. This subsection draws together evidence from various regions and nations to illustrate how language movement (LMs) catalyse nationalist claims and cultural differentiation. The imposition of a single linguistic identity by colonial powers, authoritarian regimes, or national governments repeatedly provokes resistance aimed at preserving cultural diversity and social autonomy.

A LM includes the interrelation of ideology, identity, culture and politics while advocating for linguistic diversity and the preservation of minority languages as a means of sustaining traditions and collective memory (Parajuli, 2021; Nwakanma, 2022; Ünal, 2021). In diverse societies, inclusive language policies and multilingual education can promote cultural recognition and social justice (Giri, 2022; Piccardo, 2013). These approaches challenge linguistic hierarchies and support marginalised voices. Language thus surpasses its utilitarian function as a medium of communication. While state policies that enforce linguistic uniformity often reflect broader strategies of cultural homogenisation and political consolidation, LMs represent critical reactions to such policies by articulating demands for the recognition and preservation of marginalised linguistic identities. The dialectic between state language policy and popular resistance is therefore a valuable tool for analysing issues of nationalism, colonial legacy and social inequality.

LMs intersect with political and socioeconomic structures, especially in post-colonial and multilingual environments. While English is associated with progress and opportunity, its dominance often displaces local languages and deepens inequality (Dassanayake, 2024; Giri, 2022; Jacob, 2019). Language preservation and revival thus functions both as a symbol of cultural identity and as a means of political resistance. Examples like the revival of Siraiki in Pakistan and the Nigerian Bring Back Our Girls campaign show the role language plays in expressing grievances, mobilising communities and resisting systemic injustice (Ahmad, 2019; Aluko, 2020).

The Indian experience with LMs illustrates the tensions involved in building a unified national identity in a multilingual society. The earliest political protest around language in South India took place in 1937, when the introduction of compulsory Hindi education in government schools under the Indian National Congress during the British Raj sparked widespread resistance (Elangovan, 2019; Schaefer, 1962). Over three years, the LM took various forms, including hunger strikes, public meetings, marches and pickets, and was severely suppressed by the state, resulting in multiple deaths and over a thousand arrests. Although the LM faded with the withdrawal of the compulsory Hindi education law in 1940, it set a precedent for future LMs (Oesterheld, 2007; Wilkinson, 2022).

This legacy became even more complicated in India's postcolonial era. In Assam, a LM erupted in 1961 in response to the provincial government's decision to designate only Ahom as the official language, a policy that was later tempered by the inclusion of Bengali (Devi, 2017; Saikia, 2011). However, the largest LM in India emerged in 1965, when the declaration of Hindi as the sole official language triggered nationwide mass protests (Brass, 2005; Laitin, 1989). On 26 January 1965, groups gathered on the streets, especially in Madras, where violent clashes occurred for almost two months. The eventual recognition of English as the functional official language in 1967 demonstrated the complex interplay between language policy and political compromise in a diverse society (Brown & Ganguly, 2003; Mitchell, 2009).

In South Africa, language emerged as a central element of resistance against the systemic racial and cultural oppression of apartheid. The Soweto Uprising of 16 June 1976 represents a pivotal moment in this context (Ndlovu, 2017). Regional authorities' imposition of compulsory education in Afrikaans—a language emblematic of white settler identity—incited a violent response from students, who preferred instruction in their language, Zulu. The uprising, driven by their passion and determination, rapidly escalated into a tragic confrontation. The state's brutal repression, marked by the indiscriminate shooting of the protesting students, resulted in more than a hundred killings of children and young people. This event is now historically commemorated as the 'Day of the Child' and it exemplifies the lethal risks associated with linguistic and cultural conflicts under repressive regimes (Hall, 1897).

The erosion of Native American languages under European and white American colonial rule has had long-lasting cultural and political repercussions. The civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s were a catalyst for reclaiming and revitalising Indigenous languages that have been systematically marginalised in favour of English. After nearly two decades of

advocacy and protest, on 30 October 1990, the US passed legislation to protect and preserve the linguistic heritage of Indigenous peoples (Fife, 2005; McCarty, 2008). This legislative milestone reflects a broader reorganisation of linguistic hierarchies, as the once unchallenged dominance of English gradually gives way to a more pluralistic linguistic landscape. In Canada, language is a pivotal issue among colonial groups as well, particularly in Quebec, where cultural identity is intricately linked to linguistic expression. Quebec's historical pursuit of linguistic and cultural autonomy (Couture Gagnon & Saint-Pierre, 2020; McRoberts, 1979), although less intense in recent years, highlights the persistent significance of language as an indicator of political and social identity in a multicultural nation.

In Europe, Latvia's experience with language policy also reflects a deep-seated legacy of imperial domination. Despite centuries of domination by the Russian Empire and then the Soviet Union, the proposal to reintroduce Russian as a second official language was decisively rejected in a 2012 national referendum (Correia, 2017). This not only reflected a resurgence of nationalist sentiment but is also a sign of a broader commitment to reclaiming and asserting indigenous linguistic identity in the post-Soviet era.

The complex interplay between French, German and Dutch speakers in Belgium provides a further example of how linguistic divisions serve as a proxy for deeper sociopolitical conflicts (Darquennes, 2015). Similar dynamics can be observed in regions like the Balkans and the autonomous regions of Spain, where language policies are intricately linked to the legacies of colonial and post-colonial power structures (cf. Njaradi, 2012; Slapšak, 2015). Language has played a significant role in mobilising nationalist sentiments throughout history. The conflicts between Mandarin and Manchurian in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century China (Lattimore, 1932) and the bilingual tensions in northern Mexico show that language disputes often serve as flashpoints for broader power and identity struggles (Garza Ayala, 2023; Nuñez-Janes, 2002). These cases demonstrate that LMs are not isolated incidents, but integral components of a broader struggle for state legitimacy, identity and pluralist recognition. Moreover, the postcolonial development of LMs underlines the dual function of language as an instrument of subjugation and a catalyst for liberation. The mobilisations around language reflect the ongoing global struggle between forces of homogenisation and the need to preserve cultural distinctiveness.

1.2 World Englishes

The language I speak,
Becomes mine, its distortions, its queernesses.
All mine, mine alone
It is half English, half Indian (Das, 1973, p. 26).

In academic literature, conceptualisations of English in global contexts are typically divided into three main approaches: Global English (GE), WE and English as a Lingua Franca (ELF). WE, a term first introduced in the 1970s, is characterised by postcolonial perspectives that emphasise the common possession of English, although NSs are considered the standard of competence (Butler, 1997; Kachru, 1985; Widdowson, 1994). During the emergence of WE, its primary objective, as evidenced by journals like *World Englishes* and organizations (i.e., the International Association for World Englishes and Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages) was to enhance ELT (Hayes & Burkette, 2017, p. 246). In contrast, GE, a term first coined in the 1990s, characterises English as a global language in international business and communication and thus rooted in ideologies of globalisation and the centrality of NSs (Crystal, 2003; Graddol, 1997; McArthur, 1987). However, critics (Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Pennycook, 2007b) have argued that the everyday use of English is difficult to determine, making the term GE purely theoretical. Meanwhile, ELF, which also emerged in the 1990s, is characterised by a liberal, fluid and NNS-centred orientation. It frames English as a contact language that facilitates communication between NNSs (Kuo, 2006; Saraceni, 2008; Seidlhofer, 2005a, b). Despite its flexibility, ELF is difficult to localise geographically due to its fluid nature.

1.2.1 A History of World Englishes

It is crucial to understand how English forms within, develops through and modifies different sociocultural contexts to enrich dialogue on language development, policy and teaching methods. Historically, the spread of English was fuelled by the British Empire's colonial endeavours in Asia, Africa and the Americas, which made it a dominant language in these areas (Schneider, 2007). Postcolonial changes and the rise of the United States as a world power consolidated English's position as a lingua franca. Socio-political elements like economic and technological advances have augmented its global spread, leading to its use and transformation in numerous non-native environments (Crystal, 2003). This phenomenon has led to the emergence of diverse linguistic varieties, collectively referred to as WE. This term enables the recognition and codification of various varieties as separate, independent entities (Buriro, 2023). WE include the

sociolinguistic dynamics of localised varieties of English that arise in diverse cultural, geopolitical and linguistic contexts (Kachru, 1992a, b; Jenkins, 2009). The WE paradigm is a context-sensitive linguistic system and frames the development of postcolonial literary traditions, particularly in Asia, as a form of cultural nationalism (Hosillos, 1982; King, 1980; Lim, 1984). WE thus challenge the conventional notion of a single SE by recognising the validity of different Englishes (Kachru, 1992a).

1.2.1.1 English Varieties

The term WE reflects its multiple functions, distribution patterns and structural complexity. Fishman's (1977a, b) concept of 'Pro-World Englishes' emphasises three main forces underlying the current global sociolinguistic order: the international spread of English, its regulation and the development of vernacular languages. Subsequent studies (e.g., Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020; Kachru, 1985; Kirkpatrick, 2020) have discussed how English has spread widely in multiple countries, particularly after decolonisation in Asia between the late 1940s and the early 1960s. In addition, several studies (e.g. Kachru, 1992b; Kirkpatrick, 2007b, c; Strevens, 1992) have categorised the Englishes of countries that were previously colonised by either the UK or the US as 'new Englishes', 'nativised Englishes', 'institutionalised Englishes' or 'indigenised Englishes'.

As a term, WE plays a crucial role in addressing issues of linguistic diversity, identity and ownership. It reflects how English, once a colonial imposition, has been adopted and adapted by local communities, resulting in unique varieties that express distinct identities (Canagarajah, 1999a). This challenges the dominance of SE and supports the recognition of localised English as a valid form of expression that allows speakers in formerly colonised areas to make the language their own. For example, BdE has some morphosyntactic similarities with other South Asian Englishes (SAEs) but also shows distinct patterns due to the influence of Bengali and local sociolinguistic dynamics (cf. Kortmann et al., 2020).

1.2.1.2 Conceptual Development

Anchimbe (2009) has connected the phenomenon of 'naming Disease' (p. 274) to WE, describing the multiplicity of terms that have been used for the concept. The historical trajectory of English from a monolithic linguistic entity to a pluricentric, context-sensitive phenomenon has been extensively theorised within WE and, more recently, GE paradigms (Rajagopalan, 2012;

Sadaghpour & D'Angelo, 2022; Sanczyk-Cruz, 2023; Saraceni, 2015). The plural term Englishes was first recorded in 1910 by Mencken, signalling an early recognition of English's internal variation. In 1965, Kachru introduced Indian English (IndE) as an autonomous variety, formally challenging the NS-centric norm and establishing a conceptual precedent for recognising nativised forms. This reconceptualisation was further advanced by Smith in 1976, who underscored the metamorphosis of English into multiple global forms and initiated discourse on English as an International Auxiliary Language (EIAL). Kachru's (1985) formulation of the Three Circle Model delineating inner, outer and expanding circles of English provided a foundational sociolinguistic taxonomy for the study of WE.

In the twenty-first century, alternative theoretical formulations have emerged: Jenkins (2000) introduced ELF, while McKay (2002) conceptualised English as an International Language (EIL). Between 2011 and 2013, Jenkins expanded the framework by coining the term GE, which was subsequently institutionalised through the establishment of the Centre for Global Language Englishes at the University of Southampton in 2013. Jenkins soon rebranded her earlier work under the GE label, a shift echoed in Galloway and Rose's publication *Introducing Global Englishes* (2015), which provided a pedagogical synthesis of the paradigm.

Since then, a growing body of scholarship has enriched the field through empirical studies and theoretical refinements. Galloway and Rose (2019) extended the GE paradigm into language pedagogy by articulating the Global Englishes Language Teaching (GELT) framework. Fang (2020) further systematised the GE model by introducing the GE paradigm, which encapsulates the contemporary reconfiguration of English as a dynamic, deterritorialised and ideologically contested global resource. A wide range of scholarly terminologies (Table 1.2) have emerged to conceptualise the global spread and variation of English.

Table 1.2: Terms Describing the Global Spread and Variations of English

Labelling English	Literature
1. International English	Trudgill& Hannah (1982); Davies (1996); Modiano (1999b)
2. English as an International Language	McKay (2002); Llurda (2004);
3. English as a World Language	Bailey & Gorlach (1982); Mair (2003); Pakir (2009);
4. English as a global language	Crystal (1997)[7]; Davidson (2007)
5.English languages	McArthur (1987)
6. English Around the World	Cheshire (1991)
7.English as a World Language	Mair (2003)

[7]Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a Global Language* (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.

8.English in Britain and overseas	Burchfield (1994)
9. Englishes	Gorlach (1991, 1995); Crystal (1999)
10.Post- imperial English	Fishman, Conrad and Rubel-Lopez (1996)
11. Global language English	Svavarsdóttir, Duszak, & Okulska (2004); Grzega (2005)
12. Globalising English	Onysko (2009)
13. Global language Englishes	Pennycook (2007b); Jenkins (2013, 2015a); Galloway & Rose (2015)
14. Lingua Franca English (LFE)	Jenkins (2006a, 2007); Seidlhofer (2001, 2005a,b); Canagarajah (2007); Dewey (2007); Saraceni (2008)
15. World English	Bailey (1985); McArthur (2001); Brutt-Griffler (2002); Rajagopalan (2004)
16. World Englishes	Jenkins (2003); Canagarajah (2006); Kachru, Y. and Nelson, C.L. (2006); Kirkpatrick (2007a)
17. English International Auxiliary Language (EIAL).	Smith (1976)

1.2.2 Theoretical Foundations for World Englishes

From a sociolinguistic perspective, the importance of WE lies in the language's global spread, where it functions independently of the norms of NSs in various domains. Kachru (1985) conceptualised WE in terms of sociolinguistic function and claimed that varieties emerge according to local needs. WE also reflects its global role in sociopolitical and linguistic contexts (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013), including interactions between NSs and NNSs, especially through ELF (Llurda, 2004; McKay, 2008). Furthermore, WE promotes linguistic equity by challenging Western dominance and affirming the legitimacy of different varieties (Ishikawa, 2016; Yan & Su, 2008). Bhatt (2008) has further argued that non-native varieties are functionally autonomous and offer critical insights into the sociocultural and communicative realities of their users. Understanding Bangladesh's role in this framework requires further examination to achieve unique insights into BdE's structure, categorisation and development (Chapter Six).

1.2.2.1 Strevens' World Map

Strevens' model (1980) was one of the first attempts to map English by dividing it into two main branches: British English (BrE) and American English (AmE). British postcolonial countries were assigned to BrE, reflecting their colonial history (Figure 1.8). The model has been valuable in showing how English spread geographically and historically, particularly through colonisation and it continues to serve as a reference point for understanding the global spread of English (Haswell & Hahn, 2015). However, several limitations limit its relevance in today's linguistic discussion. The model suggests that all other English varieties are derived from and

remain subordinate to BrE or AmE. As such, it reinforces a hierarchical view that does not do justice to the complexity of today's English usage (Haswell & Hahn, 2015; Hahn, 2019).
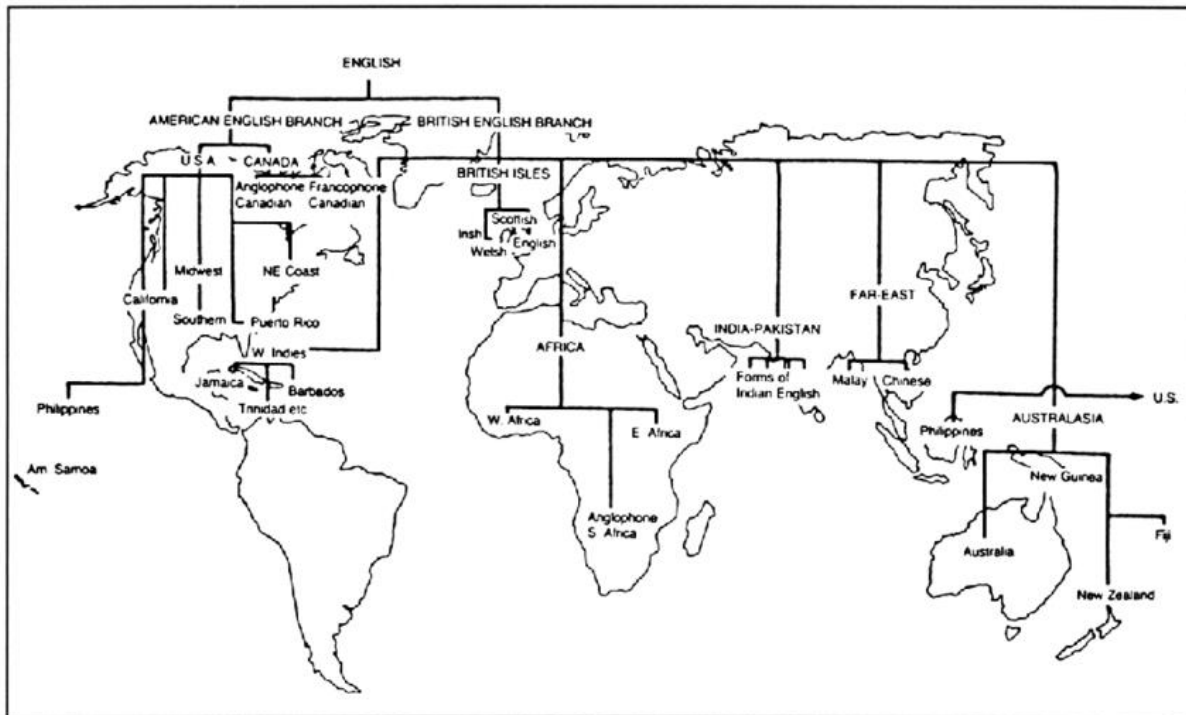
Figure 1.8: Global Spread of English

Note. Map from Strevens (1980).

The focus on BrE and AmE as core varieties ignores the development and distinctiveness of other varieties like Irish, Australian, Canadian and New Zealand English, each of which is characterised by unique historical and cultural contexts (cf. Avetisyan & Voskanyan, 2021; Coombes, 2006; Leitner, 2004; Schneider, 2018; Selvi et al., 2023; Woods, 1979). The map also reflects an Americanised bias and does not account for the presence of multiple varieties of English within regions, particularly those used for everyday communication that do not conform to formal or dominant norms (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

Although Strevens' map provides an important starting point for understanding the spread of English, its narrow framework does not adequately represent the history, diversity and sociolinguistic realities of the Englishes used around the world today. It largely overlooks the unique linguistic adaptations in the former British colonies by categorising them as mere offshoots of BrE (cf. Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 15). This simplistic classification ignores the regional influences and linguistic development, where English has developed localised phono-

logical, syntactic and lexical features (Haswell & Hahn, 2015). It therefore offers a broad historical perspective but fails to recognise the distinct linguistic identity of developed varieties like BdE.

1.2.2.2 Kachru's Three Circles

Kachru's (1985) model illustrates three core dimensions in the global use of English in the historical development of English in different countries after European decolonisation between the late 1940s and 1960s (Bolton & Bacon-Shone, 2020). It divides countries into three groups (the inner [IC], outer [OC] and expanding circles [EC]) based on how English came to each region, how it is learned and what role it plays in society (Kachru, 1992b; Seargeant, 2012b). Table 1.3 provides the three concentric circles of the model based on their historical relationships with English, the patterns of acquisition and the functional functions of the language.

Table 1.3: English Varieties and Functions Across the Three Circles

Kachru's Circles	Mediums of the spread of English	Nature of Use	Sectors of application	Example countries	Normative identity	Metamorphoses
Inner	Settler colonisation	ENL	Common language; mother tongue	Australia, Canada, NZ, UK, US	Norm-providing	Developed throughout history; Native identity involved
Outer	Exploitation; colonisation	ESL	Official and institutional purposes	India, Malaysia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Singapore, South Africa	Norm-developing	Local identity, cultural and contextual adaptation
Expanding	Globalisation	EFL	Communication with native, non-native speakers	Caribbean, Saudi Arabia, China, Korea, Nepal, Taiwan, Japan	Norm-dependent	Developed for use through curriculums and planning; Little or no sense of identity involved

Note. Adapted from Seargeant (2012b, 31-32) & Kachru (1985, 1997). ENL = English as a native language; ESL = English as a second language; EFL = English as a foreign language.

The IC includes countries in which English is the native language, the OC includes countries where English was introduced through colonisation and has become institutionalised and the EC includes countries where English is learned as a foreign language. The model also identifies key differences in pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar and communication style between NSs and NNSs (Jindapitak & Teo, 2013; Kachi, 2004; Kirkpatrick, 2007c; McKay, 2002). It emphasises that English is not a single, unified language, but a series of variants adapted to diverse cultural, social and educational contexts (Saraceni, 2015). It legitimises non-native varieties and situates their development within historical and political contexts (Bhatt, 2001; Hasim & Islam, 2020; Seargeant, 2012a, b).

However, the circles are not truly concentric and often overlap, making some country classifications unclear (McArthur, 1992; Tripathi, 1998). It can oversimplify the complex functioning of English in many regions and does not consider all countries in which English plays a key role (Crystal, 2003). Another criticism is that the model places Anglophone countries at the centre, which can reinforce the idea that these varieties are more 'correct' or 'prestigious'

(Al-Mutairi, 2020; Graddol, 1997). However, it remains a useful starting point for analysing the global diversity of English and continues to influence research on WE.

1.2.2.3 Schneider's Dynamic Model

Schneider's (2003a, 2007) Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes offers a structured explanation of how English develops in postcolonial contexts. The model draws on identity theory (Jenkins, 1996), accommodation theory (Giles, 1984) and language contact theory (Thomason, 2001) and conceptualises language development as a product of interactions between immigrant settlers and indigenous peoples (Leith & Seargeant, 2012; Schneider, 2003a, 2007, 2017; Saraceni, 2015). It identifies five stages of development: Foundation, Exonormative Stabilisation, Nativisation, Endonormative Stabilisation and Differentiation. In the Foundation stage, English is introduced through colonisation, often with limited interaction, lexical borrowings, koineisation and pidginisation. This is followed by Exonormative Stabilisation, in which English is institutionalised for administrative use, aligned with British norms and adopted by local elites. Nativisation marks a shift in socio-political orientation, in which English adapts to the local context and absorbs Indigenous cultural and linguistic elements. In Endonormative Stabilisation, post-independence societies promote their localised English varieties and codify them as markers of national identity. The final phase, Differentiation, involves an internal diversification of a local variety along regional, ethnic and social lines, signalling its full integration into national language practises.

This model's contribution lies in its emphasis on identity change and sociolinguistic adaptation. It views identity not as a binary relationship between coloniser and colonised, but as a shared construct shaped by historical and cultural convergence (Schneider, 2003a). It recognises the interrelationships between the perspectives of settlers and natives and the role of adaptation in shaping linguistic outcomes (Schneider, 2007; Schleef, 2020). The model also emphasises how colonial legacies influence linguistic structures and norms over time (Saraceni, 2015). However, it does not distinguish between different types of colonisation and assumes a uniform linguistic process in all contexts, which can overlook significant historical and geopolitical differences (Saraceni, 2015). Moreover, the focus on common processes can obscure macro-level differences in colonial impact. Nevertheless, Schneider's model remains an important framework for discussing the historical and sociolinguistic dynamics of English in postcolonial contexts.

1.2.2.4 Modiano's Centripetal Circles

Modiano (1999a, b) proposed two models that re-conceptualise EIL by prioritising communicative competence over NS status. These models involve both NSs and NNSs and provide a more comprehensive framework. The first model (1999a) categorises users into three concentric groups based on their proficiency. The core is made up of fluent users of EIL, regardless of their native language. The second band includes users who are proficient in English as a native language (ENL) or ESL, while the outer band includes learners who are still developing. Individuals who do not speak English do not fall into any band. This model emphasises functional skills in global contexts and challenges traditional hierarchies that favour NSs (Jenkins, 2009). It recognises the competence of NNSs and acknowledges that NSs do not always have effective intercultural communication skills (Hahn, 2019). However, Jenkins (2009) has raised concerns about the model's lack of clarity, particularly in defining EIL proficiency and distinguishing accent variation.

To address these limitations, Modiano (1999b) revised the model to emphasise linguistic features that are commonly understood by proficient users of all varieties of English (Figure 1.9). In this version, EIL occupies the central position, surrounded by common international features. The outer layer comprises five categories: AmE, BrE, other major varieties, local varieties and foreign varieties. According to Jenkins (2009), the features in these outer groups may be less accessible to others unfamiliar with them. This model shifts the focus from SE norms to common, understandable elements and thus supports more effective international communication. This promotes a more equitable model of English use based on mutual intelligibility rather than the authority of NSs (Hahn, 2018). Nevertheless, the categorisation of native varieties as 'major' and established non-native varieties like IndE as 'local' has been criticised for reinforcing linguistic hierarchies (Jenkins, 2009). Despite such limitations, Modiano's models offer a valuable perspective on WE by emphasising communicative functionality and inclusivity in transnational contexts.
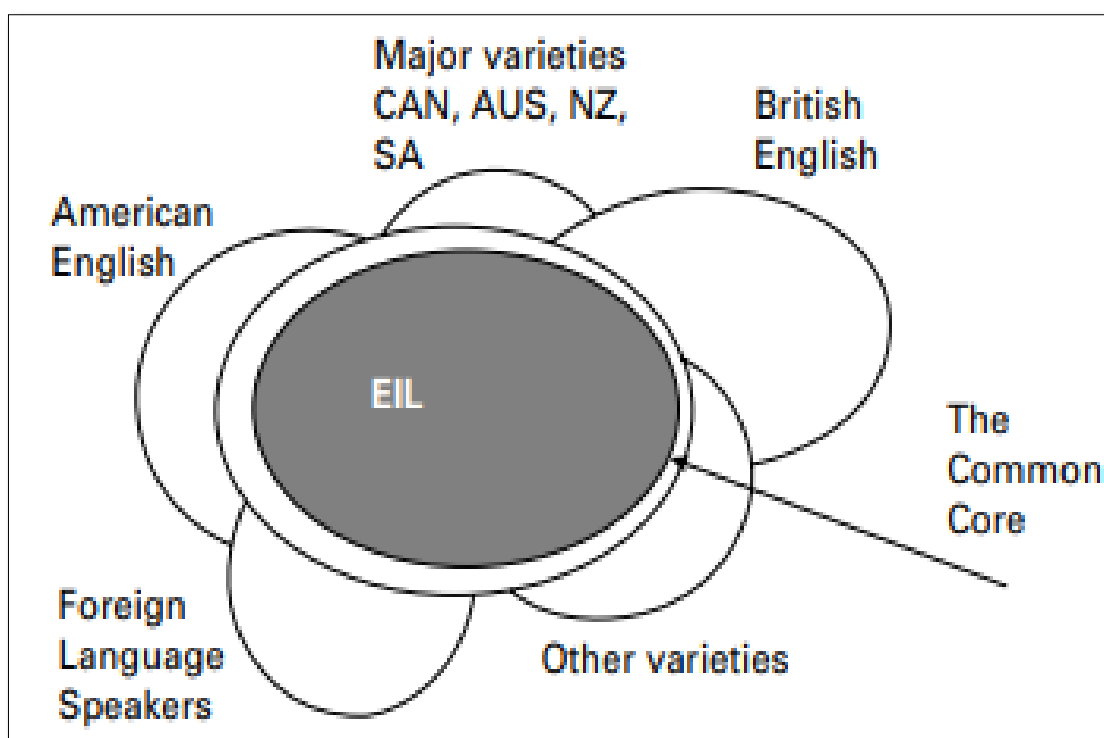
Figure 1.9: Modiano's English as an International Language

Note. From Modiano (1999a, b), Cited in Jenkins (2009).

1.2.2.5 Yano's Cylinder Model

Yano's (2001) cylindrical model presents a user-centred approach to WE, moving beyond geographic and historical classifications to focus on communicative effectiveness and contextual adaptability (Figure 1.10). The model visualises English varieties and users as smaller cylinders within a single large cylinder, in which depth and height reflect degrees of intelligibility and contextual relevance. According to Haswell and Hahn (2016), the more localised and less internationally intelligible a variety is, the deeper it is positioned within the cylinder. These localised forms, known as 'basilects', include distinct grammatical, phonological and lexical features that limit broader comprehension. In contrast, varieties with wider intelligibility occupy the upper levels and are referred to as 'acrolects' (Hahn, 2019; Yano, 2001). The model allows for permeability between levels, reflecting the fluidity of language use across different contexts.
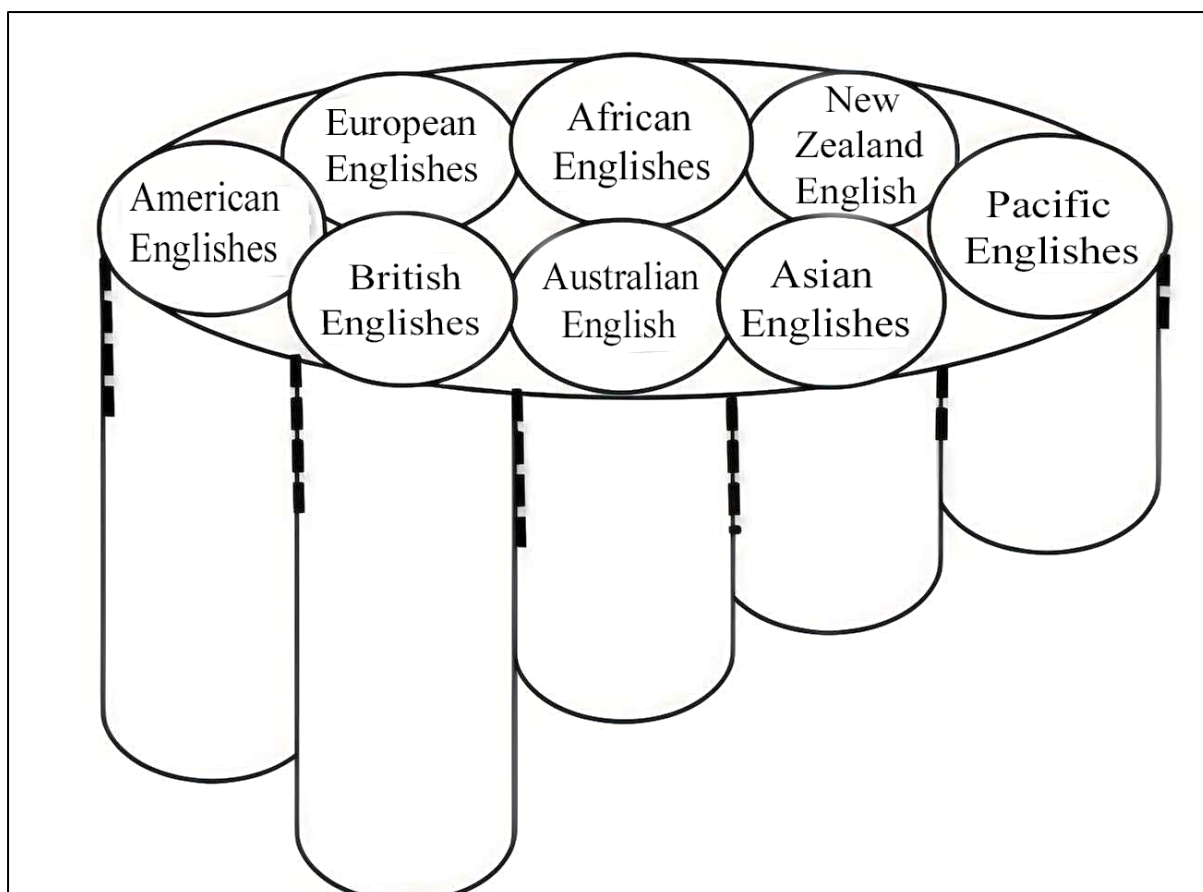
Figure 1.10: Yano's Cylindrical Model

Note. From Haswell and Hahn (2016). Copyright 2016 by the Japan Association for Language Teaching (JALT).

An important contribution of Yano's (2001) cylindrical model is the dynamic, non-static representation of English proficiency. Speakers may achieve acrolectal forms for international communication while maintaining basilectal forms for interaction within a community, reflecting a continuum shaped by context and purpose. Haswell and Hahn (2016) emphasised that this model considers both the structural features of English varieties and user behaviours, including pragmatic and contextual adaptations. Hahn (2019) further argued that this framework acknowledges speaker autonomy, the capacity to adjust language use strategically across different communicative settings. By focusing on intelligibility, adaptability and user agency, it shifts the analytical lens from fixed categories to dynamic interaction, accounting for both linguistic variation and the evolving competencies of speakers. This perspective contributes to a more flexible and realistic model of English use in multilingual and transnational contexts.

1.2.3 Non-Standard English and Its Digital Varieties

This section explores how SE and (non)standard English (NSE) intersect in contemporary ELT and the influence of digital media on WE. While SE remains dominant in educational settings, its elevation marginalises NSE and upholds ideologies such as native speakerism and linguistic purism. In contrast, digital platforms have fostered the rise of digital Englishes (marked by fluidity, creativity and features like abbreviations, emojis and code-switching) that challenge linguistic norms. By problematising rigid distinctions between SE and NSE, this section advocates a more inclusive ELT framework that reflects the realities of global and digital English use.

1.2.3.1 (De)Legitimising Standard English

The distinction between WE and SE is of crucial importance in postcolonial discourse, as debates continue about linguistic superiority, identity and the socio-political structures underlying the division between SE and NSE (cf. Tahmasabi et al., 2019). SE is commonly defined as a 'purely social dialect' (Jenkins, 2003, p. 32) predominantly used and promoted in formal, academic, pedagogical and professional settings. It also serves as a normative benchmark for effective communication through a standardised set of grammatical, lexical and phonetic rules (Bex, 1999; Crystal, 2003; Trudgill & Hannah, 2002). Meanwhile, NSE includes regional dialects, sociolects, pidgins and creoles that deviate from SE norms and often fulfil an expressive function that allows speakers to assert their cultural, social or regional identities (Labov, 1994; Wardhaugh, 2010; Wolfram, 1998).

In the context of debates over the linguistic validity of NSE, Kachru (1985) argued that multiple varieties of English can co-exist worldwide and should be considered equally legitimate. Trudgill (1999) held that the SE is merely one of many worldwide varieties, rather than a superior norm. Bhatt (2017) found that local forms of English that have stable, rule-governed systems in their communities and should therefore be recognised as legitimate languages and not as transient 'interlanguages'.

However, ELT continues to privilege IC norms and uphold the monolingual NS as the preferred model, particularly in OC and EC contexts (Ali, 2015; Chan, 2016; Rose et al., 2021). Quirk (1985, 1990), for example, argued for maintaining a common international standard to ensure mutual intelligibility and criticised 'liberation linguistics' for potentially limiting the

socioeconomic mobility of learners. Todd (2006) advocated for ELT pedagogy with the ideology of EIL. Most recently, Bhowmik (2015) identified causal factors in ELT derived from IC paradigms that adversely affect local educational contexts and pinpointed significant challenges in integrating WE into ELT due to 'native-speakerism'. This attitude in ELT privileges NS and undermines pedagogical equity between NSs and NNSs (cf. Canagarajah, 1999a; Phillipson, 1992; Seidlhofer, 2004). Curricula and instructional materials favouring 'native-speakerism' neglect local cultural and pedagogical needs. Instead, Jindarpitak and Teo (2013) have maintained that learners should be made aware of the sociolinguistic and sociopolitical aspects of English and its diverse global varieties.

Studies on WE challenge traditional fallacies by establishing English as an inclusive and democratic language that includes non-native expressions. By recognising the innovations of NNSs, the WE approach asserts that English is accessible regardless of linguistic or cultural background. Research in the WE field has demonstrated that IC-centric biases impact teachers' attitudes and create pedagogical reinforcement for SE dominance in ELT among primary school students, as seen in Taiwan (Chien, 2014). Inceçay and Akyel (2014) and Deniz et al. (2016) reported that Turkish EFL teachers were reluctant to use ELF in class due to adherence to NS norms. Furthermore, in Japan, participants have shown a preference for the American accent over NNS accents (Matsuura et al., 1994, p. 118). In Hong Kong, SE is considered the standard for language proficiency, with deviation often seen as a sign of cultural or linguistic inferiority (Xie, 2022). Similarly, university students in Beijing recognised the development of Chinese English but were reluctant to acknowledge it socially, preferring NS instruction; a phenomenon attributed to 'new capitalism' (Gray, 2010a, b; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002). Moreover, studies have supported that a person's accent has a significant impact on their personal and professional development (Xie, 2022, pp. 424–425).

Widdowson (1994) clarified the distinction between SE and NSE by emphasising their dual function (i.e., communal and communicative), thus highlighting the multiple roles that different language varieties play in society. Furthermore, the reliance on SE increases the stress of local teachers and students, highlighting the need to revise teaching for multilingual contexts (Galloway & Numajiri, 2020). In addition, using teaching methods developed within IC contexts without adapting them locally disrupts ELT and impairs learning outcomes. These results show that IC-based ELT strategies do not match the needs of local educational environments in OC and EC contexts. The systemic challenges inherent in adopting ELT strategies based on

IC paradigms often result in misalignment with local educational needs and objectives (Table 1.4).

Table 1.4: Causes and Effects of 'Native-Speakerism'

Cause	Effect
Development of IC-based curricula and materials	Diminished sensitivity to, and consideration of, local cultural and educational contexts
Language proficiency tests aligned with NS norms	Neglect of local pedagogical objectives and priorities
Preference for NSs in instructional roles	Marginalization and stress among local teachers and learners
Implementation of IC teaching methodologies without local adaptation	Disruptions in ELT delivery and adverse impacts on learning outcomes

Note. Adapted from Bhowmik, 2015. IC = Inner circle; NS = Native speaker; ELT = English language teaching.

Based on Kachru's (1985) framework, Bolton (2019, p. 757) notes that WE have revolutionised global English studies and triggered two paradigm shifts: one that reforms teaching and research in line with sociolinguistic realities, and another that moves away from theories that privilege monolingual contexts. In ELT, it is crucial for students to understand both the 'commonalities' of shared knowledge between speakers and 'local variation' of context-specific differences (Leyi, 2020, p. 390). Moreover, Bhatt (2017, p. 285) suggests that the study of WE in ELT should incorporate interdisciplinary theories and methodologies that reflect the multilingual, multicultural nature of language contact, along with teaching strategies that address both the national and international roles of English.

Although WE encourage a pluralistic view of English, there are notable pitfalls in the ongoing focus on NSs and SE. These reinforce the dominance of IC norms, demoralise NNSs and perpetuate linguistic hierarchies. NNSs frequently fall prey to 'native-speakerism', also called the 'native-speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1992), which can undermine the legitimacy of localised varieties due to the pursuit of standardised English. Dhami (2023) argued that the concept of WE challenges this native-speakerism. WE acknowledges that regional differences can affect understanding, but that mixed local forms are often more expressive and powerful than standard varieties (Galloway & Rose, 2015).

Discriminatory attitudes are also widespread in NNS communities and often take the form of internalised linguistic hierarchies that favour certain accents, skills or varieties over others. Accent plays an especially vital role in the formation of such prejudices, as it often serves as a marker of perceived social status, intelligence or competence. Derwing (2003, in McKay, 2013, p. 40) argues that the NNS accents are often perceived as an indicator of lower intelligence and competence, a prejudice that disproportionately affects visible minorities.

Gluszek and Dovidio (2010) found that the NNS accents can lead to feelings of exclusion and stigmatisation, further marginalising speakers in predominantly monolingual societies. Moreover, NNSs in Anglophone countries are also disproportionately affected in terms of access to housing, education and employment (Munro, 2003).

While Jenkins (2006b) argued that intelligibility can be achieved through pragmatic awareness and adaptation rather than conformity to SE norms, the question of linguistic legitimacy also arises. For example, Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2017) examined Australian teachers' views on WE and found that while some recognised newer varieties, others questioned their legitimacy. As another example shows, Taiwanese participants rated NS varieties highest in self-confidence and intelligence, but lower in friendliness. Non-native varieties like IndE received moderate ratings, while Taiwanese English was rated lowest in status but highest in solidarity (Chien, 2014, p. 8). In China there is a tension between the SE norms of SE and the promotion of localised varieties (Zheng, 2023, p. 945). In South Korea, English language instruction and assessment, including national standardised tests like the College Scholastic Ability Test (CSAT), are predominantly based on AmE norms (Ahn, 2015a; Kiaer & Ahn, 2021; Park, 2009). This orientation reflects historical, political and pedagogical preferences for AmE as the standard variety in South Korea's formal education.

Nevertheless, Bhatt (2008) maintained that non-native varieties have functional autonomy, which contradicts the notion that they are inferior or illegitimate. This perspective challenges traditional norms by advocating for linguistic equality and the acceptance of different forms of English (Tahmasbi et al., 2019). The standardisation of regional English dialects raises debates about hierarchy and politics with respect to SE. Jenkins (2009) argued that the emphasis on BrE and AmE inevitably categorises non-native forms as inferior and establishes a hierarchy within WE. Modiano (1999b) supported a framework that prioritises ELF users and challenges the supremacy of SE norms. Moreover, Widdowson (1994) emphasised that SE politics involve a struggle for linguistic authority in which NNSs can redefine language as a tool for local and cultural expression rather than accepting externally imposed norms.

The NS model and the construct of SE are based on an elitist, classist framework that systematically categorises the linguistic practises of non-standard speakers as inferior, even in UK and US contexts (Lloyd, 2020). Kachru (1976, p. 236) refers to this bias as 'linguistic

chauvinism' and suggests for a global approach to English characterised by 'linguistic tolerance'. Despite such calls for inclusivity, the discourse on WE continue to be undermined by territorial metaphors that privilege NSs.

1.2.3.2 Digital Englishes and Their Linguistic Features

Digital media, driven by globalisation and advances in ICT, have been instrumental in the development of WE. Digital English, often accused of 'bastardising' traditional norms (Warchauer et al., 2010) manifests as 'Netspeak' (Crystal, 2004), which is characterised by abbreviations, emojis, memes and hashtags that promote brevity, immediacy and global cultural expression. According to Seargeant and Tagg (2014, p. 2), globalisation is rapidly changing social and cultural interactions; ICT are a key contributor to this transformation. Digital media have also contributed significantly to the expansion of WE. Language use has been revolutionised by digital media as more than half of the world's population now listens, speaks, reads and writes on virtual media. According to Crystal (2003), the number of L2 English speakers is now surpassing NSs in terms of English-language internet use. According to Warchauer et al. (2010), this metamorphosis may have both positive and negative consequences.

Digital platforms clearly demonstrate the global diversity of English in many ways, as virtual English is more inclusive than traditional English because it is low-cost and accessible. Digital English includes abbreviations, phrases, contractions, acronyms and many other features. Thurlow (2003) identified three cardinal sociolinguistic principles underpinning youth digital communication: brevity and speed, paralinguistic restitution and phonological approximation. Each indicates the intricate interplay between linguistic forms and communication functions in this mode of discourse. The advent of digital communication has transformed English into a dynamic, evolving language that adapts to the different needs of its users (cf. Abdullayeva & Abdullayeva, 2025; Friedrich & de Figueiredo, 2016; Friedrich, 2020; Saputra et al., 2024; Warschauer et al., 2010; Yingsoon et al., 2025).

1.2.4 Renegotiating World Englishes

The notion of linguistic ownership has thus evolved from earlier distinctions between NSs and NNSs, as describes by Rampton (1990), who identified three key elements: expertise, inheritance and affiliation. Building on these foundational insights, multiple studies (Foo & Tan, 2019; Higgins, 2003; Seilhamer, 2012) have supported the expansion of language ownership

to encompass multiple dimensions that influence an individual's linguistic identity. Studies found that formerly colonised communities (e.g., Ghana, India, Pakistan) have adapted and reshaped English to reflect their local identities, thereby asserting ownership over the language in the process (Edu-Buandoh, 2016; Rushdie, 1980; Sidhwa, 1976). These include self-presentation in terms of authority and legitimacy, perceived advantage, affective belonging, legitimate knowledge, ability, confidence in language use and a sense of being a language community insider.

This perspective emphasises the fluid, dynamic nature of language ownership, where users actively negotiate their positions based on personal, social and cultural factors. Meanwhile, a 'mother tongue' is defined as a language characterised by its origin, the speaker's language skills, communicative roles, self- and other-determined identities, generational transmission and its links to community belonging (Fatima & Nadeem, 2025; Little, 2020; Skutnabb-Kangas & Phillipson, 1989). These attributes illustrate that a native language is not only a linguistic construct but also a strong marker of identity and belonging. By integrating these frameworks, this study places linguistic ownership at the intersection of individual agency, sociocultural context and historical ancestry (Ahn et al., 2023).

English has evolved into a transcultural medium, no longer confined to IC speakers (Baker & Ishikawa, 2021; Rose & Galloway, 2019). Its global status is increasingly driven by steady growth in non-IC users (Boonsuk et al., 2023, p. 2). In countries where English is 'owned', it adapts to local cultural norms and is used effectively by skilled speakers in different contexts, resulting in different registers and dialects (Gilsdorf, 2002, 366). The notion of 'linguistic ownership' within WE is therefore complex and multi-layered, especially in postcolonial contexts where English has historically been enforced as a language of power. As seen above (Section 1.3.2.1), Strevens' (1980) model implicitly restricted linguistic ownership by framing BrE and AmE as 'mother branches' from which other varieties emerge (Galloway & Rose, 2015, p. 15). More restrictive views of linguistic ownership support a 'birthright paradigm' and frame it as intimately linked to inheritance while claiming that ownership of a language other than one's mother tongue is a disavowal of one's identity (Parmegiani 2010). Consequently, the Englishes of regions like South Asia are presented as extensions of BrE or AmE rather than as distinct, independent variants (Haswell & Hahn, 2015).

Kachru's (1985) three-circle model (Section 1.3.2.2) extended the concept of ownership by positioning OC countries such as India, Singapore and Bangladesh as 'norm-developing' contexts (cf. Seargeant, 2012b). Here, English is no longer strictly determined by IC norms but reshaped according to local contexts, allowing postcolonial societies to exercise control over their own Englishes. For example, IndE exhibits distinct lexical, syntactic and phonological features that are shaped by Indigenous languages and cultural norms (Gargesh, 2004; Lange, 2012; Leuckert et al., 2023; Sailaja, 2012; Schilk, 2011; Sharma, 2017; Sirsa, 2014; Sirsa & Redford, 2013). This demonstrates how postcolonial societies actively shape and localise English rather than serving as passive recipients. The three-circle model's recognition of these localised forms validates non-native Englishes and challenges the exclusivity of NS authority (Hasim & Islam, 2020, p. 3). Furthermore, Modiano's (1999b) EIL model (Section 1.3.2.4) of emphasises communicative competence over SE norms, democratising ownership and positioning English as a global resource (Hahn, 2018). This perspective views English as a tool for postcolonial empowerment. WE thus emphasise the negotiation between local and global influences and transforms English from a colonial mechanism into a symbol of resilience and socio-cultural identity.

1.2.4.1 Navigating Norms

The process of identity construction in WE involves both personal and collective frameworks as speakers navigate their relationship to English while reflecting local cultural values. IndE, for example, has special linguistic characteristics that distinguish it from BrE. It functions as a medium of collective self-expression that reflects the sociocultural identity of its speakers (Grishechko et al., 2021; Kachru, 1965; Kashyap, 2014; Parasher, 1983; Sailaja, 2012). In the context of postcolonial nations, English has undergone nativisation, creating localised varieties like Chinese English (CE). CE incorporates Chinese linguistic and cultural characteristics, offering speakers a sense of identity and linguistic ownership (Xu, 2010, in Zheng, 2023, p. 942). This process reflects a broader effort to challenge ideologies associated with both Indigenous and colonial languages, contributing to the reconstruction of cultural identity and national self-image (Spencer, 1975, p. 193).

On a personal level, people in postcolonial contexts often navigate multiple identities shaped by their interactions with local Englishes and native languages. This dual identity is reflected in the ability to switch between English and native languages depending on the social context, creating a personal linguistic repertoire. Schneider's model (Section 1.3.2.3) captures

these layers of identity construction as individuals balance their use of English with expressions of cultural authenticity. It shows how English can simultaneously serve as a medium of global communication and local identity (Schneider, 2003a; Leith & Seargeant, 2012, pp. 108–109).

1.2.4.2 Linguistic Imperialism

Through the protection of linguistic rights, the fostering of a diverse ecosystem of linguistic varieties and the empowerment of users, small languages and varieties can contribute to a positive peace through language (Friedrich, 2009, p. 409). According to Bonomo (2017), language policies, education plans, domains, use, status and identity of language patterns contribute to effective communication between English speakers worldwide. Historical, sociolinguistic and ideological accounts of SE homogeneity and dominance have been studied to gain a better understanding of the social and political relationships within and among speech communities, the acquisition and utilisation of linguistic resources within institutions and the relationship between language and the dominant and subordinate systems within speech communities (Bhatt, 2001; Blommaert & Verschueren, 1998; Parakrama, 1995; Pennycook, 1998; Phillipson, 1992; Ramanathan, 1999; Skutnabb-Kangas, 2000; Woolard, 1985; Woolard & Schieffelin, 1994).

Phillipson (1992, p. 1) conceptualised 'linguistic imperialism' and 'linguicism' as a positive attitude to BrE and negative attitude to other varieties. This dichotomy reflects an often-implicit bias against NSE. Similarly, Huddart (2014, p. 18) argued that linguicism constructs hierarchical language ideologies by portraying English as 'scientific' and 'rational' while labelling other varieties as 'emotional', 'musical' or 'irrational'. Thus, the (im)position of IC English supports linguistic imperialism as 'the imposition of a new mental structure through language' (Phillipson, 1992, p. 166), which serves cultural hegemony as a repository for NS culture (Olayan, 2020, p. 541). Hayes and Burkette (2017, p. 246) argued that this is rooted in 'colonial', 'imperial' and 'hegemonic' processes through which English was institutionalised as a second or official language in OC countries and former colonial contexts (e.g., the US, Australia).

The interplay between ELI and WE reflects the nature of this process. While ELI emphasises IC varieties as an instrument of colonial control and cultural domination, the rise of WE illustrate a power shift in which formerly colonised societies adapt and reshape English to assert their linguistic and cultural agency. Kachru's (1985) model (Section 1.3.2.2) supports

this transition by showing how OC countries repurpose English as resistance to exonormativity. Thus, English evolves from an instrument of dominance to a resource for local empowerment and reflects a reconfiguration of global linguistic power.

1.2.4.3 Decolonisation, Localisation and Nativisation

You taught me language; and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse (*The Tempest*, Act 1, Scene 2, Lines 364–365).

Saraceni and Jacob (2021) argued that although the processes of nativisation and appropriation of English are often framed as tools of decolonisation, this view might be too hopeful or even a bit unrealistic (p. 20). Decolonisation is not limited to the revision of curricula but involves a profound transformation of the structures that govern wealth, land and property relations (cf. Tuck and Yang 2012). Saraceni and Jacob (2021) suggested that decolonising WE involves three interrelated processes: de-mythologising, de-silencing and de-colonising. De-mythologizing requires critically examining and challenging the prevailing narratives that privilege certain forms of English. De-silencing means giving voice to communities and linguistic practices that have been historically marginalised. Finally, de-colonising involves actively dismantling the colonial legacies and power structures that continue to influence the global hierarchy of English varieties through nativisation, which

> is a relatively simple process of indiginizing the phonological, syntactic and pragmatic aspects of the linguistic system of the English language—a target that has been largely achieved. Decolonization is a fairly complex process of taking control of the principles and practices of planning, learning, and teaching English—a task that has not been fully accomplished (Kumaravadivelu, 2003, 540).

Here, decolonisation must go beyond simply recognising that English is not the exclusive property of Western groups and has been adapted in postcolonial contexts. Rather, it involves a critical examination of underlying power dynamics and systemic violence influencing how it is taught, learnt and used (Saraceni & Jacob, 2021, p. 20). Mehrotra (2000) argued that greater attention to local English texts and translated literature in the classroom can contribute to the decolonisation of ELT, as these contributions now influence global literature, a process he refers to as 'reverse colonialism' (pp. 139–140).

Bhatt (2017) demonstrated that the nativisation of language occurs along four dimensions. The grammatical dimension includes structural adaptations and morphological over-generalisations that enable English to meet local communicative needs. The discursive dimension describes how longer texts and conversations are organised through narrative structures and

rhetorical conventions. The sociolinguistic dimension reflects the influence of social factors, such as identity and power dynamics, on language variation. Finally, the literary dimension describes how creative writing and stylistic innovations reflect and shape cultural narratives. In Schneider's (2003a, 2003b) dynamic model (Section 1.2.2.3), this phenomenon corresponds to the Nativisation phase, in which English absorbs local cultural elements, detaching itself from its colonial roots and becomes a language that reflects regional identities. Through such linguistic adaptations, English in post-colonial societies resists imperialist influence and instead becomes an integral part of local identity and self-representation.

According to Kachru (1985), the inclusion of non-native Englishes into a codified framework not only challenges SE norms but also raises sociolinguistic questions about linguistic legitimacy and identity. Widdowson (1994) stressed that speakers in these contexts should have the authority to adapt English to their communicative needs, further challenging standardisation. Such assertions reflect postcolonial discourses on property and the need for a pluralistic approach that reflects the diversity of English (Jenkins, 2009). Therefore, the quest for codification must struggle with the trade-off between linguistic innovation and the historical weight of British and American standards (McArthur, 1987).

Educational institutions and government agencies play a crucial role in legitimising NSE through their policies. For example, Kachru (2001) pointed out that the codification of Englishes in postcolonial contexts is often influenced by institutional decisions about what constitutes an acceptability within academic and official use. Policies that advocate or favour SE risk marginalising local varieties, while policies that recognise local varieties reinforce these forms and validate their formal use (Kirkpatrick, 2021). The integration of local Englishes into education therefore depends on the support of academic and governmental frameworks, which, according to Spolsky (2004), contribute to the prestige or stigma of these varieties.

1.2.5 World Englishes in English Language Teaching

Language attitude (LA) is a multifaceted construct comprising emotional, belief and behavioural components (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980; Albarracin et al., 2005; Cargile et al., 1994; Hsu, 2016). LA involves the listener's judgement of a speaker (Cluver, 2000) and is a socially constructed process (Cargile et al., 1994). The attitudes and perceptions of teachers and learners towards WE in ELT are central to the wider implications of linguistic diversity and pedagogical practices. Eagly and Chaiken (1993) found that LA reflects wider psychological tendencies.

This concept was further explored by Garrett (2010), who noted the importance of intensity in the formation of judgements and behaviours. This notion emphasises the need to explore LA towards linguistic phenomena, including the role of WE in education (Chien, 2014).

LA is strongly influenced by stereotypes and sociolinguistic factors, as evidenced by the tendency to associate linguistic cues with specific attributes (cf. Giles & Billing, 2004). For example, familiarity plays a crucial role in the formation of positive attitudes, with exposure to AmE in education and the media often leading to a more favourable evaluation (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Chien, 2014). The perceptions of WE are also stratified by regional and cultural factors. Austrian students preferred NS accents based on exposure and experience, suggesting a need to reassess norms in pronunciation teaching (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997)

1.2.5.1 Inner, Outer, and Expanding Circles

Kachru's (1985) framework of IC, OC, and EC English provides a valuable model for examining LA. Mehrotra (2000) argued that in the IC, British lexicographers have struggled to move beyond a colonial mindset and imperial attitude in their approach to English (p. 141). IC norms continue to dominate global ELT practices, particularly through hiring preferences for NS teachers from IC countries. Studies have found that the attitudes of IC members towards WE often reflect bias. For example, W. B. Yeats (1865–1939) discouraged Indians from writing in English (Mehrotra, 1987, p. 103) and Gilroy Scott of the British Council dismissed WE literature as reflecting 'politics of reaction and nationalism' (Rajan, 1993).

However, recent scholars (e.g., Colmenero & Lasagabaster, 2024) have argued that teachers from OC and EC contexts possess equally legitimate varieties of English for classroom use, provided they are intelligible. Moreover, teachers from these contexts often see their own English varieties as integral to their cultural identities and professional legitimacy (Boonsuk et al., 2023). Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2017, 2019) found that while many Australian teachers support the inclusion of pluricentric curricula, their acceptance of EC Englishes depends on their prior training. This highlights the need for targeted professional development to encourage wider acceptance. Furthermore, Chalhoub-Deville and Wigglesworth (2005) found that teachers from IC countries did not show significant differences in their assessment of the speaking performance of English learners, suggesting a shared perception of speaking proficiency across these contexts.

In the OC, educators tend to recognise the legitimacy of WE conceptually but continue to prefer SE norms. Monfared (2020) found that teachers in India and Nigeria favour BrE or AmE in testing scenarios, reflecting the dominance of NS-centric ideology. Nepalese teachers in Dhami's (2023) study showed a positive attitude towards GE and recognised English as diverse and contextualised. They recognised the distinctive features of Nepali English and considered it part of their identity. While they questioned native-speakerism as an ineffective ideology, they also observed its continued influence on educational events and teacher training. Meanwhile, Dhami (2022) found that teachers in Bangladesh questioned the legitimacy of OC and EC Englishes in academic contexts and equated standardisation with IC norms. This perception contributes to the continued marginalisation of local varieties of English in Bangladeshi ELT. Zhang and Gonzales (2024, p. 11) reported that in postcolonial contexts, WE are often marginalised in ELT because they are equated with lower education. Denying learners the right to use local Englishes also restricts their access to the associated social, professional and cultural communities. However, Chan (2023) supported the potential of integrating multilingualism and WE to enhance current EMI in EC contexts (p. 1).

In EC countries, teachers are increasingly questioning NS norms after professional training supporting WE. Turkish teachers, for example, showed a growing acceptance of WE in pedagogies after participating in relevant training (Solmaz, 2020). They felt that striving for native-like English is neither realistic nor pedagogically necessary (Misir & Gürbüz, 2022). Thai teachers acknowledged the legitimacy of Thai English and its visibility in global and media communication (Tarrayo et al., 2021). Similarly, in Vietnam and South Korea, teacher training interventions have been shown to reduce misconceptions about WE and foster more inclusive pedagogical practices (Hamid et al., 2022; Lim & Park, 2022). For instance, Ahn (2014) observed a discrepancy between Korean teachers' progressive attitudes towards WE and their teaching practices, which remained centred on AmE due to the influence of national examinations. Shim (2015) found that although teachers were receptive to diverse English varieties, they perceived Korean English as an interlanguage rather than a legitimate linguistic form. Sung (2018) and Lee et al. (2019) found that, although pre-service English teachers acknowledged the pedagogical importance of incorporating WE, their attitudes often remained influenced by SE norms and preferred AmE in teaching due to social pressure. Both teachers and students overwhelmingly favoured SE norms due to comprehensibility and professional benefits (Ahn, 2015a, b; Chang, 2019).

Similarly, teachers in Iran acknowledged the existence of English varieties but rejected the legitimacy of EC Englishes, including Asian varieties (Sadeghpour & Sharifian, 2017). Cambodian ELT teachers also demonstrated awareness of English's global spread but continued to favour IC models (Lim, 2019). In China, limited exposure to ELF in teacher education programmes contributed to teachers' insufficient understanding of GE, reinforcing their preference for IC Englishes (Zhang, 2022). Japanese English teachers acknowledged WE but adhered to IC models in classes and devalued their own pronunciation (Uchida and Sugimoto, 2019). Japanese English coursebooks mostly present IC varieties (Sugimoto and Uchida, 2018) and teachers doubt the feasibility of introducing WE into future texts (Takahashi, 2017). Even in Hong Kong, where English is an official language and the MoI at most universities, high school teachers prefer IC teaching models (Wong, 2018).

These results underscore a growing recognition of WE across OC and EC contexts and advocate for a shift toward more equitable and localised English language pedagogies. However, while Dhami (2023) investigated the perceptions of WE by EFL teachers in Bangladeshi universities, a comprehensive study of Bangladeshi attitudes towards phonological variation and perceptions of the acceptability, ownership and standardisation of WE is still lacking. To address this gap, the present study investigated how teachers and students at public and private universities perceive the existence and legitimacy of a BdE. It also examined the underlying beliefs regarding native language learning and its influence on ELT practices in Bangladesh (Chapter 5).

1.2.5.2 Sociolinguistic and Institutional Influences

Sociolinguistic factors like cultural capital and linguistic hegemony have a considerable influence on perceptions of WE. Spolsky (2004) emphasised the influence of language policies and official status on LA towards local varieties, whereby the institutional and media-driven privileging of SE often perpetuates linguistic hierarchies. This dynamic marginalises NSE, which can lead to 'language attrition' or even 'language death' (Grenoble & Whaley, 2006). Teachers' perceptions are linked to their practices and influence the design of curricula and instructional decisions. Studies from Thailand and Turkey, for example, have indicated that including WE elements promotes intercultural competence and linguistic flexibility, even though adherence to SE norms often prevails (Buripakdi, 2012; Ceyhan-Bingöl & Özkan, 2019).

1.2.5.3 Challenges and Opportunities Promoting World Englishes

Resistance to English remains present in all contexts, despite widespread preference for SE norms. This resistance is particularly pronounced in OC and EC countries, where WE are often perceived as being less prestigious or practical. For example, Japanese educators, while cautiously in favour of students being exposed to different varieties of English, preferred SE norms in speaking and writing (Takahashi, 2017). Despite these challenges, teachers' increasing awareness of WE provides opportunities for change. The integration of WE into teachers' training can promote the adoption of inclusive, pluricentric pedagogy. As Sadeghpour and Sharifian (2019) demonstrated, GE-related training provides teachers with the skills and knowledge they need to deal with linguistic diversity in global communication. By fostering an understanding of the sociolinguistic relevance of WE and promoting inclusive practices, it is possible to address inequalities in ELT and promote a culturally aware approach to language teaching.

1.2.5.4 Bangladeshi English in Models of World Englishes

BdE's place within WE requires a critical reassessment of established models. Kachru's (1985) Three Circles model places Bangladesh in the OC due to its colonial history and the formal role of English in society. However, this classification reinforces a hierarchy that privileges NS norms and neglects the creative, localised evolution of the language. Similarly, Schneider's (2007) dynamic model, with its sequential stages from Foundation to Endonormative Stabilisation, appears to mirror the historical development of BdE. However, its linear progression oversimplifies the complex (often nonlinear) changes observed in postcolonial changes. In contrast, Modiano's (1999b) Universal Model, which depicts English as a culturally neutral tool for global communication, downplays the importance of cultural identity and local influence, factors that are crucial to shaping BdE. Graddol's (1997) future English model provides a pragmatic outlook by emphasising the demographic shift toward NNSs and the resultant focus on communicative competence rather than linguistic perfection.

Despite its practical appeal, this model does not fully engage with the sociopolitical forces that determine language policy and public perception in Bangladesh. Furthermore, Jenkins's perspective on ELF (Jenkins, 2007), along with Canagarajah's (2013) concept of translingual practice, offers a valuable counterpoint by validating the legitimacy of hybrid linguistic practices and contesting rigid standards. These approaches collectively underscore the active role of local agencies in mediating global linguistic trends. Nonetheless, each model is

limited by its own assumptions, failing to capture the nuanced interplay between global influences and Indigenous identity that defines BdE.

1.3 English in Bangladesh

1.3.1 A History of English in Bangladesh

The colonial and postcolonial periods profoundly influenced Bangladesh's socio-political and economic structures. British rule (18th–20th century) shaped governance, economy and culture, with bureaucratic frameworks persisting post-independence (Miah, 2013; Mollah, 2011). Despite reforms, colonial legacies in language and administration continue to impact her development and identity.

1.3.1.1 Colonial Period

During the Mughal era of Bengali history, Persian was the official language. There has been a negative attitude developed towards these two languages that has been much discussed. Sanskrit became a major burden on Bengali and the Persian vocabulary was displaced because of the massive interest in Sanskrit. The other part of the Bengali community rejected this process. This led to the development of anti-Persian and anti-Sanskrit movements.

There was much competition over Bengal (present-day Bangladesh) during the colonial period. While the Portuguese did not govern Bengal, they founded trading posts and settlements in various parts of India, then encompassing Bengal, throughout the 16th and 17th centuries. Their primary presence was in Hooghly and Bandel. Although they had influence in the areas where their trading posts were located, they did not institute a governing presence in Bengal like the subsequent British colonial reign. As a result, Portuguese was widely adopted in Bengal. Afterwards, the Dutch, French and other peoples arrived, leading to eventual political competition between the French and the British. After France was defeated, the British influence over Bengal increased, while French influence decreased (see Bryant, 2013; Ivermee, 2024; Margerison, 2015; Mole, 2015).

The English language was introduced to Bengal by the British East India Company (BEIC), which was founded in 1600 through a charter granted by Queen Elizabeth I. Originally made to secure trading concessions from the Mughals, the BEIC established its first settlement in Bengal in 1633, opened a factory on the Hooghly River in 1650 and established Calcutta as an important trading centre in 1690. The decline of the Mughal Empire in the 18th century enabled the British to further expand their influence. Major victories at the Battles of Plassey

(1757) and Buxar (1764) enabled the BEIC to gain control of Bengal, Bihar and Orissa and become the *diwan* (revenue collector) in 1765. In 1757, the British defeated the last independent Nawab of Bengal at the Battle of Palashi, ending several centuries of Persian rule and re-subjecting the Bengali language to persecution (Chakrabarti & Chakrabarti, 2013; Ghosh, 1979; Mukherjee, 2024).

Although the British did not reject Persian immediately after coming to power for political and administrative reasons, they continued to consider alternatives to Persian in their new regime. Some Bengali intellectuals, like Madanmohan Tarkalankar (1817–1858), used this opportunity to advocate for the reinstatement of Indigenous words and the removal of the Persian words from Bengali. Although Bengali could have been a feasible alternative to Persian as designated language, numerous locals, particularly those in Calcutta, showed a strong desire to acquire proficiency in English. This trend stemmed from the desire to take advantage of the opportunities that arose from interacting with the BEIC and the English. In 1830, Bengal was compelled to adopt English as its official language. However, the BEIC also continued to financially support the Persian language. Their primary objective was to generate the required number of Persian-speaking personnel for the company. They used Persian predominantly for administrative purposes and to communicate with the local population. In 1843, the BEIC declared Persian the language of religious and cultural heritage (Roy, 1999, p. 20).

According to Roy (1984, 1989, 1999, p. 14), at the beginning of British colonisation, Hindu religious communities in Bengal were initially unwilling to allow English schooling. However, many people in Bengal hoped to become like *Shaheb* [Englishmen] and *Bibiana* [British ladies] for prestige. Gradually, increasing numbers of Bengalis went to Great Britain for education, business and so on. Multiple Bengali writers, scholars and intellectuals (e.g., Rabindranath Tagore [1861–1941), Dwarkanath Tagore [1794–1846], Madhusudan Dutt [1824–1873], Ram Mohan Roy [1772–1833) became famous in their respective fields by visiting England. The Bengali elite thus accepted the British royals as their masters. For example, when King George V (r. 1910–1936) ascended to the throne, he proposed a visit to India during the five-week royal tour from December 1911 to January 1912. This was the first time a reigning British monarch visited Indian territory. Rabindranath Tagore, an acclaimed Bengali poet

and intellectual, welcomed the British emperor George V as 'the ruler of the minds of all people, dispenser of India's destiny'.[8]

Disputes between the Hindu and Muslim communities in Bengal had not been an issue prior to colonisation (Roy, 1999). Instead, they had maintained a dialogue that helped maintain social and class concordance. Following the introduction of English education to Bengal, the Hindu population began showing a more positive attitude toward acquiring English. This was in stark contrast to the Muslim community, which resisted its adoption. Consequently, the Hindu community began securing higher positions within colonial society, while the Muslim community became marginalised. This began causing new forms of class conflict within Bengali society and exacerbated previous Hindu–Muslim differences.

According to Sharif (2006/1991), following the introduction of English education, European notions of tribal, national, linguistic, regional ethnicity and caste consciousness were rapidly introduced into the subcontinent. As a result, religious and political nationalism arose among English-educated people. As a result, Hindus, who were most likely receive this education, became increasingly convinced of an all-Hindu national identity. The primarily contribution of English, English education and foreign influence in India was therefore the creation, development and perpetuation of this religious-based nationalism. As a result, India was unable to fully embrace secularisation after independence. Pre-colonisation, India had belonged to diverse groups. During colonial rule, however, the Indian people were divided into Hindus and Muslims. Meanwhile, Indian and Bengali Muslims were largely excluded from the Indian Revival and Bengali Renaissance, which were enabled by English-language education (Sharif, 1991, 2006, pp. 78–80; Figure 1.11).

Gradually, the British Raj started employing English-educated people from Bengal, meaning many lower-class Hindu people gained prestigious employment. As a result, lower-caste Hindu people became economically equal to upper-caste members. English education thus also became a tool to challenge the discrimination within the caste system. As a result, the longstanding caste system began breaking down. This marked the start of a Bengali Renaissance, during which a new social system developed as a product of English education, which led to the proliferation of science, the arts, dance and drama (Roy, 1999, p. 20; Figure 1.11).

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[8] For contemporary accounts and reports published in December 1911, see the microfilm holdings at the British Library, London, which include: *Bengalee* of S. N. Banerjee (Ref. SM 81), *Mahratta* of Tilak (Ref. SM 5), *Amrit Bazar Patrika* (Ref. SM 15), *Times of India* (Ref. SM 77), *Tribune* (Ref. SM 13), *Capital* (1898–1946) (Ref. SM 203), and *Englishman* (1834–1934) (Ref. SM 49).

Introduction of English education
Classical nationalism arose among the English-educated people
Hindus believing in all-Indian Hindu nationality
Muslims also believed in universal Muslim nationality
National Identity as superficial address of ideological or emotional neutrality
India were divided and marked as Hindus and Muslims
Muslim descendants are victims of anger-anger-hatred
Bengali Muslims are absent in the new awareness
Hindu revival, Bengali renaissance

Figure 1.11: English Education in Bangladesh and Socio-Political Transformations

Note. Adopted from Sharif, 1991/2006, pp. 78-80.

When the University of Bombay, the University of Madras and the University of Calcutta were established under the British in 1857 (Mathew & Sohoni, 2021; Momen et al., 2024; Seal, 1968), Bengali was completely discontinued as a MoI (cf. Kachru, 1994) and was replaced by English in colleges and secondary schools. English was also taught in elementary schools. This created new divisions between those who had access to ELT and those who did not. It also caused a shift in native culture as English became the dominant language in several arenas. English replaced many Indigenous languages in government and business contexts, pushing them to the margins of society and creating a language barrier. This change in language use had a significant impact, making English a symbol of prestige and privilege.

In the late 19th century, an awakening occurred among Bengalis. They recognised the importance of expanding the influence and reach of the Bengali language, seeing it as the embodiment of their country, culture and identity. As Dutt, who once aspired to be an English poet and was versed in multiple languages (Sanskrit, Greek, Latin, Persian and Italian) wrote to his friend Gourdas Basak:

> European scholarship is good … but when we speak to the world, let us speak in our own language. Let those, who feel that they have springs of fresh thought in them, fly to their mother-tongue …. I should scorn the pretensions of that man to be called 'educated' who is not master of his own language …. After all, there is nothing like cultivating and enriching our own tongue. Do you think England, or France or

Germany or Italy wants Poets and Essayists? I pray God [for] the noble ambition of Milton to do something for his mother-tongue and his native land may animate all men of talent among us (1865, in Basu, 1900).[9]

In his 1891 convocation speech at Calcutta University, the institution's first Indian Vice-Chancellor, Gurudas Banerjee (1844–1918), similarly remarked,

> I firmly believe that we cannot have any thorough and extensive culture as a nation, unless the knowledge is disseminated through our own vernaculars. Consider the lesson the past teaches. The darkness of the Middle Ages of Europe was not completely dispelled until the light of knowledge shone through the medium of the numerous modern languages. So, in India, the dark depth of ignorance all round will never be illuminated until the light of knowledge reaches the masses through the medium of their own vernaculars (Bandyopadhay, 1891).[10]

Motivated by Banerjee's words, Ashutosh Mukherjee (1864–1924) proposed incorporating native languages like Bengali, Hindi or Urdu into university education. Although some (e.g., Bankim Chandra [1838–1894], Haraprasad Shastri [1853–1931], Anandamohan Bose [1847–1906]) endorsed this, partisan opposition from the Bengali community opposed the proposal. A young Rabindranath Tagore wrote in the *Bharati* newspaper that

> "What has been learned in English should be expressed in Bengali, so that Bengali literature may advance, and eventually, this knowledge will be spread in Bengali throughout the schools of Bengal. Education in English can never be distributed everywhere in the country" (*trans*) (1883).[11]

He continued:

> Will our timidity last indefinitely? Must we not assert that higher education should be anchored in our mother tongue? Japan assimilated Western knowledge and proliferated it nationally by grounding it in their native language. We have yet to acknowledge the feasibility of higher education in Bengali. If the contention is the absence of advanced educational resources in Bengali, the remedy is to champion higher education in Bengali at our universities (Tagore, 1883, *trans*).[12]

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[9] Basu, Y. (1925). *Maikel Madhusudan Datter jīvan-cerita [Life and character of Michael Madhusudan Dutt]* (5th ed., pp. 574–575). Chakrabarti Chatterjee & Co.
[10] Sahitya Parishat Patrika (Volume 1).
[11] https://galpersa-may.com/2018/05/23/%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%80%E0%A6%A8%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%A6%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B0%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A5%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B0-%E0%A6%B6%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%95%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%9A%E0%A6%BF%E0%A6%A8/
[12] See Tagore, R. (1946). Shikkhar Bahon [The vehicle of education]. In Songkolon (pp. 17–31). Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthan Bibhag.

He also argued that real progress in Bengal lay in education, which eliminates ignorance, raises Bengali from its colonial inferiority and makes it a respected medium of global knowledge dissemination (1946).[13] He also argued,

> There is a great difference between us and other independent countries. There, those who realize the necessity for the completeness of education learn foreign languages. However, beyond what is essential for knowledge, it is not necessary for them to learn more. This is because all the affairs of their country are conducted in their own language. In our country, most activities are conducted in English. Those who govern are not obliged, at least not to a sufficient extent, to learn our language. (Tagore, 1960, pp. 291–310; *trans.*)

Around 1905, following the British Partition of Bengal and the declaration of Dhaka as the capital of East Bengal (present-day Bangladesh), the nationalist Swadeshi movement started in West Bengal. Bengali elites began abandoning English clothing and culture and showed increased resistance to English education in Bengal. However, this was done out of political resistance, not a love of the Bengali language; many activists of the Swadeshi movement could not speak Bengali themselves. Rather, they believed in old India as an isolated village against modernity. However, the Swadeshi movement was not supported by most residents of East Bengal. Instead, they expressed gratitude to the British and considered the Swadeshi movement their enemies. However, this situation would not last long.

The British rescinded the Partition of Bengal in 1911, and the inhabitants of East Bengal demonstrated their displeasure toward both the British authorities and the Swadeshi agitators. They believed this would destroy the economic development they dreamed of through the partition and would restore previous political and economic dependence on West Bengal (Ahmad, 2013, pp. 17–18). They began demonstrating hostility toward British dress, literature and education. However, schoolteachers, lawyers, judges and educated people continued to use English in daily life and professional capacities. Common people protested, considering this an insult to the Bengali language. In 1914, however, Nagendra Ghosh's (1887–1962) *England's Work in India* was published in East Bengal. The book expounded on the various advantages and enhancements that the British had brought about in India, especially East Bengal. The details of the benefits and improvements mentioned above may have helped restore a positive disposition toward the British among the literate population of East Bengal. This may have also sparked an increased interest in the acquisition and use of the English language among educated people (Ahmad, 2013, p. 20). These events illustrate the mixed Bengali reaction to the English

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[13] See Tagore, R. (1946). Shikkhar Bahon [The vehicle of education]. In Songkolon (pp. 17–31). Kolkata: Visva-Bharati Granthan Bibhag.

language during the late colonial period, which was driven by economic concerns and regional development.

1.3.1.2 Postcolonial Period

The introduction of English to Bangladesh marked a significant sociocultural shift and positioned it as a language of prestige, modernity and power. As Stock (2017) has described, English served as a lingua franca between East Bengal (now Bangladesh) and West Pakistan and facilitated communication in a politically fragmented region. While Bengali remained the native language, English was increasingly perceived as a means of socioeconomic advancement, especially among the middle class. This perception was so widespread that many families, including farmers, made significant financial sacrifices, including land sales, to ensure that their children could learn English (Stock, 2017). In Bengal, English was pursued for government employment, commercial opportunities in Calcutta and social prestige. However, this transformation was rooted in socioeconomic stratification as English-speaking urban elites marginalised rural communities and languages. Therefore, English functioned as both an instrument of opportunity and a symbol of privilege, shaping identity, social hierarchies and cultural transitions (Stock, 2017).

Following the India–Pakistan partition of 1947, English transitioned from a colonial legacy to a symbol of socioeconomic progress and global integration. However, curricula modelled on British and American literary traditions continue to perpetuate an elitist framework that marginalised local perspectives (Hamid, 2021). English continued to play a practical role in Bangladesh (which had become East Pakistan) as a second language that was essential for governance, HE and communication between East and West Pakistan. English was taught from the third to the tenth grade in Bengali-speaking schools, while in HE, English was maintained as the dominant MoI, reflecting its status as the global language of diplomacy and academia (Azam & Kusakabe, 2018).

After its separation from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh focused on building a national identity rooted in Bengali and made it the only official language in its 1972 Constitution to honour the legacy of the Bengali LM (Banu & Sussex, 2001a). The Education Commission Report (1974) emphasised this cultural shift by recommending Bengali as the MoI at all levels of education and reducing English to an optional foreign language. However, minimising ELT led to a visible decline in proficiency, which impacted Bangladesh's ability to engage globally, particularly in HE and trade (Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

In the 1980s, the need to integrate English into the curriculum was re-emphasised as continued globalisation and technological advances increased the demand for English skills. Policy recommendations like those of the English Teaching Taskforce Commission (1976) and National Curriculum Committee (1988) suggested the reintroduction of English as a compulsory subject from the earliest grades. Despite the political instability that hindered implementation, these initiatives made it clear that the importance of English for Bangladesh's development was being increasingly recognised (Arafat & Mehnaaz, 2020).

The 1990s reforms, also driven by globalisation, introduced Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) to enhance practical English proficiency and communicative competence (Hamid & Jahan, 2021; Podder, 2013). Funded by international agencies and embedded within the 1996 National Curriculum, CLT emphasised the integrated skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing. However, its implementation was hampered by inadequate resources, uneven teacher training and persistent biases favouring SE norms. These limitations indicated a broader postcolonial tension in which the utility of English in global communication was being continually negotiated against its colonial legacy (Hamid, 2021; Podder, 2013).

In response to these challenges, the national curriculum was revised in 2012 to reinforce the CLT objectives and encourage students' creativity and critical thinking (Arafat & Mehnaaz, 2020). However, barriers like the continued reliance on the Grammar Translation Method (GTM), exam-based teaching and socioeconomic inequalities led to continued unequal English language proficiency among students (Rahman & Pandian, 2018). The debate between GTM and CLT reflected broader educational policy concerns, with proponents of GTM pointing to proficiency outcomes and CLT proponents emphasising the need for real-world communicative skills in a globalised world (Podder, 2013).

Today, English remains an integral part of Bangladeshi national education, but the quality and accessibility of teaching remains a challenge. Teacher competence, curriculum engagement and assessment practices are not compatible to meet the practical and global demands of English proficiency. The balance between the ELT and the cultural preservation of Bengali remains a crucial consideration in policymaking, as both languages play a significant role in national identity and global engagement (Hamid & Erling, 2016). Thus, the history of ELT demonstrates a dynamic interplay between political influence, cultural identity and global needs.

1.3.2 Language Policy and Planning

In Bangladesh, linguistic development has been characterised by significant changes in LPP that have fundamentally changed national language use (Table 1.5). The government has recognised the cultural and national importance of Bengali and initiated multiple measures to consolidate its position as the main language in numerous areas like administration, justice and education. The first major step in this direction was taken with the introduction of the first education policy in 1972. This policy eliminated English as the language of instruction at the primary and tertiary levels and introduced Bengali as the sole language of instruction in all schools and colleges. It was not only symbolic, but also a manifestation of the nation's commitment to its linguistic heritage.

Table 1.5: Timeline of Official Bangladeshi Language Policy and Planning

Year	Laws or Acts	Language policy and planning
1972	Constitution Act 3(1)	Bangla is the only state language.
1972	Constitution Act 153(3)	Bengali shall prevail in the event of disagreement between English and Bengali.
1974	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Order (18-05-1974)	All government forms must be in Bengali.
1975	President Order (30-12-1975) No: General:729/9 (400)	Bengali must be used in all government activities.
1979	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Order	a) Ordered creation of a Bengali typing machine. b) Ordered a Bangla Academy for lexical development. c) Official letters and orders to be in Bengali font and style. d) Ordered Bengali textbooks, especially in engineering and medical science.
1979	President Order & Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Order	No papers to be received in any language other than Bengali.
1979	Ministry of Cabinet Affairs Order (31-01-1979)	*Sadhu Riti* to be used for official purposes.
1984	Establishment and Reformation Ministry Order (12-02-1984)	a) Due to linguistic barriers, English can be used temporarily. b) All sign boards and nameplates must be in Bengali.
1985	Bengali Language Implementation Cell Order (1-4-1985)	a) All official documents must be in Bengali. b) All recruitment papers must be in Bengali.
1987	Bengali Implementation Act (8-3-1987)	a) Bengali is compulsory in all official documentation and communication. b) No non-Bengali appeal or application allowed to any office.
1988	8th Constitutional Amendment of Bangladesh (Act xxx, Section 3)	'Bangla' is officially replaced with 'Bengali'.
1992	Supreme Court Order (44 DLR 1992-332) (28-11-1992)	Judgements and prosecutions can be done in English. The Bengali Implementation Act cannot regulate SCB judgments.
1996	Bengali Language Implementation Cell Order (02-02-1996)	a) Ordered translation of documents into Bengali. b) 100 BDT granted for every thousand words of government records translated into Bengali.

1996	Bengali Language Implementation Cell order (28-05-1996)	*Sadhu Riti* used for formal official documentation purposes, *Chalit Riti* used for informal documents.
2006	Ministry of Establishment Order (26-05-2006)	a) Ordered creation of Bengali administrative terminology. b) Ordered translation of English into Bengali. c) Ordered survey on problems for implementation of Bengali language for official purposes.
2014	High Court Order	Government and private institutions must stop using English and mixed language on public signage and advertisements.
2014	Ministry of Public Administration Order (14-05-2014)	All signboards, nameplates, car plates, billboards, advertisements in electronic media and circulation must be in Bengali.
2014	Public Service Commission Order	a) The exam authority will prepare the public service recruitment question in both Bengali and English. b) Candidates may respond in English or Bengali. c) Ordered education in English for skilled personnel in public service commissions.
2015	Bengali Implementation Act 2015 (22-01-2015)	All legal orders, judgments and proceedings of the court must be in Bengali.
2016	Ministry of Public Administration Order (23-02-2016)	All public signage and advertisements must be in Bengali.
2016	Ministry of Education Order (03-04-2016)	a) English and Bengali to be used in higher education. b) Reference books to be translated into Bengali for education.

To further cement this commitment, the Dr. Kudrut-e-Khuda Education Commission (1975) submitted a comprehensive report that laid out the future roadmap of LPP in education. The basic points of this policy were: a) the advocacy of Bengali as a MoI at all levels of education; b) the introduction of Bengali as a compulsory subject from the earliest levels of education through BA; c) the introduction of English as a foreign language taught at the secondary levels; d) the recognition of the importance of global languages. The policy also proposed the establishment of an Institute of Modern Languages to offer courses in modern languages like Arabic, Chinese, Russian, German, French and Japanese for university students and other interested individuals. This all-encompassing approach ensured that while Bengali remained the centre of Bangladeshi education, students also had access to global languages in an increasingly interconnected world (Moniruzzaman, 1979).

These policies are legally reflected. Constitutional Act 3 (1) specified Bengali as the only state language (Ara, 2020; Arna & Sultana, 2022; Islam & Hasim, 2019; Moni, 2021; Mousumi & Kusakebe, 2017; Pino, 2021; Rukanuddin, 2019). In addition, Constitutional Act 153 (3) states that 'In case of conflict between the Bengali and English texts, the Bengali text shall prevail'. In 1974, the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs subsequently ordered that all government forms and printed material be published in Bengali. The president ordered Bengali to be used throughout the government in the following year. In 1979, the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs

ordered that emphasis be placed on Bengali and established the Bangla Academy for lexical development. The government also encouraged the production of Bengali textbooks, especially in the fields of engineering and medicine.

In the same year, the president and the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs ordered that no document should be received without being written in Bengali. In the same year, the Ministry of Cabinet Affairs ordered that *Sadhu Riti* [literary Bengali] be used only for official purposes as part of language standardisation. In 1984, the Ministry of Establishment and Reformation ordered that English be allowed to be used temporarily due to the obstacles in conducting official work in Bengali. In addition, all signboards and nameplates in Bangladesh must be in Bengali. The following year, the Bengali Language Implementation Cell ordered that Bengali must be used in all legal matters and procedures, including gazettes, circulars, regulations and much more. The Bangladesh National Parliament Bill and Bengali Implementation Act then ordered that

> It shall be compulsory to use Bengali in all records and correspondences and in all legal matters in all courts, government and semi-government offices and autonomous bodies in Bangladesh. Any appeal or application not written in Bengali shall be considered illegal and invalid (1987).

To promote Bangladeshi nationalism, the word *Bangla* was replaced by *Bengali* by the 8th Amendment to the Constitution of Bangladesh (1988). In 1992, the Supreme Court of Bangladesh (SCB) ordered that legal matters, judgements and prosecutions could be written in English. The SCB claimed that the Bengali Implementation Act was a general law that could not regulate the language of SCB judgements. In 1996, the Bengali Language Implementation Cell established the need for the translation of laws, orders, proceedings and other documents into Bengali. It also announced a reward of 100 BDT for the translation of every thousand words of government documents into Bengali.

In 1996, the Bengali Language Implementation Cell ordered that only *Sadhu Riti* can be used for official formal documentation purposes, while *Cholit Riti* (colloquial Benglai) can be used for informal documentation. In 2006, the Ministry of Public Affairs ordered a focus on creating Bengali administrative terminology, translating documents from English into Bengali and studying the problems of using Bengali for official purposes. In 2014, the Public Service Commission directed the examination authority to write the civil service recruitment questions in both Bengali and English to recruit candidates with English language proficiency. The candidates can answer the questions in Bengali or English. It also directed the Bangladesh Civil

Service Examination Commission to emphasise the need for English for skilled workers. To further establish Bengali in the legal system of Bangladesh, the Bengali Implementation Act (2015) mandated that all court orders, judgments and court proceedings must be written in Bengali.

On 17 February 2014, a judge of the SCB ordered that all English use in signboards, hoardings, banners, car number plates, government office nameplates, advertisements and mass media should be discontinued. The government was instructed to take measures to this end. However, for nearly four years after the directive, Bengali script had still not been strictly enforced on signboards and hoardings. Later, in 2016, the Bangladesh Ministry of Public Administration ordered local governments to make signboards, nameplates, car nameplates, and billboards in Bengali. In the same year, the Bangladesh Ministry of Education ordered that English be used alongside Bengali in HE and that the government take the necessary steps to translate reference books into Bengali for teaching in the first language. Bangladesh has thus attempted to make Bengali central to its national identity by requiring its use in government, legal systems and education. However, the continued use of English in areas like HE and court proceedings demonstrates an ongoing struggle to balance national culture and global demands.

1.3.3 Donor Agency Programs in Bangladesh

As a developing country, Bangladesh is dependent on aid from imperial core countries. Naysmith (1987) claimed that the ELT 'has become part of the process whereby one part of the world has become politically, economically and culturally dominated by another' (p. 21). Recently, there have been a significant number foreign-funded projects in Bangladesh focussed on improving ELT at various levels (Table 1.6). These initiatives demonstrate the joint commitment of the Bangladeshi government and international donors to improving English language proficiency and emphasise its importance for the country's economic development and social progress. However, this emphasis also raises concerns about ELI as English becomes increasingly popular over Bengali. Major projects funded by foreign agencies have targeted secondary school teachers, ELT and teaching quality. Other programmes have had a combined impact on English language teaching policy and practice.

Table 1.6: Foreign-Funded English Education Projects in Bangladesh

Project	Duration	Funding Source
Orientation to Secondary School Teachers for Teaching of English in Bangladesh	1990–1995	DfID and Bangladesh Government
English Language Teaching Improvement Project	1997–2010	DfID
Secondary Education Sector Improvement Project	1999–2005	Asian Development Bank (ADB)
Teaching Quality Improvement Project—School Education Program	2005	ADB and Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
Teaching Quality Improvement Project II	2012–2017	ADB and CIDA
Secondary Education Sector Development Program	2007–2013	ADB
Secondary Education Quality and Access Enhancement Project	2008–2014	World Bank
English in Action	2008–2017	DfID
Secondary Education Sector Investment Program	2013–2023	Bangladesh Government and ADB
Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation Project	2018–2030	Proposed by Bangladesh Government

Note. Adapted from Rahman (2015, p. 88).

Against this backdrop, the Government of Bangladesh launched a project called the English Language Teaching Improvement Project (ELTIP) in 1997, which was jointly funded by the Government of Bangladesh and the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) (Chowdhury & Ha, 2008). ELTIP ran until 2017 and strongly advocated the use of CLT but faced challenges due to lack of funding, which resulted in the project failing to meet its objectives and being terminated prematurely.

In 2002, the Bureau of Manpower, Employment and Training established an English language laboratory at its training centre in Dhaka with the support of IOM (International Organization for Migration) and a budget of 49,963 USD, which was used from years 2004-2005.[14] Since then, IOM has been involved in the development of English training programmes in other parts of the South Asian region, providing language training for migrants preparing to migrate abroad for work. It was felt that the materials and training used to provide the English training in Dhaka should be reviewed and improved to better reflect the migration experience and assess its usefulness for this group of overseas labour migrants and their employers.

The English in Action (EIA) initiative (2008–2017), also supported by DfID with an investment of £50 million, was broader in scope and aimed to improve the English language proficiency of 25 million Bangladeshis through various methods such as media, mobile learning and teacher training (DfID, 2012). At the centre of the EIA initiative was the multi-platform

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[14] https://www.iom.int/project/upgrading-english-language-training-migrant-workers-bangladesh

BBC Janala service, which used television, online platforms, print media and even basic mobile phones to provide accessible language learning opportunities. The service was run by around 6,000 English clubs across the country, offering courses like *BBC Janala Mojay Mojay Shekha* [*BBC Learning with Fun*] and *Amar Engrej Courses* [*My English Courses*]. Collaborative outputs included *BBC Buzz* and the drama series *Bishaash* [*Trust*], which aired through partnerships with the media platforms *BBC Bengali Service*, *Channel I* and *Prothom Alo*. The project demonstrated resilience and innovation in creating broad access to English education, significantly contributing to the linguistic and socioeconomic development of Bangladesh. Here, ELT acted as an instrument that imposes a language teaching method on a country without contemplating its social and cultural aspects (Shams, 2015). The shift from ELTIP to EIA demonstrated how unpredictable foreign aid can be and how difficult it is to align donor objectives with domestic needs. Although the use of modern media and digital technologies in EIA was considered innovative, it also illustrated how foreign-funded projects can unintentionally create linguistic hierarchies (Rahman, 2015; Shams, 2014).

One of the notable programmes was the Secondary Education Sector Investment Programme (SESIP), which is supported by both the Government of Bangladesh and the Asian Development Bank (ADB). SESIP, which ran from 2013 to 2023, aimed to restructure secondary education to focus on the skills needed in the labour market, much like previous initiatives. Although these efforts have demonstrated a commitment to skills-based learning, they also emphasised the importance of English for career success, potentially perpetuating a social and linguistic hierarchy (Rahman, 2015).

The Strategic Plan for Higher Education (SPHE) of 2018–2030 also demonstrates this pattern. In line with the National Education Policy 2010, Vision 2021 and Vision 2041, the SPHE aims to improve HE through the Higher Education Acceleration and Transformation Project (HEAT). This strategy emphasises the importance of English for Bangladesh's global competitiveness while reinforcing the idea that English proficiency signals social and economic progress, raising concerns about ELI in HE.

1.3.4 Bangladeshi English

Shams (2014) saw the emergence of BdE as an evolving variety that reflects local linguistic practices and socio-cultural contexts. She characterised it as frequent code-switching with Bengali, particularly in informal digital communication. Although BdE is not officially recognised,

she argued features commonly perceived as 'errors' underline the legitimacy of BdE as a localised form of English. Moreover, the limited functional scope of BdE is evident in its lack of institutional entrenchment compared to other SAEs. This leads to its categorisation as erroneous or a non-institutionalised variety (Hoffmann et al., 2011, p. 270). Hoffmann et al. (2011) affirmed that distinguishing between nativisation and learner errors remains a challenge when analysing BdE. For example, constructions like 'take benefit from' or 'have lack' might represent preliminary stages of nativisation or simply non-native usages influenced by Bengali syntax and semantics (p. 275).

1.3.4.1 Historical Roots

Exploring the historical root of BdE, Suárez-Gómez and Seoane (2022) emphasised that it developed within the framework of SAEs but took a non-prototypical path compared to other postcolonial Englishes. However, BdE is also considered a clear descendant of IndE as both varieties originated under British colonial rule. This common origin influenced BdE, but its development diverged significantly after the independence of Pakistan in 1947 and Bangladesh in 1971, resulting in unique sociolinguistic and political contexts (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023; Gries & Bernaisch, 2016). Unlike IndE and Pakistani English (PkE), BdE has been largely overlooked in the scholarship and has not been extensively covered in recent handbooks on English varieties. While other SAEs like IndE, PkE and Sri Lankan English (SLE) are well documented in sources like *The Electronic World Atlas of Varieties of English* (*eWAVE* 3.0), BdE is conspicuously absent (Kortmann et al., 2020). Similarly, there is no Bangladesh component in the *International Corpus of English* (*ICE*), unlike IndE and SLE. However, BdE data can be found in the G*lobal Web-based English Corpus* (*GloWbE*), the *News on the Web Corpus* (*NOW*) and the *South Asian Varieties of English Corpus* (*SAVE*), which offer limited but valuable insights into its characteristics (Bernaisch & Koch, 2016; Davies, 2013; Schilk, 2011). *GloWbE* is especially helpful for its representation of the morphosyntactic features of BdE and comparisons with other SAEs to identify patterns of homogeneity and heterogeneity (Davies, 2013).

1.3.4.2 Features

The morphosyntactic characteristics of BdE include the extension of the progressive aspect. For example, BdE extends the use of the progressive aspect to stative verbs more frequently than SE (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023, p. 28), as seen in sentences like 'He is knowing the answer'. BdE also demonstrates a higher frequency of analytic comparatives, compared to IndE

and SLE (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023, p. 29). Double comparatives are especially common in BdE, and uses of 'better' and 'easier' highlight an inclination towards redundant marking (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023, p. 30). BdE frequently pluralizes mass nouns (e.g., 'informations', 'furnitures') more than other SAEs (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023, p. 31). It shows distinct patterns in light verb constructions (LVCs) that are shared with other SAEs (e.g., BdE 'take rest' rather than BrE 'have a rest'). However, variations exist, such as the use of zero-article LVCs (e.g., 'give boost') being more frequent in BdE than in IndE or BrE (Hoffmann et al., 2011, 272). BdE exhibits deviations in article usage, often omitting articles in constructions where they are obligatory in BrE or IndE. For example, phrases like 'give Ø rest' and 'take Ø lease' are attested more frequently in BdE than in other SAEs (Hoffmann et al., 2011, p. 273). Unique constructions like 'take lease' and 'have lack' demonstrate influence from Bengali syntactic structures and possibly limited exposure to SE norms (Hoffmann et al., 2011, p. 275).

BdE speakers often engage in code-switching between Bengali and English, as evident in the linguistic landscape of Dhaka, media (Banu & Sussex, 2001b, p. 53). Despite its limited local scope, BdE is also influenced by global and regional Englishes through media, education and economic interactions. This results in a hybridisation of linguistic features, blending BrE norms with regional adaptations common in SAEs (Hoffmann et al., 2011, p. 276). Such practices contribute to the further development of this localised variety (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023). BdE also demonstrates unique developments influenced by Bengali syntax and vocabulary (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023, p. 24). Moreover, it shares lexical and phonological traits with IndE, PkE and SLE due to historical associations. However, BdE also demonstrates unique phonological variation (Chapter 7).

The current state of BdE suggests that it has not yet fully developed the stage of Endonormative Stabilisation like IndE and SLE, which show more advanced nativisation processes (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023). According to Hoffmann et al. (2011), BdE's unique developmental course can be attributed to English's status as a foreign language and not an institutionalised ESL variant, since it has no official status in Bangladesh and does not function as a liaison language (p. 273). Nevertheless, English remains widely used in Bangladesh, especially in academic and professional settings where code-switching and code-mixing between Bengali and English are common, reflecting a sociolinguistic environment of widespread bilingual practices (Shanta, 2017). For example, in urban areas like Dhaka, there is significant

linguistic and graphological code-switching in public spaces, print media and electronic media, which Banu and Sussex (2001b) identified as factors that promote localisation through public understanding (pp. 53, 66). Furthermore, Hossain et al. (2015) argued that the use of English in Bangladeshi media serves both as a tool for localisation and as a step towards establishing a distinct BdE variety.

Thus, BdE occupies a unique position within WE, reflecting both the characteristics of L2 English varieties and the specific characteristics of Bangladesh's bilingual environment. As BdE continues to be shaped by interactions between Bengali and English across different domains, it illustrates the complex dynamics of language evolution in postcolonial societies and highlights the importance of recognising the role of BdE within the broader landscape of SAEs (Seoane & Suárez-Gómez, 2023).

CHAPTER TWO
METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The research methods that were used in this study are provided in this chapter, and the justifications for the chosen methods, data collection procedures, instruments, tools, sampling, analytical frameworks, and other related issues are explained. The chapter includes the aim of the study, the research questions (RQs), the role of the researcher, ethical considerations, and credibility.

2.1 Research Aim and Questions

Based on the general theoretical framework described in Chapter 1, the aim of the current study is to examine English linguistic imperialism (ELI) and World Englishes (WE), particularly the localised variety of English that is spoken in Bangladesh. It also includes emerging aspects in relation to research problems, such as global migration, digital colonialism (N. Schneider, 2022; Salami, 2024), digital neocolonialism (Auh, 2024), Standard English-driven artificial intelligence (AI) (Auh, 2024), technofeudalism (Varoufakis, 2021), discourses of agencies (parental, child, donor, and state), cognitive imperialism (Ofosu-Asare, 2024) and others. These aims led to the following RQs:

> **RQ1**. What are the perceptions of students and teachers in higher education regarding the English language in Bangladesh?

> **RQ2**. How do students and teachers perceive BdE and what are their attitudes towards it?

> **RQ3**. To what extent are phonological variations manifested in BdE, as evidenced by acoustic analyses?

RQ1 contributes to the broader discourse on language policy and the power dynamics of language use in Bangladesh. It involves the historical, educational, and sociopolitical context in which English is taught and used. Thus, the perceptions of teachers and students are essential for understanding the sociocultural role of English in society. RQ2 focuses specifically on the role of WE, particularly how it influences perceptions of and attitudes towards English in different cultural contexts. The aim is to provide a detailed, highly accurate picture of how WE

intersect with issues of identity, ownership, power, and resistance in neocolonial contexts. Another aim of this study is to investigate the impact of the recognition of multiple varieties of English in language policy and education in the (post)colonial context. Moreover, RQ3 is an attempt to understand the phonological differences between BdE and Received Pronunciation (RP), which is traditionally associated with Southern Standard British English (SSBE).

2.2 Approach

A mixed-method research design was adopted in the present study as this design integrates both qualitative and quantitative approaches. The use of this approach in this study was justified by several key considerations found in the methodological literature, which was consulted to provide stronger evidence and to broaden the perspectives on the complexity of language use, variation, change, and development across different social contexts of intersectionality, language identity, discrimination, and social identity (Caldas, 2012; Milroy & Gordon, 2003; Park et al., 2024; Zhao, 2017). The mixed-method approach supports methodological diversity in sociolinguistic inquiries to investigate multiple perspectives (Hernández-Campoy, 2014; Yakushkina & Olson, 2016). Furthermore, it also allowed for triangulation in this study and strengthened the interpretations (Bans-Akutey & Tiimub, 2021). As population trends and individual language practices were analysed in this study (Blaxter & Kinn, 2018), the mixed-method approach was consistent with the philosophical paradigm of the research. Finally, the mixed-method approach allowed for the expansion of the study as it enabled the collection of both closed-ended quantitative data and open-ended qualitative insights, which increased the depth of the findings (Creswell, 2014).

In this study, I examined the global influence of ELI, its structural and cultural foundations, the contemporary mechanisms, and the forms of resistance that challenge its dominance in HEIs. Specifically, RQ1 was addressed through qualitative methods, including FGDs and semistructured interviews, which were analysed using a TA to explore the social and ideological perceptions of English. By contrast, RQ2 was addressed using quantitative survey methods that incorporated descriptive and inferential statistical techniques to examine attitudes towards BdE. To answer RQ3, an instrumental acoustic analysis was used to measure phonological variation in BdE in comparison to RP and SSBE, thus entailing a quantitative scientific method. While the three RQs were addressed using distinct techniques, they collectively addressed the broader research issue, namely the perception, and attitudinal and phonological dimensions of

ELI and the localisation of English in Bangladesh. Given this purposeful combination of paradigms and the intention to synthesise insights from both types of data during the interpretation of the results, the study conforms to the definition of a mixed-method design as described by Creswell and Plano Clark (2018).

The integration of three interrelated RQs supports the investigation of perceptions (social and ideological views), attitudinal orientations (perceptions and attitudes), and the linguistic realisation (phonological variation) of BdE (see Figure 2.1). As mentioned previously, a mixed-method research design was employed to address the single broader phenomenon of ELI and the emergence of BdE. However, this study cannot be categorised as a multimethod study, as that term refers to the use of multiple methods within a single methodological tradition (e.g., entirely qualitative or entirely quantitative approaches). Instead, methods from both qualitative and quantitative paradigms are systematically integrated in this study, thereby aligning it with a mixed-method approach that enables a comprehensive analysis of the research problem.
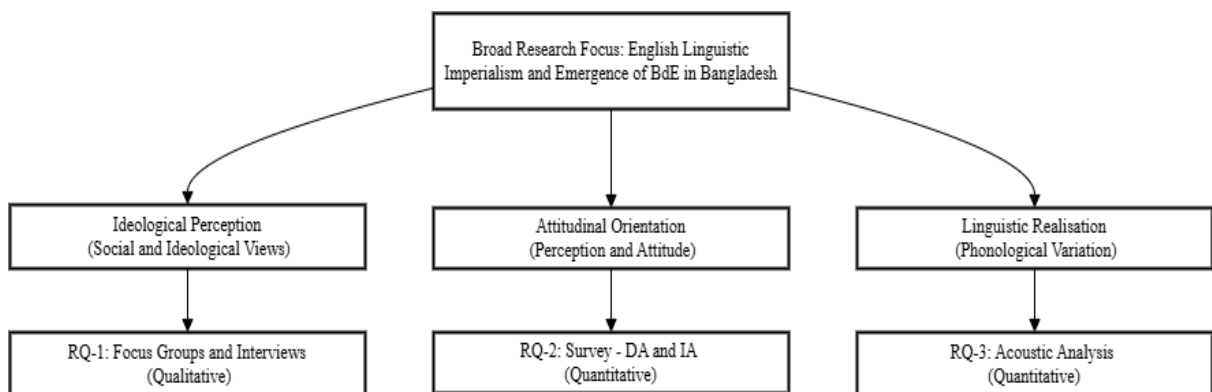
Figure 2.1: Conceptual Framework of the Study

2.2.1 Philosophical Paradigms

The philosophy of scientific research refers to the conceptual framework that guides the researcher's thinking and through which valid and reliable knowledge about the object of investigation is generated. A research paradigm explains what the researcher believes reality to be, how they think knowledge can be understood, and what they value in research. The technical terms used to articulate a research paradigm are ontology, epistemology, and axiology (Pretorius, 2024). A research paradigm A research paradigm forms the basis of the research process and influences the choice of the research strategy, the formulation of the problem, and the procedures for collecting, analysing, and interpreting the data (Žukauskas et al., 2018).

2.2.1.1 Qualitative Inquiry

A critical constructivist ontological stance (Jofili & Watts, 1995) was adopted in this study to explore the underlying assumptions about the nature of multiple realities and how they are understood (Saunders et al., 2019). It is generally agreed that social actors enact phenomena and interpret their meanings (Bryman, 2008). Adopting a critical constructivist ontological stance allowed the researcher to investigate how the ELI manifests in experience and reveals the power structures. Moreover, critical constructivism combines constructivist ideas about how individuals create knowledge through social interactions and constructionist notions of socially derived meanings based on the Frankfurt School's critical theory, and allows for the examination of societal power dynamics and the ethical consequences of human actions (Bentley et al., 2007; Jofili & Watts, 1995; Kincheloe, 2005; Milutinović, 2015). As part of the QI, semi-structured interviews and FGDs were used to collect descriptive data from the participants.

The aim of the QI was to interpret the in-depth, context-specific insights (perceptions) of students and teachers; in terms of the epistemological stance, a subjectivist stance was adopted in this study (Collis & Hussey, 2003). Furthermore, the QI in this study was guided by an interpretivist–constructivist–phenomenological stance to explore how individuals constructed meaning within specific cultural and social contexts (Schwandt, 2000). Rooted in idealist philosophy, interpretivism encompasses a variety of perspectives such as social constructivism, phenomenology, and hermeneutics; this paradigm collectively rejects the notion that meaning exists independently of human consciousness, and asserts that knowledge is co-constructed through individuals' subjective experiences and social interactions instead (Nickerson, 2024). Within this framework, understanding is seen as being context dependent, and reality is interpreted rather than being discovered. Consequently, this philosophical position allowed the researcher to explore/interpret how the participants — students and teachers — constructed meaning around the use of the English language, identity, and linguistic variation within the sociocultural context of Bangladesh.

The QI in the current study was the phenomenological stance rather than the positivist approach because the latter is unable to determine the interaction between theory and fact (Seale, 1999) and overlooks human subjectivity (Schutz, 1970). Furthermore, phenomenology supports the idea that action and behaviour are generated from within the human mind (Popper, 1980); the phenomenological position supported the QI due to enabling the understanding of

these meanings from the participants' perspectives (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2007; Crotty, 1998) and provided detailed descriptions of experiences in natural settings (Snape & Spencer, 2003). It also facilitated the interactions amongst the researcher and/or the participants and provided sufficient flexibility to address emerging issues (Snape & Spencer, 2003). This flexibility was evident in both the order and the formulation of the questions, contingent upon the role and expertise of the participants (Ennis & Chen, 2012). Moreover, it was used to obtain comprehensive information about the participants' perceptions (Baral et al., 2016). The RQ pertaining to the QI was largely exploratory and open ended. The methodological approach of QI was adopted to address "what" and "how" questions in relation to phenomena (Ritchard, 2003; Silverman, 2011). Therefore, finding a single, definitive truth to account for the participants' diverse linguistic experiences was untenable; instead, the QI supported the interpretation of their actions, choices, beliefs, and values within their specific social contexts (Richards, 2003; Snape & Spencer, 2003).

2.2.1.2 Quantitative Inquiry

2.2.1.2.1 Survey

A "middle-ground" philosophical stance (Gubrium & Holstein, 1998: 416–21), which allows for methodological pluralism to balance a structured, empirical inquiry with both critical and interpretive understanding, was adopted in this study. According to Tashakkori and Creswell (2008), middle-ground worldviews enable the adoption of multiple perspectives, which is particularly suitable for complex postcolonial linguistic contexts such as Bangladesh. Yin (2016) also considered this hybrid paradigm to be more compatible than positivism or constructivism. The QnI in the current study was selected to be an intermediate ontological position to acknowledge the fact that both objective and subjective views of reality are useful in a social science study (Ansari et al., 2020).

Critical realism (CR) was adopted as the ontological stance in this study to answer in this study to answer RQ2, following Bhaskar (2008, 2014) and later developments by Archer et al. (1998). CR advances a stratified view of reality and distinguishes amongst the empirical (perceived experiences), the actual (observable events), and the real (underlying causal mechanisms) (Fletcher, 2017; Scott, 2005; Tikly, 2015). The CR paradigm was used in this study to explore students' and teachers' views regarding the perception of and attitude towards BdE via closed-ended surveys. While observable events (such as language attitudes) were evident, they were underpinned by deeper, often unobservable structures and mechanisms, such as historical,

cultural, and institutional influences (Pretorius, 2024). Moreover, CR enabled the QnI to be used to investigate causal tendencies by emphasising the interplay between the structure and the agency of local varieties of English, with judgemental rationality taking priority over explanatory depth (Hu, 2018). This ontological stratification allowed for the investigation of underlying mechanisms that were not immediately visible, similar to how only the tip of an iceberg can be seen above the water (Stutchbury, 2021).

Furthermore, a postpositivist epistemological stance was adopted in this study (Zhu, 2024). As can be seen, postpositivism acknowledges that, although reality exists independently of human perception, our understanding of it is always partial and is shaped by context (Popper, 1980). Pinsonneault and Kraemer (1993) defined it as a "means for gathering information about the characteristics, actions, or opinions of a large group of people" (p. 77). Moreover, Bisel and Adame (2017) explained that it comprised reality, knowledge, and values. They also argued that social reality was objective and measurable, although they acknowledged the complexity and challenges that were involved in fully accessing and interpreting that reality. Therefore, the position that was adopted in this study is that the world is ambiguous, variable, and multiple in its realities; what might be the truth for one person or cultural group may not be the truth for another (O'Leary, 2004).

A "value-laden" (Pretorius, 2024: 2702) axiological stance was adopted for the statistical analysis. Although the survey-based quantitative phase aimed for structured objectivity, it must be acknowledged that complete neutrality is not achievable. As Pretorius (2024) highlighted, knowledge construction is inherently influenced by values; subjectivity was therefore embraced, and reflexivity was encouraged. In line with CR, it was recognised that researchers are shaped by their social, historical, and cultural contexts in this study. Reflexivity was applied throughout the research process to critically examine the researcher's position, assumptions, and potential biases in the production and interpretation of knowledge.

2.2.1.2.2 Acoustic Analysis

An acoustic analysis was used to measure, visualise, and analyse the physical properties of speech sounds, such as formant structure. The philosophical foundations (i.e., ontology, epistemology, and axiology) are shaped by the research paradigm. In this study, the acoustic analysis to answer RQ3 entailed a realist ontological stance. As speech sounds are physical phenomena that exist independently of human perception, features such as frequency and formant are treated as the objective properties of sound waves that can be measured, regardless of

whether or not they are interpreted by a listener. The epistemological orientation of the study was positivist, as it presumed that objective knowledge about phonology could be obtained via systematic measurements and analyses. According to the philosophy of positivism, researchers address questions objectively without affecting the actual problem being studied (Maksimović & Evtimov, 2023). PRAAT provides numerical and graphical representations that are considered to be empirical evidence of real-world acoustic events.

The acoustic analysis followed a positivist epistemology and a realist ontology, which posit that an objective reality exists and can be empirically measured (observable). Therefore, a value-free axiological stance was adopted to promote objectivity and to minimise researcher bias (Pretorius, 2024). Instrumental tools and standardised procedures — such as the measurement of formant frequencies and voice onset times (VOTs) — were employed to ensure neutrality and replicability.

Table 2.1: Research Philosophy and the Approach in This Study

Component	Stance				Application in this study
Research Philosophy	Ontology	Qualitative paradigm	Multiple Realities leans heavily towards subjectivity	Critical Constructivism	Interrogate how English education in Bangladesh promotes epistemological asymmetry.
		Quantitative	Middle ground	Critical Realism	Language perception and behaviours.
		Quantitative Instrumental acoustic Measurements	Objective	Realism	Speech sounds exist as measurable physical phenomena
	Epistemology	Qualitative paradigm	Subjective	Interpretivism Constructivism Phenomenological	Emphasises understanding the socially constructed nature of reality through the subjective meanings that individuals assign to their experiences.
		Quantitative	Middle-ground	Post-positivism	The study accepts that perfect objectivity is impossible; it seeks measurable trends in attitudes and perceptions using structured tools (e.g., Likert-scale surveys and VGT).
		Quantitative Instrumental acoustic measurements	Objective	Positivism	Objective knowledge, obtained through systematic measurement and analysis as PRAAT provides empirical evidence of real-world acoustic events.
	Axiology	Qualitative		Value Laden (biased)	This study acknowledges the role of the researcher in shaping interpretation (especially in thematic analysis). As a researcher from a Bangladeshi background, it influences coding.
		Quantitative		value-neutrality	The positivist epistemological framework and a realist ontological perspective, striving for value neutrality. By employing standardised measurement tools and objective analytical methods, the research seeks to minimise the influence of researcher bias.

2.3 Sampling

The sampling for this study reflected a rigorous and multifaceted approach, and was designed to ensure representativeness. As can be seen, a stratified random sampling method was employed to select HEIs in Dhaka, one of the eight administrative regions of Bangladesh (see Figure 2.2). Dhaka, the capital city, was selected as the main location due to its demographic representativeness and the ease of communication.
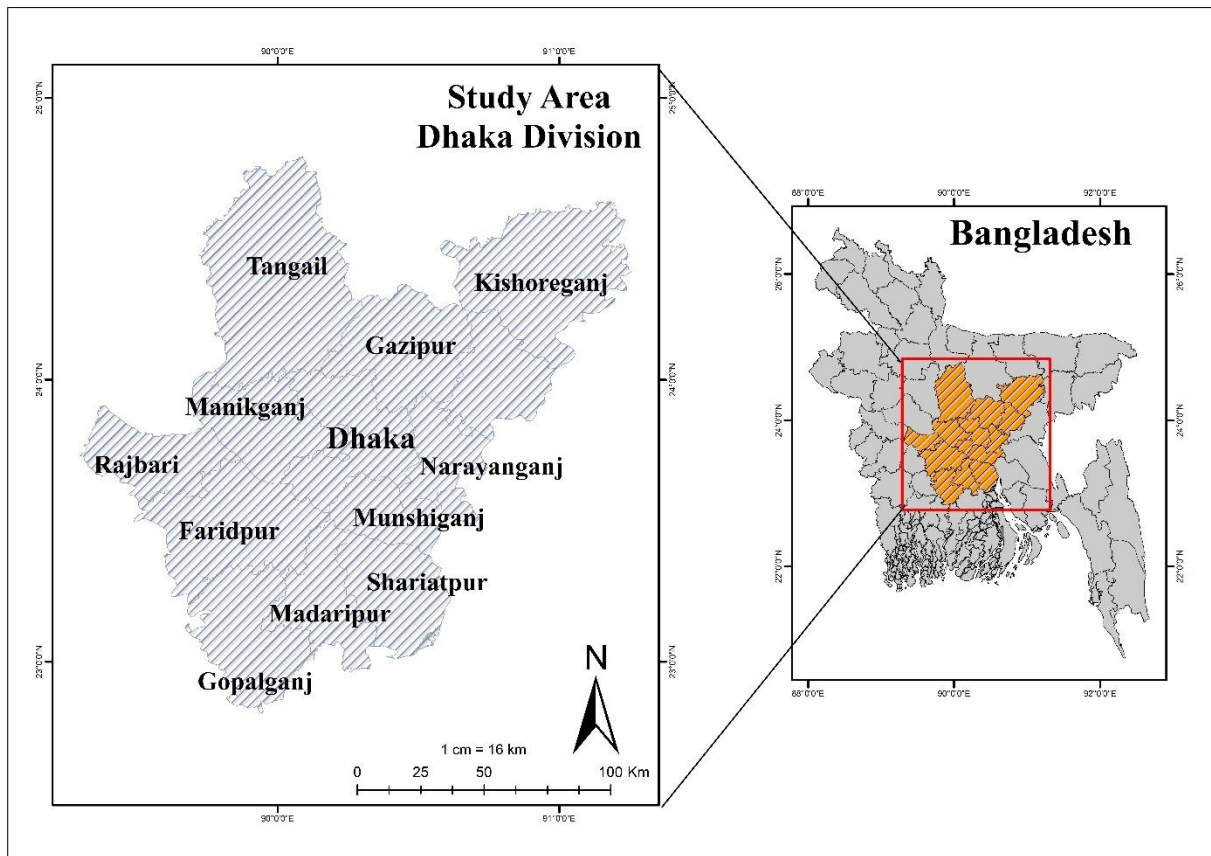
Figure 2.2: Geographic Distribution of Study Locations

The universities in Dhaka were divided into public and private institutions before selecting the participating institutions. Two universities were randomly selected from each category in order to include two public universities (designated as Universities A and B) and two private universities (designated as Universities C and D). These four universities served as the final sites for participant selection across the data collection instruments. Different sampling methods were employed for each instrument to recruit distinct participant groups, ensuring representativeness. These institutions are key academic hubs that attract students from diverse socioeconomic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds.
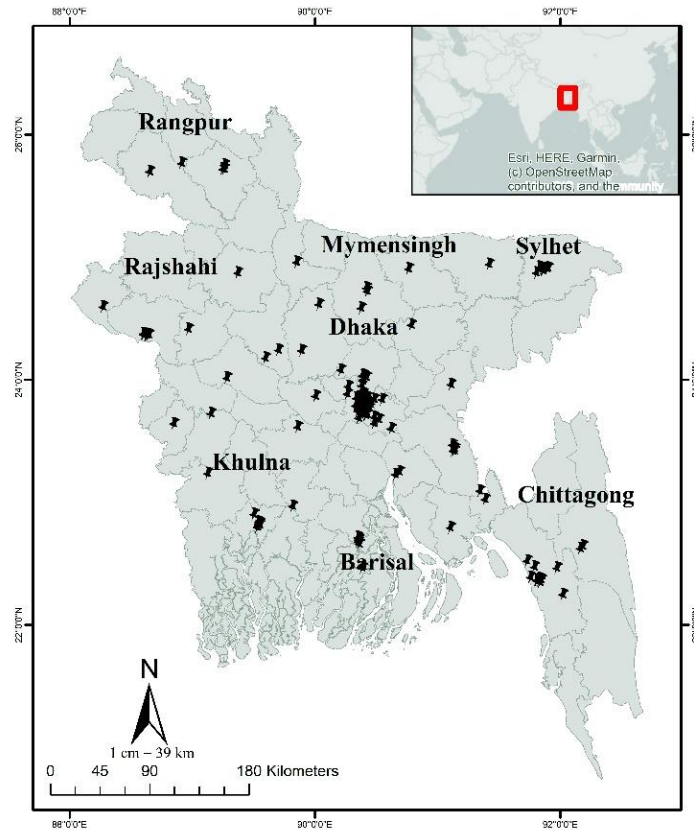
Figure 2.3: Geospatial Distribution of EMI Universities in Bangladesh

Teachers and students were then recruited purposely to attain the aims of the study. Table 2.2 provides sample strategies for each instrument; the size of the participant group and the number of institutions were selected for this study.

Table 2.2: Sampling Techniques, Types, Number, and Category

	Instruments	Sampling technique		Sample Size (n)	Group/ Category
		Probability sampling	non-probability sampling		
Partici- pants	Focus group dis- cussion	-	Purposive Sam- pling	n = 100	Students
	Interview	-	Purposive Sam- pling	n = 20	Teachers
	Survey	Simple random sam- pling	-	n = 120	Students & teachers
	Audio Record- ing	-	Purposive sam- pling	n = 10	Students & teachers
Institu- tions		Stratified Random Sampling	-	n = 4	A, B, C, D

Purposive sampling was employed in this study to select the participants for both the FGDs ($n = 100$) and the semi-structured interviews with teachers ($n = 20$). This nonprobability sampling technique was chosen to ensure the inclusion of individuals who had specific characteristics and insights pertinent to the research objectives. Purposive sampling was used to select participants who could provide detailed and meaningful insights into the research topic. This approach allowed for the identification of individuals who could assist in answering the RQs, thus enabling the collection of rich, in-depth data (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Various departments at the universities were selected for the recruitment of participants for the FGDs in order to capture a range of perspectives from both public and private universities and to ensure diverse representations of experiences and perceptions. Similarly, the teachers who were chosen for the semi-structured interviews were selected based on their subject expertise and professional experience, which provided data that were both relevant and contextually rich. This purposive sampling approach was aligned with the study's qualitative design, which emphasised depth of understanding. Recruiting participants who were directly connected to the research topic enabled a focused exploration of RQ1, consistent with established qualitative methodologies (Creswell, 2014; Marshall, 1996; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015).

However, simple random sampling was used to select the survey participants (n = 120) as a probability-based approach to select students (n = 100) and teachers (n = 20) from four universities. This sampling approach ensured that each individual from both groups had an equal chance of being selected for the survey to increase the representativeness thereof (Cochran, 1977; Creswell, 2014; Thompson, 2012). Given the smaller population size of teachers relative to students, the sample size for teachers was proportionately smaller. However, to ensure meaningful analysis and adequate representation of teacher perspectives, a sufficient number of teachers (n = 20) were included in the sample. This smaller number reflects the broader student–teacher ratio characteristic of higher education in Bangladesh and aligns with the socio-structural realities of the context. Moreover, purposive sampling was used for the audio recordings of a select group of participants (n = 10) (Creswell, 2014; DiCicco-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006; Palinkas et al., 2015; Patton, 2015). The participants who contributed the audio data met the criteria that matched the research objectives.

Although the acoustic analysis in this study involved a small number of participants, such an approach is common in phonetics and sociophonetics, particularly when the analysis

is detailed and systematic (Lakens, 2022a, b). Each participant's speech was subjected to a careful acoustic examination, including multiple recordings and measurements of key phonetic features such as formants and VOT. This rigorous procedure enhanced the reliability of the findings despite the limited sample size. Similar studies in the field have supported the use of small samples; for example, Delvaux et al. (2014) conducted an acoustic analysis of 10 native French speakers to examine vowel and aspirated stop production, yielding meaningful results. Similarly, Mahmood et al. (2011) studied 15 Pakistani postgraduate students' productions of /θ/ and /ð/ in English and Urdu, using PRAAT for a detailed analysis (Styler, 2013). These examples demonstrate that, when analysed with precision and the appropriate tools, small samples can produce valuable insights. A similar approach was adopted in this study, thus prioritising depth of analysis over sample size, which was particularly appropriate for RQ3.

2.4 Research Instruments and Data Collection

A research instrument is a systematically developed tool that is used to gather, measure, and analyse data in relation to specific research objectives and focus areas (Oben, 2021). Systematic data collection procedures were used in this study to ensure the reliability and validity of the results. The research instruments were chosen to reduce bias, to control confounding variables, and to ensure consistency throughout the process (Creswell, 2014; Fowler, 2014). Ethical protocols were followed to protect the participants' rights (see Appendix D) and to increase the trustworthiness of the results (Kumar, 2019). Data were analysed using a rigorous approach to enable a meaningful interpretation and to contribute to knowledge development. These procedures provided a solid foundation for evidence-based and data-driven conclusions (Saunders et al., 2019).

2.4.1 Focus Group Discussions

The FGs were deliberately formed by selecting groups of people to collect data to answer RQ1, rather than to constitute a statistically representative sample of a wider population (Nyumba et al., 2018). Several strategies are used to form effective FGDs; for example, emphasising equality and difference to capture a broad range of perspectives and experiences (Femdal & Solbjør, 2018; Hermann et al., 2024). The FGDs provided a valuable framework for generating new ideas and allowed for participant interaction, which helped to explore the participants' experiences, perceptions, and ideologies, thereby facilitating an in-depth understanding of complex social issues (Nyumba et al., 2018).

The FGDs involved bringing together students from similar backgrounds or with similar experiences to elicit rich, interactive dialogues (Dilshad & Latif, 2013; Lobe, 2017; Sachdeva et al., 2024; Smithson, 2008; Stewart & Shamdasani, 2014; Tümen-Akyıldız & Ahmed, 2021). Accordingly, Morgan's (2012) two basic forms of interaction in FGDs, (a) sharing and comparing and (b) organising and conceptualising, were followed in this study. These techniques facilitated the transition from the general to the specific and defined the role of coconstruction in the participants' discussions of the research objectives. Relevant prompts were used to encourage the participants during their narratives (Geampana & Perrotta, 2025). In addition, this inquiry considered group identity, which influenced the participants' psychological mechanisms of collective action and emotional responses (van Zomeren et al., 2008). Moreover, a guideline was developed to encourage open dialogue and to make the participants feel comfortable when sharing their views, as well as to encourage active involvement (Owen 2001; Powell & Single, 1996).

Table 2.3: List of FGDs Participants

Section	FG	Institution	Department	Date	Participants	Gender	District
Public	1	A	Pharmacy	6/12/23	Anika	F	Dhaka
					Ayan	M	Chattogram
					Ayesha	F	Dhaka
					Anisa	F	Narayanganj
					Arifa	F	Gazipur
	2		Computer	14/12/23	Bushra	F	Dhaka
					Chandni	F	Cumilla
					Bristi	F	Chattogram
					Arman	M	Narayanganj
					Farhan	M	Dhaka
	3		Botany	18/12/23	Aarif	M	Rajshahi
					Ayman	M	Rangpur
					Orin	F	Chattogram
					Adnan	M	Narayanganj
					Rafia	M	Mymensingh
	4		Finance	21/12/23	Faisal	M	Khulna
					Syam	M	Sylhet
					Toma	F	Dhaka
					Keya	F	Bogura
					Lipi	F	Gazipur
	5		Sociology	4/1/24	Rita	F	Barishal
					Toya	F	Cumilla
					Jovan	M	Noakhali
					Tisha	F	Dhaka
					Shathi	F	Brahmanbaria
	6	B	Political Science	9/1/2024	Jahid	M	Brahmanbaria

	No.		Subject	Date	Name	Sex	District
					Fahim	M	Feni
					Imran	M	Narsingdi
					Nasrin	F	Gazipur
					Irfan	M	Tangail
	7		History	17/1/24	Raisa	F	Jashore
					Nusrat	F	Pabna
					Kashif	M	Cumilla
					Kabir	M	Sirajganj
					Jishan	M	Dinajpur
	8		Zoology	25/1/24	Khaled	M	Kushtia
					Mahir	M	Chattogram
					Amina	F	Chandpur
					Nazim	F	Faridpur
					Arisha	F	Dhaka
	9		Bengali	5/2/2024	Mahin	M	Cox's Bazar
					Nazima	M	Cumilla
					Minhaz	M	Habiganj
					Nabil	M	Jamalpur
					Arohi	F	Sunamganj
	10		English	13/2/24	Asma	F	Mymensingh
					Afia	F	Patuakhali
					Farhana	F	Chuadanga
					Noman	M	Dhaka
					Nasir	M	Gazipur
	11	C	Finance	19/2/24	Omar	M	Narayanganj
					Rahim	M	Chattogram
					Rajib	M	Cumilla
					Farhana	F	Bogura
					Fariha	F	Barishal
	12		Law	22/2/24	Saif	M	Chattogram
					Fiza	F	Narayanganj
					Riaz	M	Rajshahi
					Fatima	F	Tangail
					Shakil	M	Noakhali
	13		Human Resource Management (HRM)	27/2/24	Habiba	F	Dhaka
					Ishrat	F	Faridpur
					Shihab	M	Khulna
					Jannat	F	Dhaka
					Tamim	M	Chattogram
Private	14		English	29/2/24	Jesmin	F	Gazipur
					Shoaib	M	Sirajganj
					Tanvir	M	Narsingdi
					Sohail	M	Narayanganj
					Touhid	M	Barishal
	15		Economics	4/3/2024	Lamia	F	Bogura
					Meher	F	Mymensingh
					Wasim	M	Jashore
					Nadia	F	Brahmanbaria
					Mahak	F	Rangpur
	16	D	Chemical Engineering (ChE)	7/3/2024	Wadud	M	Dhaka
					Sabrina	F	Chattogram
					Tasnim	F	Cumilla

			Shima	F	Sylhet
			Yousuf	M	Tangail
17	Electrical and Electronics Engineering (EEE)	11/3/24	Zahir	M	Dhaka
			Yasin	M	Cox's Bazar
			Tahira	F	Barishal
			Uzma	F	Feni
			Zubair	M	Jamalpur
18	Computer Science and Engineering (CSE)	14/3/24	Sahil	M	Narayanganj
			Zafar	M	Pabna
			Adil	M	Habiganj
			Hina	F	Chattogram
			Juthi	F	Dhaka
19	Software Engineering	18/3/24	Afsar	M	Dinajpur
			Zara	F	Noakhali
			Yasmin	F	Khulna
			Bilal	M	Sylhet
			Hafiz	M	Chandpur
20	Information Technology (ICT)	21/3/24	Disha	F	Dhaka
			Emran	M	Gazipur
			Labib	M	Narayanganj
			Iqbal	M	Rangpur
			Kamal	M	Dhaka

Table 2.3 provides information about the FGD members' institutions, departments, the date, the participants' pseudonyms, genders, and district(s) of origin. As can be seen, 20 mini-FGDs were conducted with participants (n =100) from four selected institutions in an interactive environment to allow them to express their individual and collective reflections. Moreover, brainstorming (Krueger & Casey, 2009), free association, and the nominal group technique (NGT; Morgan, 1997) were used. NGT involved the structured generation of ideas, which ensured that all the participants' voices were heard while minimising the dominance of more vocal individuals (Gallagher et al., 1993; Morgan, 1997; Varga-Atkins, 2011). The participants were encouraged to develop ideas spontaneously and without criticism; these ideas were later refined into themes (Krueger & Casey, 2009).

Table 2.4: Demography of FGDs Participants

	Characteristic	n (%)
	Gender	
	Male	53 (53%)
	Female	47 (47%)
	Age	
	18-22	65 (65%)
Focus Group Discussion	23-27	35 (35%)
	Education	
	Higher Secondary Education	70 (70%)
	Bachelor's Degree	30 (30%)

Location			
Metropolitan (e.g., DHAKA)	15 (15%)		
District-level	85 (85%)		

As shown in Table 2.4, the FGD participants included a balanced mix of genders, thus supporting diverse viewpoints. Most of the participants were from district-level areas and could thus offer insights beyond urban experiences. Their ages and education levels reflected the typical demographics of young people in educational settings, which aligned well with the study's focus. All the FGDs were audio recorded, accompanied by careful note taking. Probing and clarification techniques were used to increase the depth of the discussion to identify insights. The data were then transcribed verbatim and were translated carefully. Table 2.5 provides an overview of the FGD participants from the selected institutions and describes their primary objectives and research areas.

Table 2.5: Anonymised Institutes of the FGD Participants

Institute Code	Institute Type	Faculties/Departments	FGDs
A	Public University	- Pharmacy - Computer - Botany - Finance - Sociology	5
B	Public University	- Political Science. - History - Zoology - Bengali - English	5
C	Private University	- Finance - Law - HRM - English - English	5
D	Private University	- ChE - EEE - CSE - Software Engineering - ICT	5

Moreover, the participants were given the option to choose a language in which they could communicate comfortably. All the participants were over the age of 18 and had diverse linguistic backgrounds, as shown in Table 2.4. Five focus groups were formed at each institution, and each discussion lasted for approximately one hour. Prior to the discussion, the participants were provided with specific information about the project and their tasks. The students were given prompts to explore their experiences of learning in EMI and in other languages.
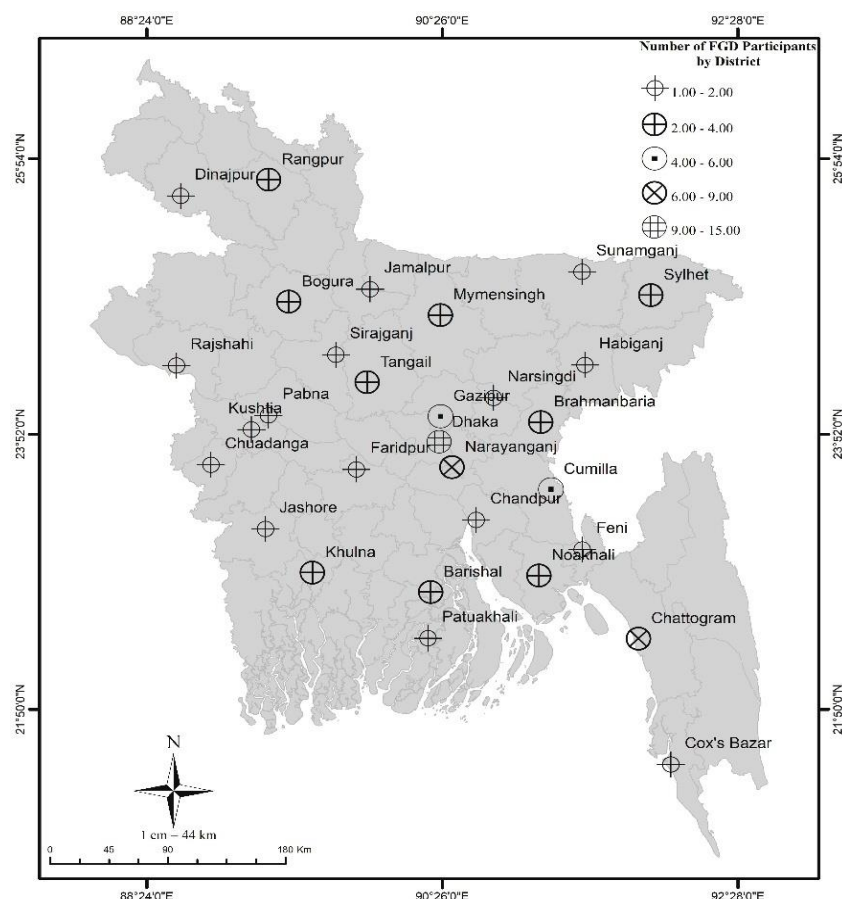
Figure 2.4: Geographical Distribution of the FGD Participants' Places of Origin

2.4.2 Semistructured Interviews

Semistructured interviews are well-suited to sociolinguistic and interdisciplinary research, as they enable the collection of in-depth and spontaneous data on language use, perception, and identity. This method uses predetermined open-ended questions while allowing flexibility to explore participants' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives in greater depth (Baumbusch, 2010; Boyce & Neale, 2006; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019; Haukås & Tishakov, 2024; Oerther, 2021; Oranga & Matere, 2023). Furthermore, the versatility of this instrument is emphasised by its compatibility with qualitative analysis techniques (Sal İlhan & Külekçi, 2022; Tavares et al., 2021).

Therefore, semistructured interviews were chosen to capture various phenomena, such as the experiences of teachers from HEIs from different backgrounds. They were carefully selected participants with purposive sampling to explore complex interpretive frameworks of classroom practices and policy of HE. The interviews also maintained consistency to explore emerging topics relevant to RQ1. It also facilitated triangulating data of interviewees and FGDs

in interrelated issues. Finally, data were then verbatim transcribed and translated for TA. Participants were interviewed in person for approximately one hour. The interview format also provided participants with the opportunity to elaborate on their responses, thereby fostering rapport and encouraging open dialogue (Dor-Haim, 2023; Hanna, 2012; Rahman & Zhang, 2017; Shee et al., 2021).

An open-ended semistructured questionnaire (see Appendix C) was created to contain explicit questions and avoid digressions during the interviews. The interviews were conducted between April 2024 and May 2024. The interviewees were initially contacted through the researcher's acquaintances residing in Bangladesh. Upon confirmation of availability, all interviews were conducted at the participants' respective institutions, based on the time and location they proposed. The interviews lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. At the beginning of each interview, the participants were given the option to choose languages from English, Bengali, and or both. All interviews were digitally recorded in mp3 format, and the background information of the interviewees is provided in Table 2.6. A total of 20 teachers participated in the interviews, with five selected from each institution. The sample included 4 female and 16 male teachers.

Table 2.6: The Interview Participants' Demographics

Type	Insti-tution	Course	Age	Date	Partic-ipants	Gender	Teaching experience	Home District
Public University	A	Pharmacy	35	3/4/24	T1	M	5	Dhaka
		Public Health	40	7/4/24	T2	M	12	Chattogram
		Bangla	38	11/4/24	T3	M	7	Khulna
		Social science	45	16/4/24	T4	F	13	Sylhet
		Sociology	49	18/4/24	T5	F	20	Rajshahi
	B	Political Science	33	22/4/24	T6	M	3	Barishal
		History	37	24/4/24	T7	M	9	Cumilla
		Zoology	41	29/4/24	T8	M	14	Rangpur
		Law	50	30/4/24	T9	M	19	Dhaka
		English	46	2/5/24	T10	M	15	Mymensingh
Private University	C	Bangla	42	6/5/24	T11	M	13	Khulna
		Law	39	9/5/24	T12	M	8	Jashore
		English	48	13/5/24	T13	F	18	Rajshahi
		Mathematics	44	16/5/24	T14	M	13	Sylhet
		Economics	36	19/5/24	T15	M	7	Barishal
	D	Marketing	31	21/5/24	T16	M	4	Cumilla
		Electrical and Electronic Engineering (EEE)	34	22/5/24	T17	F	6	Gazipur
		Computer Science and Engineering	32	26/5/24	T18	M	5	Feni
		Software Engineering (BSSE)	47	28/5/24	T19	M	17	Narayanganj
		Business Studies	45	29/5/24	T20	M	15	Pabna

2.4.3 Surveys

Surveys are considered to be valuable tools in sociolinguistic studies, as they are large-scale quantitative methods that are used to assess a wide range of psychological and behavioural constructs (Blackall et al., 2007; Janicak & Zreiqat, 2019; Kagerbauer & Magdolena, 2023). Surveys are useful tools for finding out what people believe, think, or feel. They can collect information in different areas. For example, surveys can show what people know or understand about certain topics, what kind of experiences they have had (such as using a service), and what their beliefs and values are (like their views on social norms or how acceptable they think certain behaviours are). Surveys also help to understand people's attitudes and opinions, such as how satisfied they are with a service or what they think about an institution. Lastly, surveys can explore people's hopes or fears about the future (Herbert, 2013; Hilker & Kangas, 2011).

Table 2.7 shows the data analysis procedure and the rating scale that was used in the current survey. As can be seen, teachers ($n = 20$) and students ($n = 100$) were surveyed to answer RQ2. Surveys were used to gather data about perceptions of English language ideologies, attitudes towards English varieties, and awareness of WE. Part of the questionnaire (attitudes towards WE) was designed (see Appendix A) based on previous studies (Bernaisch & Koch, 2016; Choi, 2007; He & Miller, 2011; Pan et al., 2021; Sasayama, 2013). Moreover, the verbal guise technique (VGT) (see Appendix B) was used to compare attitudes towards BdE and BrE. As shown in Table 2.7, descriptive analyses were used in this study to explore the participants' perceptions and attitudes, while inferential statistical techniques were used to test the differing attitudes across the four dimensions of the BdE and BrE language varieties.

Table 2.7: Survey Procedure and Focus

Survey procedure	Rating scales	Data Analysis procedure	Focus
Perception test	7 points likert scale perception questionnaire	- Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. - Pearson correlation between WE and ELI.	- Perception towards ELI. - Perception of WEs and BdE. - Developmental Phases of BdE
Attitude test	VGT with SDS	- Descriptive statistics and inferential statistics. - Repeated measures MANOVA	- Attitude towards BdE with BrE.
	7 points likert scale attitude questionnaire	- Descriptive statistics.	- Attitude towards BdE (Personal preference & international acceptability)

2.4.4 Audio Recordings

Audio recordings were used in this study to investigate the phonological variations in BdE to address RQ3. Ten participants were selected from amongst the students and teachers at the institutions (A, B, C, D). Recorded speech samples were collected in a controlled environment to ensure high quality; the recordings were then subjected to a detailed acoustic analysis targeting 12 monophonic vowels and 24 consonant phonemes based on the standard British IPA charts (Roach, 2000). However, Ladefoged (2001) identified a total of 20 vowel sounds in BrE, although this inventory differs slightly from the one presented by Roach (2000). Of note, the schwa /ə/ was excluded, as it typically only occurs in unstressed syllables and does not function contrastively with other vowels. Moreover, I compared the similarities between and the distinct phonetic characteristics of BdE and SSBE (or RP) in this study; thus, I included the schwa /ə/.

The participants were recruited from four HEIs in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Purposive sampling was used to select 10 participants (five males and five females); the sample consisted of two early-career teachers and eight students whose ages ranged from 20 to 37 years ($M = 25.6$, $SD = 5.50$). The participants were selected based on predefined criteria and their willingness to participate; they were all native Bengali speakers who were born and raised in Bangladesh. In terms of their linguistic backgrounds, they had either studied English because it was a compulsory subject in all government and private educational institutions, or because they were currently enrolled in EMI programmes (Rahman & Mehar Singh, 2020).

The participants were provided with flashcards containing sentences with 12 monophthong vowel words (seven short and five long) and 24 consonant phonemes representative of RP (Roach, 1991). Moreover, the participants were instructed to pronounce each phrase in a natural tone of voice and to avoid any unnecessary emphasis (stress) on any individual word to maintain consistency. During the recordings, a distance of 12–15 inches was maintained between the participants and a noise-cancelling microphone (viz BOYA BY-M800 large diaphragm cardioid condenser microphone) was used to ensure accuracy and to minimise ambient noise. The sounds were then recorded directly using the PRAAT tool (version 6.4.12) using the mono channel, a sampling frequency of 44100 Hz at a resolution of 24 bits, and was saved in WAV format.

Table 2.8: Instruments, Techniques, Analysis, Focus, and Targeted Data

Instruments	Related research question(s)	Data source(s) and size (n)	Data analysis(s)	Research Techniques/ Activities	Focus	Targeted data
Focus Group Discussion		students (n=100)	- Thematic analysis (TA)	- Brainstorming - Free Association - Recording - Note-Taking - Probing -Clarification Techniques - verbatim transcription - translation - Nominal Group Technique (NGT)	English linguistic imperialism	- Students' perception of English in the context of Bangladesh.
Semi-structured interview	RQ-1	teachers (n=20)				- Teachers' perception of English in the context of Bangladesh.
Survey	RQ-2	students & teachers (n=120)	- Descriptive analysis (DA) -Inferential analysis (IA)	- Closed-ended questions regarding perception. - Attitude towards BdE (The Verbal-Guise technique, Attitude questionnaire)	World Englishes/ BdE	- Students and teachers' perception and attitude towards Bangladeshi varieties of English.
Audio recordings	RQ-3	students & teachers (selected) (n=10)	- Acoustic analysis (AA)	- Audio recording. - 12 vowel monophthongs and 24 consonant phonemes were examined.		- Phonological variation of BdE compare to RP & SSBE

2.5 Analytical Frameworks

Multilayered frameworks were used to answer the RQs in the present study. Qualitative methods were used to analyse the data obtained from the FGDs and the semistructured interviews. QnIs were used to examine the survey and phonetic data with a focus on the emergence of WE and the phonological characteristics of BdE to provide a detailed understanding of the influence of English in Bangladesh, the dynamics of linguistic imperialism, and the localisation of English.

2.5.1 Thematic Analysis

While various qualitative approaches were considered, TA was chosen as the most appropriate approach due to its analytical flexibility and alignment with RQ1. Grounded theory coding was not used in this study because the goal was to find patterns in the data, not to construct a new theory. Grounded theory necessitates steps such as open, axial, and selective coding, as well as constant comparisons and theoretical sampling, to create a main idea and to develop a theory (Charmaz, 2006). Similarly, content analysis (CA) was excluded due to its predominantly

quantitative or descriptive approach, which often focuses on manifest content, frequency counts, or categorical coding (Schreier, 2012).

Therefore, a Big Q qualitative paradigm with a "Reflexive Thematic Analysis (TA)" (Braun & Clarke, 2006, 2021a, b) was adopted to analyse the data derived from the semistructured interviews ($n = 20$) and the FGDs ($n = 20$). Furthermore, some scholars view TA as a meta-analytical tool rather than as a distinct analytical approach (Gibson & Brown, 2009). Thus, TA was applied in this study to analyse the QI data, as it is a well-established analytical framework that is aligned with the interpretivist paradigm. TA offers flexible ways to analyse data and helps to explore personal meanings and participants lived experiences, particularly in a (post)colonial context (Willig, 2013). Moreover, TA enabled the subjective interpretation of meanings and ideologies, and provided theoretical flexibility (Guest et al., 2012; Joffe, 2011) and capacity, making it well suited for examining complex sociocultural issues and situating it firmly within the broader qualitative research paradigm (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

As a Big Q qualitative paradigm was adopted in this study and a reflexive TA was conducted, the use of coding reliability procedures (intercoder agreement and codebooks) was not appropriate for the current analysis. As the use of coding reliability is rooted in positivist assumptions, it contradicts the epistemological paradigms of reflexive TA (Braun & Clarke, 2021a, b). The TA approach positions the researcher as an active meaning maker rather than as a neutral code applier and discourages rigid coding frameworks that may force data into predefined categories, which reflect small q positivist assumptions. Instead of using preexisting theories or frameworks, "bottom-up" inductive coding was used in this study to allow patterns to emerge directly from the data (Braun et al., 2015). At the same time, the analysis was influenced by theoretical ideas such as linguistic imperialism and postcolonial criticism. Although deductive coding is a valid approach in some forms of thematic analyses, a purely deductive coding approach was not adopted in this study as it conflicted with the Big Q paradigm and the reflexive TA. Thematic network analysis followed Attride-Stirling's (2001) six-step process, beginning with systematic coding to identify key textual features. These codes were then organized into themes and mapped into thematic networks that visually represented relationships within the data. Through exploration and interpretation of these networks, broader patterns and deeper insights into participant perspectives were revealed.
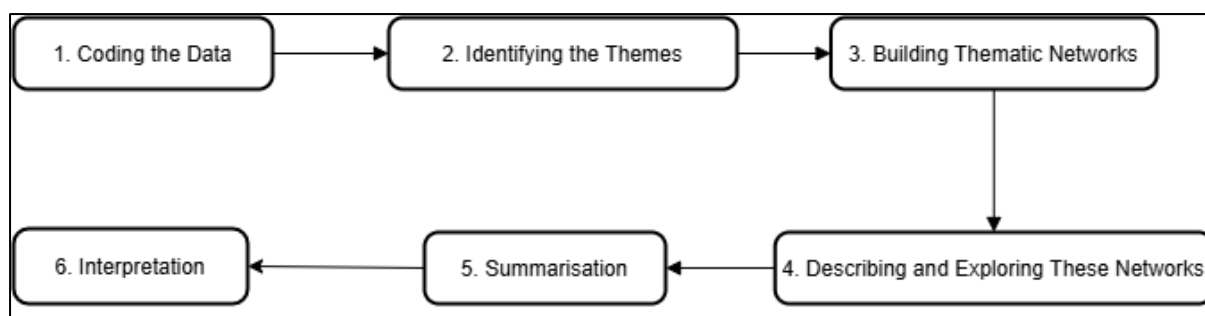
Figure 2.5: Steps in the TA

2.5.2 Statistical Analysis

The survey was analysed via a descriptive analysis (*M* and *SD*), an inferential analysis (the Pearson correlation, MANOVA), Levene's test for the assumption of homogeneity, and normality tests to fulfil the assumption of the parametric test. Cronbach's alpha was used to assess the reliability of all Likert-scale data for the survey items. SPSS (version 27) was used as a research tool. The English version of the questionnaire used BrE exclusively and adhered strictly to UK spelling, specific terms, and phrases. Moreover, the Bengali version was composed using the spelling rules prescribed by the Bangla Academy. Both versions were offered to the participants, who were allowed to choose a language based on their preference.

The VGT was developed to assess listeners' attitudes towards BrE and BdE. The selection of BrE is rooted in its historical dominance and ideological prestige and continues to influence Bangladesh's current education system (Ali, 1986). To minimise potential influences from extraneous factors beyond the targeted English varieties (e.g., gender, age, educational background), this study selected two male graduate speakers in their twenties. The speaker representing BdE is a native Bengali (L1) speaker with high proficiency in English, while the BrE speaker is a native English speaker (L1). A reading passage was developed to ensure low linguistic complexity, maintaining clarity and accessibility. The text was composed using relatively simple English to minimise cognitive load (Sasayama, 2013). The VGT consisted of 12 items that were constructed using semantic differential scales (SDSs), which typically employ bipolar adjective pairs on a 7-point Likert scale (see Table 2.9). For example, the participants were instructed to rate the extent to which they perceived the speakers to be "likeable" or "dislikeable", with a rating of 1 indicating strong dislike and 7 indicating strong likeability.

The selection of solidarity, power, competence, and status as the principal evaluative constructs was grounded in previous theoretical and empirical studies of language attitudes. As

can be seen, "solidarity" encapsulates social affinity, interpersonal warmth, and in-group iden-
tification, reflecting perceptions of honesty, being interesting, and being likeable (Bradac &
Wisegarver, 1984; Cheyne, 1970; Coupland & Bishop, 2007; Johnson & Buttny, 1982; Luh-
man, 1990; Sasayama, 2013; Tucker & Lambert, 1969). By contrast, "power" pertains to per-
ceived authority, assertiveness, and social dominance, which shape listeners' judgements re-
garding a speaker's persuasiveness and leadership potential (Sasayama, 2013). Apart from
these socioaffective constructs, "status" is a crucial determinant in the evaluation of linguistic
varieties, particularly in postcolonial sociolinguistic contexts in which English proficiency is
closely linked to socioeconomic mobility, institutional legitimacy, and global capital (Mon-
fared & Khatib, 2018; Stewart et al., 1985). Furthermore, "competence" is a fundamental con-
struct in language attitude studies, encompassing assessments of linguistic proficiency, flu-
ency, grammatical accuracy, and intelligibility — factors that are pivotal in distinguishing lo-
calised varieties from native norms (Ahn, 2017). The inclusion of these four constructs pro-
vided a theoretically robust and multidimensional framework for analysing language attitudes,
and enabled the capture of both affective and cognitive evaluations while ensuring cultural and
linguistic relevance in the sociolinguistic landscape of Bangladesh.

Table 2.9: Final Set of Adjective Pairs Used in the VGT

Item	Traits	Items		Scale
		Positive Adjective	Negative Adjective	
1	Solidarity	Likeable	Unlikeable	
		Honest	Dishonest	
		Interesting	Boring	
2	Power	Rich	Poor	
		Fluent	Not Fluent	
		Confident	Not Confident	
3	Competence	Smart	Stupid	7-point Likert
		Educated	Uneducated	
		Good English	Bad English	
4	Status	Beautiful	Ugly	
		Modern	Outdated	
		Sophisticated	Crude	

The researcher ensured that the personal traits that were measured were relevant to the
selected adjectives, guided by the view that significant personal attributes vary across nation-
alities, ethnicities, and cultures (Al-Hindawe, 1996). This culturally sensitive approach was
deemed to be essential for obtaining meaningful and interpretable data from the target popula-
tion. In addition to the VGT, an attitude questionnaire was developed to capture the partici-
pants' preferences and the acceptability of BdE via the personal preference subscale and the

international acceptance subscale. These instruments consisted of five closed-ended items (cf. Sasayama, 2013); both were administered via paper-based surveys, and enabled a systematic data collection and the subsequent analysis of the participants' responses.

2.5.3 Acoustic Analysis

The phonological characteristics of BdE compared to 12 vowel monophthongs (Deterding, 2006; Roach, 1992) and 24 consonant phonemes of BrE were examined in this study. In total, 360 voice samples were collected from 10 participants. These samples were analysed using PRAAT (version 6.4.12) to document the phonetic characteristics of English vowels and consonants. Specific phonetic parameters were used to measure vowel formant frequencies and VOT values for both voiced and voiceless plosives, and Wideband Spectrograms (WB) were used for other consonants (i.e., fricatives, affricates, nasals, laterals, approximants, and liquids) (Lisker & Abramson, 1964).

The emergence of BdE in the 21st century has largely been attributed to globalisation, with its development being influenced by its underlying linguistic substrate, Bengali, which distinguishes it from other varieties such as Indian English, Pakistani English and Sri Lankan English (cf. Suárez-Gómez & Seoane, 2022). For the purposes of visualisation, the vowel formant values (F1 and F2 in Hz) were converted to the Bark scale using the formula proposed by Zwicker and Terhardt (1980). The vowel data for BrE were derived from Deterding (2006), whereas those for BdE were obtained from the participants and the L1 Bengali vowel chart (adapted from Alam et al., 2008).

$$Z(f) = 26.81 \times \frac{f}{1960+f} - 0.53$$

The vowel spaces were plotted using F1 (inverted on the y-axis) and F2 (x-axis) to show the relative vowel positions for each variety. Formant frequencies (e.g., F1 and F2) are essential for the characterisation of vowels. In particular, F1 reflects the height of the vowel (the vertical position of the tongue) and F2 indicates the backward movement of the vowel (the horizontal position of the tongue). These formants provide the most important acoustic data for the distinction of vowel qualities and are therefore essential for analysing the phonological differences between BdE and RP (Lee et al., 2019). Higher formants such as F3 and F4 are less important for this core analysis, as they are mainly used in singing.

PRAAT was used to measure the formants of vowels using an optical analysis of spectrograms (Boersma & Weenink, 2024). The formant frequencies were extracted from the midpoint of the sustained vowels, which are only minimally influenced by the surrounding consonants, thus ensuring an accurate representation (Paliwal, 1984; de Jong et al., 2007). This technique was used to avoid distortions due to consonantal resonance near vowel boundaries. A scale of five formants with a maximum of 4500 Hz (male speakers) and four formants with a limit of 5000 Hz (female speakers) was used as the standard (Renwick & Ladd, 2016). A window length of 0.025s was used for the analysis.

For vowels, the measurements were categorised by gender for a comparative analysis and vowel plots were created with the mean formant values of the BdE speakers to investigate cross-linguistic theories regarding speech production (Johnson et al., 1993). The formant frequencies (F1 and F2) of the "English vowels" in a previous study (Deterding, 2006) were compared to those of the BdE vowels. Deterding (1997) characterised the participants' accents as SSB, a variant that closely resembles what Wells (1982) called "Mainstream Received Pronunciation" (Harrington et al., 2000). SSB, which is considered to be the "modern equivalent of RP", is an accent that is associated with South East England and functions as a prestigious norm both within the region, as well as in other parts of the British Isles and beyond to varying degrees (IPA, 1999, p. 4)[15].

As vowels are categorised on the basis of three primary properties, namely vowel length (tense/lax), position (high/low and front/back), and lip shape (rounded, neutral and spread), the acoustic properties and vowel spaces within the vowel inventory of BdE were investigated in this study. A vowel plot was created using MS Excel to visualise the positions of the long and short vowels. The formant frequencies (measured in Hz) were converted to the auditory Bark scale (as proposed by Zwicker and Terhardt, 1980). In the plot, F1 was positioned inversely on the y-axis and F2 on the x-axis, effectively capturing the open-close and front-back qualities of the vowels.

VOT was measured using PRAAT software to analyse the temporal characteristics of stop consonants. PRAAT software was used to measure the VOT values for six plosive consonants, including voiced (/b/, /d/, /g/) and voiceless (/p/, /t/, /k/) consonants. WB were used for the analysis, which focused on the release burst (t1) (a sharp spike in the waveform) and the

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[15] https://ia801705.us.archive.org/11/items/intonation-practice/Handbook_of_the_IPA.pdf

onset of voicing (t2) (the first periodic vertical striation in the spectrogram). The VOT was calculated using the following formula:

$$VOT = t_1 - t_2 \text{ (ms)}$$

The VOT interval was identified by determining the release burst, marked by a distinct spike transitioning to a transient waveform, and the onset of vocal fold vibration, recognised as the first regularly spaced vertical striations indicative of glottal pulsing on the spectrogram. This process involved the precise marking of the intervals between the release of the stop and the initiation of the glottal vibration. The extracted VOT values were cross-verified using both the waveform and the spectrogram to ensure accuracy (Awoonor-Aziaku, 2021; Kaur, 2015). Moreover, the other consonants [fricatives, affricates, nasals, laterals, approximants, and liquids] were used with WB. The manner and place of articulation were tested using the formant positions [F1, F2, and F3] in Hz. The formant frequencies of BdE consonants were compared to the "English phonetic" formats in prior studies (Ogden, 2009; Yavaş, 2011) to identify the different features of BdE.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues were considered when ensuring the anonymity of the participants' and institutions' identities. The ethical framework extended beyond simple adherence to procedures and addressed the fundamental moral imperatives of research involving human subjects. Informed consent was obtained for the study to ensure an ethical review and to proactively manage potential risks (Chatterjee & Sarker, 2013; Emanuel et al., 2000; Kjellström & Fridlund, 2010; Laryeafio & Ogbewe, 2023; Lo & Grady, 2013). For example, institutional approval was obtained prior to the data collection from the participants. The objectives of this study were disclosed to build trust with the participants, who were also informed of their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Thus, the emphasis in this study was on trustworthiness in terms of credibility, reliability, confirmability, and transferability (Bingham, 2023). For example, the detailed documentation of the study design, the data collection instruments, and the analysis procedures ensured transparency and enabled the independent verification of the results. Furthermore, I was concerned about capability, benevolence, and integrity (Caldwell & Hayes, 2007). Trustworthiness for all the participants was maintained via appropriate engagement to reveal their authentic

perceptions (Griffith et al., 2020). The analysis of the data followed the principle of neutrality, and all types of bias, partiality, stereotypes, and prejudices were avoided (Krefting, 1991).

Summary

In the current study, I investigated perceptions and attitudes towards the English language in Bangladeshi HEIs with a focus on BdE and its phonological features. The focus in this study was on three questions: how students and teachers see English in Bangladesh, how they view BdE, and what sound differences in BdE can be revealed via an acoustic analysis. This study followed a mixed-method approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Grounded theory guided the qualitative part with the aim to identify patterns in the participants' views and experiences. Different philosophical approaches were adopted for each part of the study. The qualitative part entailed a critical ontological stance with interpretivist, constructivist, and phenomenological views of knowledge. With regard to the quantitative part, a middle-ground approach was adopted, using CR as the ontological stance and postpositivism as the epistemological stance.

Data were collected through FGDs, semistructured interviews, surveys, and audio recordings. Four universities in Dhaka (two public and two private) were selected using stratified random sampling. The participants in the FGDs, the semistructured interviews, and the audio recordings were selected using purposive sampling, while the survey participants were chosen through simple random sampling. A TA with inductive coding was used for the qualitative data, while a statistical analysis was applied to the survey responses. An acoustic analysis was used to examine the phonological features in BdE with a focus on formant frequencies and VOT. To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, I addressed issues of validation and reliability in the study. The data collection procedures were defined clearly, including the mode, the timing, the location, and the process. A range of analytical tools was employed, including SPSS and Excel for the statistical analysis and visualisation, PRAAT for the acoustic measurements, and structured questionnaires and stimuli for the data collection. In summary, a methodologically rigorous and ethically sound approach that is expected to provide credible and meaningful results was presented in this chapter.
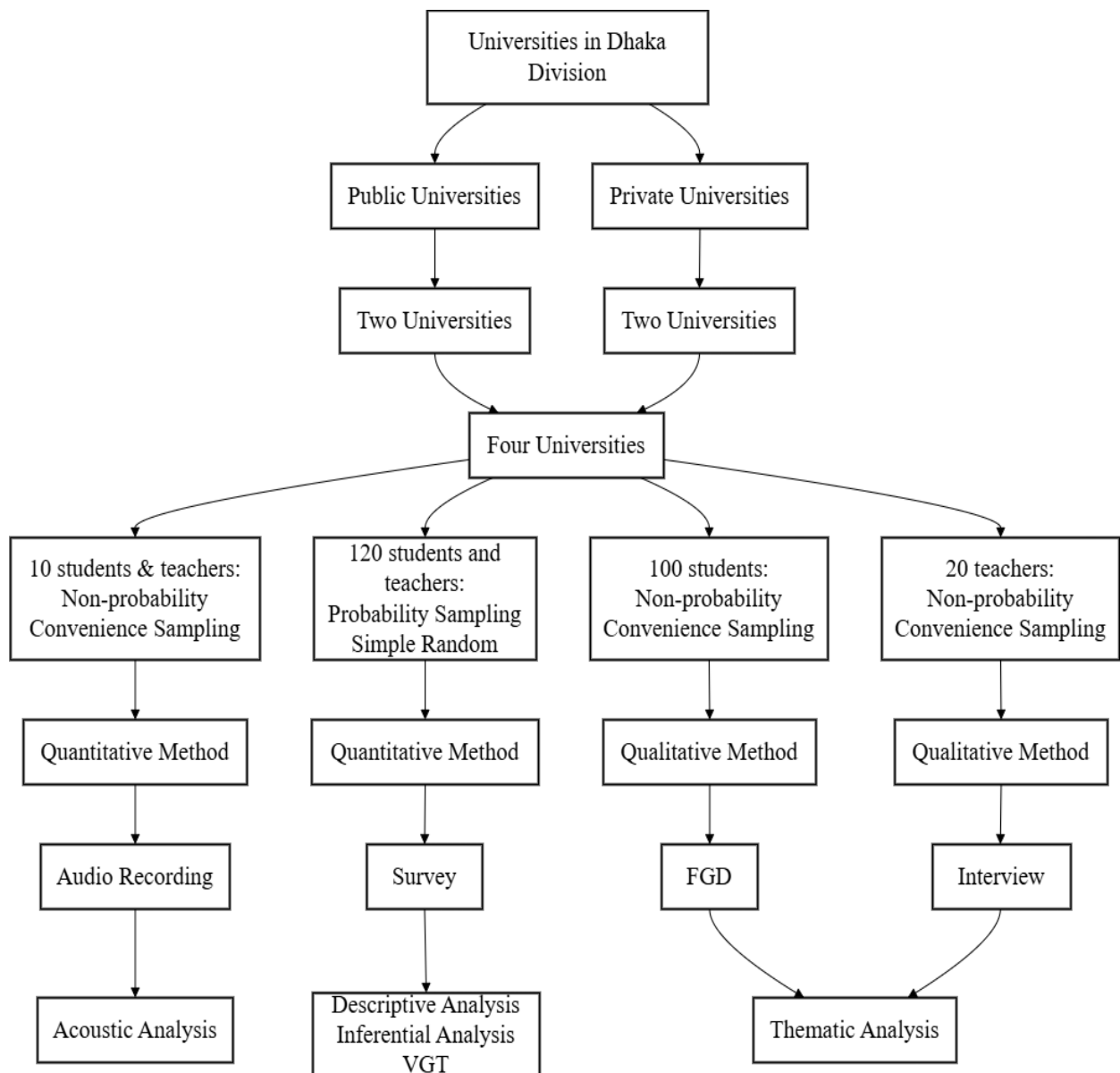
Figure 2.6: Sampling Design and Research Instruments

CHAPTER THREE
STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH

Introduction

This chapter reports the findings of the focus group discussions (FGDs) conducted as part of the exploratory research design investigating students' perceptions of English. It discusses how students understand and negotiate the role of English in relation to development, language policy, postcolonial discourses and decolonisation. Perception, as defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, refers to 'a belief or opinion, often held by many people and based on how things seem" and "a specific set of experiences' (cited in Seng, 2017).

The findings from the FGDs can be divided into five themes based on the contents of the participants' conversations (Table 3.1): English's role in personal development (including its function as a gateway to educational and career opportunities), English's use for international mobility, group language policies (including families, governments and donor organisations) and their influence on language use and preferences in academic and professional settings, English's historical legacy within postcolonial discourse, and strategies for reclaiming and decolonising English as a resource for cultural and intellectual self-determination. The findings are presented with TA and supported by direct participant quotes and analytical interpretations. This chapter will therefore contribute to a nuanced understanding of English as both a resource and as a contested socio-political symbol in a globalised context.

3.1 English in Academic and Socio-Economic Contexts

English occupies a key position in Bangladesh's higher education (HE) landscape and has a significant impact on academic outcomes and socio-economic mobility. Thanks to increasing globalisation, English has come to serve as the primary channel for knowledge acquisition, employment opportunities and international engagement. However, English's role remains complex, offering both benefits and significant challenges for students. The increasing use of English as a medium of instruction (EMI) underlines its growing importance, which is further influenced by parental expectations. The financial impact of EMI is significant, particularly in private institutions, whose high tuition fees restrict access and exacerbate socio-economic inequalities in education. English's role in Bangladeshi HE reflects a broader dynamic in which language proficiency, financial resources and access to quality education intersect. Students'

experiences, as discussed in the FGDs, reflected on these trends and illuminated the opportunities and inequalities in Bangladesh's current education system.

3.1.1 Navigating the Dual Facets of Academic English

3.1.1.1 Perceived Benefits

When asked they perceived the role of English in academia, the students—all of whom were in HE—expressed a strong consensus in their experiences and perceptions. While some participants associated learning English with connecting with the outside world, most saw it as a direct or indirect means for economic gain. Since most participants' English acquisition pursuits were linked to various types of economic connections, I placed these reflections under the theme of 'English's role in academic and socio-economic contexts. Most participants ($n = 65$, 65%) framed English as useful for various aspects of their educational, professional and social lives. This reflects the empirical evidence from Baker et al. (2024) that English plays a central role in the sociolinguistic and economic framework of middle- and low-income countries, a category that applies to Bangladesh. Baker et al. (2024) found that 97% of respondents saw English education as important, and that the top two reasons for learning English were career and communicating with people from other cultures.

Participants generally expressed positive sentiment towards English due to its role in various fields, especially in education, careers and business in a globalised world. This agreement suggests that the participants perceived English's importance in Bangladeshi higher educational institutions (HEIs) to be highly beneficial. Ayman (FGD3), for example, expressed his opinion about English as the language of science and knowledge:

> Those whose mother tongue is not English must also learn English if they wish to explore or understand the unknown beyond their immediate surroundings. The greatest **dissemination of science and knowledge** occurs primarily in English. The vast repository of **valuable information** available in various languages across the world is most frequently translated into English (Ayman, FGD3).

Various phrases in the FGDs reflected the necessity of English, including 'necessity of English in the technological age', 'necessity in the modern world' and 'facilitating international communication'. These frequent associations of English with specific terms, many of which were adapted from textbooks, reflected the widespread influence of Western discourse among students. As noted by Graves (2000), textbooks play a crucial role in the learning process as they guide learners into acquiring knowledge in a standardised way, which leads students to perceive English as a superior language required for academic success, career advancement or

recognition. Western discourses tend to present English as a universal 'common good' (cf. Jaede, 2017), which provides the poor with an opportunity to compete with others in society and thus ensure their inclusion in the country's economy and business life.

The FGD10 responses demonstrated a complex interplay of social expectations, institutional influences, and personal agency in shaping students' language preferences. For instance, Afia's made it clear that her choice of English was not just an academic decision but a reaction to prevailing social norms that equated language with prestige and convenience: 'I enrolled in English [courses] upon the advice of my family and the people around me. Therefore, I have a personal desire to gain proficiency in English because of its prestige and practicality' (Afia, FGD10).

This phenomenon highlights a wider societal pressure that promotes 'learner agency', in which students consciously favour English over their native languages to increase communicative efficiency and secure economic advantage. Complementing this perspective, participants from FGD3 pointed out a strong psychological drive to acquire English language skills to create the theme 'Institutional Market Value and Recognition'. Meanwhile, a theme gleaned from FGD4, 'Markers of Competence and Intellectual Capital', emphasised the notion that English is perceived not only as a means of communication but also as a crucial symbol of academic and professional competence.

Several students also emphasised the central role of English in improving career prospects for both the local and international market. For example, Noman from FGD10 described English as a 'master key' that opens great opportunities, a metaphor that indicated his confidence in navigating in a labour market in which English language skills are essential:

> Proficiency in English almost guarantees that you **won't remain unemployed.** English is like a **master key**; you can use it everywhere. It opens doors to countless opportunities. And let's not even get started on the booming outsourcing sector. That's why there's hardly any reason to worry about a career (Noman, FGD10).

Participants from FGD1 identified English as central to accessing international careers and a tool for achieving institutional market value and recognition. Some participants from FGD19 also mentioned that English provides access to high-paying jobs in multinational companies operating in Bangladesh. These qualitative findings are consistent with existing literature. Khan and Chaudhury (2012) emphasised that English is essential in the corporate sector in Bangladesh while also noting that workers' English language skills often do not meet the requirements of the industry. Lincoln et al. (2002) argued that improved English language skills

significantly help individual job seekers. Taken together, these findings emphasise the urgent need for targeted interventions aimed at closing the skill gap and preparing young people for the challenges of the global career marketplace.

3.1.1.2 Perceived Issues

In contrast, a minority of participants ($n = 16$, 16%) from four focus groups (FGD5, 6, 7, 9) at public universities and one focus group (FGD12) at a private university—all of whom had academic backgrounds in the arts—were critical of prevailing societal expectations surrounding English. Although some reported lower levels of English proficiency, all sixteen participants actively resisted the prevailing societal ideologies that prioritize English proficiency in academic and professional settings. They also challenged negative attitudes towards Bengali perpetuated by these same societal norms.

English has a great impact in both HE and the labour market. Meanwhile, HE is itself considered a necessity for accessing high-paying jobs. Accordingly, participants from FGD9 described numerous concerns about the hegemony of the English. Nabil, for example, expressed his experience with academic insecurity as a student at an institution using Bengali as a medium of instruction (BMI):

> I was towards the **bottom of the university merit list** because of English, so apart from [BMI], I had no other options. Since attending university was a must, I reluctantly enrolled in [a BMI institution]. But I feel **ashamed** to admit this in front of others because people **look down on** … Bengali, treating it with **contempt and disregard** (Nabil, FGD9).

English in HEIs acts as a gatekeeper that excludes learners with lower English proficiency from HE programmes. The importance of English proficiency in Bangladeshi HE is emphasised by recent data showing that about 23% of students will fail the HSC-2024 and its equivalent English examinations, limiting their access to academia in 2024[16]. Many studies conducted in middle- and low-income countries found similar results. For example, Baker et al. (2024) conducted research across five linguistically and socioculturally diverse HE contexts: Colombia, Mexico, Iraq, Thailand, and Vietnam. Their findings revealed that English language assessments are prerequisites for university admission in 62% of cases and for graduation in 72% of cases. Mahin (FGD9) expressed frustration about the higher market value

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[16] See https://www.jagonews24.com/education/news/975089

assigned to graduates from EMI institutions in both government and private employment sectors, while students from BMI institutions face systemic discrimination:

> In our society, **Bengali is somewhat marginalised**, almost like a **minority**. This is because career **opportunities for those who study [in] Bengali are limited** because it is not as valuable, whether in the public or private sectors. The better your English proficiency, the higher your value in the job market. From tourism to bureaucracy, English dominates every field (Mahin, FGD9).

Similarly, participants in FGD7 discussed how societal bias against BMI contributes to unequal treatment in the job market. As noted by Shahed and Rahman (2022) and Erling (2017), English has surpassed Bengali in both prestige and labour market advantage for Bangladeshi graduates. This dominance continues to shape linguistic practices and socio-economic dynamics. Due to the associated social stigma, Bengali is perceived as 'less valuable'. Toya (FGD5), a student with limited English proficiency, expressed her sense of exclusion from international academia, stating, 'I don't even stand a chance in this globalised world with lower English proficiency'. This exclusion of BMI from HE and employment sectors thus undermines the credibility of BMI-based degrees. Thus, the language's desirability and diminishing are reduced along with its value across educational, professional and social domains. As previously mentioned in the introduction, unequal access to English and to Teaching English as a Second Language intersects with material realities and identities (e.g., socioeconomic status, ethnicity, gender, religion, urban/rural background, sexuality). This results in different experiences of empowerment and/or disempowerment (Kubota, 2020).

Even though English's overall relevancy as a requirement is questionable in the Bangladeshi context, students are forced to gain English proficiency if they want to enter professional sectors. Multiple students thus expressed negative perceptions of English due to its restrictive nature in the job field.

This section has explored how social perceptions influence the significant pay gap and further shape the language choice of students and strengthen the perceived economic advantage of EMI. For example, in FGD7, Nusrat, Jishan and Raisa discussed the issue of English as a means of discrimination, particularly against students with limited proficiency. Nusrat highlighted the view that English proficiency is an essential requirement to get 'good jobs' that lead to financial stability and social recognition. On the other hand, BMI students take jobs with 'below average' salaries:

> Look, those who are proficient in English are getting **good jobs**. His economic situation will improve and able to reach a good position in society and for us! Maybe a primary school teacher with a **below-average salary** (Nusrat, FGD7).

Furthermore, Jishan vehemently criticised the role of English as an essential skill for career development in the 'corporate' sectors, where English skills are crucial to secure a job and communicate with overseas businesses. Moreover, specific requirements and a high salary disparity between BMI and EMI backgrounds prevail: 'in Bangladesh, this is evident because of competitive job exams, corporate recruitment processes, interviews and freelancing everywhere English is necessary. I think there is no need to give such excessive importance to English' (Jishan, FGD7).

Similarly, Shathi from FGD5 expresses her frustration with how systemic bias limits career opportunities in the government sector, further hindering career advancement for those who specialise in Bengali. This observation highlights the structural inequalities due to English language proficiency in Bangladesh. Rahman et al. (2019) mentioned the higher demand for English proficiency in Bangladesh's private sector, where English is desirable and paid more. Earlier research has also corroborated this finding and demonstrated that a sound knowledge and skills in English helped in getting a higher salary or earnings (e.g., Casale & Posel, 2011; Chiswick & Miller 2009; Shields & Price, 2002).

Raisa's frustration was caused by the paternalistic perspective of the government towards students with a more limited command of English, who are considered less competent as a result:

> The biggest government job is the [Bangladesh Civil Service]. But even there, if you're not proficient in English, you **don't stand a chance**. From the outset, the selection panel assumes that candidates with less English proficiency are **comparatively weaker**. It's as if they've already decided that if you cannot speak English, you are not competent for these jobs. That is why sometimes I feel like **quitting my studies** (Raisa, FGD7).

The prevailing 'English for development' discourse not only compelled her to contemplate discontinuing her studies but can also be seen in a broader trend of English apprehension among graduates in Bangladesh (Hamid & Honan, 2012). Moreover, the escalating demand for English proficiency appears to have exacerbated systemic disparities in the educational sectors. Empirical evidence indicates that teachers in EMI institutions receive substantially higher compensation than their counterparts in BMI schools for instance, the Bangladesh Teachers' Association Salary Survey reports that teachers in EMI schools typically earn 30,000–50,000 BDT.

[17] In contrast, BMI government-employed teachers earn 16,000–25,000 BDT and those employed in BMI schools under the Monthly Payment Ordinance receive only 8,000–15,000 BDT (Sarkar & Mustaqeem, 2024). These findings underscore the intricate relationships between English proficiency, educational pathways and systemic inequalities in employment and income.

This inequality in salary structures contributes to the socioeconomic divide, affects the quality of education and impacts students' experiences and prospects (Sarkar & Mustaqeem, 2024). Globally, respect and power are often determined by financial status (Ansolabehere & Snyder, 1999; Malleo, 2022; van der Geest, 1997), and in Bangladesh, the treatment of EMI and BMI reflect this dynamic. The declining attractiveness of BMI reinforces the social and economic stratification that characterises English education. The emphasis on English proficiency exacerbates existing inequalities while privileging those who have access to quality education while marginalising others. This aligns with Bourdieu's (1977, 1984) concept of the 'profit of distinction', in which language proficiency becomes a means of division and stratification. Systemic inequalities in HE, societal structures and the professional sector meanwhile have significant psychological impacts, such as causing stress regarding academic and career prospectus due to language barrier on learners and their families.

According to the findings of this study, English in Bangladesh is characterised as both an asset and a barrier. On one hand, for students in EMI contexts like Afia and Noman, English was perceived as a form of capital that confers societal prestige, facilitates promising career opportunities and bolsters personal empowerment. On the other hand, participants from BMI backgrounds like Rajib and Omar experienced societal stigma, restricted opportunities and low self-esteem. This dichotomy aligned with Silver's (2005) characterisation of language as a gatekeeper to education and employment, underscoring its complex implications.

3.1.2 English as a Medium of Instruction and Parental Agency

3.1.2.1 Parents' Perception

English-centred societal and parental perceptions influenced by structural inequalities perpetuated by the government and corporate business. Students from early EMI backgrounds generally held positive perceptions of English. However, they also discussed the influence of their

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[17] https://teast.co/teach-english-bangladesh (For instance, the Bangladesh Teachers' Association Salary Survey reports that teachers in EMI schools typically earn 30,000–50,000 BDT.)

parents' perceptions and motivations behind choosing EMI. As a few noted, observation of and experience with both BMI and EMI had a direct influence on their parents' perceptions of the vulnerability and inadequate socio-economic benefits of BMI. Four participants from two FGDs ($n = 13$, 13%) shared their experiences regarding their parents' control of their English education from kindergarten to university.

Ayan (FGD1) noted that factors like exam question leaks in BMI schools, along with other issues, were motivations for parents to send their children to EMI schools instead:

> Students from BMI [backgrounds] are generally **weak in English.** Even BMI [institutions are] over-whelmed with many other problems, like exam **questions leaking** [for] higher educational entrance exams and even … job tests. That's why my parents chose an EMI school (Ayan, FGD1).

Participants from by three other FGDs mentioned similar factors, including 'performance-based assessment,' 'global standard curricula,' 'lower academic rigour in BMI,' 'quality resources,' 'employment opportunities,' and 'chances for HE abroad'. Furthermore, the systemic inequalities faced by BMI-background students reinforced parental perceptions that BMI education carries inherent risks and limitations. Parents preferred EMI over BMI because EMI institutions were seen as addressing issues like second language proficiency, exam preparation, teacher quality and school availability (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2016).

The widespread prevalence of leaked questions in public school examinations[18] [19] as well as in recruitment examinations[20] (Al Hasan, 2024) has significantly undermined public confidence in the integrity of Bangladesh's examination system and frustrate general students. High-profile cases, such as the admission of 4,000 students to medical and dental colleges based on leaked exam papers,[21] have exacerbated this problem with merit-based assessment. In Bangladesh, parents from academic backgrounds and higher socio-economic levels therefore tend to prefer EMI (Murshed & Uddin, 2019) based on their access to information about a variety of study programs that offer better quality education (cf. Bell, 2009). Meanwhile, as parents from the periphery have expressed dissatisfaction with society's obsession with English, they often compound this pressure by prioritising native language skills and foreign education models for their children (Kim, 2020: 14). These gaps in the quality of education lead parents to believe that private EMI-based institutions, which mainly follow British curricula,

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[18] See https://today.thefinancialexpress.com.bd/editorial/question-paper-leaks-frustrate-general-students-1720626438
[19] See https://www.tbsnews.net/features/panorama/grades-and-jobs-sale-neverending-saga-question-paper-leaks-896046
[20] See https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/crime-justice/news/psc-question-papers-least-30-leaks-12-years-3652971
[21] See Staff Reporter (2020, July 24). *Fãś howa prośne medical-dentale bhorti hoyechen 4 hajar shikkharthi* [4,000 students admitted to medical-dental colleges through leaked questions]. *Prothom Alo*. https://www.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/crime/ফাঁস-হওয়া-প্রশ্নে-মেডিকেল-ডেন্টালে-ভর্তি-হয়েছেন-৪

are more qualified than BMI-based government-managed institutions. This widespread perception among parents with economic ability leads to the further commodification of English.

This phenomenon was mentioned by Ayesha (FGD1), who emphasised how financially capable parents prioritise English education as a strategic investment in their children's future: 'as soon as parents can afford it, they either enrol their children in [EMI] schools or put them in coaching classes to learn English for future gain'. However, this influence is not exerted in a neutral or free market, but within a framework of structural inequalities and cultural expectations that treat English as essential for social and economic mobility. The new, globalised economy has thus profoundly affected language and identity, creating tensions between state and corporate identities and between local, national and supranational language practices (cf. Bauman, 1997; Castells, 2000; Giddens, 1990; Heller, 2003). For many Bangladeshi parents, the imposition of language went together with the perceived economic and social advantages of cultivating linguistic vitality as conceptualised by Bourhis (2006). The FGDs emphasised that parental agency actively contributes to the commodification of language, leading to language-based elitism.

Parents are increasingly choosing EMIs to provide a better education for their children, avoiding restrictions and ensuring a meritocratic future. This reflects a desire for a high-quality global education. The participants in FGD5 affirmed that their parents preferred EMI for its symbolic prestige and economic utility. Tisha (FGD5) mentioned the trend of parents enrolling their children in EMI kindergartens, which reflects a broader societal shift and the strategic prioritisation of academic trajectories from an early age: 'I've seen many parents forcing their children into English kindergartens to study so that, from a young age, their kids can become proficient in English'. Similarly, Jovan (FGD5) noted that 'Parents who enrol their children in [EMI] schools do so to ensure a good career, and society is seen as a mark of status'.

The demand for English education is steadily rising among both parents and students across the nation, extending beyond affluent urban families to rural communities. Afsar (FGD19) mentioned that many parents of EMI-background students are advised to communicate with their children in English, which he reckons is a practice most such parents adopt. Parents see early enrolment and English interaction as essential for building children's early speaking and listening skills, reinforcing the belief that early language exposure facilitates linguistic proficiency, contributing to future socioeconomic status. This reflects the belief in the so-called 'native speaker fallacy' (Phillipson, 1992) of linguistic imperialism, which positions

English not only as a language skill but also as essential for both modernity and higher social standing.

In Bangladesh, the increasing parental preference for EMI has led to the widespread and rapid emergence of a variety of EMI options (including kindergartens, schools, universities, community education centres and British Council-supported schools) both in urban and rural areas. The Bangladesh Kindergarten Owners Association reported about 4,500 EMI kindergartens enrolling about 200,000 students annually (S. Habib, 2022). In addition, there are currently about 183 British Council partner schools across the country, further indicating the widespread expansion and institutionalisation of EMI.[22] Furthermore, data from the Bangladesh English Medium School Association has counted 350 EMI schools (excluding kindergartens) that enrol around 300,000 students annually (S. Habib, 2022). BANBEIS also demonstrated that the number of registered EMI schools in Dhaka increased from 109 to 138 between 2010 and 2015 but decreased to 142 nationwide by 2020, mainly due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the number of enrolled students continued to rise, from 54,507 in 2018 to 78,201 in 2020 (BANBEIS, 2010, 2014, 2015, 2020).[23]

Discrepancies in existing data regarding the number of EMI institutions and enrolled students further indicate the prevalence of unregistered EMI institutions across the country. It is estimated that there are more than 1,700 EMI schools across Bangladesh, including kindergartens and semi-EMI schools.[24] In Dhaka, the Board of Intermediate and Secondary Education reported around 4,500 EMI Schools, of which only 142 were officially registered (Chandan, 2022). This unregulated growth of EMI reflects the widespread, uncontrolled demand for English education while also indicating a lack of structured language policy and systematic educational planning. This lack of clear oversight has led many EMI schools affiliated with international organisations to operate without state registration, fragmenting the educational system. This lack of regulation further supports English being the predominant language in education and society while simultaneously weakening educational standards. Parental action has been key in boosting English's role. Parents strategically invest in English language acquisition, reflecting a conscious endeavour to secure linguistic capital for their children, often at considerable financial cost. In this context, parental agency drives social stratification as families

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[22] See Reza, S. (30 Sep, 2024). https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/360318/british-council-holds-annual-partner-schools
[23] https://banbeis.gov.bd/site/page/86dac856-5b22-46bd-8a07
ef277379fb0f/%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%8D%E0%A6%AF%E0%A6%BE%E0%A6%A8%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%87%E0
%A6%B8-%E0%A6%97%E0%A6%AC%E0%A7%87%E0%A6%B7%E0%A6%A3%E0%A6%BE
[24] https://www.daily-sun.com/printversion/details/656638 (It is estimated that there are more than 1,700 EMI schools across Bangladesh, including kindergartens and semi-EMI schools)

engage in the commercialisation of English to improve their children's prospects. English thus continues to be a marker of power and prestige, especially in upper-class Bangladesh, where linguistic hierarchies reinforce class differences (Shahed, 2001). This aligns with Kim's (2020: 29) argument that the focus on English proficiency has deepened the 'English divide' in many countries by enabling wealthier families to access private tutoring and international education.

3.1.2.2 Pecuniary Implications

The benefits and rapid expansion of EMI has encouraged many Bangladeshi parents from diverse economic backgrounds to enrol their children in EMI schools. Although this is a deliberate decision, the high cost creates a significant financial burden on middle- and lower-class families. Participants from FGD15, 18 and 19 (n = 11, 11%), who were studying at private universities, reported that EMI has forced their families to make significant financial sacrifices to afford their high tuition fees. Their experiences further reflect the broader problem of the commoditisation of EMI, where access to quality education is contingent upon financial resources. Thus, EMI has again demonstrated its role from a medium of instruction to an exclusive tool for perpetuating inequalities.

Hina, Adil and Sahil (FGD18) emphasized the profound financial sacrifices and socio-economic pressures associated with studying EMI at private universities for middle-class families. Hina mentioned drastic measures like selling the family's land to pay these costs: 'It's hard to describe the financial pressure of choosing a private university. My family doesn't have much, so my father sold land just to cover my tuition'. Adil agreed, adding that the depletion of 'lifelong savings' was considered an investment in the perceived socio-economic opportunities and status gains associated with EMI: 'my parents put every bit of money from their savings into my education. It's a huge financial strain. My parents say it'll help me secure a good job'.

This conversation highlighted how EMI institutions transcend education to become a symbol of elitism and exclusivity, to the point that access to EMI exerted considerable pressure on their families. Sahil's further highlighted this problem by discussing the experience of a middle-class peer who had initially enrolled in a private EMI program but ultimately could not bear the financial burden, resulting in a lost academic year:

> … it's not just about education. Private universities have status attached to them, like elite and exclusive, so some people think they are missing out on a huge opportunity. Like, a classmate of mine was from a middle-class family. His family could barely afford the **high expenses of a private university**, so after

a while, he enrolled in a college instead. However, he ended up **losing a year in the process** (Sahil, FGD18).

In Bangladesh, private universities rely on tuition fees due to the lack of government funding, resulting in significantly higher costs of up to 44 times more than public universities (Sumon, 2023). [25] The Annual Education Survey (2023) meanwhile found a significant expansion of EMI in HE, with the number of EMI universities increasing from 38 in 2003 to 171 in 2023. This included 55 public and 116 private institutions for a total annual enrolment of 1,069,579 (Shahed & Rahman, 2022). Similarly, the number of EMI technical institutions (i.e., medical and technical universities) grew from 187 in 2000 to 842 in 2023, with student enrolment rising from 51,789 annually in 2003 to 174,988 in 2023. In total, about 1,244,567 students were studying at EMI institutions annually, with enrolments at private universities and technical institutions increasing by 205.26% and 237.89%, respectively in 2023.[26]

The introduction and expansion of English to the Indian subcontinent can be attributed to the British colonial regime, and its survival in the postcolonial context of Bangladesh is evident through its integration into curricula as a compulsory subject. The ongoing prevalence of these practices has been further reinforced in the contemporary political and economic landscape, characterised by neoliberalism and the global use of English (Kabir & Chowdhury, 2024; Ong, 2006; O'Regan, 2021). The emphasis on English skills as human capital reflects how colonial dynamics have manifested in subtler ways through neoliberal globalisation (Ali et al., 2023). This shift has increased demands for English education and led to a rise in EMI schools as the free market fosters lucrative opportunities in the private sector (Mousumi & Kusakabe, 2016).

At the same time, the expansion of EMI is supported by 'school agency', a constellation of factors including the commercialisation of teachers, unethical practices by school authorities and profit-driven models. Such models are evident in high tuition fees and the widespread use of private tuition. These elements point to the broader trend of the ongoing commercialisation of education, with financial constraints increasingly determining both the structure and priorities of EMI institutions. As a result, parents are forced to make significant financial sacrifices

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[25] See Sumon, S. A. (2023, April 17). Bēsarakāritē byay 44 guṇ [Private sector costs 44 times more]. Desh Rupantor. https://www.deshrupantor.com/420797/বেসরকারিতে-ব্যয়-৪৪-গুণ
[26] https://banbeis.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/banbeis.portal.gov.bd/npfblock/Bangladesh%20Education%20Statistics%202023%20(1).pdf

to secure an EMI-based education for their children. This dynamic is exacerbated by the influence of 'parental agency', which further enshrines the centrality of English in the educational landscape. Access to quality education is increasingly dependent on financial means, thus worsening socio-economic inequalities and undermining both financial security and social equity. This prevailing ideology contributes to the devaluation of BMI and other languages and constructs a hierarchy that categorises English as not only superior but indispensable. As educational and social priorities shift (Table 3.1) towards an English-language paradigm, people with access to EMI benefit disproportionately, while those who rely on BMI are increasingly marginalised

Table 3.1: Perception and Concerns Regarding English in Education

Category	Group	Findings	n	Results
English for Development	Global Communication and Development	Facilitate international communication.	40	
		Globalisation as a modern need.	28	
		Central to global labour.	22	
	Knowledge, Technological and Information Exchange	Language of science and knowledge.	27	Rising demand for EMI.
		Technological advancement.	22	
	Career, Employment, Status and Institutional Prestige	Gateway to career opportunities.	17	Rapid growth of EMI institutes.
		Access to high paying jobs in multinational companies.	14	
		Professional stability.	16	Early parental pressure for English proficiency.
		English-demanding job market navigation.	29	
		Social prestige, convenience and recognition.	32	
		Institutional market value.	14	
		Marker of competence and international capital.	18	
Concerns	Academic and Sociocultural devaluation	Academic gatekeeping (linguistic exclusion) and educational barriers.	12	Parents' early exposure to English.
		Limited local academic opportunities for BMI-background students.	10	Educational landscape fragmentation.
		Exclusion of BMI-background students from global academia.	7	
		Sociocultural devaluation (Bengali disregarded in society).	9	Educational commercialisation.
	Employment, and Socio-Eonomic Impact	Employment requirement for prestigious careers.	6	
		English established as an essential skill for career development.	13	Significant financial burden on middle-class families.
		Private sector demand for English.	10	
		Salary disparity (economic inequality).	7	
		Gatekeeping from socio-economic progression.	9	Cultivates linguistic vitality.
		Urban privilege (educational inequity).	15	
		Government polarisation of students with limited English proficiency.	13	
Parents' perception/ motivation of EMI	Concerns regarding education system	Questions leaked in BMI-based institutions.	6	
		Merit-based evaluation in EMI (suggesting a fairer system).	7	
		Perceived lower academic rigor in BMI.	14	
	Academic and socio-economic Advantages of EMI	Global standard curricula.	7	
		High-quality resources.	6	
		Future employment opportunities.	8	
		Better second language proficiency.	4	
		Chances for HE abroad.	7	
		Better quality teachers.	9	

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3.2 English and International Mobility

English-language skills are key to accessing HEIs and career opportunities abroad and facilitate academic and economic migration from Bangladesh. The demand for international credentials and jobs demonstrates the role of English in mobility. English influences individual aspirations and broader economic patterns; for example, HE in Anglophone countries offers prestige, research opportunities and career prospects. Thus, students seek opportunities abroad to improve their professional standing and financial stability. Economic factors also drive migration, as employment in Anglophone countries offers greater financial security and upward mobility.

Moreover, an international or transnational education facilitates permanent residency, as students can use their academic qualifications to secure work permits and long-term settlement. English skills are crucial for family reunification and are a prerequisite for sponsorship and integration programmes in many host countries. However, facilitating migration through proficiency in English incurs significant financial burdens. The increasing reliance on standardised language tests—including the International English Language Testing System (IELTS), the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) and the Duolingo English Test (DET)—is driving up costs, benefiting foreign agencies while straining local resources. Tuition fees, visa fees and relocation costs exacerbate economic inequalities and restrict access for students from low-income backgrounds. This theme categorically addressed the intersection of language, education and economic mobility in Bangladesh. English remains central to Bangladeshi migration decisions (Table 3.2), reinforcing its role in academic and career advancement, and financial and systemic barriers determine their access to international opportunities.

Table 3.2: Motives for Studying in Anglophone Countries and/or at English-Speaking Institutions

Category	Findings	*n*	Result
Educational Factors	Limited learning and teaching opportunities.	21	
	Perceived higher education quality abroad	44	
	Limited research opportunities	31	
	Outdated curriculum	14	
	Limited opportunities for skill development	25	
Economic Factors	Transcend limited career options.	37	
	Limited salaries	28	
	Corruption and nepotism.	15	- Increase in transnational EMI.
	Long-term financial strategy	9	- Academic hegemony.
	Enhanced employment prospects	20	- Linguistic convergence.
Diaspora agency	Representing English as essential.	5	- Inhibition of critical cognition.
	Success stories and cultural exchanges.	2	- Pursuit of permanent settlement.
	Financial support for EMI.	3	- Intellectual emigration.
	Guidance on migration.	4	- Erosion of linguistic diversity.
	Cultural mediators, blending local and global norms.	4	- Decline in indigenous output
Social Factors	Overcoming societal barriers.	23	
	Elevated social standing.	15	
	Mental health.	5	
	Female students' security.	4	
	Escaping domestic hardships.	19	
	Permanent residency.	37	
Political Factors	Political instability.	12	
	Undervaluation of skills.	15	
	Insufficient research opportunities.	11	

3.2.1 Economic and Academic Pursuits in Anglophone Migration

3.2.1.1 Academic Migration

From an economic perspective, both English skills and formal education are forms of human capital with considerable value in the labour market (Chiswick, 2008; Chiswick & Miller, 2008, 2009). While language skills are inherently personal and require investment, they also offer significant economic benefits, including better job opportunities, higher income and greater ease in accessing goods and services (Adserà & Pytliková, 2016). In this section, academic migration from the Global South to Anglophone countries is explored, with a particular focus on the role of the English language in this process. In total, 73 of the participants in the FGDs came from both private (*n* = 44) and public universities (*n* = 29). Most participants expressed a strong desire to study abroad and described various factors that influenced their decision, as described by Jesmin (FGD14), who said that 'The main reason for going abroad is the quality of higher education. However, for a student from a middle-class family like me, it's the hope for better educational opportunities that drives the decision to go abroad'.

In recent years, due to a complex interplay of social, educational, and economic factors, increasing numbers of young people have taken up opportunities abroad, particularly regarding

HE. Shoaib (FGD14) expressed disappointment and dissatisfaction with local university education, particularly in terms of limited learning and teaching opportunities due to outdated curricula and the low quality of Bangladeshi HE: 'My university is a top one [in Bangladesh] … yet it has no global [ranking] in the top 1,000 universities. But abroad, they provide a high quality of education'. Similarly, Tanvir (FGD14) complained, 'Even though we're interested in research, there are no adequate facilities here. So, I focus on English for universities abroad'. Participants' concerns about the poor quality of education at universities reflected a broader structural problem that leads students to seek better prospects abroad due to the perceived higher quality of education and more research opportunities. UNESCO (2023) noted that the number of Bangladeshi students studying abroad had increased significantly; 52,799 left the country in 2023, which is double the number of 2013.[27] The World Economic Forum (2023) also reported that 82% of young South Asians, including Bangladeshis, wanted to emigrate for a better lifestyle and career.[28]

In the past, sending children abroad to be educated was largely the preserve of the elite, as it required political influence or significant financial resources. However, as Jesmin noted above, this trend has shifted, with middle- and even lower-income families—including those from agricultural backgrounds—increasingly seeking foreign education for their children. This shift has been fuelled by the increasing perception of limited prospects for middle- and upper-middle-class youth. English has become the language of the global academy; thus, students from diverse backgrounds are adopting it, further accelerating global linguistic and cultural erosion, and solidifying its position as a tool for students who want to study abroad. In turn, the global appeal of English as the academic lingua franca reinforces migration trends. The 'internationalisation of higher education' has created a landscape in which global mobility and knowledge exchange are becoming increasingly prominent, particularly in the Global South (Barnawi, 2018; Collins et al., 2014; Phan Le Ha, 2018). This creates an international academic imperialism and a system of HE in which non-Western scholars rely on Western educational institutions (Alatas, 2003).

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[27] Saudia Afrin. (2024, August 29). *Paving the way for world-class education for Bangladeshi students. The Daily Star.* https://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/global-education-home/news/paving-the-way-world-class-education-bangladeshi-students-3689256
[28] See https://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Global_Risks_Report_2023.pdf.

3.2.1.2 Economic Drivers

The population interested in settling abroad is increasing. The factor motivating emigration mentioned most frequently by all FGDs was increasing unemployment, especially for those without prior experience or connections:

> It's almost impossible to get a good private or government job without '**networking or corruption'**, especially for fresh graduates. Many companies '**don't offer proper salaries'.** Why should we tolerate this misery? That's why I **focus on learning English to go to an English-speaking country** (Shihab, FGD13).

Unemployment was accompanied by various forms of insecurity. As Ishrat (FGD13) noted, worries about these insecurities has caused other forms of social change: 'Recently, even parents have been sending their daughters abroad. Previously, they typically waited until marriage before considering this, but now they're no longer objecting due to the "lack of social and economic security"'.

The participants in FGD13 agreed that economic and social factors were increasingly forcing students to acquire English-language skills as a strategic measure for migration. In this context, participants perceived the opportunity to study in an English-speaking country as a means of overcoming limited career prospects and entrenched social boundaries. Jannat emphasised the profound emotional toll of increased academic and professional rivalry:

> Students from all fields are rushing toward the same jobs in the same way, but a very small number of students get the opportunity. I don't want to be **'disappointed'** in this '**unhealthy competition'.** Even the thought of it gives me anxiety. So, going outside of this country is the only solution for me (Jannat, FGD13).

Mental health issues (exacerbated by job insecurity and academic pressure) have played an important role in the rising number of suicides amongst students in Bangladesh. Of the 513 students who committed suicide in 2023, emotional distress was cited as the primary reason by about 32.2% of cases ($n = 165$). This distress was exacerbated by poor performances in public examinations and significant academic and family pressures. Over 60% of these cases involved female students, suggesting that sociocultural stressors affect this group disproportionately.[29] Overall, these findings indicated the urgent need for comprehensive psychosocial support and fundamental educational reform. They also draw attention to the wider consequences of linking

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[29] See Aachol Foundation. (2023). Student suicides in Bangladesh: A survey report. bdnews24.com. Retrieved from https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/nmzzy4tnzk.https://drive.google.com/file/d/16Z4aPCx6aBKh3QcfjMBuZNsVABWt4fbo/view

English-language skills to the aspiration to migrate, which can inadvertently reinforce existing socioeconomic and gender inequalities in education and employment.

Furthermore, the influence of Habiba's (FGD13) sister on her language preferences reflected the active agency of diasporic communities, a theme that was also mentioned by five participants from FGD10 and FGD19: 'My sister who lives in the UK told me to learn English properly. So, after completing my degree, I plan to go to my relatives living in the UK and settle there permanently'. Diasporic influence thus plays a significant role in shaping students' language choices. This highlights the pivotal role that diaspora agencies play in migration processes, particularly regarding native linguistic and migratory behaviours. These communities transmit aspirational values by emphasising that English is essential for social mobility and global integration, often reinforced by success stories and cultural exchanges. Their financial support for EMI and guidance on migration processes further solidifies others' perceptions of English. Diaspora networks thus contribute to the reinforcement of linguistic hegemony while members act as cultural mediators, blend local and global norms, and serve as indirect advocates through role modelling, as their visible success inspires their peers to emulate similar linguistic and migratory pathways. Diasporic agency thus perpetuates English's centrality while shaping transnational aspirations and identities.

Bristy's (FGD2) statements revealed that her parents viewed education abroad as a long-term financial strategy essential for better employment prospects and future social standing, with international education considered a route to socioeconomic stability:

> Honestly, my parents, like a lot of others … For them, studying abroad is a big deal. They see it as an **investment,** and it means I'll have a **better future** with the skills and **recognition** that come with it.

Bangladeshi parents often focus on the security of and social benefits for their daughters who are studying abroad. As Azam (2020) noted, many young people feel compelled to seek prospects beyond the country's borders, with an English education being increasingly seen as a preparatory step towards achieving this goal. According to the Population Council (2016), 76% of adolescent Bangladeshi girls have been sexually assaulted, both in- and outside educational institutions. Social factors like crime, personal safety, health, the infrastructure, natural

disasters and digital security are serious problems in Dhaka, making it a highly dangerous and unliveable city in 2024.[3031]

The socioeconomic instability and safety concerns in Bangladesh—and the Global South in general are key factors influencing both parental and diasporic support for the migration of young Bangladeshis, including girls and women, to Anglophone countries that promise greater safety, security and professional advancement. Moreover, English proficiency is often a prerequisite for migration to countries like Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, where policies emphasise candidates' English skills, educational attainment and age when issuing permanent residency visas (Adserà & Pytliková, 2016). Therefore, after enrolling at a university, students focus heavily on achieving this proficiency, which hinders their academic development in other fields.

3.2.2 Permanent Residency and Family Reunification

3.2.2.1 International Education and Permanent Residency

Thirty-seven participants from FGDs 3, 5, 6, 9–11, 13 and 16–20 expressed a desire to pursue permanent residence in their prospective host countries after studying abroad. These respondents reported that their interest in remaining in the Global South decreased significantly once they had acquired a certain standard of English. They attributed this change in preference to the academic and socioeconomic challenges that undermined their prospects for long-term stability and development in their home regions.

The participants in FGD20 pointed out that learning English encouraged students to settle abroad, mainly due to the perceived economic, social and political challenges at home. The participants viewed English-language skills as a passport to better opportunities and as a means of escaping domestic hardships. For example, Emran (FGD20) explained that low wages and limited economic prospects made remaining in Bangladesh unviable: 'After graduating, I might get a job, but the salary will be so low that it won't even cover my personal expenses, so I'll have to leave the country'. He added that his choice was 'the UK to do my master's and stay permanently'. Similarly, Iqbal (FGD20) mentioned that rampant nepotism drove students to seek stability abroad: 'Like me, many students face discrimination [via nepotism] and go

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[30] Economist Intelligence Unit. (2024). The Global Liveability Index 2024. https://www.eiu.com/n/campaigns/global-liveability-index-2024/.

[31] Forbes India. (2024). The top 10 largest economies in the world in 2024. https://www.forbesindia.com/article/explainers/top-10-largest-economies-in-the-world/86159/1

west out of frustration. Most people don't want to leave their own country but are forced to. Even our parents won't ask us to come back'.

Disha (FGD20) succinctly added, 'My point is if you are good at English, just leave the country. There is no future here'. Emran's aspiration to settle permanently in the UK reflected a wider trend amongst university students in Bangladesh. This further indicated that some foreign universities are acting as 'visa factories', with education providing a potential route to permanent residency (Robertson & Runganaikaloo, 2013). This was consistent with the findings on family expectations surrounding elite educational institutions; the expected benefits include the possibility of permanent residency abroad, higher earning potential upon return and higher social status overall (Alves, 2022).

Moreover, a student who goes abroad to study may be attracted by the research opportunities, technology, social security, quality of life, rule of law, and stability in the host country. According to the Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center and the Centre for Peace and Justice at BRAC University (2023), a study of 5,609 young people in Bangladesh's eight divisions revealed that almost half (42%) of the country's young, educated people expressed a desire to emigrate. Economic and social conditions, political instability and a widespread lack of security discouraged them from remaining in Bangladesh[32]. In addition, the lack of a 'supportive work environment', 'undervaluation of skills' and 'insufficient opportunities for growth in research' force large numbers of talented young people to settle permanently in developed countries. For these students, English is not just a language, but a tool to create a better future, as fluency is believed to pave the way for economic security and a better quality of life. Consequently, the urge to learn English was fuelled by the desire to overcome local constraints and to secure a viable future abroad.

3.2.2.2 Expatriate English Proficiency and Family Migration

International mobility is a key phenomenon reshaping the global socioeconomic landscape, particularly in the Global South. Participants reflected on how expatriates use their English proficiency to facilitate the migration of their families and relatives. For example, FGD6 discussed current migration trends and how language plays a crucial role in overcoming barriers

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[32] See https://bylc.org/assets/files/Youth-MattersSurveyFindings.pdf

to migration. FGD6 illustrated the multifaceted interplay amongst language proficiency, migration practices, and evolving diasporic ties.

The participants revealed a common view of migration as being driven by economic motives like 'changing their fortunes' (Nasrin, FGD6) via foreign income. Nasrin (FGD6) emphasised that people with various educational levels viewed migration as a fundamentally economic strategy: 'The primary reason behind the migration of both highly educated and **less** educated individuals is economic. They dream of "changing their fortunes" by earning money for themselves and their families'. Imran (FGD6) also emphasised HE as a route to migration but pointed out a critical problem: 'due to a lack of suitable employment, financial insecurity, and concerns about their children's future, many people leave the country after learning only a bit of English'.

As evidence shows, unemployment in Bangladesh has increased. The latest quarterly Labour Force Survey by the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (BBS) reports that, in the second quarter (October–December) of the 2024–25 fiscal year, the unemployment rate rose to 4.63 percent. Additionally, the number of unemployed people grew from 2.55 million in 2023 to 2.7 million in 2024.[33][34] Which increased the number of individuals who emigrated. Jahid's (FGD6) comments supported this:

> **It's because**, by earning abroad, they can provide **substantial financial** support to their families back home, which is satisfying for the families. Moreover, when one person goes abroad, it often **creates opportunities for other family members** to do the same.

Settlement abroad was also seen as a way of escaping social problems. Thus, English becomes a tool that helps individual families but simultaneously diminishes local opportunities for growth and development. This contrasted with portrayals of English as facilitating the movement of capital, goods and labour across borders (Canagarajah, 2017; Park & Wee, 2013).

Western countries also use English to disseminate their development ideas and to promote their political, cultural, and economic interests in former colonies (Pennycook, 2017; Phillipson, 1988). The Bangladeshi government's own recent initiatives to provide English courses through embassies (e.g., in the Maldives) and the Ministry of Expatriates' Welfare and Overseas Employment's year-round English programmes are aimed at increasing migration-

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[33] https://bangla.thedailystar.net/economy/news-673961
[34] https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/c885f359_ef11_4abe_95f6_021865be3401/2025-03-17-13-46-d852531e09b5774adf71c859d71ebd7c.pdf

related economic gains. These measures are based on the belief that English proficiency is essential for creating a skilled labour force that can contribute financially from abroad. By equipping expatriates with English skills, these efforts reinforce the link between language proficiency and economic opportunity and are consistent with studies linking language proficiency in the host country to higher wages and economic mobility (Dustmann & Fabbri, 2003; Grin, 2001). While these measures emphasise the country's economic advantages, they also enforce English's hegemony, which has wider sociocultural implications (Miranda & Giraldo, 2019). Scholars have argued that discourse on development in South Asia, which is primarily mediated through English (Shamim, 2011), has made English synonymous with economic growth, thereby shaping language policies across the Global South (Mackenzie, 2021; Mohanty, 2017; Sayer, 2015b). This reinforces its commodification within neoliberal frameworks (Piller & Cho, 2013; Sharma & Phyak, 2017) and incentivises individuals to prioritise it over their indigenous languages in the pursuit of socioeconomic mobility.

English's increasing dominance meanwhile causes the indigenous languages of the Global South to lose ground, resulting in less linguistic diversity and fewer creative or academic contributions in those languages. Individual migrants may benefit, but policies that prioritise English risk weakening and undermining national and indigenous languages, which are rich in cultural heritage and history (Corradi, 2017), as well as weakening overall cultural integrity. This dynamic perpetuates linguistic hierarchies and socioeconomic inequalities in- and outside migrants' home countries, following Phillipson's (1992) linguistic imperialism. Furthermore, this situation can be exacerbated by complicated dynamics in which individual financial advantages undermine broader linguistic and cultural autonomy.

3.2.3 Standardization and Migration Economic Costs in the Global South

3.2.3.1 The IELTS and Foreign Agency

As mentioned previously, increasing urbanisation, neoliberal capitalism, uncertain prospects and many other factors are driving people from the Global South to seek HE or job opportunities abroad. However, to achieve this goal, they often need to demonstrate a certain standard of English proficiency. TOEFL, introduced in 1964 (Alderson, 2009; Mangan-Dimuzio, 2014), and the IELTS, introduced in 1980[35], were established as benchmarks for assessing nonnative English speakers' proficiency and are widely accepted for admission to educational institutions

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[35] See https://www.manhattanreview.com/ielts-history/

in and migration to Anglophone countries, including the US, the UK, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand.

Most of the participants mentioned the need for an English proficiency test to enrol in HE abroad and had a neutral view. However, two participants from FGD16 expressed negative feelings about high test costs and the need for a standardised English test. Shima (FGD16) highlighted the necessity of English proficiency to access international opportunities and viewed testing success as a crucial stepping stone, saying 'we want to leave our country for our studies, and of course, proficiency tests in English are a necessity there'. Meanwhile, a significant increase in the number of candidates taking the IELTS examination has been observed in Bangladesh, with the number of candidates rising from 35,000 in 2021 to 100,000 in 2022, an increase of 2,86 times within a single year.[36] The rapid rise of IELTS as the dominant international assessment of English as a foreign language in Bangladesh illustrates how hegemony functions within Bangladeshi educational policy (Mulderrig, 2003). The control of these exams by core countries allows them to influence education while diverting significant financial resources from peripheral countries, thus perpetuating global power asymmetries.

Wadud (FGD16) criticised these costs, saying, 'we have to spend a lot of money, firstly for taking IELTS coaching and secondly for the test fee. I think it is much higher in countries like Bangladesh'. English tests have often been criticised for being provided by profit-driven enterprises, raising questions about their fairness (Raymond, 2020). This coincides with negative reactions from students in the Global South, who view the IELTS as being prohibitively expensive. The financial burden on students, including the cost of essential materials like course books, emphasises concerns about economic exploitation (e.g., Yasmin, 2024; Phillipson, 1992; Rogers, 1990). Over three million people have taken IELTS and TOEFL, which are recognised by more than 10,000 universities and admissions offices in 130 countries (Badalyan, 2018; Mohamed, 2023). Core countries thus administer these exams through their institutions in peripheral countries and charge substantial fees for them. This reliance on foreign institutions to assess language proficiency not only places a significant financial burden on families but also raises concerns about exam regulation and quality control.

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[36] See https://www.thedailystar.net/supplements/study-abroad/news/navigating-the-road-success-ielts-and-studyuk-scholarship-3398451

3.2.3.2 Financial Strain and Resource Drain

The British Council, which has been promoting English language education since the 1930s, provides consultancy services in over 100 countries and generates around 85% of its revenue from teaching, exams, contracts and partnerships (Byrne, 2021; Fisher, 2009; Romer, 2017). By 2019, the British Council's turnover had reached £1,250 million, driven by robust performances in English teaching and exams, high income from contract work and grants from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (British Council, 2019).[37] This growth illustrates the increasing dominance of English examinations in non-Anglophone countries in the Global South.

This also leads to bias and inequality based on the knowledge being imposed and dominates the scale of the IELTS, which was discussed heavily in FGD8. They highlighted the influence of IELTS as a gatekeeper to global educational opportunities. Amina's (FGD8) concern about her English proficiency (despite her expertise in zoology) demonstrated how English can overshadow domain-specific skills, potentially excluding qualified individuals from international academic participation:

> a large portion of us want to go abroad, but for financial reasons, we cannot. Like, I'm a bit weak in [my] English speaking, but I'm skilled in my field. I'm already taking English coaching, but if my [IELTS] score is low, I am afraid … I **won't be able** to go.

Similarly, Arisha (FGD8) observed that 'talented students have failed to go abroad because English proficiency is the main qualification'. Khaled's (FGD8) own difficulty with the exam's structure despite his education revealed a disconnect between standardised tests and practical, locally developed language skills: 'IELTS is a big challenge, even for me as an EMI university student …. the patterns and contents of the exam are very obscure to me'. Many Bangladeshi students are unfamiliar with the test's British English characteristics (Yasmin, 2024). Otchie (2023) described rating the English proficiency of Ghanian students via the IELTS as 'another form of colonialism' and 'a form of linguistic imperialism'.[38] Such exams can lead to the prioritisation of English proficiency over professional qualifications. The participants perceived the imperialistic nature of the IELTS as demonstrating a bias against individuals who were proficient in local Englishes, thus perpetuating inequalities in the global HE system (see also Davidson, 1994; Khan, 2009).

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[37] https://www.britishcouncil.org/sites/default/files/annual_report_2019-20.pdf
[38] See https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/features/The-lingering-effects-of-linguistic-imperialism-The-struggle-for-recognition-of-African-English-1762928

The motivation to acquire English skills and emigrate to Anglophone countries was linked to the influence of English linguistic imperialism (ELI) throughout the findings. As Ayman (FGD3) explained, 'After my bachelor's degree, I would like to go abroad for higher studies. As scholarship opportunities are competitive, I [will] convince my parents to take loans or sell assets to manage money'. This statement illustrated the ambition of students who view migration to Anglophone countries as a path to better academic and economic prospects. His family's willingness to take financial risks demonstrated the symbolic power associated with a foreign education. Kubota and Takeda (2021), O'Regan (2021) and Sayer (2015a) have argued that the integration of English into international educational policies and assessments was driven by a neoliberal agenda that promotes connectivity and efficiency to facilitate global capital flows. Concurrently, the migration of young populations reflects broader postcolonial aspirations and results in significant human capital outflow from the Global South as individuals and institutions invest in acquiring foreign certifications in Anglophone countries, thereby reinforcing Western economic advantages.

Data from the Bangladesh Bank have demonstrated a significant increase in capital outflows for education, rising from $150.4 million in the 2016–17 fiscal year to $235 million (nearly 25 billion BDT) in 2022–23 (Sharma, 2024). This increasing expenditure, particularly by middle- and lower-middle-class families, is consistent with UNESCO's 2023 report stating that the US, the UK and Canada collectively host thousands of Bangladeshi students (Sharma, 2024). Universities in these countries often treat international students as 'cash cows', or an endless source of income (Robertson, 2011). Bangladesh's dependence on foreign English education not only drains the country's financial resources but also increases its linguistic and cultural dependence on core countries. This highlights the urgent need for policies that strengthen domestic education and combat the dominant influence of Anglophone programmes abroad.

The trend of mass migration to English countries contributing to the phenomenon of the 'brain drain' in Bangladesh is evidenced by the country's high scores on international migration indicators. The Fund for Peace (2019) reported a Bangladeshi brain drain index of 7.6/10 pre-pandemic, while the global average was 5.5/10.[39] In addition, 39% of people aged 15–29 reported migrating for work opportunities in 2018, and post-pandemic Bangladesh remains among the most drained 20 countries globally with a score of 7/10 on the human flight

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[39] https://fundforpeace.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/9511904-fragilestatesindex.pdf

and brain drain index in 2021 (according to WB).[40] The overwhelming focus on English proficiency under current policies may be professionally legitimised, but often leads to a brain drain, as some participants mentioned 'leaving the country and settling' abroad (FGD20), and Azam (2016) argued that the immense popularity of English was due to the possibility of travelling abroad and living there permanently.

Previously, migration was done by the elite, who had the necessary financial resources. However, this study demonstrated that this trend has moved firmly to the middle class and that English proficiency was the key factor in this significant societal shift. The consequences of this phenomenon are numerous. Most Bangladeshi students are educated at universities using taxpayers' money without repaying their debt to society as they subsequently migrate abroad, primarily to Anglophone countries. Despite EMI universities in Bangladesh producing globally competent students, Bangladesh still must rely heavily on foreign agency and has failed to develop an inclusive language policy that represents the linguistic interests of its indigenous people. Moreover, by marginalising the large number of students with limited academic English proficiency and encouraging the elite of the Global South to encourage the continuation of neocolonialism, Bangladesh's national control over its own language policy is further reduced, the influence of donors is increased and the national language is potentially sidelined, creating a vicious cycle (Figure 3.1).

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[40] Pranon, A. (2023, December 15). *Brain drain and its impact on Bangladesh's economy*. *The Business Standard*. https://www.tbsnews.net/thoughts/brain-drain-and-its-impact-bangladeshs-economy-757990
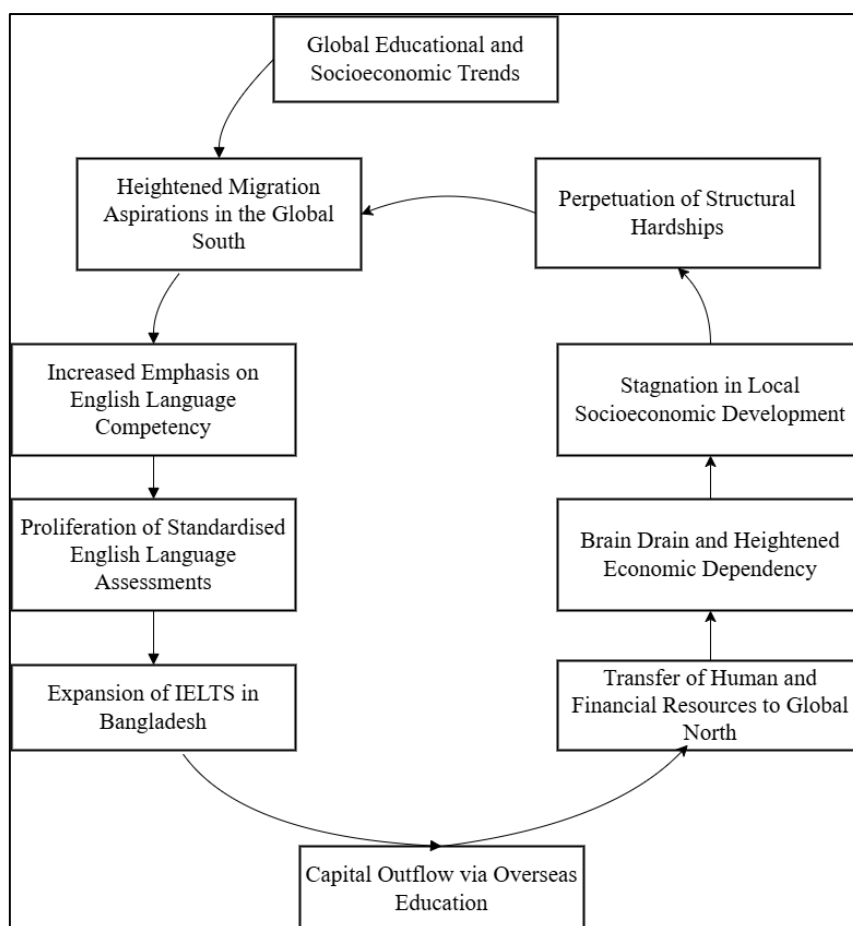
Figure 3.1: Flow of Language Capital

3.3 English in Language Policy and Planning

The LPP in Bangladeshi HE is influenced by several factors, including colonial legacies, foreign influences and domestic structures. These factors have led to the dominant role of English in academic access, institutional frameworks and students' aspirations. This theme categorically explored both the macro- and microlevel LPPs that define English's role in Bangladeshi HE and its broader socioeconomic impact (Table 3.3). The institutionalisation of English during British colonial rule was a seminal moment in its establishment as the dominant language of government and education, a legacy that has persisted post-independence. English's supremacy has further been reinforced by globalisation and foreign institutions. International collaborations, English-language programmes and policies influenced by global agencies have helped consolidate its role, making English proficiency essential for academic and professional advancement. This section presents a discussion of participants' perceptions of LPP and highlights the nexus of historical, institutional and familial factors in shaping their experiences.

Table 3.3: Macro- and Microlevel Language Policies and Outcomes

Level	Policy Aspect	Perceived Influence	*n*	Outcomes
Macro Policy	Colonial Influence on LPP	Academic lingua franca.	74	- Erosion of native identity.
		English-oriented NEPs.	9	- Perceived academic inferiority.
		Prohibition of Bengali	11	- Teachers' bias towards English-proficient students.
		English for all academic activities.	5	- Threat to Bengali departments' survival.
		Teachers encourage English.	17	- Declining interest in learning Bengali.
		Western pedagogy and policy.	12	- Low demand for Bengali studies.
		Diplomatic and commercial English use.	6	- Institutional prohibition of Bengali.
				- Enforcement of linguistic homogeneity.
				- Bengali responses considered inferior.
				- Loss of connection to Bengali.
	Foreign Influence on NEP and LPP	Inadequacy of educational materials in Bengali.	8	- Rote memorisation over conceptual understanding.
		Increased publication of English-language textbooks.	5	- Prevents meaningful learning.
		Western-centric content in English textbooks.	7	- Marginalisation of research in Bengali.
		Unsuccessful pro-Bengali policies.	4	- Increased reliance on plagiarism.
		Inadequate government funding for BMI.	4	
		English use encouraged.	5	
		Significant foreign donations for EMI.	1	
		English-only policies at private universities.	12	
		Academic documents and signs in English.	6	
Micro Policy	English in School-Scape	Academic documents and signs in English.	9	- Bengali considered irrelevant.
		English dominance in education.	4	- English used solely for development.
		English used for national slogans.	5	
	Family Language Policy	Parents discourage Bengali use at home.	6	-Generational shift in linguistic practices.
		Lack of exposure to Bengali literature.		- Intergenerational communication gap.
		Restricted children's access to Bengali culture.	4	- Fragmentation of cultural traditions.
			5	- Alienation from Bengali.
				- Disengagement from local cultural practices.

3.3.1 Macro-Policy: Colonial Ramifications and Extrinsic Influences

3.3.1.1 Colonial Legacies in Language Policy

In Bangladesh's private universities, the regulatory commission's policy mandating exclusive English usage (contrasting with the more flexible linguistic policies of public universities) has had profound implications for pedagogical practices and students' learning outcomes. This parallels the colonial era's 'civilising mission', whereby colonial powers justified their interventions under the guise of benefiting the colonised. Colonial powers promoted their own linguistic and cultural structures to impose their worldview on other populations. The integration of English education ensured the maintenance of cultural and power dynamics through linguistic subjugation. The introduction of English in place of local languages was originally intended to create a 'submissive class' that would learn English, act as interpreters and serve the British,

resulting in the marginalisation of local languages and cultures. English was thus imposed as the sole language in education, government, and administration. This not only led to the destruction of linguistic diversity but also jeopardised indigenous cultures.

ELT materials, as the products of surviving colonial and postcolonial language policies, perpetuate a comparable narrative (Pennycook, 2007a). Most participants expressed favourable perceptions of English and recognised it as an academic lingua franca. However, these feelings were not universal. Sixteen participants from five FGDs (5–7, 9, 12) expressed dissenting views regarding the rigid English-only language policy implemented at private HEIs.

As part of its colonial legacy, English continues to serve as the primary medium of instruction (MOI) at public, private and specialised universities that rely on English-only resources. As Ali et al. (2023) stated, an initial lack of local English-language proficiency encouraged Bangladesh's dependence on overseas donors and their institutions. Private universities began proliferating after the ratification of the Private Universities Act in 1992, and almost all established English departments to cater to the increasing demands in the country. These universities also fed a significant market for the English language by introducing support programmes for students from BMI backgrounds (Hamid & Al Amin, 2022). This reflects the persistence of linguistic imperialism as described by Pennycook (1998), who argued that colonial language policies privileged European languages and established linguistic hierarchies and racial prejudices that legitimised colonial enterprises. Fiza (FGD12) reflected on the effects of such policies:

> it feels strange, like we're in a **mini-UK** within Bangladesh …. at our university, we **learn nothing** about **our culture and our rich heritage**. We learn **Western teaching** but nothing on our own. Yes, we have one course, but we learnt that in [grade] school.

Private universities have institutional policies mandating the exclusive use of English in all academic (including lectures, examinations, and assignments) and administrative activities, following the National Education Policy-2010. These policies explicitly prohibit the use of Bengali in academic contexts. Previous studies, notably the work of Sultana (2014), corroborated this observation by highlighting that students who were proficient in English had little difficulty articulating their ideas during classroom interactions, whereas those whose primary proficiency was in Bengali found themselves effectively silenced due to the enforced use of English. This was reflected in Saif's (FGD12) statement:

> in private universities, there is hardly any practice of Bengali. **Everything is in English—lectures, exams, even assignments**. There's no option to use Bengali; even the university trustees themselves dictate

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that everything must be in English, and **no one should use Bengali,** and, in almost all universities, writing answers in **Bengali is prohibited.** This actually becomes a significant **problem for us.**

English is also predominantly used as a medium of academic communication at public universities, although some departments, particularly in the humanities, allowed students to respond in Bengali. However, participants who were attending public universities reported that this was largely avoided. The students expressed concerns about being considered academically inadequate or less talented by their lecturers if they chose to speak Bengali. Moreover, the lecturers tended to favour students who demonstrated proficiency in English. The lecturers openly admitted that they encouraged their students to actively use English both inside and outside of the classroom. Riaz (FGD12) emphasised that this was 'frustrating' because 'It feels like our identities are being overlooked. For a lot of students, it just adds to the anxiety of having to navigate in English all the time'. This tendency has been noted in multiple studies (e.g., Azad, 2019).

This widespread use of English in academics threatens the closure of Bengali departments, as expressed by participants in FGD17 and FGD11. The lack of interest was mainly related to the perception of limited career prospects and minimal demand for Bengali in the labour market, as well as the dominance of English in diplomacy and conferences reflecting the colonial practices in HE. Echoing Fiza (FGD12), one participant from FGD5 compared the status of the language at universities to that of being a stranger in one's own land due to the widespread restrictions on teaching, lecturing and academic writing in Bengali. This colonial marginalisation is reinforced under macrolevel language policies, according to which L1 responses are seen as inferior. Striving for academic achievement, students are encouraged to lose their connections to their L1 and perpetuate the colonial legacy.

English-only teaching policies at private and public universities have been discussed by Phillipson (2018), who asserted that 'the strong position of English in former colonies represents a continuation of the policies of colonial times' (p. 5) and excludes students with weaker English-language skills from participating in classroom discussions, thus reinforcing linguistic and social divides (Sultana, 2014). The dominance of English at universities in the Global South, driven by strict language policies inherited from the colonial era, has significant consequences for cultural and intellectual integrity. Meanwhile, the one-sided emphasis on English neglects the importance of bi- or multilingual competence in non-Anglophone countries.

3.3.1.2 Foreign Influence on Language Policy

This section examines participants' reflections on foreign influences on language policies in the Global South. In Bangladesh, policies supported by foreign organisations play a role in perpetuating a neocolonial order. Kasif (FGD7) emphasised that overreliance on English had the potential to decrease students' understanding, engagement and motivation and posited that it could have detrimental socioeconomic and identity-related consequences, hindering national development and autonomy:

> The main reason why most students in our country do not enjoy studying is the **excessive influence of foreign language,** English**.** People naturally feel more comfortable reading and understanding in their mother tongue, whereas grasping concepts in a foreign language **can be quite challenging**. Most of the books included in our university syllabuses **do not have Bengali translations**, making learning even more difficult. China has progressed so much today because they prioritised their language and culture in their development. However, we are **overly focused on foreign languages** instead of giving importance to Bengali. If this continues, we may have to pay a heavy price in the future.

Similarly, Rita (FGD5) expressed concerns that foreign influences in educational policies could perpetuate linguistic dependency and hinder comprehension or the establishment of cultural identity. She agreed that unequal foreign and government funding for English-language materials reinforced this dominance, marginalised Bengali and weakened policy implementation. Thus, this imbalance sustains Western-centric content, increases community resistance and threatens linguistic sovereignty.

Nusrat (FGD7) discussed the results of this phenomenon, observing that the exclusive focus on English in the academic environment could be intimidating or even detrimental for students with less English proficiency:

> when everything is in English, it's **intimidating**, especially for those who aren't as proficient. Some students feel **pressured** to **copy assignments or research papers and just** change a few words to avoid detection. It's like we're so focused on English that real learning and research become secondary.

Pressured to write academic assignments exclusively in English, classmates often copied term papers or research papers and only made minimal changes to avoid their submissions being identified as plagiarised. The personal development of writing skills thus falls by the wayside. Reza (2024) observed that, 'at present, universities and research institutions in Bangladesh discourage research in Bengali', highlighting a concerning trend that undermines the scholarly value of the national language. This influence has replaced genuine learning and critical thinking with the superficial fulfilment of language requirements.

Raisa (FGD7) insisted that exclusive use of English textbooks for complex academic content encouraged memorisation rather than deep conceptual understanding while also weakening Bengali's potential academic use:

> relying completely on **English books** makes it **challenging** because we don't always have the language skills to interpret complex ideas. We're learning more through memorisation than understanding. After doing assignments, quizzes, midterms, presentations, and term papers in English, I suddenly realise I've **forgotten many Bengali words.**

According to Fatima (FGD12), this reliance is an example of the imposition of Western pedagogical practices that reinforce both linguistic and conceptual challenges, ultimately undermining students' sense of belonging. Similarly, Soto-Molina and Mêndez (2020) reported cultural biases in ELT textbooks in Colombia. Furthermore, Ulum and Köksal (2020) demonstrated a significant correlation between the ideological and hegemonic practices found in both global and local ELT textbooks. Overall, these findings indicate that a strict insistence on English hinders meaningful learning, limits critical engagement, decreases Bengali-centred cultural identity at both national and international levels and creates a more difficult and discouraging academic environment.

Critics have claimed that the imposed teaching of English as part of the education policy was significantly influenced by foreign agencies. For example, the WB has played a crucial role in funding education in developing countries and has been criticised for perpetuating the linguistic imperialism of the colonial and early postcolonial periods (Phillipson, 2018). Mazrui (1997) described the WB's example in Africa:

> The World Bank's real position … encourages the consolidation of the imperial languages in Africa …. The World Bank does not seem to regard the linguistic Africanisation of the whole of primary education as an effort that is worth its consideration. Its publication on strategies for stabilising and revitalising universities, for example, makes absolutely no mention of the place of language at this tertiary level of African education (p. 39).

A similar phenomenon can be observed in Bangladesh, where foreign influence manifests through strategic planning imported from abroad, large foreign donations and policies that prioritise English over indigenous languages. As Azam (2020) put it:

It's not surprising, and perhaps, given our reality, not even shameful; our twenty-year strategic plan by the UGC was crafted by the World Bank. Not just in education, but in almost every matter, we borrow the necessary 'knowledge' or directives to run the state from abroad.[41]

This reliance on external bodies like the WB highlights the extent to which universities' strategic planning is guided by international organisations rather than by national priorities (Azam, 2020). Moreover, the UGC's implementation of internationally developed strategies exemplifies how this external influence bolsters the status of English in tertiary education.

According to a report by the British Council,[42] considerable foreign donations have flowed into Bangladesh's English education. In 2018, the government approved the Primary Education Development Programme 4, the largest five-year reform programme for primary education to date, which is worth billions of dollars. As part of this reform, the British Council was awarded the contract for a comprehensive training programme, English for Primary Teachers, worth BDT 230 *crore* (around £21 million). In 2019, the government approved the British Council's Teacher Education for Primary Schools (TMTE) project, an initiative worth BDT 47 *crore* (£4.5 million) and its first aimed at developing nearly 130,000 Bangladeshi primary school educators with English skills. These foreign-funded initiatives are in line with the government's overall focus on English proficiency. In 2018, the prime minister of Bangladesh personally praised the project, hoping it would meet the 'need for giving the utmost priority to children to learn English proficiently at the primary level' (TMTE, n.d.).

3.3.2 Micro-Policy: Home and School

3.3.2.1 English in Contemporary Education

Five participants from FGDs 9, 14 and 17 emphasised the continued predominance of English, not only as an integral part of overall academic activities, but also as an inherent part of the linguistic landscapes of academic institutions. They were concerned about institutional practices that ignored the legal requirement to include the Bengali language on signage. For example, Minhaz (FGD9) described the ELI in Bangladesh's educational landscape, in which English was visually dominant:

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[41] This is my own translation from the original.
[42] See https://www.britishcouncil.org.bd/en/programmes/education/TMTE

Beyond our educational institutions, most private universities, English-medium schools, and even libraries **display their names in large English letters**. Additionally, the **signboards and billboards** of universities are written in English. Observing all this, it sometimes feels as though Bengali has no vocabulary of its own and that we are living entirely **within a world of English words.**

Participants also noted that academic certificates, marksheets, registration and admission papers and logos were in English their universities in Bangladesh, which helped promote positive perceptions of the language. The prevalence of English on signboards, banners and posters at universities may foster the perception that Bengali is irrelevant in professional and contemporary spheres while associating English with prestige. As of 2023, of the 115 private universities, only seven had their names in Bengali, while the remaining 108 had their names in English.[43] Displays in English at educational institutions can be attributed to the societal perception that these institutions are symbols of modernity, are globally oriented, offer superior educational quality and provide access to international opportunities.

Furthermore, certain Bangladeshi government slogans like 'Digital Bangladesh' and 'Smart Bangladesh' are integral to the linguistic landscape, which includes all the visible language in public spaces, such as signs, advertisements, and official messaging. By using English for these national development slogans in the media and public spaces, the government not only communicates its commitment to modernisation and progress, but also subtly influences social attitudes by associating technological and economic development with English. This further reinforces language hierarchies and increases English's prominence in public and intellectual domains, thereby subtly perpetuating a hegemonic mentality that challenges Bengali's everyday presence while limiting its linguistic and cultural representation.

3.3.2.2 Family Language Policy

FLP encompasses the ways in which families perceive and manage language use, including ideologies, goals, practices, and outcomes (King et al., 2008), and develops through everyday interactions. FLP provides a microlevel perspective on how language ideologies and practices within families contribute to broader sociolinguistic dynamics. During FGDs, the emphasis was on the socioemotional effects of FLP on language acquisition, family relationships and wellbeing. Analysing English through the lens of FLP revealed its impact on a family's lan-

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[43] Dainik Shiksha. (2023, February 21). Bishwobidyaloye upekshito matribhasha [Mother tongue neglected in universities]. Dainik Shiksha. https://www.dainikshiksha.com/বিশ্ববিদ্যালয়ে-উপেক্ষিত-মাতৃভাষা/269480/

guage choices and the acceptance of (or resistance) to dominant ideologies. Participants discussed parental reinforcement for language selection, including how their families introduced English, the primary language that was spoken at home and its impact. When asked about their language preferences when communicating with family members, most participants stated that they predominantly spoke Bengali. However, seven participants from FGD15 and FGD19 who were exposed to an English environment from an early age reported using English as their primary home language. Their experiences illustrated the pervasive effects of English-language imperialism in Bangladeshi households, in which FLP and societal pressure encourage the shift from Bengali to English and undermine cultural connections. Lamia (FGD15) reported that her FLP prioritised English at home just like at school, contributing to an overall shift:

> **In class**, English is given more importance, and speaking in **Bengali is discouraged,** and at home we also **converse in English ….** The movies and TV series I watch are also in English, so I don't get the chance to speak Bengali as much.

Research has supported this trend, as more than 60% of respondents to a survey stated that their families favoured English over Bengali and associated English proficiency with a sense of superiority (Obaidullah, 2020). This shift in language use is not simply a matter of personal preference; it shows that English is seen as a sign of sophistication, a notion that has had an impact on Bangladeshi society since colonial times. English is seen as a sign of elite status and social distinction, which is in line with Haugen's (1953) idea that language prestige creates social pressure.

Wasim's (FGD15) observation of how his sister's limited Bengali created a communication barrier with older relatives was an example of this tension:

> My sister can hardly talk to the **older folks** because she **barely knows any Bangla.** Because **my parents** thought that if she **learnt English** from a young age, she wouldn't have any problems later on. It's kind of unfortunate that she can't speak Bengali properly.

This emphasises the resulting communication gap between generations, as limited knowledge of Bengali restricts communication with older family members and prevents cultural transmission. As families adopt English due to ideological and social pressure, younger generations are becoming linguistically alienated from their heritage language, hindering intergenerational communication and disrupting cultural continuity. FLP plays a central role in language development and use, with families actively shaping the acquisition of bi- or multilingualism through their linguistic practices and ideologies (King et al., 2008). However, in the Bangladeshi context, this contribution is heavily biased towards English, often at the expense of balanced bilingualism. The complex dynamics of Bangladeshi FLPs lead to English, which

is associated with prestige and modernity, being favoured over Bengali. This is consistent with 'language ideology' as defined by Abtahian and Quinn (2017), wherein beliefs about language influence which languages are socially promoted. The perception of English as a language of progress, which has its roots in the colonial era, thus continues to shape language practices at the household level.

Mahak (FGD15) observed that due to English-favouring FLPs, not only does he find Bengali more difficult, but some most EMI students have little or no exposure to Bengali literature, creating further ideological and cultural marginalisation: 'I also often find Bengali to be difficult and complex because from an early age I have only been exposed to English literature and culture, so I remain largely disconnected from our own'. This imbalance not only limits students' access to their indigenous cultural heritage, but also deepens their disconnection from local identities, leading to cultural detachment. While many families favoured English, a contrary ideology cautioned against its overuse, revealing the tension between the preservation of linguistic heritage and the pursuit of the perceived socioeconomic benefits of English proficiency. This shift from Bengali to English reflects key drivers of language change, including demographic pressures and evolving attitudes (Holmes & Wilson, 2017). This is consistent with Zeng and Yang's (2022) notion of English linguistic neoimperialism, in which adopting English is a choice characterised by global power structures and economic pressures, ultimately weakening the role of the indigenous languages in the home.

Parents in Bangladesh often prefer English over Bengali in educational contexts for several interrelated reasons (Azam, 2016; Figure 3.2). English is associated with social prestige and a sense of elitism that stems from its colonial legacy and continues to influence middle-class aspirations. It is widely perceived as a language that will ensure better employment opportunities, particularly in the private sector and in multinational contexts. Many parents believe English equips their children for the global market and facilitates access to foreign universities. Furthermore, there is an increasing sense of hopelessness regarding the quality and outcomes of Bengali education, which is often under-resourced and poorly managed by the state. The government's failure to elevate Bengali as a prestigious language or provide quality public education has led to a lack of confidence amongst parents. Moreover, the influence of the Indian model of education and the emulation of upper-class choices have reinforced the notion that English is indispensable. There is also a widespread belief that English and Bengali

compete with rather than complement each other, reinforcing the marginalisation of the national language in formal education. Combined, these factors lead to a systematic preference for EMI, particularly amongst the urban middle and upper classes.
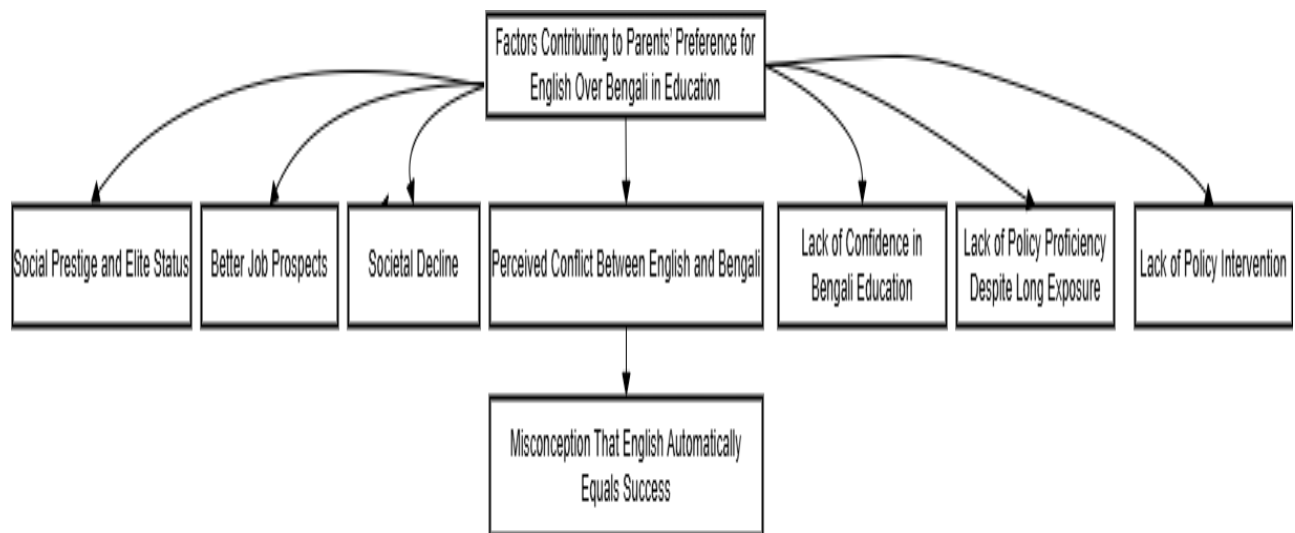
Figure 3.2: Factors Influencing FLP for English over Bengali in Schooling

3.4 English as (Post)Colonial Discourse

The perpetuation of English in HEIs represents the continuation of colonial language hierarchies. As a former British colony, Bangladesh remains discursively dependent on English, as academic structures, policies and students' experiences are shaped by historical and socioeconomic forces. This theme explored the continued impact of colonial language policies on educational practices and institutional frameworks (Table 3.4). For students, English is both an academic gateway and a structural barrier. While proficiency in English creates access, its dominance marginalises those with limited English skills. This paradox emphasises the postcolonial condition of Bangladeshi HE, in which English functions simultaneously as a vehicle for academic mobility and a mechanism for stratification. This theme thus also categorised students' perceptions of the persistence of colonial language policies and how English continues to shape academic discourse, institutional governance, and students' experiences, thus perpetuating sociolinguistic inequalities.

3.4.1 Continued Colonialism in Higher Education

3.4.1.1 Discourse Monopolies

The legacy of colonialism continues to characterise postcolonial educational discourses by imposing English as the dominant MOI, which marginalises indigenous knowledge and traditional practices. This often results in degrees that are irrelevant for local needs and leaving graduates unprepared to address community-specific challenges. Most participants did not share concerns about the disconnection between academic education and employment opportunities. However, eight participants from FGD5–7 and FGD17 highlighted the struggles that many graduates encounter. English remains the dominant language at Bangladeshi HEIs, but it is often irrelevant for local contexts. Toya's (FGD5) story of an acquaintance illustrates this:

> He earned both a bachelor's and a master's degree in economics with strong academic results, aiming for a government job. Despite multiple attempts, he was unable to pass the written exams, and now he has reached the age limit for government employment. **This has left him unemployed** and frustrated, as he feels that his academic knowledge doesn't fully prepare him for the practical challenges of the job market. Currently, he helps his father with the family land, and although he would accept even a modest job, he continues to struggle in finding one.

This example highlights the increasing gap between education and employment needs, as many graduates fail to integrate into local professions and focus solely on Westernised desk jobs that emphasise English-language skills instead. The Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics (2023) have reported a decrease in the overall unemployment rate amongst graduates, from

19.2% in 2017 to 12% in 2022[44]. Despite this apparent progress, however, the actual number of unemployed university graduates has nearly doubled to an estimated 800,000. This troubling trend highlights the inefficient allocation of educational resources, which produces skills that often fail meet local needs, ultimately leading to unproductive degrees and a waste of taxpayers' money. This limits the potential for a locally focused education system, thus restricting practical applications and hindering sustainable socioeconomic development. As a result, the education system in Bangladesh remains orientated towards Western standards and privileges the language and ideals of former colonial powers over indigenous knowledge, thus preventing the development of a self-sustaining, culturally relevant education system.

The current education system often neglects the local expertise that is essential for agriculture, cottage industries and crafts. This expertise was once an integral part of traditional *pathshalas*, which emphasised basic life skills. While graduates today are equipped with theoretical knowledge aimed at globalised labour markets, they lack the practical skills that are essential for local industries. This change has significant social and cultural implications. People with practical skills are often marginalised due to their lack of focus on Anglophone knowledge and lose social respect and cultural identity, while English speakers are seen as 'brown sahibs' (Khurshid, 2009; Shankar, 2023; Omar, 2017) whose social ties to their communities weaken as they conform to Western values (Hamid, 2021). This not only disrupts cultural continuity, but also prevents a deeper understanding of indigenous art, heritage and philosophy, leaving a void in which indigenous knowledge once flourished.

3.4.1.2 Linguistic Fetishism and Postcolonial Dependencies

Pennycook (1998) argued that ELT had become a product of colonialism not because it was colonialism that produced the initial conditions for the global spread of English, but because it was colonialism that produced many of the ways of thinking and behaving that still form part of Western culture. One student expressed his views about how HEIs continue to promote colonialism and its narratives even into the postcolonial era, drowning out indigenous perspectives and identities: 'even the uniforms we wear seem like leftovers from colonial times; they don't represent who we are. I think we should include our knowledge in what we're studying' (Kabir, FGD7).

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[44] https://bbs.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/bbs.portal.gov.bd/page/b2db8758_8497_412c_a9ec_6bb299f8b3ab/2023-06-26-09-19-2edf60824b00a7114d8a51ef5d8ddbce.pdf

The legacy of colonialism has introduced what Pennycook (1994) termed 'discourse imperialism', in which Western discourses dominate intellectual and cultural narratives. As Kabir mentioned, universities are replacing local history with Western narratives. As Polzenhagen et al. (2021) stated, English's cultural power has long served as an instrument of 'indirect rule', maintaining colonial influence through discourses that uphold Western values. European values like individualism and economic determinism have deeply infiltrated educational systems in postcolonial contexts. Discourses around these values prioritise personal identity over communal responsibilities, fostering a self-centred outlook that undermines collective welfare. Excessive individualism detracts from social responsibility, leading to societal fragmentation. This aligns with previous discussions about economic determinism, in which education is viewed primarily as a means to economic ends, reinforcing capitalist ideologies that favour Western economic models. Bangladesh's official curriculum, including resources like *English for Today* (Ali et al., 2023), exemplifies the government's continued alignment with colonial frameworks that promote such discourses. The ELT textbooks used in HE are not neutral tools; rather, they are vehicles through which power relations are constructed and disseminated. According to Budairi (2018), it is essential to critique how hegemonic Western discourses and English's global status are constituted, produced, naturalised and circulated through linguistic and semantic features in educational texts. These textbooks often perpetuate Western norms and values, overshadowing local cultures and knowledge systems.

English, as the primary conduit of these discourses, reinforces inequalities across areas like economics, politics, education and culture. By adopting foreign educational structures, curricula, policies and language, postcolonial societies remain dependent on former colonial rulers. This phenomenon is particularly evident in Bangladesh, where educational frameworks and curricula still closely align with Western paradigms. The linguistic and intellectual frameworks imposed during colonial times continue to shape educational practices, perpetuating a dependency trap that reinforces colonial ideologies and power structures. This dependency trap is not only economic, but extends to intellectual and cultural dimensions, as expertise in the Global South depends on Western discourse. This limits the potential for developing indigenous models that reflect local contexts and further marginalises local cultures and languages. The dominance of English in HE thus serves as a tool of neocolonialism, sustaining Bangladesh's dependencies on former colonial powers.

In terms of cultural narratives, the fascination with English in postcolonial societies is not solely driven by pragmatic considerations. Azam (2016) highlights that this attraction is

also fuelled by 'a sense of pseudo-aristocratic identity' inherited from colonial times.[45] Moreover, the adoption of Western educational structures has led to the erosion of local cultures and values. The insistence on conforming to Western norms extends beyond language to include aspects like British formal attire and behaviour. The expectation that students must 'dress like' Westerners to be accepted in educational institutions reflects a deeper desire to assimilate, with local attire and customs being deemed unacceptable or inferior. As Kabir's statement above indicated, even school uniforms carry 'colonial undertones', subtly reinforcing a 'White' perspective at every level of education. This cultural imposition alienates students from their heritage and fosters a sense of inadequacy regarding their own cultural identities.

Universities thus function as instruments of intellectual control by perpetuating colonial educational frameworks that prioritise Western-centric knowledge, thereby marginalising indigenous perspectives and controlling intellectual discourses. The educational system in Bangladesh distances itself from local culture through practices like adopting colonial attire for school uniforms and imposing curricula that elevate Western viewpoints, preventing a full understanding of indigenous art, culture, and heritage. Said (1978) famously criticised this phenomenon, and Phillipson (1992) warned against linguistic imperialism strengthening the hold of the 'centre over the periphery'. To counter this, the concept of pluriversity has emerged as an ideal for decolonising education, representing not simply the global extension of Eurocentric education but a transformative process of knowledge production. This model is open to epistemic diversity and fostering horizontal dialogues amongst different epistemic traditions without abandoning the pursuit of universal knowledge, thereby reforming universities into spaces that transcend disciplinary divisions and radically rethink established modes of thought to genuinely reflect and promote the richness of global intellectual traditions.

3.4.1.3 Meta-Lingua-Fetish

The concept of a 'linguistic fetish' (Kelly-Holmes, 2014), as in case of English in Bangladesh, has a primarily symbolic purpose over a purely communicative or instrumental purpose. This symbolic role is manifested in various socioeconomic and institutional settings in which English is chosen not for its communicative effectiveness, but its perceived status and modernity. For example, in government recruitment practices, English tends to be used in job interviews as a sign of status, reflecting a fetishised choice of language rather than the preference for functional communication.

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[45] This is my own translation from the original Bengali: "Ouponibeshik uttaradhikarjanito chadma abhijatyer bodh".

Several students stated that English served a symbolic purpose in job requirements for government and private sectors. For example, Zubair (FGD17) stated that, during his interview for a public service role, the emphasis was on his English fluency rather than on the content of his responses: 'A job candidate in the Public Service Commission has to give a 20-minute interview in English. I had no trouble speaking in English, and they were impressed. They even asked how I achieved such good fluency'. Despite the mandated status of English at all educational levels in Bangladesh, the actual demand for English proficiency is indented in all economic sectors. Students from diverse socioeconomic and linguistic backgrounds encounter demands for English that are often influenced by the segmented national labour market. Advanced English proficiency is crucial for those seeking international work or high-level academic or administrative roles. Meanwhile, students intending to work in Bangladesh may only require moderate English skills.

This linguistics fetishisation of English from the government at the microlevel aligns with Kelly-Holmes' (2014) framework, in which English's function as a status symbol supersedes its practical use. Academic discourse increasingly emphasises the commodification of language by presenting English proficiency as a marketable skill that increases individual value (e.g., Da Silva et al., 2007; Holborow, 2018). This phenomenon resonates with Urciuoli's (2008) concept of language as a market asset, suggesting that Bangladeshi students are pressured to acquire English as an essential resource even at personal cost (cf. Piller & Cho, 2013; Piller et al., 2010). This commodification shifts the perception of English from a communal resource to an individualised asset, creating a tension between shared cultural identity and personal gain (Duchêne & Heller, 2012). This segmentation highlights the need for nuanced language planning that aligns English education with individual aspirations and socioeconomic contexts.

The participants from FGD8 discussed how English was chosen due to the feelings, images or ideas that it evoked rather than its practical role in conveying information. In multilingual countries like India and Pakistan, English serves as a language for communication between people from different regions, who may speak vastly different dialects or even languages. However, the participants agreed that English does not serve this purpose in Bangladesh. Instead, it is often used amongst young people because it 'looks or sounds modern or cool' (FG-8) rather than because it communicates ideas more effectively than Bengali does.

In a discussion about language use in university newsletters, Mahir (FGD8) expressed dissatisfaction with the exclusive use of English and noted that this practice completely excluded Bengali: 'I understand that English might reach a broader audience, but if we don't include Bengali at all, no one will value our mother tongue'. Other participants argued that, while English may facilitate wider access, the omission of Bengali undermined the cultural and linguistic integrity of the L1. Nazim (FGD8) agreed that English circulars (such as job and university admission advertisements) had a greater aesthetic appeal and conveyed a stronger sense of formality and prestige: 'honestly, I think English circulars just look more appealing. They give off a serious vibe and seem to reflect higher standards'. This emphasised the symbolic function of English in institutional practice, as the participants observed that numerous universities used English in their official communication because English created an elitist impression but also made the content less accessible to the local audience.

Bangladeshi universities frequently use English as a marketing tool, particularly in advertisements, and thus strengthen English's symbolic status as a marker of quality and desirability. Five participants from FGD9 and FGD12 remarked that HEIs use English-fronted marketing strategies to increase their institutional appeal. They also commented that English was equated with higher quality and was valued far more highly. This trend reflects a form of linguistic fetishism in which English functions as a decorative 'linguistic colour' (e.g., de Burgh-Woodman & Brace-Govan, 2010) that conveys a homogenised, consumer-orientated cultural perspective. Such practices resonate with Kress and van Leeuwen's (2001, 2006) concept of English's 'visual' function, through which it transcends communicative boundaries to align with consumerist aesthetics.

The widespread use of English in educational settings also represents a shift towards 'deliberate monolingualism', a phenomenon that is characteristic of postcolonial attitudes that prioritise English over indigenous languages. This shift has profound implications for postcolonial societies, and indeed, Bengali is progressively excluded in favour of commodification. The elevation of English as a symbol of value is indicative of a broader societal trend towards considering it an economic asset rather than a cultural or communal resource. This both alienates English from its local cultural origins and reinforces its perceived superiority through socioinstitutional frameworks (Da Silva et al., 2007).

The grassroots-level dissemination of English in Bangladesh has contributed to the emergence of a unique phenomenon that I have tentatively termed the *meta-lingua-fetish*. This

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denotes the cognitive tendency of postcolonial people characterised by an intense fascination with metalanguage objects (e.g., clothing, food, lifestyle habits, technology) that fulfil the linguistic gratification associated with English. This phenomenon is particularly widespread amongst young rural people on digital media platforms. The main cause appears to be society's valorisation of English. As a result, young people adopt foreign clothes, change their food preferences, and experience a sense of belonging and psychological pleasure due to associations with Anglophone cultures. As Nasrin (FGD6) said,

> my cousin [is named] Raju, but his social [networking] ID name is King RJ. I think he likes to show more of the Western side of him. He commonly uploads his pictures with **coats** and **ties** at **restaurants in front of sandwiches**, **burgers and pasta**, this type of food, **trying to write captions in English**. Yet he lives in small towns, is unemployed and does these things just to show [off to] others.

In postcolonial countries, there is frequently a marked fascination with metalinguistic elements linked to Western cultures due to their association with social prestige. Banu and Sussex (2001b) observed that people frequently hybridised proper names and commercial signs with English, as English is viewed as people often see English as a magical thing that influences them in different ways (Pennycook, 2007c). Zara (FGD19) noted that adopting English food etiquette gave her 'mental satisfaction' and a sense of connection with the Anglophone world. It also gave her 'mental peace', as she believed that society perceived her as 'smart'. This cultural fetish for English has permeated media, education and language policy in Bangladesh, leading the country towards Anglicisation (Alfarhan, 2016). In colonial Bengal, the English introduced British norms into traditional dress, prompting the Bengali elite to adopt Western attire as a symbol of modernity aligned with colonial standards of progress. English proficiency and Western dress became essential for social acceptance, reshaping local sartorial practices to mirror colonial ideals.

Zara (FGD19) also observed that English-style food was often preferred at formal events and that dress codes reflected colonial influences. This supported the findings of Jayasooriya et al. (2021), who found that following Western dress codes affected the professional image and social status of female teachers in Sri Lanka. Chakrabarty (2005) challenged the colonial mindset of modernity as 'catching up with the West' (p. 4813), although access to Western ideals varied across colonised communities. Consequently, in postcolonial countries, people practice a selective lifestyle, blending Western and traditional elements. Clothing serves as a powerful medium for nonverbal communication and social signalling. Howard (2019) emphasised that attire can communicate identity. Phillipson (1992) interpreted this internalisation

of colonial ideals as 'mental slavery', whereas I have found that postcolonial societies increasingly preferred English attire over traditional clothing. Wearing Western-style clothing provides a sense of self-confidence and pleasure, resulting in a departure from traditional dress.

Table 3.4: Concerns about English as a Postcolonial Discourse

Category	Concepts	*n*	Outcomes
EMIs and discourse dependency	Western education and language models are irrelevant for Bangladesh.	8	- The gap is deepening between education and local needs.
	Western narratives are replacing indigenous history.	1	
			- Colonial influence survives through Western discourse.
Meta-Lingua-Fetish	English is used as a status symbol rather than for communication.	1	- English is a market asset.
	English is preferred for self-expression amongst young people.	2	- English functions as 'linguistic colour'.
	English marketing is used to appeal to an indigenous population.	5	- Societal shift towards 'deliberate monolingualism'.
	Young people change their food preferences and clothes to fit in.	2	-Bangladesh is heading towards Anglicisation.

3.5 Decolonizing English

In contemporary academic discourse, focus group discussions reveal a multifaceted landscape in which digital colonialism and linguistic imperialism intersect with the dual role of technology in the marginalisation and revitalisation of language. (Smith et al. 2024) criticise the pervasive influence of digital colonialism on English and the ideology of standard language, while Yim (2024) emphasises the ability of technology to both suppress and rejuvenate linguistic practises. In academic assessment, generative AI functions paradoxically by privileging certain voices while providing opportunities for access to academic legitimacy, leading to critical reflections on the integrity of assessment and the ethical use of AI. Furthermore, the predominance of English-language major language models, exemplified by LLAMA2's limitations in supporting non-English languages, exacerbates linguistic colonialism and jeopardises the vitality of low-resource and regional languages. Against this backdrop, the theme of 'decolonisation of English' becomes a critical framework that categorises students' perceptions into dimensions of perceived resistance, nuanced notions of ownership (both positive and negative micro-ownership as well as macro-ownership) and the local emergence of Bangladeshi English, collectively challenging prevailing linguistic hierarchies in the digital age.

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3.5.1 Epistemic Resistance and AI in Decolonial Praxis

3.5.1.1 Perceived Resistance

Most participants reported no resistance to the current linguistic paradigm; however, three participants expressed concerns regarding this lack of resistance, and some discussed various views regarding the decolonisation of English in HEIs. For example, the participants in FGD7 reiterated the predominance of English requirements in the country. They specifically indicated hopes for effective strategies that could establish indigenous languages at HEIs and revitalise the compatibility of these languages in academic discourses.

Nusrat (FGD7) harshly criticised Bangladesh's NEP: 'I don't think there's any other country in the world where one is not considered educated or awarded a certificate without knowing the importance of learning English and the grammatical rules of the English language'. Her concern reflected a form of resistance to compulsory English at all levels of education. Furthermore, as Kabir (FGD7) noted, there is no overt resistance to English across all social classes:

> there was a time when we fought for the right to study in our mother tongue and to govern the country in it. Now, however, speaking **Bengali in certain circles, spaces, and institutions is considered unconventional.** But **no one seems bothered** by this; a few write articles to express concern, yet there are **no effective measures** taken to address it.

Whether these approaches simply empower students to engage more fully with neoliberal globalisation or whether they effectively challenge colonial and neoliberal structures is questionable (cf. Kubota & Takeda, 2021; O'Regan, 2021; Sayer, 2015a; Tupas, 2019). The government's policy, which mandates compulsory English education and designates it as the MOI in HE, reflects the ruling authorities' lack of interest in integrating Bengali in a meaningful way. Even community schools, which have resisted compulsory English in the past, are now in favour of it. Moreover, positive attitudes towards learning English and a dramatic increase in the efficacy of its instruction have been observed at Bangladesh's *madrasas* (Golam & Kusakabe, 2018, 2020; Rahman et al., 2021).

Although the participants were concerned about Bengali's future, they still chose to use English due to social and economic pressures. By contrast, Bengali is neglected in terms of linguistic modernisation, with minimal efforts to introduce new terminology (e.g., in technology) leading to a lack of simplified terms, thus limiting comprehension and reinforcing linguistic inequalities, as advancements increasingly favour English. Greater official promotion of

regional dialects and indigenous languages could serve as a countermeasure to ELI; however, current initiatives are insufficient to effectively challenge English's dominance. Linguistic resistance plays an essential role in social movements by providing marginalised voices with a platform for equality and recognition, but Bangladesh lacks any coherent social movements for linguistic equality.

3.5.1.2 Decolonisation Strategies

Colonial dominance continues to characterise linguistic hierarchies at present. In Bangladesh, Western academic and government bodies continue to favour English, even though Bengali is the fourth most spoken language in the world. However, in the digital age, new technologies offer potential avenues for decolonisation. For example, Zafar (FGD18) suggested how AI might be used to decolonise the education system by challenging entrenched linguistic and cultural hierarchies:

> AI can help integrate diverse histories, languages and indigenous knowledge systems that have not been integrated into our education system. Instead of education being dictated by a single dominant standard, **AI-powered teaching can fulfil the requirement of specific language needs of students,** whether it's English or some indigenous language with few speakers.

The decolonisation of education in Bangladesh requires a complete reorientation of public spaces and curricula to include local languages and knowledge systems (Mbembe, 2001). The reliance on nonnative languages in education hinders intellectual growth, innovation and employment prospects while perpetuating a pseudo-elitism that has its roots in colonial legacies. Just as developed nations prioritise their own languages, Bangladesh should promote Bengali in education and research ways to strengthen national self-reliance and intellectual capacity. In addition, any integration of AI into education must be tailored to local needs and preceded by a rigorous risk-benefit assessment (Jobin et al., 2019, p. 392). The greater representation of low- and middle-income countries in key debates about the subject is essential for sustainable educational development (Barnett & Finnemore, 2012).

A robust decolonisation strategy also requires English to be transformed into only one element of a multilingual repertoire rather than being the dominant MOI (García & Lin, 2017, 2018). Epistemic decolonisation requires the abolition of colonial worldviews and the creation of knowledge systems that respect indigenous perspectives (Stebbins et al., 2017). Santos (2009) argued that an 'ecology of knowledge' in decolonised curricula could promote linguistic and cultural diversity, strengthen the national heritage and support cognitive development by familiarising learners with familiar cultural frameworks.

3.5.2 Linguistic Ownership

The theme of 'linguistic ownership' here refers to the relationship between speakers and language(s) they use, especially their perceived authority over the use and development of those language(s). According to Wee (2002), it refers to a 'specific relationship between the speakers of a language and that language itself' and is 'a metaphor for reflecting the legitimate control that speakers may have over the development of a language' (p. 283). This concept was crucial in participants' discussions about language policy, linguistic identity and the power dynamics of language use, particularly in postcolonial and multilingual contexts (Table 3.5).

Table 3.5: Resistance and Ownership of English

Category	Concept	*n*	Outcomes
Perceived resistance and decolonisation	A lack of resistance to English requirements in schools.	3	- Bengali neglected in linguistic modernisation
	Decolonisation of education using AI.	1	- Perpetuates pseudo-elitism.
Ownership	English as a part of one's identity.	6	- Ownership through learning, self-expression.
	English is misaligned with cultural identity and creates a sense of detachment.	2	- English remains foreign - Pluricentric views. - Incorporation of local expressions, nuances.
	English as a shared resource.	1	
BdE	Claiming English as their own by developing a distinct Bangladeshi variety.	7	- 'Linguistic deficiency'. - Reinforced hierarchy amongst varieties.
	Standardised English in AI may create barriers for emerging varieties.	1	

According to Rampton (1990, pp. 99–100), loyalty is determined by the interplay of inheritance and affiliation. 'Inheritance' here refers to whether a speaker is born into a social group that is traditionally associated with a language, and 'affiliation' refers to a speaker's desire to be associated with that language. It is important to consider ownership not only from a micro-perspective (the extent to which an individual speaker considers a language to be their own), but also from a macro-perspective, including which sociolinguistic groups are seen as the 'legitimate owners' of a language in a linguistic market (Parmegiani, 2008). Brutt-Griffler (2002); Canagarajah (1999b); Kachru (1986) and Mazrui (2004) have addressed demonstrated that the macro-ownership of English is becoming increasingly decentred and contested. In Africa, South Asia and other parts of the world, there are now Anglophone communities that have appropriated English, creating national standards that are increasingly seen as legitimate and (in some cases) more contextually appropriate than the standards used in countries like the UK

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or US (Parmegiani, 2008). Park (2011) further extended Rampton's (1990) framework by proposing a model of linguistic ownership based on two core components: legitimate knowledge and language allegiance. According to this model, the ownership of English emerges not only through the acquisition of valid linguistic competence, but also through a sense of emotional attachment to or affiliation with it (Seilhamer, 2015).

3.5.2.1 Micro-Ownership

Micro-ownership of English refers to the localised, individualised appropriation and assertion of control by nonnative speakers. It encompasses everyday practices whereby individuals and communities reframe, reinterpret and negotiate English meanings, norms and uses to align with their cultural identities and social realities. This concept highlights the agency of language users in transforming English from an imposed global standard into a domesticated, personalised tool. It emphasises microlevel dynamics whereby language practices are adapted, contested and owned, actively reflecting broader sociocultural negotiations in diverse educational and social contexts, thereby affirming local autonomy. Thus, micro-ownership is predicated on the speaker perceiving a language to be their own; that is, they perform its functions according to an intended purpose or contextual requirements (Malik et al., 2024; Parmegiani, 2008).

Participants' reflections on the micro-ownership of English revealed a contrasting experience of positive ownership, as six participants in FGD16 and FGD20 expressed a strong personal connection to and confidence in using English. Their remarks revealed key insights into how they accepted English as a part of their identity by integrating it into their daily lives. Emran (FGD20) shared a sense of ease and comfort with English, describing it as being seamlessly integrated into both personal and professional life:

> for me, English has just become a natural part of my life. I don't even think about switching between Bengali and English; it just happens. Even **when someone speaks to me in English, I feel completely comfortable** because I understand everything easily. But that doesn't mean Bengali is any less important to me. It's my first language, my foundation.

Regarding language ownership amongst bilingual individuals, Emran added, 'Bengali will always be my first language, but English has become a big part of my daily life. I feel like both languages really belong to me'. While Bengali remained a 'foundation', English has been integrated into Emran's daily routines and personal identity, suggesting a dual sense of linguistic ownership. Disha (FGD20) further emphasised this point:

I think it's more about expanding our linguistic identity rather than replacing one language with another. **English doesn't take away from Bangla**; it just **adds another layer** to how we **communicate and connect with the world**. I feel like once you use a language regularly, it becomes part of who you are. Some people think English belongs only to native speakers, but I disagree. If you practise and express yourself in English, **you make it your own.**

Here, Disha emphasised that ownership of English was attainable through continuous learning and self-expression. She argued that fluency and effective communication fosters a personal connection to a language, enabling individuals to shift from perceiving English as a foreign entity to embracing it as a medium for free expression and self-definition. These findings revealed that language proficiency extended beyond mere communication skills; it was also a significant marker of personal and cultural identity. The integration of English, alongside the retention of Bangla, reflected a dynamic process of linguistic and identity formation amongst bilingual individuals, contributing to a deeper understanding of how language shapes and is shaped by personal experiences.

Despite the widely acknowledged benefits of English proficiency, two participants from FGD14 expressed disappointment regarding their micro-ownership of the language. These students perceived English as being misaligned with their cultural identity, resulting in a sense of detachment. This contrasted with most of their peers, who had accepted that English as integral to their academic and economic pursuits. These two participants expressed a lack of micro-ownership, as they mainly viewed English as a tool for success rather than as an integral part of their personal or cultural identity. As Shoaib (FGD14) stated,

For now, English is **mostly a necessity for career growth** and a tool to achieve success. I wish it could be something we feel proud of, **like a part of my identity**, **without having to sound exactly like native speakers**. But our education system teaches English in a way that doesn't feel like it's really ours. **It still feels like a foreign language.**

Any aspiration to further integrate English into Shoaib's life was thus impeded by an educational system that prioritised 'proper' English (i.e., British or American English). The emphasis on native-like pronunciation and correctness shifted the focus from genuine engagement to superficial accuracy. Tanvir (FGD14) agreed, saying, 'In school, we were always told to speak proper English, which meant sounding like British or American speakers. I feel like it made us more focused on sounding correct rather than being confident in using the language'. The Bangladeshi educational system is more focused on making students follow linguistic rules than instilling a sense of ownership when using the language. Consequently, these participants perceived English as an external, foreign language, creating a sense of disconnection. These

findings indicated the need for educational practices that support adaptable, culturally inclusive approaches, enabling nonnative speakers to incorporate English confidently into their unique identities.

As an example of a postcolonial country in the Global South, micro-ownership and ELI in Bangladesh have profound implications that are deeply linked to the country's historical relationship with colonialism. English was introduced in Bangladesh as a tool for administrative control, a choice that still influences local perceptions, as it is still considered a language of power and prestige. However, the notion of English linguistic ownership remains largely inaccessible to many Bangladeshis due to persistent ELI ideologies that favour native-speaking standards. As Widdowson (1993, p. 2) argued, L1 English-speaking communities, particularly from the UK, have positioned themselves as the 'custodians' of 'real' English over former British colonies. In Bangladesh, this perception reinforces a colonial legacy that prioritises L1 speakers' standards and norms, thereby undermining the legitimacy of localised adaptations. This imposition creates a hierarchy whereby British or American English are seen as the ideal, while Bangladeshi varieties are marginalised or dismissed as 'non-standard' or 'incorrect'. Consequently, despite Bangladeshis' extensive use of English in various domains, they may not have a sense of linguistic ownership of English because their language practices are often judged according to native-speaking benchmarks.

3.5.2.2 Macro-Ownership

Macro-ownership regards sociolinguistic groups as legitimate language owners in the linguistic domain (Malik et al., 2024). It refers to the idea that English as a global lingua franca (EGFA) is collectively owned by all its users worldwide, regardless of their native or nonnative status. This perspective challenges traditional notions that link ownership exclusively to native speakers from core countries (Kachru, 1986). The concept claims that all who use English have the right to adapt and shape it to reflect their cultural identities and communicative needs. For example, in Africa, Singapore, South Asia and other regions worldwide, numerous communities have adapted English, leading to the development of their own distinct varieties and standards. These have been recognised as legitimate by some and even regarded as more suitable for their contexts than the standardised varieties employed in the UK and the US (Malik et al., 2024 Parmegiani, 2008).

Due to the expansion and establishment of EGFA, Smokotin et al. (2014) argued that English should not simply be seen as a tool borrowed from Anglophone countries, but a language that belongs equally to nonnative speakers who use it for international communication. This aligns with the idea of macro-ownership, suggesting that all English speakers have a legitimate claim to it. Zafar (FGD18) expressed hopes for this shift, saying, 'I think people are starting to accept that English can have a Bangladeshi flavour, but there's still a long way to go before we fully own it as our language'. This statement reflected the increasing recognition of macro-ownership amongst Bangladeshi speakers who are beginning to view English as a shared resource.

Participants also adopted diversity and pluricentric views when learning English, since macro-ownership encourages embracing a diversity of Englishes (Widdowson, 1994). Kachru (1986) supported this by advocating for a 'language ownership open to those who develop competency'. This perspective empowers Bangladeshis to use English authentically by incorporating local expressions and cultural nuances. There is also a possibility for macro-ownership to empower resistance and the reclamation of English. The English used in print and electronic media outlets in Bangladesh itself exemplifies an evolving variant within the broader context of WE (Hossain et al. 2015). This localised form, albeit restricted in scope, has gained widespread adoption amongst Bangladeshis and exhibits characteristics that are uniquely Bengali.

3.5.3 The Emergence of Bangladeshi English

Decolonial perspectives and Global Englishes (GE) approaches both challenge dominant discourses about language, culture and identity (Baker, 2022). Baker et al. (2024) argued that GE (including frameworks such as WE and English as a lingua franca) provided a critical lens for analysing the global linguistic and sociocultural dimensions of English and emphasised the need for situating language practices in their historical and power-related contexts. In line with macro-ownership, there was a growing movement amongst seven participants (FG-9, -11, and -15) to claim English as their own by developing BdE. The motivation for this was expressed by Nabil (FGD9), who stated:

> There's a movement among younger people to claim English as **[ours] and in our own way**. I feel proud when I use **English with a Bangladeshi touch** because it represents who I am. We're making it fit us, **not the other way around**.

Nabil described this adaptation as a means of 'owning' English without losing a Bangladeshi identity. Such adaptations may challenge dominant ideologies like native-speakerism

and promote the versatility of English via diverse social identities. This reflected a desire to resist traditional norms and to assert that English is adaptable to the local identity (i.e., linguistic identity). However, Rajib (FGD11) emphasised that individuals from middle- and lower-income communities often felt marginalised regarding their ability to 'own' English, a sentiment that reflected broader structural inequalities by characterising English as 'something reserved for a certain class', thereby linking language proficiency to institutional power and economic privilege. Combined, these perspectives demonstrated that macrolevel ownership of English in Bangladesh is deeply embedded in socioeconomic hierarchies, thus reinforcing multifaceted disparities in terms of access through institutional policies, opportunities and cultural capital.

Meher (FGD15) mentioned that standard English ideologies in AI may delay the process of Bengali and other emerging varieties being recognised as legitimate GEs. Nonnative speakers show less lexical diversity, richness and complexity, while the common use of standardised native English creates 'linguistic deficiency' (cf. Burgo, 2024, Jinghui, 2023; Krężałek & Wysocka, 2009; Subtirelu, 2014) amongst such users. According to Lippi-Green (1994), 'Standard Language' ideology reinforces a hierarchy amongst linguistic varieties. More standardised forms tend to be used by the upper-middle class and advocating for these varieties thus gives the advantage to powerful groups and institutions (Burgo, 2024). The idea that certain varieties are 'better' than others ignores the fact that all varieties are equally capable of expression (Drazdauskiene-Rutkauskaite, 2016; Paredes, 2008).

Meanwhile, an estimated 60% of all content on the internet is in English, despite only 17% of people speaking English globally (Nee et al., 2022). Moreover, 88% of languages have 'exceptionally limited resources' in digital spaces (Joshi et al., 2020). The default use of 'standard' English varieties in AI thus reinforces cultural biases and creates barriers to local cultures' assimilation and negotiation of English. The resulting language hierarchies can reinforce or amplify internal biases, leading to a lower quality of service for minority varieties when using language models.

Summary

In this chapter, I demonstrated the multifaceted perceptions that students have regarding English, ranging from its academic and economic utility to its association with postcolonial and migratory narratives. English facilitates global communication, technological advancement

and career development by providing access to quality education and multinational job opportunities, as well as serving as a credential indicating competence. The findings indicated that parental support reinforced the early instruction of English, particularly through the expansion of EMI facilities, which are considered to facilitate social mobility and economic advancement. Conversely, macrolevel policies shaped by the colonial legacy enforce English-only higher education and marginalise Bengali. This policy, combined with Western-oriented curricula, contributes to academic exclusion, reduces opportunities for research in Bengali, and undermines the indigenous identity. In addition, microlevel practices and family language policies further limit the use of Bengali and widen the cultural divide. Despite these challenges, the evolving attitudes of students and teachers signal the increasing acceptance of and identification with a particular form of BdE. The evidence supports a balanced approach: One that leverages the global benefits of English while preserving and promoting the Bengali language and cultural heritage. These nuanced insights into the students' perspectives set the stage for the next chapter, in which I explore how teachers, as another important stakeholder group, perceive English, its pedagogical value, and its colonial legacy in educational policy.

CHAPTER FOUR
TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF ENGLISH

Introduction

This chapter presents the results of semi-structured interviews ($n = 20$) of teachers conducted at four HEIs (labelled A, B, C and D) in Dhaka, Bangladesh, to explore their perceptions of English and its role in language imperialism. As influential members of civil society and key actors within the state structure, university teachers play a crucial role in shaping the linguistic development of students. Their insights suggest how they manage competing demands under socio-political pressures and limited resources. They offer a nuanced understanding of ELT and EMI in the context of social and economic power, political instability, related to RQ1.

The socio-cultural and economic landscape of Bangladesh applies a significant influence on teachers' perceptions of English. In rural areas, for example, the lack of resources and limited professional opportunities can weaken teachers' motivation (Khan et al., 2020; Rahman, 2019). At the same time, the prestige associated with English can lead educators to favour it over local languages. Political interventions and frequent policy changes exacerbate the challenges and lead to a loss of confidence in curriculum reforms among educators (Hamid, 2007; Rahman, 2019). Despite recognising the historical link between language and colonial power structures and the potential consequence of reinforcing language imperialism, many teachers see English as a crucial tool for empowerment and global engagement.

4.1 Teacher's Perceptions of English in Education

This analysis relates to RQ1 examines how HEI teachers perceive the English language in higher education. Their perspectives serve as both social and intellectual representations that influence pedagogical approaches and student engagement (Table 4.1; Table 4.2). Given their central role in the educational environment, students' motivation and learning progress have a significant impact on teachers' attitudes towards English. A positive perception among teachers sees English as a driving force for career advancement, global communication and academic mobility. In contrast, a negative perception pointed to inequalities in educational access, the labour market, and social stratification as structural barriers. These topics align with the sub-theme of English as a motivation when they explore these different perspectives and their impact on learning outcomes.

4.1.1 English as a Motivations on Education

4.1.1.1 Perceived Benefits

To discuss the use of EMI, all of the teachers admit directly and/or indirectly the necessity of English in a globalised world. Further, teachers ($n = 7$, 35%) stated the positive impact of English and fostered positive perception. However, they ($n = 13$, 65%) also expressed their concern and criticised the role of English as the *only* language in higher education and shared their negative experiences with its impact on both teachers and students. For example, T17 positively endorsed the necessity of students' mastery of English for their academic and professional purposes.

> English works as a **ladder of success** here. Our higher education, jobs, and foreign travel are all areas where **English plays a crucial role**. In fact, the importance of English as an international language is immense. Due to weak English proficiency, thousands of young people do not even apply to multinational or high-paying private companies **(T17).**

The findings support that teachers perceive English proficiency as integral to academic success and career advancement. As can be seen, T17 highlighted English as essential in fulfilling the requirements of key sectors and as the predominant academic lingua franca. Similarly, several other teachers ($n = 6$, 30%) identified English proficiency as a critical tool for academic progression, enabling access to educational programs and satisfying enrolment prerequisites. Additionally, 25% of teachers ($n = 5$) emphasised English as the primary means of accessing global education and enhancing opportunities for academic migration, particularly to Anglophone countries. Furthermore, 20% of teachers ($n = 4$) recognised English proficiency as directly contributing to improved career prospects, while a smaller group ($n = 3$, 15%) underscored its significance for engaging in both national and international research, thus expanding academic literature accessibility. Another subset of teachers ($n = 3$, 15%; e.g., T10) perceived EMI positively, viewing it as a valuable source of knowledge dissemination through physical and digital platforms. Moreover, two teachers (10%) stated that learning English improves critical thinking and analytical skills, as they see language skills as a sign of intellectual ability. Overall, these findings suggest that a considerable proportion of teachers regard English proficiency as indispensable for academic and professional achievement (cf. Abidjanova, 2024; Seyitmammedova, 2024).

Furthermore, T1 and some others ($n = 7$, 35%) emphasised the importance of English proficiency in securing high-paying employment opportunities in both private and public sectors, as well as in the global marketplace, reinforcing the perception of English as essential for

career growth. Additionally, T13 and number of teachers (*n*= 4, 20%) admitted English as pivotal for facilitating migration processes, allowing smoother transitions for international employment or education. Another 20% of teachers (*n* = 4) indicated that strong English skills increase employability and workplace preference, while a smaller proportion (*n* = 3, 15%) noted that native-like English proficiency significantly benefits employment in multinational corporations and increase cross-cultural communication and professional networking. Furthermore, social mobility through enhanced employability was identified as a key theme by T10 and other teachers (*n* = 7, 35%), considering English a pathway to improve socioeconomic status. Similarly, 20% of teachers (*n* = 4) described English proficiency as instrumental in overcoming social class discrimination, thereby promoting equality in professional advancement opportunities. Finally, two teachers (10%) expressed that English proficiency fosters global identity and facilitates integration into global society. English thus appears as a socioeconomic catalyst, instrumental in facilitating international education, migration, and improved social mobility (cf. Djelloul & Benida, 2024; Highet, 2021; Olusola, 2023; Tariq, 2023).

4.1.1.2 Perceived Issues

However, a significant number of teachers (*n* = 12, 60%) criticised the role of English in HEI and its dominance for the social, economic, and psychological effects. For example, T5, a public university teacher from the sociology department, discussed her view on the role of English in academia and how a lack of English proficiency affects students.

> ...) The medium of instruction in higher education is English, this is a common scenario in our country. Our students are taught in a language that they do not speak at home (T5).
> What challenges do students face (M)?
> Less English-proficient students are perceived as **less intelligent and capable.** Because, the role of English is very important, whether it is in the academic field, social system, or professional advantage (T5).

Numerous participants often expressed different opinions. For example, T5 emphasised the priority of EMI in HEIs, but also observed that this over-reliance on English has a significant impact on students with limited proficiency, particularly those are from Bengali and other medium schooling. Students from BMI background are often perceived in stereotypical ways, suggesting inferior intelligence and inability (a point also noted by teachers, (*n* = 5, 25%), thus highlighting a multi-layered impact of linguicism in HEIs (cf. Phillipson, 1992 and subsequent studies).

Therefore, the formally educated class contributed to social division. It makes clear how language reinforces inequalities in social, political, economic and cultural areas.

The existence of a **separated education system (....)** where students from affluent families attend English medium schools while those from less privileged backgrounds attend Bengali medium or Madrasas. Which perpetuates the social class divisions and threatens the unity of students and collectively our country. This not only divides society but also hampers the unity and collective cultural identity of our nation (T2).

As seen, T2 showed his concern about the *unfair and unequal* division in the national education system where students from wealthy families choose *only* EMI. He agreed that it practically strengthens the class divisions and undermines both student cohesion and threatens cultural identity. For example, the current system is divided into several schooling streams (i.e., BMI, English version of the national curriculum, EMI), multiple types of Madrasa education (i.e., English medium Madrasa, Qaumi Madrasa, and Aliya Madrasa), and technical education. Therefore, it is generally observed that students from lower and middle-class families attend BMI, Aliya Madrasa, or technical schools, whereas the upper-class or upper-middle class tend to attend EMI schools predominantly situated in urban areas, leading to a strong socio-cultural and ideological division among students from an early age.

Moreover, T4 and some respondents ($n = 7$, 35%) highlighted from their social experiences that, in most cases, English-speaking elites often live in urban areas and have the greatest access to EMI. This has led to a social phenomenon where enrolment in EMI is perceived as an advantage and gives parents from semi-urban or rural areas a sense of similarity with the urban population. Students from urban areas are given better academic opportunities and resources to develop their language skills, leading to social fragmentation (cf. Saraví, 2014). As previously mentioned, a considerable proportion of teachers acknowledge English as enabling academic and economic mobility. However, about half of the participants (e.g., T11) ($n = 9$, 45%) criticised that parents tend to opt for early English education through EMI as soon as it becomes affordable. In general, people facing economic difficulties and living in rural areas in Bangladesh have limited opportunities to learn English (Akter, 2021; Hossain, 2024).

From the earlier discussion with participants, it is self-evident that class divisions are the main factor behind the fragmented streams of education (i.e., closely based on MOI). Now, many people seek to become highly skilled in English by any means available. As they become more aware of their economic challenges, they are turning towards capitalist values and seeking independence to improve their lives and join the elite class. For instance, T7 and others ($n = 4$, 20%) from a public university further initiated the topic of language-based social division. For example,

> [B]ecause of economic class division, the Bengali people are divided. Highly educated people from the upper class have made English their own language, and middle- or lower-middle-class people associate **wealth with languages**. Members of this class consider English more important than Bengali (T-7).

He explained how language is used as a tool for developing social and economic status. Others also detailed on how parents from the middle class invest their capital to educate their children in EMI schools to overcome social class discrimination. Thus, the linguistic negotiation with English and ideological compromise among most of the parents and adult children create "INNER-STATE AGENTS" [my working term]. T8 and others ($n =9, 45\%$) of the teachers interpreted that the social inequalities reinforced in the local and global labour market, where English proficiency is often required for high-paying jobs, leading to social stratification (Rahman, 2020). Moreover, T13 and others ($n = 5, 25\%$) experienced that one of the main motivations for the higher interest and use of English is "economic" for the local and through immigration ($n = 4, 16\%$) in the global market, where English is seen as "commodification" (cf. Phillipson, 1992). Moreover, the spread of English has brought about major cultural changes, especially in schools and among the middle and upper classes. While some groups are becoming more financially independent, for example, their traditional cultural ties are weakening. This could be similar with Fanon's (1952/1986) idea of the "dependency complex" in postcolonial societies.

The teachers' narratives are clearly consistent with the concept of "linguicism" (Phillipson, 1992) where English is closely linked to socio-economic status, enabling access to better education and perpetuating unequal access to resources and power for the privileged group. The dominance of English in higher education and its impacts *exacerbates* inequalities and *disadvantages* students from the Bengali medium and madrasa [i.e., community -based academic institutions] systems. Leading to a possibility of subtractive bilingualism and loss of linguistic identity (cf. Christiana, 2022; Collazo, 2021). The roots of linguicism can be traced to national language attitudes, policies, and planning, compounded by a disregard for language rights and revitalisation efforts. Consequently, home languages are either devalued or subjected to correction as deviations from dominant norms, resulting in diminished *self-esteem and impeded academic achievement* (cf. Huynh, 2012; Rose & Conama, 2017; Skerrett & Ritchie, 2021) and contributing to *unequal access to education* (Alhamami, 2023; Murillo & Smith, 2011; Parmegiani & Wildsmith-Cromarty, 2022). As a result, it may affect understanding of the material and overall academic performance. Additionally, this imposition promotes the perception that English is a language of success, symbolising power, prestige, social mobility, opportunity, development, democracy, and modernisation (see Pennycook, 1994).

As can be seen, students who prefer EMI are often disconnected from the broader society, often keeping residual fragmentation (cf. González-Sanmamed et al., 2018). For instance, EMI students tend to avoid social connections with BMI students from personal and/or social relations. This leads to socio-psychological conflicts between these streams of education. Similarly, T14 and others (*n* = 5, 25%) shared their experience regarding the perception of EMI students and how students become desperate to gain English proficiency. Furthermore, they also revealed how EMI influences their [students'] views on local culture and language.

> ...Except for a few English medium schools, the rest are feeding our new generation a mix of English and Banglish! They can neither speak proper English nor Bengali! [...]. And they consider non-English mediums as **backward**! [...] It's not just backward! **uneducated, rustic, outdated**...and whatnot! They think **Bengali is a language for peasants,** and that is why students are more desperate to learn English (T14).

T14 (from a public university) described how EMI students mostly consider the Bengali as a language of farmers characterised as "uneducated, rustic, outdated." Conversely, students from other language media (i.e., Bengali and Arabic) are socially considered less aligned with culture from core countries (viz. English). When social, political, and economic advantages are tied to the language of education, a "linguistic hierarchy" emerges (Palmer, 1957) in post-colonial countries as neo-imperialism. As another teacher (T11) mentioned, the elite of the society strongly promote the English language to strengthen their influence and power and to maintain and revitalise EMI, or English as a subject, through linguistic and cultural negotiations. They do this to educate their children to become part of the global society. The linguistic negotiation of postcolonial populations can be situated within the stages of "Adopt" (uncritical acceptance of the colonizer's language and cultural forms), "Adapt" (modification and localization of these forms), and "Adept" (assertion of cultural and linguistic autonomy), as conceptualised by Barry (2002). This causes an underlying tension and results in a hybrid identity between Bengali heritage and the influence of English. A number of teachers described them as ethnically native but culturally and intellectually aligned with colonial values of "Minute on English Education"[46] declared in 1835.

In particular, this negligence and detachment from the local language (viz Bengali) may be attributed to colonial legacies (cf. Barry, 2002). The alienation of local and heritage languages (i.e.,linguistic exploitation) benefits multinational corporations and global economic interests at the expense of local culture in the periphery. Accordingly, the authorities prioritise

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[46] See https://english.washington.edu/sites/english/files/documents/ewp/teaching_resources/minute_on_indian_education_1835_by_thomas_babington_macaulay.pdf

English, thereby suppressing and disregarding their local epistemological resources. This attitude covertly or overtly serves the interests of external powers.

> ...From higher education to professional and government spaces, Bengali is **neglected.** This not only **diminishes the status** of our mother tongue but also creates barriers for students from Bengali medium backgrounds, who may not have the same proficiency in English as their peers from English medium institutions (**T8**).

T8 emphasised the negative impact of prioritising English over Bengali in academic and professional settings on the cultural importance and practical value of the Bengali language. Moreover, T2 and other (*n* =3, 15%) criticised that the issue of linguistic identity and belonging of those who are less proficient in English may feel marginalised or excluded from major socio-economic opportunities (cf. Wilkerson & Salmons, 2012). Moreover, T3 and others (n = 5, 25%) mentioned that one of the major motivations for the higher interest and use of English is "economical" because it secures immigration in the age of globalisation, where English can be regarded as "commodification."

The participants stated that one reason for marginalisation is the internalisation of linguistic hierarchies by Bengali speakers themselves. Over time, many people consider English as a symbol of modernity, success, and higher social status. The internalisation of post-colonial ideologies clearly contributes to the neglect of Bengali. This devaluation often occurs overtly or through subtle practises that favour English (Biswas et al., 2022; Imam, 2005; Kachru, 1996). The decline of Bengali suggests a possible neglect of linguistic and cultural preservation in Bangladesh and caused the participants to worry about the future of their mother tongue and cultural heritage. the results confirm that "cultural and structural inequalities" (Phillipson, 1992) continue to function as underlying mechanisms that prioritise English in the educational landscape.

Table 4.1: Perception on the Motivations/ Criticism on English in Higher Education

Category	Motivations	Reference	Total	Negative impact	Reference	Total
Academic	English for access to HEI	T1, T10, T13 T17, T18, T19	$n = 6$ (30%)	Fragmented education system.	T2	$n=1$ (5%)
	Academic Success from primary to higher education	T20, T1, T17, T18	$n = 4$ (20%)	Creates urban-rural disparity	T4, T5, T9, T15, T16, T7, T 11	$n = 7$ (35%)
	Global Education.	T13, T19, T10, T20, T1	$n = 5$ (25%)	BMI backgrounds are perceived as less capable.	T5, T3, T6, T8, T12	$n = 5$ (25%)
	Research accessibility	T17, T18, T19	$n = 3$ (15%)	Linguistic favouritism in academia.	T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T11, T12	$n = 9$ (45%)
	Knowledge acquisition	T10, T13, T20	$n = 3$ (15%)	Investment on EMI to overcome discrimination.	T3, T4, T9, T11	$n = 4$ (20%)
	Improves critical thinking	T1, T19	$n = 2$ (10%)			
	Perceived as intelligent and capable.	T1, T19	$n = 2$ (10%)			
Professional And Societal impact	Professional success/career opportunities	T1, T10, T13 T17, T18, T19, T20	$n = 7$ (35%)	Inequalities in the local and global job market.	T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T11, T12	$n = 9$ (45%)
	Employability Motivation	T1, T13, T17, T18, T19	$n = 5$ (25%)	Language based societal division	T7, T3, T12, T16	$n = 4$ (20%)
	Migration.	T1, T13, T18, T19	$n = 4$ (20%)	EMI foster socio-psychological conflict	T14, T5, T6, T7, T8, T11	$n = 5$ (25%)
	Favourable position at workplace	T1, T13, T17, T18,	$n = 4$ (20%)	Loss of linguistic identity	T2, T7, T16	$n =3$ (15%)
	Preferable in multinational companies.	T1, T13, T18,	$n = 3$ (15%)	Linguistic and cultural negotiation with English	T11	$n = 1$ (5%)
	Social mobility.	T1, T10, T13 T17, T18, T19, T20	$n = 7$ (35%)	Commodification of English	T3, T5, T6, T9, T 14	$n = 5$ (25%)
	Overcome social class discrimination	T10, T13 T18, T20	$n = 4$, (20%)	Linguicism		
	Become a part of global society	T10, T20	$n=2$, (10%)			

4.1.2 The Agencies of English Linguistic Imperialism

4.1.2.1 Academic and Institutional Agency

T12 and others (n=13, 65%) narrated how the academic agency emphasised English as a compulsory subject in all levels of national education. They strongly pointed out that the influence of English is felt in every conceivable sphere of society and permeates different aspects of daily life and interactions in Bangladesh (see also Hossain, 2013).

> English is a **compulsory subject** in every educational sector from kindergarten to higher education in Bangladesh. It's the **default language** in higher educational textbooks, exams, and even **administrative communication**. This pervasive presence of English creates an environment where students and educators have no choice but to prioritise English **(T12).**

T12 (from a private university, law department) showed his concern about English becoming an integral part of the socio-educational landscape of Bangladesh (see also Akteruzzaman & Islam, 2017). Similarly, T1 (from a public university, pharmacy department) shared his similar experiences about the prominence of English in the medical sector. He observed that the medical textbooks, exams, research articles, and even classes are conducted in English. Other participants ($n = 14$, 70%) also mentioned the predominance of English in textbooks, and students are required to possess a proficient command of the English language to comprehend the material, successfully complete their examinations, and ultimately engage in medical practice. This significant presence of English occurs under institutional and state policy. Consequently, English is used in prescriptions, patient documents, and professional communication, which presents challenges for those who are not proficient in the language in Bangladesh (see Awal, 2024). This reliance on English not only creates a barrier for some students but also raises questions about medical study and healthcare services for the broader population (cf. Pandey et al., 2021; Whitaker et al., 2022).

Several teachers ($n = 6$, 30%; e.g., T5) from a public university confirmed with their interviews that important national examinations, such as the university entrance tests, require English language proficiency, which perpetuates systemic biases. Similarly, T19 from a technical university ($n = 8$, 40%) noted that English only teaches training programs to further elaborate English in education domains. In addition, T15 and some others ($n = 12$, 60%) mentioned the relation between access to scholarships and international exchange programs and English language popularity, further influencing the students to prioritise English. A considerable proportion of teachers ($n = 8$, 40%; e.g., T6) emphasised that English-only academic research evidenced the dominance of English in theses, dissertations, and research publications. Finally,

some of them (*n*=6, 30%; e.g., T2) indicated that global standardised tests such as IELTS, TOEFL, and GRE are considered essential for securing international academic and professional opportunities. These tests also serve as a *push factor* for a significant number of students who go abroad each year.

4.1.2.2 State Agency

Multiple respondents of teachers (*n* = 12, 60%) mentioned the role of the state agency in the mechanism of English (covertly or overtly). Although LPP in socio-political implications of English by the state that, although Bengali is the state language in the constitution, the younger generation has lower proficiency compared to the previous generation, indicating a preliminary stage of "language shift" (cf. Razmjoo & Barani, 2025; Semenova et al, 2021; Villarreal, 2014), in which the state mechanism of English plays a decisive role.

> The ministers, bureaucrats, and businessmen of Bangladesh do not respect the state language. They send their children to English medium schools or send them to study abroad. They don't know how to speak Bengali. Unfortunately, they and their children are the ones **who control the main sectors, like jobs and business.** The ruling class has no concern for the Bengali language, and they will **not support other language-speaking people (T11).**

T11 (private university) asserted that English is not only a means of communication for elites but also a tool that aligns with global power structures. The emphasis on English by the ruling and elite class and their influence on the government have reinforced the use of English among the youth job seekers. This linguistic distinction, alongside differences in dress, education, and culture, is crucial to maintaining control over the population. This perspective emphasises the broader implications of linguistic power and dominance in society (for a different view, see Ananda, 2022; Davidson, 2007; Grabe, 1988). The institutionalisation of English has entrenched English as a *sine qua non* for social mobility (see Adami, 2014; Highet, 2022), perpetuating socio-economic inequalities. Furthermore, T6 (from a public university) labelled these elite and ruling-class people as the "Lumpenbourgeoisie" (see for the term cf. Baran, 1957; Frank, 1972; Lukács, 1943; Mills, 1951) (i.e., professionals, bureaucrats, and industrialists) operating as a "comprador class" (see cf. Fanon 1952/1986, 1961/1963) in Bangladesh, using English as a tool to capitalise on people from other linguistic backgrounds and to elevate their socio-economic status.

> The central medium of communication in a capitalist world is the English language, and naturally, English is a dominant language in our country, and the main reason is the **Lumpenbourgeoisie.** So, to **gain advantages**, the **Bengali language is now neglected** in Bangladesh **(T6).**

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T6 and others (*n*=3, 15 %) further implied how lumpenbourgeoisie pervasive English in government and private sector education and jobs as a token of merit and a prerequisite for success. Additionally, some teachers (*n* =9, 45%; e.g., T8) characterised English as essential for human capital development, and government initiatives emphasise English proficiency to prepare a globally competitive workforce. This criterion perpetuates a linguistic and cultural dichotomy with the English language that favours the elites (i.e., Lumpenbourgeoisie) from the centre and periphery to maintain the sociopolitical *status quo* through various types of imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). It reduces access for the wider populace and consolidates their sociopolitical hegemony (cf. Ives, 2004; Brown et al., 2019), often creating an "ideological complex" (see also Tietze & Dick, 2013).

Similarly, other teachers mentioned and criticised the role of state agencies in promoting and enforcing English in higher education. Some of them (*n* = 3, 15%; T7) expressed that the government's emphasis on English by mentioning the Civil Service Exams [i.e., BCS and other exams]. Half of the teachers (*n* = 10, 50%) noted that official and civil documents are produced exclusively in English, suggesting a pronounced institutional bias. Moreover, T2 directly accused the government of this divided education system as discussed as a mechanism to foster English linguistic hegemony. Several participants (*n* =4, 20%) indicated that the disproportionate investment in ELT, particularly when supported by foreign aids which appears to coincide with a neglect of Bengali language preservation. Moreover, T6 mentioned underinvestment in Bengali for the macro-level policy of the government.

So, the lumpenbourgeoisie has critically influenced the spread and dominance of English. The government' s promotion of English through institutions such as the Foreign Service Academy, for example, reflects a strategic strengthening of linguistic hegemony that has its roots in colonialism. This study also suggests that the English dominance extends beyond education and influences many key sectors in Bangladesh.

4.1.2.3 Socio-Economic Agency

Moreover, the teachers' interviews suggest a broader discourse on mechanisms related to socioeconomic differentiation by critically evaluating the impact of English. For example, T3 (from a public university, Bengali department), criticised the societal bias towards English.

> From what I've seen in Bangladesh, almost every **certification exam and training program is held entirely in English** and it's not just about these professional tests, documents, birth certificates, school board certificates, and even university documents are also issued exclusively in English. Which is totally unnecessary (**T3**).

T3 and a few of others ($n = 3$, 40%) mentioned that English functions as a decisive socioeconomic authority, and they also criticised the language of professional certifications and accreditations. They also found that English is directly or indirectly associated with elite English-speaking schools, exclusive cultural events and social clubs. Moreover, T18 and others ($n = 4$, 20%) interpreted the presence of English in multinational companies operating in Bangladesh, as well as in job advertisements and private sector hiring practices, indicating its predominant position in society. In the area of business networking and entrepreneurship, a group of them ($n = 9$, 45%) described how English foster's international partnerships and business incubators. Moreover, English dominates international trade and investment ($n = 5$, 25%) and financial services ($n = 2$, 10%) which impacts the national economic landscape. So, the current findings suggest the dual transformative role of English. While English facilitates access to international academic standards and economic opportunities, it simultaneously reinforces internal social stratification and marginalises indigenous languages and practices.

Linguistic imperialism is manifested through various mechanisms (see Rahman, 2020; Anam, 2018). The observations of the interview teachers are associated with "linguistic penetration" (see also Phillipson, 1992; Reeves & Wright, 1996), which manifested as English domination of education, government and social spheres. As demonstrated in interviews, there is a discernible trend of increasing EMI use in Bangladesh. Consequently, the integration of English in education is predicated on two factors. Firstly, English must be disseminated across diverse functions. Secondly, cross-lingual communication within these functions must be enhanced (cf. Reeves & Wright, 1996). The findings of this section completely support that the current English-dominated educational system in Bangladesh exacerbates "linguistic hegemony" (cf. Al-Kahtany & Alhamami, 2022; Eriksen, 1992), where its prioritisation has led to a decline in the use of local and indigenous (i.e., minority or small ethnic communities) languages (Hamid & Baldauf, 2014). This is particularly evident in the medical field in Bangladesh, where language barriers prevent students from understanding their teachers, defendants from understanding their judges and patients from understanding their doctors, as English dominates (see also Awal, 2024; Bhuiyan et al., 2019).

Table 4.2: Pathways and Mechanisms of English Proliferation

Types of Agencies	Mechanisms / Strategies	Reference	n (%)
Academy/Institution agency	Compulsory integration of English	T12, T1, T5, T7, T9, T10, T13, T14, T15, T16, T17, T18, T19	$n = 13, 65\%$
	English Professional Education	T1, T2, T6, T8, T9, T11, T12, T14, T18, T16, T17, T10, T3, T7	$n = 14, 70\%$
	National Exams and Assessments	T12, T5, T6, T10, T15, T17	$n = 6, 30\%$
	English-only Teacher Training Programs.	T19, T1, T6, T7, T8, T9, T11, T18	$n = 8, 40\%$
	English-centric Scholarships and Exchange Programs.	T15, T2, T5, T6, T7, T8, T9, T10, T12, T13, T16, T18	$n = 12, 60\%$
	English in Academic Research	T6, T7, T9, T10, T12, T13, T14, T17	$n = 8, 40\%$
	Global Standardised Tests [IELTS, TOEFL, SAT, GMAT]	T2, T5, T9, T11, T16, T19	$n = 6, 30\%$
Socio-economic agency	English as a Social Prestige Marker	T11, T2, T5, T7, T10, T18	$n = 6, 30\%$
	Job advertisements and recruitment	T18, T6, T9, T12, T14, T15	$n = 6 \ 30\%$
	English in Business Networking and Entrepreneurship	T12, T5, T8, T11	$n = 4, 20\%$
	English in Certification and Licensing	T3, T1, T5, T7, T9, T11, T13, T16, T18	$n = 9, 45\%$
	English in International Trade and Investment	T14, T2, T10	$n = 3, 15\%$
	English in Financial Services and Banking	T15, T6	$n = 2, 10\%$
State agency	Elite preferred language	T11	$n = 1, 5\%$
	Requirement of lumpenbourgeoisie in Employment opportunities	T6, T8, T12	$n = 3, 15\%$
	Human Capital Development	T9, T1, T5, T6, T7, T8, T10, T14, T19	$n = 9, 45\%$
	Fragmented education system	T2	$n = 1, 5\%$
	Civil Service Exams	T5, T7, T16	$n = 3, 15\%$
	Official and civil documentations	T6, T1, T2, T5, T7, T8, T10, T11, T12, T14	$n = 10, 50\%$
	Solicitation and acceptance of foreign aid for English education	T6, T9, T13, T17	$n = 4, 15\%$
	Underinvestment in Bengali preservation	T6	$n = 1, 5\%$

4.2 Colonial and Postcolonial Influence on National Education Policy

In postcolonial discourse, the English language occupies a central role in educational policy and pedagogy, serving as a medium of knowledge production and a gatekeeper of access and power. University teachers note that English is ubiquitous and is seen as both a catalyst for global engagement and a constraint on indigenous languages. This view is consistent with broader analyses of NEP, where English reinforces entrenched historical hierarchies. As the primary MOI, English shapes LPP while perpetuating long-standing educational inequalities. This study explores whether English perpetuates colonial era structures or supports postcolonial aspirations for global inclusion (Table 4.3). Teachers' perspectives offer essential insights into the ideological underpinnings of NEP and its role in maintaining or challenging the colonial legacy in education.

4.2.1 The Impact of English on Policy and Practice

4.2.1.1 Educational Language Policy

The NEP is covertly and/or overtly influenced by the colonial and post-colonial ideologies in Bangladesh. In this section, teachers' perceptions of educational planning, policies, and curricula were analysed. Many teachers ($n = 15$, 75%) agreed that the current language policy of education is misaligned due to colonial influence and does not benefit the nation and has an impact on pedagogy, curriculum, and teaching.

> In Bangladesh, a language plan was created based on a policy that **lacked alignment with the national interests** of Bangladesh, and the education system was implemented accordingly. As a result, this approach did not benefit the nation. The language education policy relied on comprehensive language planning, guided by language policies shaped by various **linguistic ideologies**, but we have none. I admit English is necessary but not at the cost of Bengali **(T19).**

In addition, several participants ($n = 3$, 30%; e.g. T19), emphasised the lack of a linguistic ideology to promote and protect their native language, noting that current language policy is disproportionately biased towards English. This has led to a misalignment of LPP that inadequately addresses the linguistic needs of both majority and minority groups ($n = 8$, 40%). Furthermore, T8 and may other respondents ($n = 9$, 45%) criticised the compulsory inclusion of English in education, arguing that its practical use is limited and not generally necessary in Bangladesh. The dominance of English in the NEP thus reflects a continuation of the colonial legacy in the postcolonial context. Nonetheless, this policy direction has met with minimal resistance and remains largely unchallenged among the population. Existing literature shows a lack of examinations of or challenges to English dominance in colonial educational policies (cf. Masso, 1924; Takayama et al., 2017).

In many postcolonial countries, English is often politicised to accommodate linguistic diversity and promote national unity. Papua New Guinea, Kenya, Nigeria, Uganda, India and Singapore, for example, rely on English to unite the different linguistic groups within their borders. Language policies in these countries are rooted in sociolinguistic ideologies of assimilation, indigenisation and internationalisation. While these policies have reduced linguistic differences, they also perpetuate the colonial legacy of English dominance. In contrast, before becoming a nation-state, Bangladesh achieved linguistic unity by adopting a common language, which evolved into Bengali. This unity was further strengthened during the Bengali Renaissance, consolidating Bengali as a central element of national identity. Unlike other countries that relied on English to promote unity after independence, Bangladesh's identity was always rooted in Bengali. Therefore, the rationale for compulsory English education in other former British colonies does not apply to her.

For example, T9 asserted that NEP continues to reflect colonial perspectives by prioritising English over Bengali and other local or indigenous languages in education, which acts as a barrier to students' intellectual curiosity and critical engagement.

> The current language policy is a direct consequence of our colonial past. There is limited language policy and planning regarding the implementation of English, thus creating an imbalance and lack of coordination, which results in discouraging **intellectual curiosity and critical engagement (T9, from a private university).**

T9 and another ($n = 2$, 10%) highlighted the structure of the education system as a legacy of colonialism and asserted that institutions function primarily as sites for the certification of job and business skills rather than as conduits for the generation of new knowledge. Furthermore, T12 and others ($n = 4$, 20%) revealed that while some policies initiatives to promote BMI in HEIs along with administration, law and media, its implementation has been *inconsistent and frequently ineffective*. This is primarily due to the complex role of English in education policy in Bangladesh, which can be described as "transcultural flows" (cf. Appadurai, 1996). They interpret education and language as commodities that serve capitalist interests, a perspective that aligns with Marx's (1867) concept of "commodity fetishism".

Furthermore, T15 and a few ($n=3$, 15%) strongly criticised the UGC (University Grants Commission, Bangladesh) because this state agency discourages (legally) private university teachers from using Bengali in the classroom as a part of state agency from macro-level LPP which is also a motivation from colonial practice. Moreover, the faculty members and university regulatory bodies (e.g., UGC, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh and others) themselves

develop academic regulations or norms to make English compulsory in public universities covertly or overtly. Moreover, medical colleges and technical universities are taught entirely in English and they follow the regulations of universities as autonomous authorities (see also Sultana & Jamin, 2021). The NEP-2000 marked a shift towards improving English proficiency. English is compulsory at all levels of education and is used as a medium of instruction in higher education and emphasises its central role in academia (NEP, 2010). NEP-2010 [revised 2013] further emphasised English for global competencies, while other foreign languages and local languages were largely neglected. The primacy of English in the NEP is consistent with the predominance of English and the influence it can have from colonial history and as a post-colonial continuation. The priority of English poses a threat to the vitality of Bengali, resembling the introduction of Latin by the Roman Empire (Garnsey & Saller, 1987).

4.2.1.2 Pedagogy and Curriculum

To discuss the colonial and post-colonial influence on pedagogy, teachers (n =11, 55%) encountered various types of influence, for example, colonial standardisation method detaches students from their education.

> We tend to use **foreign teaching methods** that don't really fit with our students' needs. Plus, teachers try to stick with the so-called standard English, and students are often corrected or even ridiculed for not using correct pronunciation and grammar. This can make students who have trouble with it feel ashamed and less confident **(T17).**

In the above extract, T7 and a few respondents ($n = 4$, 20%) talked about the challenges posed by the dominance of English in education, particularly due to the lack of localised teaching and learning methods. They emphasised that traditional, localised pedagogical approaches are increasingly being displaced by Western methods, which have a negative impact on students' confidence, creativity, and active participation. As a result, students often feel humiliated by their peers and teachers when they are unable to meet established standards, which reduces engagement in the classroom and ultimately prevents effective knowledge production and dissemination. Instead, the widespread adoption of Western educational models, often without critical evaluation with regard to the local linguistic context.

Inequalities in English proficiency happen in Bangladesh due to different teaching methods imported from the centre, which are not compatible with the majority in the peripheral countries for nation-building in a globalised world by language choice in education (cf. Annamalai, 2005; Jhingran, 2005). Moreover, ELT methods face difficulties when the curriculum design does not take into account the multilingual reality of learners (i.e. Bengali and speakers

of regional and indigenous languages), which is referred to as "pedagogical breakthrough" (Groff, 2017 for a general overview). As a result, learners from rural areas and lower socio-economic backgrounds are often disproportionately affected and blamed for their low achievement (cf. Annamalai, 2005).

The topic can be concluded as the challenges in LPP in education are deeply intertwined with colonial, neoliberal, and linguistically discriminatory practices that intentionally or unintentionally neglect multilingual experiences globally (see Kalyanpur, Boruah, Molina, & Shenoy, 2023). Similarly, ELT in Bangladesh (i.e., teaching and pedagogy) has not yet addressed the right to preserve cultural identities and languages by challenging monolithic cultural perspectives and promoting equitable, non-discriminatory approaches that integrate local languages and cultural contexts (for a different opinion, see Soto-Moli & Méndez, 2020). The current study agrees with Hrvatić (2007) that intercultural pedagogy is an essential epistemological response to maintain cultural balance and resist the forces of homogenisation and universalisation that have historically challenged the coexistence of different cultural groups. There is a possibility that the language of the colonisers may displace the indigenous languages (e.g. Bengali and others), thereby jeopardising the intellectual and cultural essence (cf. Bush, 2006). To address these issues, the government needs to work on developing an exclusive language policy based on decolonisation and prioritising national interests and economic needs. Although many institutions now offer multilingual courses, more research and government support are essential for further development in this area.

4.2.2 English in Educational Materials

4.2.2.1 Colonial Narratives

Governments serve as key architects of national curricula, using textbooks as primary instruments for knowledge dissemination. When these materials are structured within inherited colonial frameworks, whether explicitly through content or implicitly through ideological underpinnings, they reinforce a dominant epistemology that privileges Western paradigms. This process perpetuates hegemonic knowledge systems, marginalizing indigenous perspectives and sustaining colonial discursive legacies within educational structures.

> The government provides free textbooks for all students at primary and secondary levels. It is a subtle way to **perpetuate colonial narration through TEXTBOOKS (T4).**

Furthermore, the teachers ($n = 6$, 30%) acknowledged that government-provided textbooks perpetuate colonial narratives, stemming from the understanding that education is an

ideological tool that reinforces dominant historical, cultural, and epistemological frameworks. Studies (Freire, 2000; Said, 1978) argue that textbooks function as vehicles for transmitting hegemonic knowledge through selective historiography; these materials contribute to the subconscious internalisation of colonial ideologies among students.

Mainstream education and EMI in Bangladesh continue to be strongly influenced by the colonial legacy, with the British model of education. It significantly shapes the development of the national curriculum. The structure and content of the curriculum reflect colonial epistemological paradigms and teaching methods, supported by donations and aid from the core countries. Furthermore, limited awareness of these colonial influences has led to Western knowledge being presented as universal, marginalising indigenous knowledge and resources of epistemologies of the South (see Chakrabarty, 2000; De Sousa Santos, 2014; Grenier, 1998; Said, 1985; Semali & Kincheloe, 1999).

4.2.2.2 Popular Demand

Teachers ($n = 7$, 35%) interpreted the complex relationship between LPP with socioeconomic factors, pointing out that economic demands significantly influence the prioritisation of English in policy, pedagogy, and curriculum development. They emphasised that effective language policy must explicitly take this interdependence into account (cf. Haarmann, 1990; Neustupny, 1983). Furthermore, bureaucratic decision-making processes often exclude the input of linguistic human rights specialists and indigenous language planning, leading to a disproportionate emphasis on English and the marginalisation of other languages. Similarly, Faquire (2024) argues that the Bangladeshi curriculum is shaped by these administrative practices, with Western ideologies reinforced by the influence of individual preferences.

> In my experience, the heavy emphasis on English proficiency is **driven by market demands**. We are pushing students to learn English to economic success (**T13**).

In the above excerpt, T13 experienced that LPP in higher education is also driven by "market demand". Moreover, T6 explained that due to the new status of English in "late capitalism" and political power (see Phillipson, 1992), government policies increasingly tend to promote English and emphasise its importance for global economic activities, including attracting foreign investment (see also Hamid & Luo, 2016). Recent studies increasingly focused on the importance of English in improving international relations (cf. Xhemaili, 2022; Stöger,

2022). Therefore, NEP-2010[47] emphasises English as essential for a "knowledge-based society" and for fostering foreign investments and relations (Faquire, 2024). Changes in education policy increasingly reflect the pursuit of economic gains, positioning English as crucial for individual economic prospects and enhancing national global competitiveness in Bangladesh (see also Ali & Hamid, 2020; Hamid & Rahman, 2019; Imam, 2005; Rahman, 2022).

"Language economics" (Grin, 2003; Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010) appears to suggest the relationship between linguistic practices and economic needs in the global south and/or any postcolonial countries. In the context of Bangladesh, the pervasive role of English in education and employment has been demonstrated to contribute to the devaluation of indigenous and vernacular languages. This has been shown to reinforce linguistic hierarchies that prioritise economic benefit over local cultural expression. The market value of these languages, as observed by Strauss, Leibbrandt, Beukes, & Heugh (1996), is a reflection of their functional utility within the community. Enhancing this value is crucial for improving the social, political, and economic standing of languages in Bangladesh. Consequently, integrating these languages into the economic framework becomes essential [specially for global south] to ensure that they are recognised as valuable assets within both the global and local economies, as advocated by Coulmas (1992).

Furthermore, NEP-2010 and other reforms in Bangladesh may reflect a growing emphasis on English, with the expansion of EMI largely influenced by parental expectations regarding their children's future economic advancement. English is increasingly perceived as a form of linguistic capital, offering tangible socio-economic benefits. Consequently, English version education is being commodified and strategically positioned within the linguistic marketplace as a desirable asset (Roshid & Sultana, 2023). The educational landscape of Bangladesh reveals the lack of economic value of Bengali that has popularised EMI among parents. Initially, the education authorities produced textbooks only in Bengali, but with the advent of English-medium schools, they now publish textbooks with the same content in both languages. This supports the teaching of English at the grassroots level, both in private and public schools. However, the NEP-2010 has not adequately addressed this significant shift towards the English version.

> There are **so many changes that occurred in terms of education policy;** the government implemented and tested **various types of policies in a very short span of time.** They introduced different kinds of

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[47] https://file-chittagong.portal.gov.bd/media/59a512a6-5c94-41b1-b368-b86e9c79338d/uploaded-files/1242bangla.pdf.

EMI and gave the population a wider range of choices to become English-educated, and everyone accepted it (**T17**).

In the above excerpt, T17 acknowledged that there are inconsistent policy adjustments without long-term stability. Studies have found a strong correlation between economic class and the prioritisation of education (cf. Mac Ruairc, 2011; Milroy & Margrain, 1980; Spencer et al., 2013). With the rising economic growth in Bangladesh, the popularity of EMI has increased. However, not everyone can access or succeed in English-medium education due to high expenses and lack of academic support. In response, since the 1990s, the government introduced a different stream of EMI, namely the English version of the national curriculum, which is relatively less costly than the English medium (Haider & Kabir, 2024; Roshid & Sultana, 2023), to widen access and attract students from diverse backgrounds to English. As teaching in English is relatively expensive, the English version has gained great popularity even among the lower middle class. Though there are approximately 350 English version primary schools across the country, with 141 located in Dhaka city, some private schools charge high tuition fees, yet students gain limited academic benefits.[48] Due to the high demand from the population, the government has announced that it will establish at least one state primary school in English in every district to improve inclusion and access.[49] This growing preference for the English language led to a complex mixture of different educational models. However, English pedagogy is becoming increasingly popular across the country as it is a more financially affordable alternative that still provides education in English. This poses a major challenge for the government to promote the alternative MOI, as EMI is the preferred medium of Bangladeshi parents. The preference for a different language of instruction has profound implications due to the long-standing belief and deep-seated fascination with English as a sign of sophistication and necessity in a globalised world. Furthermore, as Tochon (2012) argues, the "fetishisation of methods" in language teaching contributes to this colonisation of the mind by reinforcing a monological mindset that prioritises the language and methods of the coloniser over indigenous knowledge.

Moreover, the continued use of English in HEIs in Bangladesh serves as a "prime" that perpetuates the colonial mindset (cf. Bargh, Chen, & Burrows, 1996; Okazaki et al., 2008). To ensure equitable NEP in postcolonial Bangladesh, socioeconomic opportunities and acknowl-

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[48] Akhter, S. (2023, February 13). Students gain little for high costs. New Age. https://www.newagebd.net/article/194385/students-gain-little-for-high-costs

[49] Dhaka Tribune. (2021, January 31). State minister: Every district to get English version govt primary schools. https://www.dhaka-tribune.com/bangladesh/education/237290/state-minister-every-district-to-get-english

edgement of resources must be provided in local languages, as English once did (cf. Kamwang-amalu, 2008). This case supports the diminishing importance of Bengali in favour of English which creates a form of "historical amnesia" (cf. Goodson, 1989; Nelson, 2009; Polakow-Su-ransky, 2004), systematically erasing or devaluing the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of the colonised. Moreover, the rise of commercial English language teaching indicates substantial risks to Bengali, potentially leading to "language attrition" (Schmid, 2011 for a general overview).

Table 4.3: Colonial and Postcolonial Influence on Educational Structure

Category	Description	Reference	Total	Result
Influence on Educational Language Policy	Misaligned Language Planning	T19, T1, T3, T5, T7, T9, T11, T13	$n =8$, 40%	
	Lack of National Linguistic Ideology	T19, T6, T12	$n =3$, 15%	
	English as a compulsory subject	T8, T1, T4, T5, T7, T9, T10, T11, T15	$n =9$, 45%	- English dominates education and administration over local languages.
	Conduits for the generation of new knowledge	T9, T3	$n = 2$, 10%	- Undermine students' confidence, creativity and willingness to engage
	Inconsistent implementation of primary MOI	T12, T5, T6, T11	$n =4$, 20%	
	Discourages private university teachers from using Bengali in the classroom	T15, T17, T10	$n = 3$, 15%	
Influence on pedagogy and Curricula	Lack of Localized teaching and learning	T7, T3, T12, T9	$n=4$, 20	- Less class engagement and ultimately lack of knowledge Production and Dissemination
	Displacement of Traditional methods	T13, T5, T11	$n=3$, 15%	- historical amnesia
	Continuation of Western Curricula through donor agency	T4, T1, T7, T8, T9, T10	$n=6$, 30%	
Colonial narration and Popular Demand	Continuation of colonial narration	T13, T6, T3, T5, T7, T11	$n=6$, 30%	
	Promotion of English due to "late capitalism"	T6	$n=1$, 5%	
	Inconsistent policy adjustments	T17	$n=1$, 5%	

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4.3 English in the Cultural and Socio-Educational Sectors

The following section explores university teachers' perceptions of Anglocentric dominance in textbooks and its effects through a detailed examination of four central themes: (a) Anglo-cultural intervention in textbooks, (b) native speaker fallacy, (c) effects on native culture and identity, and (d) media imperialism (Table 4.4). Each theme presents educators' critical reflections on how textbook content systematically privileges Western linguistic and cultural norms, thereby perpetuating linguistic imperialism and marginalising local epistemologies. The topic of Anglo-cultural interventions in textbooks will illustrate educators' concerns about the continued reinforcement of Western ideologies and how such interventions influence curriculum design and the construction of knowledge. In the context of the native speaker fallacy, educators' narratives will provide critical insights into the widespread belief that native speaker norms stand for linguistic authenticity and superiority and consequently delegitimize localised varieties of English.

Within the theme of impact on Indigenous culture and identity, the analysis will focus on educators' observations of students' changing identities and cultural affiliations, particularly emphasising the erosion of Indigenous traditions through the privileging of Western cultural practices in educational institutions. Finally, through an exploration of media imperialism, educators' accounts will emphasise how global digital media platforms disseminate Western cultural and linguistic dominance and further reinforce pressures for cultural assimilation. In the discussion that follows, these thematic insights will be integrated and critically framed within a broader postcolonial discourse on linguistic imperialism, epistemic inequality and cultural hegemony.

4.3.1 Linguistic Hegemony and Cultural Biases

4.3.1.1 Anglo-Cultural Textbook Intervention

The previous section provides a comprehensive analysis of colonial influences on education in Bangladesh, particularly on curricula and pedagogy. In this section, teachers ($n = 12$, 60%) discussed the predominance of western contents in ELT materials. Most of the participants agreed that English countries have a significant influence in NEP. The then British Minister for Education and Employment [year 2000], David Blunkett argued the importance of English to the British economy and foreign relations as "It makes good economic sense to use English fluency as a platform to underpin our economic competitiveness and to promote our culture

overseas" (cited in Phillipson 2002, p.12). English language teaching and textbooks are often criticised for "linguistic and cultural genocide" (e.g., Day,1981), often driven by external policies and English language teaching materials (Hunter, J. D. 1997). When the discussion regarding the textbook appeared, several teachers (*n*=8, 40%) expressed their concern in ELT textbooks.

> Students often **fail to see their own cultural** reflections in the content, leading to a sense of alienation and disengagement (**T5)**.

T5 expressed a negative perception that national ELT textbooks predominantly contain an imbalance between native and international cultural content (Jasmin, 2020; for a different opinion, see Ferdus, 2021)[50] and emphasise Western cultural contexts. This predominance of Western is a result of the foreign aid which leads to cultural dissonance as students find it difficult to engage with content that is based on Western experiences and unfamiliar in the Bangladeshi context. This observation echoes Phillipson's (1992) criticism of Western-centric LPP models, which are often inappropriate for multilingual and developing countries. In addition, the British Council's policy on English language programs has been extended to Bangladesh as a postcolonial country. Similarly, another teacher (T18) mentioned the way English is taught based on culturally specific norms (e.g. in the UK and the USA) is often criticised as "an imperialist structure of exploitation" (Phillipson, 1992, p. 55).

> ELT [textbook] is **heavily Western influenced**. **British and American cultures are given prominence,** but other countries are not included in that way (**T8**).

T18 encountered how textbooks in Bangladesh reveal a predominance of Western cultures. English textbooks from countries (i.e., UK and others] often lack relevance, as they fail to reflect the local cultural and educational context, making them less effective for learners (Mostafa & Jahan, 2024). Furthermore, T2 highlighted a "gap" in educational practices with "local cultures and languages under-represented," leading to students feeling disconnected from their socio-cultural realities. Furthermore, similarly, T7 indicated that the dominance of Western content in textbooks diminishes educational relevance and effectiveness and weakens cultural creativity. Western cultural invasion through ELT is evident, as most of the prescribed and imported ELT textbooks for higher studies and for EMI institutes do not adequately reflect the local social, cultural, and linguistic landscape. So, many teachers observed that English language textbooks focus on Western cultural contexts, sidelining local narratives and alienating students.

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[50] http://www.languageinindia.com/aug2021/mesnadulbangladeshculturegendereftbook.pdf

The common Western scenarios and idioms found in textbooks, which are often unfamiliar to Bangladeshi learners, indicate an Anglocentric approach to language planning (Phillipson, 1992), resulting in a lack of student engagement. Furthermore, English language textbooks tend to disconnect students from their cultural heritage, contributing to "cultural synchronisation" (Hamelink, 1983) and reinforcing "Anglocentricity" in English language teaching (Phillipson, 1992). This practice perpetuates structural inequalities by prioritising foreign pedagogies over local socio-political and economic contexts. Some teachers argued that such an approach weakens students' cultural belonging and undermines the effectiveness of language teaching. Furthermore, the widespread promotion of English emphasises the complexity of linguistic imperialism, where language serves as a medium for cultural and ideological influence. T8 recognised that students are increasingly turning away from their local cultural heritage. It was also noted that the lack of mother tongue-based education hinders the holistic development of students, as awareness of one's history, traditions, and language is essential for comprehensive personal development.

When asked about textbooks, T11 and others ($n = 4$, 20%) also mentioned that universities prescribe "multinational publications" that are used exclusively for teaching students in higher education and EMI programs and influence students' perception through textbook contents. Participants expressed concern that these textbooks neglect the historical figures of Bangladesh, which play an important role in developing perception and ideology.

> **...**universities predominantly prescribe **textbooks from multinational publications**, especially for EMI programs. The lack of national representation leads to an educational disconnect. students' worldviews and perceptions are inevitably influenced by perspectives and examples rooted outside local contexts (T11).

The findings support that the continued dominance of English in global publishing is due to colonial legacies (cf. Calvet, 1981).[51] These also suggest that English-language books are identified as conforming to English-only cultural approaches. Studies (e.g. Castañeda-Peña, 2018; Phillipson, 1992) argue that English-dominant circles utilise processes of whitening to impose their cultural values and identities at the expense of minority languages and their unique cultural values. Bourdieu (1991) refers to these colonial dependents as the "colonial habitus." This upholds a dichotomy of "civilised versus primitive knowledge," reinforces colonial power structures, and ultimately legitimises English as the language of power (see Bhatia, 2018; Grosfoguel, 2013; Motha, 2014). The period of British colonial rule in Bangladesh may have

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[51] See https://www.sfu.ca/publishing/news/editorials/colonialism-publishing.html.

concluded from a political standpoint, yet its influence on the nation's educational curricula persisted through the agency of "compradors" (Fanon, 1952/1986, 1961/1963) and "inter-state actors" (Phillipson, 1992). These agencies play a central role in introducing and promoting English as a global language in the educational landscape of Bangladesh, while at the same time neglecting the promotion of local languages.

Multiple respondents revealed that these foreign curricula and textbooks contribute to cultural alienation. They predominantly emphasised the foreign culture and subjugate the local culture (cf. Canagarajah, 2000; Ozdemir & Rahimi, 2013). However, some of them asserted that when given autonomy, they sometimes adapt the curriculum content to reflect the local culture. Sometimes they find alternative ways to explore deeper cultural aspects and connect them to English or other cultures to maintain an authentic connection to their cultural identity within the teaching framework. Therefore, institutional policies and textbooks may often enforce this, while ELT teachers have limited opportunities to incorporate intercultural practices.

4.3.1.2 The Native Speaker Fallacy

The widespread use of foreign content and emphasis on foreign standards in education has been shown to promote favourable perceptions among Bangladeshi students. T3 and others (n =3, 15%) highlighted that among some students, native pronunciation is regarded as the ideal and native speaker considered to have greater linguistic and cultural abilities, thus resulting in native accents (e.g. British, American, Australian) being regarded as the most prestigious and "authentic" form of English (cf. C. Jones, 2022, 2017; Tomlinson 2017).

> I've noticed that some students really tend to see **British or American accents as more prestigious;** like, if you speak with a native accent, you're automatically perceived as better at English (T3).

English language learners often undermine local educators by the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992) while they consider native English speakers inherently better suited to teach English. Such perceptions privilege Western interests and reflect a colonial mindset of devaluing the local expertise and perpetuating the dominance of foreign norms in language education. Moreover, T10 lived through that the Bangladeshi speakers of English are often perceived as subordinate compared to that of native speakers. He admitted that some people [students and fellow colleagues] judge him by the standards of the English accent of native speakers, which has a negative impact on his professional image and limits his opportunities. In contrast, Baker et al. (2024) found that only 28% of respondents (from Colombia, Mexico,

Iraq, Thailand, and Vietnam) aspired to sound like native English speakers, with native fluency ranking the lowest among the desirable qualities for a teacher.

One teacher (T12) highlighted that though it is uncommon to hire teachers from a central country due to financial constraints, students often follow the online materials of NESTs (Native English-Speaking Teacher). This perception is fostered by students because NESTs are perceived as more reliable and original because of their presentation in English and native pronunciation, lending them credibility and authenticity (Samimy & Brutt-Griffler, 1999). Furthermore, T7 mentioned that teachers with limited English proficiency in class lectures are perceived as ineffective despite their expertise. This reflects the general social dynamic in which native English speakers are privileged over non-native speakers, resulting in a dichotomous, if not overtly racist, relationship (Holliday, 2018).

Similarly, students who use so-called incorrect or imperfect English are often harshly labelled as "uneducated" by some teachers (see section 3.1.1.2). This postcolonial socio-psychological attitude of "linguistic primitivism" (Fanon, 1952/1986) creates societal pressure to follow the dominant centre variety of English (viz. Inner Circle English), often tied to Western norms of pronunciation, grammar, and cultural identity. Further reinforcing existing class divisions and linguistic inequality, which in turn reinforces the cultural hegemony of English. From the discourse and experiences of the participants, it was found that the colonial linguistic imposition in post-colonial Bangladesh has psychological impacts on the colonised (see Fanon, 1952/1986) even after political independence. Essentially, native-speakerism resists evolution as a lingua franca and limits linguistic diversity. This fosters cultural gatekeeping in academia, media, and publishing, where native speakers are favoured. As a result, the BdE remains restricted by colonial language hierarchies, which hinders the development of a locally distinctive linguistic identity and leads to cultural change in education.

4.3.2 Cultural Erosion and the Power of Global Media

4.3.2.1 Native Culture and Identity

While language conveys the history, values, and challenges of a society, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o (1986) regards language as a "collective memory bank" (p. 15). Language as a site of relations to others, to history, and to culture is exploited by coloniality to reinforce social hierarchies and exclusions in lived experiences (Stawarska & Ring, 2023). Language, culture, and power are closely interconnected and influenced by the enduring effects of colonisation on identity.

In addition, teachers (*n* =14, 70%) expressed their negative view on Englishness and its impact on indigenous (local) culture and identity.

> It (English) creates barriers to our local language and makes it **inferior** in our social standard. This is leaving behind a **void** where once existed a **rich culture and history (T5)**.

In the above extract, T5 and others (*n* = 12, 60%) criticised English for its influence on native culture and history, which leads to Bengali culture as inferior. Though there was a mixed reaction from different classes and parts of the Indian subcontinent, including Bengal, the colonial powers of the British gradually and systematically made English the language of education and administration. It is still believed that the English Education Act-1835 was the primary colonial initiative that challenged indigenous languages (Jana & Sarkar, 2021), history, and culture in the Indian subcontinent, as also seen in Thiong'o (1986) in Africa. The struggle for linguistic rights (e.g. for Bengali, Rajbashi, Nepal Bhasa, Punjabi, Andalusian, etc.) occurred in different regions. This indicates that people felt that the imposition of a colonial language posed an existential threat to the essence of local identity, as "to speak is to exist absolutely" (Fanon, 1952/1986:17).

Furthermore, the processes of *racialisation* (for example, caste, religion, language, creed, colour, and economic status) and the colonial legacy of the language have had a profound impact on the use of English in Bangladesh. Despite its widespread use, English continues to symbolise "otherness" and reinforce postcolonial identities embedded in historical power structures, similar to French in Algeria (Fanon, 1952/1986, translation revised). Similarly, the postcolonial mindset that "To speak means to be in a position to use a certain syntax, to grasp the morphology of this or that language, but it means above all to assume a culture, to support the weight of a civilization." (Fanon, 1952/1986: 17-18), is particularly relevant in the Bangladeshi context.

The students and communities emphasised a strong cultural and linguistic identity while favouring global participation because of its potential benefits and prestige in postcolonial regions. For example, a number of studies (Irak, 2007; Jones & Barkhuizen, 2011; Tembe & Norton, 2008) in Uganda, Kenya, and Mozambique found significant tensions between maintaining local cultural and linguistic identity and striving for success in a globalised world. Similarly, teacher T1 and a few of them (*n* = 3, 15%) interpretated the clear changes of the cultural behaviour among young people.

> You can tell that there is a **notable decline in the use of the Bengali language among the younger generation**. This is not a new phenomenon, but what I am worried about is that it is spreading very uncontrollably, and they are **showing less interest in native cultural activities but actively participating in Western cultural trends (T1)**.

Although it is often said that a strong sense of pride in the Bengali language persists, this study found a significant number of people are increasingly prioritising the acquisition of English. This trend is mainly due to the pursuit of better economic and social opportunities. These people see "imagined communities," as described in this situation by T1, as global networks to which they aspire. Within this framework, English can be seen as an essential medium for accessing and participating in these transnational communities (Norton & Toohey, 2011).

Concurrently, "imagined identities" denote the future roles they aim to attain, such as becoming professionals or academics (see also Norton & Toohey, 2011). These aspirations serve as motivating factors for learners to invest in English language acquisition to enhance their social status and opportunities for advancement. Furthermore, this aspiration for social mobility has resulted in an increased "investment" (see also Norton & Toohey, 2011) in EMI, particularly among the middle and upper classes, as evidenced by the proliferation of English-medium schools in urban areas. Consequently, the suppression of a person's language can be equated with the "suppression" of the person (Delpit & Dowdy, 2002), the "dehumanisation" of people's identity (Kitoko-Nsiku, 2007), and "linguistic terrorism" (Anzaldúa, 1987; Christoffersen, 2019). Kachru (1982) suggests that one way to protect the cultural identity of non-native speakers is to promote local varieties of English. In Bangladesh, the development of a localised version of English, often referred to as BdE can serve as a tool to preserve national identity while still participating in global communication.

With the reduced usage of Bengali, some teachers (n =7, 35%) also faced the students' lack of interest in learning Bengali and the resulting cultural detachment.

> Students are now completely **averse to Bengali literature**. They know the names of a handful of Bengali writers, but I doubt how many they have read. They show interest in English books or want to read them because Bengali literature is of no use. Reading English literature increases fluency in English and benefits students in all aspects. **Private universities are not opening Bengali departments because they assume no one would enrol (T11).**

In the above excerpt, T11 confirmed that the contemporary students had less interest in enrolling in the Bengali department. Furthermore, students were increasingly turning to English literature because they believed that English was essential for academic and professional development. The EMI students were mostly not even familiar with prominent native Bengali writers. The participants attributed this phenomenon to a lingering colonial mentality and a

reduced importance of language identity. The perception of the teachers of this study aligned with Macedo and DeGraff (2019) argument that former colonial languages are maintained at the expense of the largely illiterate majority, leading to a marginalisation of their native languages and functional literacy traditions. Furthermore, Ivbulis (2008) highlights the Western literary dominance in Bengali literature, leading to the critical question of whether British colonisation ultimately advanced society or overshadowed and marginalised indigenous literary traditions (Ahmed, 2006; Selim, 2014). Another teacher (T14) also found that the neglect of Bengali literature could have a negative impact on students, lead to a weakening of the cultural values, cultural identity, and create distance with their heritage.

Colonial influences delimit the growth of indigenous literature with its unique literary identity (For a different opinion see Dasgupta, H. M., & Dasgupta, K. K. (1969); Dasgupta, 1927; Jahan, 2018). As Altbach (1975) discusses, literary imperialism is intricately linked to the stagnation of traditional forms, a consequence of the impact colonial literature has on local traditions. This dominance not only perpetuates social and economic inequalities but also reinforces structural disparities, ultimately hindering balanced social development (Phillipson, 1992). The dominance of English and Western literary forms in the education system of Bangladesh exemplifies linguistic and literary imperialism (Al-Quaderi & Al Mahmud, 2010), contributing to socio-economic disparities (Haque & Akter, 2013) and marginalising native languages and literary forms. The emphasis on English as a marker of intellectual and social superiority and the reliance on Western literary frameworks hinder the development of a balanced literary tradition that integrates indigenous languages and forms (Njemanze & Ononiwu, 2015). Integrating indigenous practices with colonial frameworks could foster a more culturally relevant literary tradition, but colonial forms should not overshadow the local traditions of Bangladesh (Khan, 2023). Addressing literary imperialism requires integrating indigenous literary forms and promoting linguistic diversity within the educational system to counter the lasting psychological harm inflicted by colonialism. It devalued local education and culture while promoting the superiority of the standards of the coloniser.

4.3.2.2 Media Imperialism

Current trends among the younger generation indicate a growing preference for numerous foreign platforms, facilitated by their easy accessibility through social media. Several teachers ($n = 5, 25\%$) argued that the current emphasis on global media creates media imperialism in Bang-

ladesh which is inextricably linked to English linguistic imperialism. They emphasised the impact of global media and English dominance in undermining local traditions and promoting a homogenised global culture while shaping social norms through the influence of Western media.

> Primarily **foreign platforms are popular** among our younger generation. Which **influences their cultural values, ideologies, and narratives through mass media.** This is impacting local media production negatively and marginalising local cultures (T14).

As seen, T14 struggled with that the younger generation predominantly engages with foreign media platforms. Which could overshadow and weaken the unique cultural and linguistic characteristics of Bangladesh, leading to "cultural dilution" (see Shajith & Bhuvaneswari, 2023 for a general overview). While global media offers diverse perspectives, it often suppresses local voices and shapes their cultural values and ideologies. Post-colonial societies must resist Western influence to foster authentic identities and create inclusive content that blends tradition with modernity. The dominance of English in Bangladeshi media, fuelled by Western entertainment, drives non-native speakers to learn the language for global cultural engagement, comparable to many other countries (e.g., Kuwait, Gilgit-Baltistan and Turkmenistan) (Hayat & AlBader, 2022; Hussain & Gill, 2023; Sartor, 2010). Here, English as a global lingua franca has significant implications for local languages and identities. The influence of the West has led to more English being spoken by young people.

Thus, the dominance of English in global communication, amplified by media imperialism, significantly impacts local languages, identities, and cultural practices. The duality between native language and English fosters a hybrid identity, as individuals navigate between their Bengali heritage and the dominance of English, similar to Kachru's (1984) concept of "linguistic schizophrenia." Linguists argue that this spread of English, rooted in Western ideologies, represents a form of linguistic imperialism. This idea is supported by the prevalence of English educational materials and digital language programs from the UK and US in Bangladesh, extending their global influence and may threaten local cultural diversity through "Anglo-Americanization" (Phillipson, 1992) of non-native speakers.

Furthermore, this "McChicken phenomenon" (Hayat & AlBader, 2022) among Bangladeshi youth and predominance of exposure to Western entertainment leading towards an altered cultural perception and social behaviours, further contributing to "linguistic attrition" (Hussain & Gill, 2023) in Bangladesh. Moreover, T10 observed that the influence of English

in "social media" has transformed communication practices, particularly among younger generations in Bangladesh. The rise of social media platforms has facilitated the spread of English slang and informal language, which can alter traditional language norms and practices (see also Natsir et al., 2023; Saputra et al., 2023). Similarly, one of respondents (T18) has observed that users frequently switch between different language repertoires in their online communication. Furthermore, she has expressed concerns about the sustainability of these languages in the face of pressures of linguistic imperialism (cf. Rustan & Ajiegoena, 2022). This transition not only affects the use of local languages but also has a significant impact on social interactions and cultural expressions.

In contrast to Europe, where the impact of English as an unofficial language for international affairs is only now being discussed, Bangladesh has been facing this challenge for decades due to its colonial history. The influence of English in Bangladesh is comparable to the concept of "McDonaldisation" (Ritzer, 1993), which refers to the spread of global, often Western, cultural practices at the expense of local traditions. The dominance of English in education, business and government in Bangladesh reflects this constant struggle between preserving local identity and adapting to global pressures.

While there is an excessive admiration for the English language and culture, it supports the presence of Anglomania (cf. Fishman, 1972). The results thus show the bourgeoisie's striving for linguistic uniformity at universities. The preference for English over Bengali suggests that language in capitalist societies can symbolise the class interests of power and opportunity. In Bangladesh, as a neo-capitalist society, the workers and the capitalists speak the same mother tongue, but when it comes to the question of class interests, the language of the capitalist becomes the language of exploitation, and the language of the worker becomes the language of emancipation. The concept of "Anglocentricity" (Phillipson, 1992), which refers to the dominance of English and Western norms in language planning, has become a central theme. This focus on linguistic competence, often at the expense of cultural relevance, disconnects ELT pedagogy from local contexts.

In Bangladesh, people find themselves navigating two distinct linguistic realms: Bengali, which serves as a marker of cultural and familial identity, and English, often associated with power, status, modernity, elitism, and professional advancement. These two languages occupy distinct hierarchical positions, with English often perceived as the superior language. This power differential compels many Bangladeshis to negotiate their identity in relation to

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these languages, aligning with Fanon's assertion that subjects often have to manage the conflicts and imbalances between the languages they use (Fanon, 1961/1963). Consequently, in the context of Bangladesh, the struggle for linguistic autonomy is inextricably linked to the struggle for cultural and political self-determination. The colonial imposition of English, coupled with linguistic paternalism, infantilism, and the alienating effects of a foreign language, underscores the use of language as a tool of domination. Conversely, the postcolonial elevation of Bengali as a national language symbolises the reclamation of identity, history, and self-expression that colonialism sought to suppress.

Table 4.4: Cultural Influence on the Socio-Educational Sector

Category	Description	Reference	percentage	Result
Foreign Influence on Textbooks	Imbalance cultural contents in textbook	T5, T18, T2, T6, T9, T7, T13, T1	n=8, 40%	- Cultural alienation - Cultural synchronization - Anglocentricity - Detachment from local culture - Native speaker fallacy - Imagined communities - Fostering a colonial mentality. - literary imperialism - Cultural dilution - Hybrid identity - Imagined Communities
	Neglect of Bangladesh's historical figures	T11, T3, T10, T8	n=4, 20%	
	Predominance of British and American culture in textbooks	T18	n=1, 5%	
Native Speaker Fallacy	British or American accents are seen as prestigious.	T3, T6, T12	n=3, 15%	
	Bangladeshi speakers often perceived as subordinate	T10	n=1, 5%	
	Reliance on NESTs	T12	n=1, 5%	
	Low proficiency equates to perceived Teacher Ineffectiveness among students	T7	n=1, 5%	
Impact on Native Culture and Identity	Creates cultural and linguistic Inferiority	T5, T9, T1, T6, T3, T7, T8, T11, T13, T14, T16, T17	n=12,60%	
	Imagined communities	T1, T15, T19	n=3, 15%	
	Lack of interest in learning the Bengali language	T11, T14, T1, T6, T7, T8, T9	n=7, 35%	
Media Imperialism	Marginalisation of Local Media (Cultural Dilution)	T14, T3, T2, T10, T13	n = 5, 25%	
	Social Media Influence transformed communication practices	T-10, T18	n=2, 10%	

4.4 Neo-Imperialism and Linguistic Dynamics

This section explores the relationship between neo-imperialist influences and evolving language dynamics, focussing on how contemporary language practices are shaped by global power structures (Table 4.5). It examines how teachers perceive linguistic neo-imperialism in the higher education context, assessing both imposed linguistic norms and the emergence of locally adapted strategies.

4.4.1 Neo-Imperialism in Academia

The influence of neo-imperialism within the academic world can be seen in the favoured position assigned to certain languages (particularly English) and in the resulting impact on local academic traditions. Faculty perspectives shed light on how institutional policies and educational practices reflect or resist neo-imperialist pressures and highlight the tensions between external linguistic demands and internal socio-cultural priorities.

4.4.1.1 Structural Imposition and Local Appropriation

The structural imposition of native institutions and governance, discussed earlier in the context of colonial history, persists in the contemporary era through international structural mechanisms characteristic of neo-imperialism. This section suggests how most of the teachers consider linguistic imperialism a persistent phenomenon through global political and commercial interest aligning with extant research on neo-imperialism in postcolonial contexts, as evidenced by studies (Phillipson, 2012, 2013, 2016; Tochon, 2011; Yu, 2020; Zeng et al., 2023).

Overall, several participants ($n = 4$, 20%) implied that English dominance through neo-imperialism in academia demotes local research and pressures scholars to meet global expectations, with academic success often tied to publishing in English-language journals.

> Academic publishers and journals are mostly in Western countries, based on the priorities of the studies that are in English, align with their interests, and have more appeal. Our **locally focused research** might have great implications, but it's perceived as **less relevant** to international audiences (**T14**).

Here, T14 expressed his disappointment that the primary language of the academic publishers is English and aligned with global academic interests. Similarly, some participants also emphasised the pervasive influence of *English in technical and engineering fields,* as, T17 emphasised the predominance of English in technical disciplines and its crucial role in research

writing. Furthermore, academic meetings and conferences are conducted exclusively in English, both in a global and local context, marginalising local researchers who lack proficiency in the language. She also highlighted the necessity for students to attain the required level of fluency in English to navigate their higher educational studies. She supported the presence of structural imposition of English in academic and professional sectors reinforces colonial linguistic hierarchies and exemplifies linguistic neo-imperialism (Phillipson, 1992; 2012) in Bangladesh. The requirement for non-native English academicians and students to publish academic papers in journals of English-speaking countries. This imposition is shaped by both institutional policies and Western publishing priorities *only* in higher academic institutions.

Consequently, local researchers face pressure to meet global expectations and often fail to publish in international journals due to language barriers. This reflects linguistic neo-imperialism, where systemic forces maintain the dominance of English across global academic communities (cf. Zeng et al., 2023). Thus, academicians and students are required to learn advanced levels of English to publish in prestigious international publications due to institutional obligations; consequently, it sidelines local research, practices and influences academic careers. Spivak's (1988) concept of the "subaltern" is relevant here, as those who lack proficiency in English are effectively rendered voiceless in the global academic community. The predominance of English is driven by its perceived economic value and its role in global competitiveness, making it the dominant language of power and prestige (cf. Zeng et al., 2023). This structural imposition begins early in academic careers, embedding English as the norm for thinking, writing, and publishing, thereby subtly perpetuating neo-imperialism (cf. Yu, 2020). Furthermore, some teachers (*n* = 2, 10%) experienced the same that English has been integrated into the local academic world as an essential tool for academic engagement.

> Our institution's shift towards English-medium instruction was not a mere consequence of globalisation, but **a deliberate strategy to negotiate our colonial past** and **current global imperatives (T9)**.

Their experiences appear to suggest how local academic leaders are thoughtfully dealing with the global impact of English while countering its imperialist aspects. They also had to embed local characteristics into global academic discussions to create a unique scholarly identity that balances global pressures and local needs. Moreover, T9 negatively perceived the government's choice to make English compulsory, as this keeps English at the forefront of education in the country. The local adoption of English in HE exemplifies a nuanced interaction between local agency and global influences, historically rooted in colonial educational prac-

tices and presently influenced by neo-imperial forces. So, the introduction of English in Bangladeshi HE is both a response to global trends and a response to imperial legacies which highlights the 'locally driven adoption' of English (cf. Zeng et al., 2023).

4.4.1.2 The Normalization of English and Colonial-Imperial Attitudes

Another key feature of neo-imperialism is the "normalisation of English" (Zeng et al., 2023), which is prominent in our participants' responses (*n*=3, 15%). While our participants operate in English for easier navigation.

> In the medical field, **English is indispensable**. Our prescriptions, diagnostic papers, names of medicines, and even the terms we use are in English. It is easy for us to navigate. Patients suffer due to this language barrier, but it's **usual practice in Bangladesh (T1).**

In medical universities, English is essential for academic and professional success, as most textbooks, records, and medical practices are in English. T1 encountered that students are expected to excel in English, and this practice has become normalised. The normalisation of English in Bangladeshi academia and in professional practices epitomises neo-imperialism, where its dominance is so entrenched that it is perceived as a natural order rather than a colonial remnant. This is particularly evident in the medical field and private universities, where English governs professional communication, instruction, and assessment despite the linguistic barriers it creates. Moreover, T17 from engineering universities regards English as a universal language of science and technology. Tochon (2011) argues that neo-imperialism enforces submission through structural mechanisms, making resistance to English dominance difficult. The widespread acceptance of English, known as the normalisation of English, where individuals develop colonial-specific schemas that associate English with positive outcomes and local languages with negative perceptions, even without direct colonial experience. This sentiment echoes Fanon's (1952/1986) concept of the "wearing of a white mask," where colonised individuals adopt the coloniser's language and culture to gain acceptance, often at the expense of their own identity.

Furthermore, despite the formal end of colonialism, the colonial mindset that views English as superior to local languages remains deeply ingrained in Bangladeshi society, particularly within academic institutions. This attitude is not merely a relic of the past but continues to be perpetuated by the historical association of English with power, modernity, and progress, as several participants (*n* =5, 25%) mentioned.

> There's still this notion that if something is **written in Bengali**, it's **less credible or less important**. English carries a weight that Bengali doesn't, especially in academic circles. When we submit papers in English, they are automatically assumed to be of higher quality, which reflects our past (**T5**).

As T5 asserted, the colonial mindset is further reinforced by the emphasis on English and Bengali being less valued and acceptable in both local academic and professional settings, indicating the persistent colonial mindset. Furthermore, T17, a lecturer from a private university, actively supported English; however, she admitted that Bengali has been relegated to informal or less prestigious domains. This perception highlights the deep-seated belief that English, as a former colonial language, continues to be associated with intellect, sophistication, and global relevance. This perception is not limited to public universities but is also prevalent in private universities, where the medium of instruction is predominantly English.

This sentiment is echoed in medical and engineering universities, where English is not only the medium of instruction but also the language of professional practice. This perspective aligns with Tupas (2022), who discusses how the superior-inferior asymmetry between English and indigenous languages is a direct consequence of the colonial legacy. The perception that English is inherently superior to Bengali is further entrenched by the structural dynamics of the education system, where English is seen as the language of prestige and global connection. Hamel (2007) finds that vernacular languages, such as Bengali, are often considered unfit for expressing complex academic ideas, a belief that continues to marginalise these languages in academic discourse. The significance of this background lies in the fact that the colonial mindset continues to shape the attitudes and behaviours of both educators and students across various academic disciplines in Bangladesh. The persistence of this mindset ensures that English remains the dominant language in academia.

> In our **conferences and meetings, English is the primary language,** even when most participants are Bengali speakers. **Most foreign English-speaking delegates face communication difficulties with locals but are unwilling to learn Bengali, the local language.** This expectation that everyone should speak English undermines the importance of our native language and reflects a certain complacency among English speakers (**T16**).

Here, T16 observed that in conferences and meetings in universities, English is the primary language, even when almost all participants are Bengali speakers. This linguistic hierarchy, accordingly, undermines the significance of Bengali and reflects "Linguistic complacency" (see Crystal, 2003) where the tendency of native English speakers [working in different projects in Bangladesh] to assume that everyone should speak English. This phenomenon is also evident in Bangladesh, where the government fosters an environment where English speakers, particularly expatriates and those educated in EMI, may manifest similar neglect toward the Bengali language. This attitude is not merely about "linguistic deficiency" (Crystal (2003) but rather an imbalance of power where English is perceived as the superior language.

In Bangladesh, this complacency is often evident in higher education institutions, where both teachers and students may more comfortably acknowledge a lack of proficiency in Bengali than in English. This phenomenon reflects the broader postcolonial context observed in many British ex-colonies, where English is frequently equated with competence and intellectual capability (cf. Kachru, 2005).

> One of my foreign colleagues **working in Bangladesh wants to learn Bengali**, but his work schedule is too demanding, and **English is more than sufficient** for his working space and professional needs. After all, English is the global language, and it's expected that people here should know it (**T14**).

In the above extract, the reluctance to learn Bengali or the belief that English is sufficient, reflects Crystal's (2003) observation about the lack of motivation among native English speakers to learn other languages. For example, in Bangladesh, some expatriates and local elites justify their limited Bengali proficiency with seemingly neutral reasons such as lack of opportunity or time, which often conceal deeper complacency. Thus, T14 faced a disregard for the linguistic difficulties of Bengali speakers who are forced to learn English to advance academically and professionally. This perspective is consistent with Phillipson's (1992) study that the privileged status of English speakers is often obscured by portraying the linguistic abilities of non-native speakers as deficient.

These attitudes, which Crystal (2003: 18) describes as an "attitude or state of mind", diminishing the role of Bengali and reinforcing the power imbalance between native English speakers (centre) and Bengali speakers (periphery). This dominance causes "double consciousness" (Fanon, 1952/1986), where individuals are caught between their native cultural identity and the identity imposed by the coloniser's language. This duality often results in a fragmented sense of self, leading to the devaluation of local languages and cultures in favour of English, further entrenching linguistic and cultural imperialism. Additionally, this phenomenon connects with the idea of "mental slavery" (Gandhi, 1927; Garvey, 1937), where the internalisation of the coloniser's language and values fosters a sense of inferiority among the local population. The pressure to prioritise English over Bengali reflects this psychological domination, contributing to a "self-hatred", "inferiority complex," and "self-annihilation" (Fanon, 1952/1986) among those who struggle to preserve their cultural identity. Addressing this issue requires a greater appreciation for Bengali and a concerted effort to promote bilingualism or multilingualism, particularly in professional and academic settings where English predominates.

4.4.2 English in Digital Work and Technology

4.4.2.1 English Primacy in the Digital Era

After discussing their perceptions of technology and its impact on the Bengali language, my participants offered varied insights and expressed their disappointment and the essentiality of gaining English proficiency because of the lack of representation of Bengali in all technological systems. Numerous participants ($n = 14$, 70%) also encountered the increasing association between technological knowledge and the English language.

> To EQUIP the new generation WITH information and **technological skills,** proficiency in **English is essential**. (...) The younger generation is interested in technological advances, so they prefer English (**T20**).

As seen, proficiency in English is essential for achieving success in the technological field. Furthermore, T18 holds a similar stance and emphasises the limitation of the Bengali language in keeping pace with essential modern tools, such as programming languages, educational software, digital content, and online learning platforms.

> The Bengali language is far behind in this aspect of the most essential tools of modern times, such as **programming languages, educational software**, **content, and online learning platforms (T18)**.

T18 explained that Bengali struggles against English in this era of technology, because the dominance of English in technology has restricted access to technological advancements for people with less English proficiency. The lack of Bengali integration in these fields creates barriers for native speakers, limiting their engagement with digital and technical resources, making English the preferred language for the younger generation.

This supports that the lingering effects of colonialism in digital practices where English still dominates in keyboard layouts and software interfaces (Zaugg & Reeve, 2021). The use of technology in education has strengthened the dominance of English in the "technoscape" (Danely, 2015; Kurakin, 2022 for general view) of Bangladesh. Teachers described that English is crucial for accessing digital tools, while the limited availability of Bengali resources reduces its significance and presence in the digital world. This reliance on English for technology reinforces the lasting effects of colonialism on local cultures and knowledge systems (cf. Young, 2020).

In contrast, the Bengali language remains significantly underdeveloped in terms of essential modern technological tools. Advanced resources such as high-quality automatic chatbots, virtual assistants (e.g., Google Assistant), Optical Character Recognition (OCR) systems,

automatic translators, and AI-driven technologies like speech-to-text and text-to-speech are not yet sufficiently available or fully developed for Bengali. As T9 (public university, law department) showed a negative perception regarding the position of Bengali in AI.

> **Bengali language is not very effective to use in AI**. The AI applications cannot process commands in Bengali effectively. There is little to no initiative to develop those tools in **Bengali because of its decreasing importance (T9)**.

T9 mentioned how AI plays a critical role reinforcing linguistic neo-imperialism. This over reliance on English dominant AI manifests cognitive imperialism, a phenomenon where AI systems, predominantly developed within Western paradigms implicitly embed and propagate certain worldviews and epistemologies, often to the exclusion or marginalisation of others. The predominance of Western perspectives not only perpetuates biases but also restricts the evolution of AI into a truly inclusive and ethically grounded technology (Lind-gren 2023). Furthermore, (Birhane, 2021; Buolamwini & Gebru, 2018) stated that, AI systems often trained on biased datasets, reinforce existing social and cultural inequalities.

The absence of high-quality AI tools for Bengali contributes to a sense of "dis-alienation" and "self-division" (Fanon, 1952/1986), where the local population is increasingly alienated from their own language and culture, further internalising the dominance of English. This aligns with Jewitt & Kress (2003) concept of "multimodal literacy", where technology and digital media prioritise certain languages (e.g., English) over others, thereby shaping how languages are valued in the modern world. This lack of technological integration shifts societal preferences towards technologically advanced languages, reflecting the broader implications of "data imperialism / data colonialism" (see Couldry & Mejias, 2019, 2018; Findlay & Seah, 2020 for general overview) where languages with more data and technological resources dominate global communication. This is an example of "linguistic capital" (Bourdieu, 1991) in a "techno-feudal society" (Varoufakis, 2021, 2023), where English, helped by technology, is important. These circumstances reinforce English's global dominance as a digital and technological language.

The reliance on English for technological advancement reflects a broader trend of "linguistic neo-imperialism," where English is not only the dominant language of communication but also the language of technology and innovation, marginalising or causing the death of other languages. Technology facilitates the spread and reinforcement of English as a global language (Fairweather & Rogerson, 2003). To preserve a language may be suggested to be universalised

through mechanisation. There are about 7,000 languages worldwide, but only a few are considered developed in all respects, including English, Chinese, German, Persian, Arabic, French, and Spanish (Leben, 2018). Even the highest technological advancements may be integrated with these languages to make them attractive to speakers of other languages. These languages provide extensive knowledge about their civilisations, traditions, cultures, and existence.

4.4.2.2 Digital Spaces and Freelancing

The rapid spread of the Internet in Bangladesh has significantly reinforced English neo-imperialism, a phenomenon where English dominates digital communication, access to information, and cultural consumption. T11 and a few others (n =3, 15%) from a private university expressed his disappointment with the less representation (less resources, activities and compatibility) Bengali in digital spaces.

> Even though we're all Bengali speakers, the digital platforms we use are predominantly **designed to prioritise English**, making it feel like other languages are not as important or compatible. This makes it difficult for **our language to thrive online**, and the English language will continue to dominate the internet (**T11**).

T11, in the above extract, has elaborated his earlier proposition regarding the digital platforms they engage with being predominantly designed to prioritise English, creating an environment where other languages appear less significant or compatible. Thus, foreign entities dominate critical digital platforms and services, restricting local autonomy as digital colonialism as new imperialism in the Global South (Coleman, 2019; Kwet, 2019). The internet, primarily controlled by English-speaking entities, imposes English as the default language, reinforcing the "top-down imposition" of linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992). As a result, Bengali struggles to establish a strong presence in the digital sphere, reinforcing the continued dominance of English on the internet. With over 49.2% of online content in English, non-native speakers face significant accessibility challenges.[52] In Bangladesh, the dominance of English in the digital space is driven by the "Silicon Valley phenomenon" and the "Hollywood effect," shaping language norms online (Jones & Sudlow, 2022; Xue & Zuo, 2013). This digital hegemony strengthens English linguistic neo-imperialism and limits the presence of Bengali and other local languages.

Another T15 encountered that the English proficiency is essential in the freelancing sector, influencing consumer preferences toward global brands marketed in English and its impact on the development of political narratives and slogans in international communities,

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[52] See https://w3techs.com/technologies/overview/content_language; Retrieved May 21, 2025.

facilitated by the active role of social media and blogs in promoting and sustaining these movements. These shifts suggest the pervasive impact of English, extending its influence beyond academia into various aspects of Bangladeshi society. The widespread use of English in digital technologies, such as online education, social media, and digital communication tools, reflects digital colonialism, compelling local businesses to prioritise English to remain competitive. Thereby, it may challenge the linguistic and cultural sovereignty (cf. Dahiya, 2023)

As Phillipson (2012) warned, in the digital age, English as the global lingua franca perpetuates neo-imperialism. The widespread use of English on the internet reinforces this dominance across communication, business, academia, and education in peripheral countries, both ex-colonies and non-colonies. The spread of English in these domains exemplifies linguistic neo-imperialism, with significant implications for the preservation and use of local languages. The dominance of English on digital platforms (e.g., Facebook, Twitter, High Five, YouTube, Blogstar) in Bangladesh has both altered communication practices and fostered a sense of superiority among younger users, making English a marker of sophistication and global connectivity while marginalising Bengali and other local languages. This shift in linguistic behaviour on the internet reflects broader social dynamics, where proficiency in English is often associated with higher social status. The pervasive use of English on the internet is reshaping online identities and altering the socio-cultural landscape of Bangladesh.

4.4.3 Commercialisation and Resistance in Academia

4.4.3.1 The Commercialisation of Education

Furthermore, most participants concurred on the deleterious impact of more powerful nations exercising control over less powerful economies. Some of the participants ($n = 3$, 15%) highlighted the increasing commercialisation of education which limits the local epistemologies and diminishing cultural diversity.

> Subjects like English, MBA, medical, engineering, ICT, tourism, and hotel management are given excessive importance **according to the demands of corporations and NGOs in our country.** In other words, there is no need to study Bengali, Pali, Sanskrit, history, etc. They require a large number of corporate workers, so the subjects and curriculum must be designed to meet their demands. There is no place for fundamental thinking (**T6**).

T6 strongly criticised the disproportionate emphasis on disciplines by governments based on corporate and NGO demands. He argued that the subjects with little economic utility are being neglected because these subjects do not serve the corporate interests rather than fostering intellectual and cultural development. Similarly, some participants (e.g., T16) were worried of "accumulation by dispossession" (Harvey, 2005) as the commercialisation of education

as corporate neo-imperialism. Educational imperialism continues to characterise HE, as shown by the University Grants Commission (UGC) Strategic Plan (2006–2026), which prioritises market-oriented disciplines — such as information technology, economics and industry — over traditional academic subjects.[53] This plan, based on World Bank recommendations, aims to convert public universities into private institutions, emphasising the production of graduates for commercial sectors.

This focus, driven by corporate and NGO demands, undermines cultural and intellectual diversity, narrowing the educational landscape and promoting educational imperialism (Arafat, 2015). The present academic system produces individuals to fit corporate agendas. Phillipson's (1992, 2012, 2013, 2016) theory of "linguistic neo-imperialism" further underscores the dominance of English as the argument of "functionality" under the guise of modernisation. Corruption worsens the issue, as private universities are established through unethical deals between businessmen, academics, and politicians, undermining educational quality and equity.[54] Promoting linguistic equity requires a balanced approach that fosters English education while preserving and developing Bengali and other indigenous languages, ensuring that linguistic and cultural heritage is maintained.

4.4.3.2 Resistance to Linguistic Imperialism

After independence from British governance, the English language has been used in education and governance for its socio-linguistic significance in Indian sub-continent. However, Kachru (1984) claims that English was used "against the Englishmen". While English remains essential for global communication, it is often viewed with ambivalence, symbolising both opportunity and historical subjugation (Phillipson, 1992). According to the participants (*n*= 15, 5%), while there has been no significant resistance to English across all levels of education in Bangladesh, however, there have been some *political initiatives* to resist English.

> There is no **visible resistance against English**. However, there was previously some effort to bring Bengali back into the forefront of academic and cultural life. They were aware that we **need to celebrate our language** and culture, but the **policies mostly failed (T5)**.

The resistance to English is a multifaceted phenomenon influenced by historical, cultural, and socio-political factors. Historically, the legacy of colonialism has left a complex relationship with the English language in Bangladesh. The government undertook several initiatives to establish Bengali as the dominant language in both the administrative and public

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[53] University Grants Commission. (2006). Strategic plan for higher education in Bangladesh: 2006–2026. UGC.
[54] See report of Transparency Internationial Bangladesh- 2015

spheres, alongside accommodating English as a foreign language (see section 1.3.3). Studies have shown that English language learning has largely failed to meet the expectations of students and educators alike, often due to ineffective assessment methods and pedagogical approaches that do not resonate with local contexts (see Ali & Walker, 2014; Islam et al., 2021; Sultana, 2018). This perception creates resistance grounded in national identity and cultural pride, as numerous citizens advocate for the primacy of Bengali in public life and education. (cf. Rácová, 2016).

The reclamation of English education in Bangladesh is a strategic effort to balance the global importance of English (Akteruzzaman & Islam, 2017; Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). This process began in 1991 when the English was introduced in Class 3. In 1992, the Supreme Court ruled (44 DLR 1992-332) that English could be used in legal judgments and proceedings and also claimed that the BLIA [1987][55] did not apply to Supreme Court cases. That same year, English was made a compulsory subject from Class 1, highlighting the government's focus on early English education. In 2000, the NEP recommended EMI in kindergartens and to translate textbooks and curricula into English. In 2003, the NEC emphasised the importance of English education from the primary level and called for curriculum reform and better training for teachers both locally and abroad. In 2016, the MoE ordered the use of both English and Bengali in higher education. As a result, English remains a curricular priority because it reflects a lingering colonial mindset and its association with social status and economic opportunity (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014; Rahman et al., 2019). These actions reflect the government's position on English as essential for national development and international engagement in Bangladesh.

While the education system in Bangladesh is based on a neoliberal capitalist approach, it becomes very difficult to resist colonial legacies. As a result, EMI creates socio-economic inequalities and becomes a commodity (Phillipson, 1992; Santos, 2011). Studies (e.g., Gultung,1980; Verhelst, 1990) found that the continuation of EMI as a type of cultural imperialism. Although rebuilding education in the native language is recommended to support the decolonisation of the mind (Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, 1986), many Bangladeshis have found sociopsychological and economic satisfaction through EMI. As a result, the country has struggled to develop a sustainable LPP and NEP. Plural, dialogical, translingual, multilingual, and intercultural spaces in universities can be suggested for resisting the colonial legacy of a monolithic

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[55]https://legislativediv.portal.gov.bd/sites/default/files/files/legislativediv.por-
tal.gov.bd/page/225253ed_7079_4c48_874d_1123d1228d8e/1.%20THE%20INTRODUCTION%20OF%20THE%20BANGLA%20LAN-
GUAGE%20ACT%2C%201987.pdf

education model and countering English hegemony (Bakhtin, 1993; Freire, 2000; García & Leiva, 2014). Students from rural and indigenous backgrounds face higher dropout rates and experience lower academic performance, highlighting the need to resist the colonial imposition of English and promote a more equitable multilingual education system. Freire's (2000) idea of "critical education as a form of networking and community" is particularly relevant for overcoming institutional and cultural barriers and promoting solidarity, community and social justice in education.

Table 4.5: Mechanisms of English in Neo Imperialism

Category	Description	Reference	Total	Results
Influence of neo imperialism in Academia	Marginalization of Local Research and technical disciplines	T-14, T-17, T12, T3	(n=4, 20%)	- Language barriers in academia for local research.
	English is essential for academic visibility and progression	T13, T12	(n = 2, 10%)	- Structural imposition of English in academia.
	Locally-Driven Adoption	T9	(n=1, 5%)	- Language barriers hinder local researchers from publishing globally.
	Normalization of English	T1, T16, T17	(n=3, 15%).	
	Persistent colonial attitude in academia	T5, T-17, T5, T7, T10	(n=5, 25%)	- Linguistic complacency.
				- Linguistic deficiency.
	Privileged status of English speakers in academia	T14	(n=1, 5%)	- Double consciousness.
				- Accumulation by dispossession.
	Increased commercialisation limiting local epistemologies	T6, T16, T2	(n = 3, 15%)	- Bengali struggles to keep pace with modern digital tools and platforms.
The role of English in the Technological Era	Technoscape (increasing association between technological knowledge and the English language)	T1, T2, T3, T5, T6, T7, T8, T11, T12, T13, T14, T19, T20, T18	(n = 14, 70%)	- Cognitive imperialism.
	AI in academia perpetuating Linguistic Neo-Imperialism	T9		- Dominance of Western perspectives diminishes local epistemologies.
	Digital platforms designed to prioritise English	T-11, T7, T3	(n = 3, 15%)	- Dis-alienation.
	Essentiality of English in the freelancing sector	T-15	(n =1, 5%)	- Data imperialism/data colonialism.
Resistance and Reclamation	no significant resistance to English across all levels of education in Bangladesh	T5, T1, T2, T3. T6, T7, T8, T10, T13, T15 T16, T17, T18, T19, T20	(n=15, 75%)	
	Some political initiatives to resist English	T5	(n =1, 5%)	

Summary

In this chapter, I explored the layered and contradictory perceptions surrounding the role of English in HEIs by drawing on a detailed thematic analysis of participants' narratives. I explained the complex interplay of the dual realities of English in higher education in Bangladesh, and highlighted both its perceived advantages and its underlying sociocultural and structural implications. English is widely regarded as a vehicle for academic success, global mobility, and professional advancement, as it offers access to quality education, global research, and employment opportunities in competitive markets. For many people, English proficiency symbolises intelligence, competence, and social mobility. However, these motivations coexist with significant criticisms. EMI is considered to reinforce social and educational inequalities, particularly between urban and rural areas. It creates barriers for students from Bengali Medium backgrounds and fosters a dependency complex that is rooted in linguistic hierarchy. At the cultural level, the dominance of English marginalises local languages, erodes cultural identity, and promotes Anglocentric content in textbooks, which leads to cultural alienation and detachment from the national heritage.

Furthermore, the proliferation of English is reinforced by academic, economic, and state-driven mechanisms, including compulsory English curricula, English-only instruction in professional education, and English-dominated assessments, research, and job markets. In addition, socioeconomic practices, such as recruitment standards and the symbolic capital of English, reinforce its dominance. Technological globalisation further intensifies the role of English on digital platforms, with AI tools and freelancing markets mainly operating in English. This not only limits access for non-English speakers but also perpetuates a form of neo-imperialism in knowledge production and communication. I also discussed the lack of meaningful resistance to English dominance. Despite its colonial roots and postcolonial continuities, English has been normalised in both policy and practice, often at the expense of the development of the Bengali language. The result is a systemic imbalance that privileges English while marginalising local epistemologies. It became clear that teachers played an important role in either supporting or combating these language trends. In the next chapter, I will investigate how the teachers and students at HEIs think about BdE and WE, which will assist in understanding the wider societal attitudes towards these language issues.

CHAPTER FIVE
PERCEPTIONS OF BANGLADESHI ENGLISH

Introduction

Attitude and perception are closely interrelated concepts that significantly influence an individual's interpretation of and response to their context. According to Allport (1935), attitude is 'a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive and dynamic influence on an individual's response to all objects and situations'. Attitude can also be defined as 'a mindset or a tendency to act in a particular way due to both an individual's experience and temperament' (Pickens, 2005). In an intercultural context, Byram et al. (2002) characterised attitudes as 'curiosity and openness, readiness to suspend disbelief about other cultures and belief about one's own'.

Closely related to attitude, perception is the process by which individuals 'interpret and organise sensation to produce a meaningful representation of the world' (Pickens, 2005:52). Rakhmat (2005:51) describes perception as 'experience of objects, events, or relationships'. When a person is confronted with a situation or stimulus, they interpret it based on previous experiences. However, this interpretation can differ significantly from objective reality (Pickens, 2005). Awareness and acceptance of a particular stimulus play a decisive role in the perception process, as the ability to perceive stimuli is very selective. This selectivity is influenced by 'a person's beliefs, attitudes, motivation, and personality' (Assael, 1995). In this respect, perception is often characterised by subjective interpretations and can be defined as a belief or opinion based on observed events (Syahputra, 2016). To investigate RQ2, this chapter explores the perceptions of and attitudes toward BdE among Bangladeshi teachers and students.

5.1 Demography and Context of English in Bangladesh

The participants' demographic characteristics are presented in Table 5.1. These factors were expected to impact variations in language perception, ideologies and usage patterns.

Table 5.1: Demographic and Other Characteristics of Survey Participants

Category	Participants (*n*= 120)	
	%	*n*
Age		
18-24	58.3	70
25-34	37.5	45
35-44	2.5	3
45-54	0.8	1
55-64	0.8	1
Gender		
Man	55.8	67
Woman	44.2	53
Other	0	0
Educational Attainment		
Higher Secondary Education	12.5	15
Bachelor's Degree	42.5	51
Master's Degree	40.8	49
Doctoral Degree	4.2	5
Primary Language		
Bengali	88.3	105
Regional language	10.8	14
Indigenous language	0.8	1
Role in Higher Education		
Teacher	16.7	20
Student	83.3	100
Self- Identified English Level of Proficiency		
Basic user	49.2	59
Independent user	42.5	51
Proficient user	8.3	10
Regularity of English usage		
Daily	95.8	115
Weekly	4.2	5

Participants were predominantly in the 18–24 bracket with a mean (*M*) age 25.21 (*SD* = 6.09). Most were men (55.8%), with the vast majority identifying as students (83.3%). Their educational qualifications were concentrated at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels. English was reportedly used daily by almost all participants, although self-assessed language proficiency was mostly in the basic to independent categories. The sample predominantly comprised Bengali (L1) speakers, while also including a small representation of persons from regional and indigenous language backgrounds. These characteristics offer a clear picture of the English language context in HEIs. However, the limited representation of other linguistic and demographic groups may affect the generalisability of the findings. Self-assessed English proficiency remained modest. These observations suggest that frequent exposure to English in academic contexts does not necessarily translate into higher perceived language competence. The participants were asked to indicate the contexts in which they used English. Responses were categorised into six primary contexts (Figure 5.1).
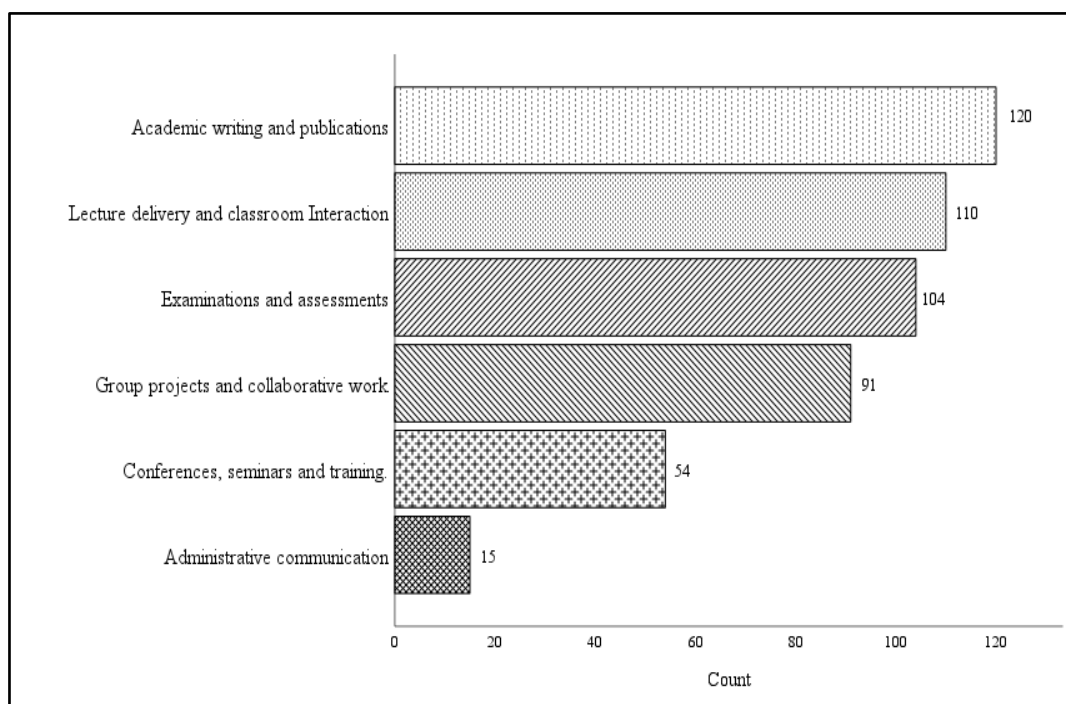
Figure 5.1: Context of English Usage

English clearly functioned as an indispensable medium across diverse academic domains. All participants reported using English for academic writing and publications, underscoring its critical role in facilitating scholarly communication and the dissemination of research findings. A substantial majority ($n = 110$, 91.67%) employed English for lecture delivery and classroom interactions, emphasising its importance in the HE instructional process. Similarly, its extensive use for examinations and assessments ($n = 104$, 86.67%) supported its entrenched position as the language of instruction and evaluation. Furthermore, the engagement in group projects and collaborative work ($n = 91$, 75.83%) suggests that English proficiency is essential for effective teamwork in academic settings. Although a moderate number of participants ($n = 54$, 45%) used English in professional development contexts like conferences, seminars and training, its application in administrative communication was notably limited ($n = 15$, 12.5%). Collectively, these findings supported the multifaceted utility of English in HE and underscored its significance as a crucial tool for both academic and professional endeavours.

5.2 Perceptions of Colonial Influence and Linguistic Imperialism

This section critically examines the experience and views of teachers' and students' regarding the colonial influence and ELI. It explores the influence of British English (BrE) and the colonial legacy in HE. It also investigates the post-colonial influence in the social hierarchies embedded in language practices.

5.2.1 Colonial Influence, Society and Language Preference

Teachers' and students' views indicated that colonial history still shapes Bangladeshi language use, with BrE maintaining its colonial status and other post-colonial influences remaining strong (Table 5.2).

Table 5.2: Perceptions of Colonial Legacies in Education and Society

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
BrE is regarded as the standard/norm in academia.	5.7 (1.39)	1 (0.8)	6 (5)	4 (3.3)	9 (7.5)	12 (10)	53 (44.2)	35 (29.2)
Colonial history has resulted in a societal preference for BrE.	5.94 (1.2)	0 (0)	4 (3.3)	2 (1.7)	10 (8.3)	8 (6.7)	53 (44.2)	43 (35.8)
Educational institutes emphasise British norms in teaching.	5.71 (1.29)	0 (0)	4 (3.3)	7 (5.8)	10 (8.3)	9 (7.5)	58 (48.3)	32 (26.7)
The BrE perpetuates colonial social hierarchies in Bangladesh.	5.77 (1.38)	1 (0.8)	5 (4.2)	5 (4.2)	10 (8.3)	6 (5)	55 (45.8)	38 (31.7)
Postcolonial legacies influence the current varieties of English in education.	5.72 (1.33)	0 (0)	7 (5.8)	2 (1.7)	11 (9.2)	12 (10)	54 (45)	34 (31.7)

Note: n = 120

Participants' responses demonstrated their strong recognition of the enduring influence of colonial legacies on educational norms. Mean scores ($M \in [5.7, 5.94]$) suggest strong overall agreement, while standard deviations ($SD \in [1.2, 1.39]$) indicate moderate variability in responses. Notably, a substantial majority partially agreed, agreed or strongly agreed ($SA + A + PA$) that BrE is regarded as the academic standard (83.4%), colonial history has shaped societal preferences for BrE (86.7%) and educational institutions emphasise British norms (82.5%). Furthermore, a similarly high proportion acknowledged that BrE sustains colonial social hierarchies (82.5%) and the continued postcolonial influence on present-day varieties of English in HE (86.7%). These findings collectively supported the participants' widespread awareness of the ongoing impact of colonial and postcolonial forces on English language ideologies and practices.

The results demonstrated that the continuing influence of colonial history on Bangla-deshi language preferences is widely recognised. They also illustrated how this legacy contin-ues to shape contemporary HE, with the continued dominance of BrE reflecting the enduring presence of colonial power structures. Furthermore, the British accent continues to be a marker of social stratification that perpetuates colonial legacies in modern social hierarchies. Collec-tively, these insights demonstrated that respondents saw colonial and postcolonial influences continuing to profoundly shape English preferences (cf. Poudel et al., 2022), educational prac-tices and norms in Bangladesh (Hamid, 2022; cf. Sibanda, 2019), along with a continued colo-nial influence on social hierarchies (cf. Labov, 2006). The ongoing privilege of BrE and its associated social implications underscore the lasting relevance of colonial legacies in shaping languages (cf. Rizqiani, 2017).

5.2.2 Linguistic Imperialism

Participants also reflected on key dimensions of English dominance, including its effects on educational equity, policy formation, the marginalisation of local languages, cultural identity and diversity and the reinforcement of social class divisions (Table 5.3).

Table 5.3: Perception of Linguistic Imperialism in Education, Culture and Society

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
The dominance of English has an impact on the equity of education.	5.96 (1.76)	6 (5)	8 (6.7)	4 (3.3)	3 (2.5)	7 (5.8)	42 (35.0)	50 (41.7)
English has a major impact on ed-ucation policies.	5.35 (1.74)	6 (5)	5 (4.2)	7 (5.8)	17 (14.2)	13 (10.8)	32 (26.7)	40 (33.3)
Bengali and native language vari-eties are being marginalised due to the preference for English.	5.14 (1.89)	9 (7.5)	7 (5.8)	6 (5.0)	20 (16.7)	9 (7.5)	32 (26.7)	37 (30.8)
English has a significant impact on local cultural identity and cul-tural diversity.	5.28 (1.76)	5 (4.2)	10 (8.3)	9 (7.5)	8 (6.7)	7 (5.8)	53 (44.2)	28 (23.3)
English is one of the main factors in creating class division within society.	5.23 (1.8)	8 (6.7)	8 (6.7)	5 (4.2)	8 (6.7)	20 (16.7)	40 (33.3)	31 (25.8)

Note: n = 120

The highest level of agreement was observed concerning ELI's impact on educational equity, with an 82.5% agreement rate. Regarding the role of ELI in shaping education policies, 70.8% of participants expressed agreement. The perception of the marginalisation of Bengali and indigenous languages yielded an agreement rate of 65%. Concerning cultural impact, 73.3% of respondents agreed that ELI affects cultural identity and diversity. Finally, 75.8% acknowledged that English reinforces class divisions in society. These results, with a $M \in$

[5.14, 5.96] and a *SD* ∈ [1.74, 1.89], reflected a consistently high level of agreement among participants across all ELI factors, accompanied by moderate variability in responses.

The findings supported the widespread influence of the English language particularly in the realms of 'educational equity' (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014) and 'educational policy' (Arefin, 2022; Titumir, 2021). The widespread agreement highlighted the significant role English plays in educational outcomes, often at the expense of equitable access to resources and opportunities for locals. Furthermore, there was considerable concern about the 'marginalisation of Bengali and indigenous languages' (Reza & Ullah, 2023; Rahman, 2023) as respondents recognised the detrimental impact English dominance has on the preservation and promotion of local linguistic traditions. This concern extended to cultural identity and diversity, with many perceiving English as a force that undermines cultural uniqueness and fosters homogenisation (cf. Edwards, 1984). The perpetuation of class divisions was another critical issue identified, in which the prominence of English reinforces existing social hierarchies (cf. Liggett, 2009; Vandrick, 2014), exacerbating inequalities. These insights supported the complex, far-reaching implications of ELI in Bangladesh, which affects not only HE but also cultural and social structures.

5.3 Perceptions of World Englishes and Bangladeshi English

The first part of this section examines the acceptance of WE by the participants and their sense of belonging and identification with these varieties. The second part examines the linguistic characteristics of BdE in the context of WE, focussing on its development and the differences in vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation.

5.3.1 The Standardisation and Ownership of World Englishes

The survey captured the participants' views on the standardisation of English and the acceptance of different English variants (Table 5.4). These questions were designed to assess how respondents conceptualised linguistic standardisation in the context of English's global spread, particularly in the areas of education and communication.

Table 5.4: Standardisation and English Varieties

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
British and American English are not the only standard varieties.	5.16 (1.75)	5 (4.2)	13 (10.8)	6 (5)	8 (6.7)	10 (8.3)	58 (48.3)	20 (16.7)
Every variety of WE should be considered SE.	5.04 (1.79)	5 (4.2)	14 (11.7)	8 (6.7)	10 (8.3)	12 (10)	49 (40.8)	22 (18.3)
SE should not be the norm for teaching and learning English.	5.21 (1.71)	4 (3.3)	11 (9.2)	9 (7.5)	7 (5.8)	14 (11.7)	51 (42.5)	24 (20)
WE should be accepted in various areas alongside SE.	5.28 (1.71)	3 (2.5)	13 (10.8)	6 (5)	8 (6.7)	11 (9.2)	53 (44.2)	26 (21.7)
The acquisition of a standard accent is not necessary for effective communication	5.32 (1.78)	5 (4.2)	12 (10)	4 (3.3)	9 (7.5)	11 (9.2)	46 (38.3)	33 (27.5)

Note. n = *120; WE = World Englishes; SE = Standard English.*

Participants demonstrated a strong endorsement of linguistic plurality. The proposition that BrE or American English (AmE) are not the only standard varieties was supported by 73.3% of participants. A slightly lower (yet substantial) 69.1% agreed that all varieties of WE should be considered standard, indicating positive orientation toward linguistic inclusivity. The notion that standard English (SE) should not be the only norm for HE received 74.2% agreement, while the view that WE should be accepted alongside standard varieties was endorsed by 75.1%. Additionally, 75% of respondents affirmed that acquiring a standard accent is not essential for communicating effectively. Overall, these result with $M \in [5.04, 5.32]$ and $SD \in [1.70, 1.79]$, reflecting high levels of agreement, indicative of a consistent preference among this cohort for diverse, inclusive conceptions of English.

The findings thus demonstrated participants' evident preference for a more inclusive, pluralistic approach to English language standards (cf. Dimova, 2020; House, 2003; Jenkins, 2002, 2006c; Mauranen, 2010; Seidlhofer, 2001, 2004), which challenged the traditional dominance of SE. There was strong agreement that effective communication is not dependent on conformity to a standard accent, reflecting a broader acceptance of accent diversity within English communication. This view indicated a rejection of the traditional view that only SE should be recognised (see Jenkins, 2013) and reflected a shift towards greater acceptance of linguistic diversity. The recognition and integration of WE (cf. Ates et al., 2015; Vo et al., 2023) in various domains, along with traditional standard varieties, are essential to promote a more inclusive approach to language use. These findings thus affirmed the acceptance of WE among Bangladeshi citizens, advocating its incorporation into socio-educational frameworks.

As can be seen in Table 5.5, Participants advocated that all forms of English should be recognised as correct and receive strong support with 69.1% overall agreement. This indicated growing acceptance of multiple English varieties as legitimate, though 20.0% of participants expressed disagreement, suggesting that prescriptive attitudes toward language correctness persist.

Table 5.5: Acceptability of Non-Native Englishes

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Every variety of English is correct English.	5.05 (1.81)	5 (4.2)	13 (10.8)	6 (5)	13 (10.8)	27 (22.5)	22 (18.3)	34 (28.3)
I am willing to participate in a non-native English learning programme	4.88 (1.14)	8 (6.7)	19 (15.8)	11 (9.2)	11 (9.2)	6 (5)	22 (18.3)	43 (35.8)
Non-native varieties also need to be taught widely.	5.27 (1.93)	6 (5.0)	14 (11.7)	5 (4.2)	11 (9.2)	6 (5)	37 (30.8)	41 (34.2)
Everyone should use and promote their local English varieties.	4.74 (1.97)	9 (7.5)	17 (14.2)	6 (5)	16 (13.3)	13 (10.8)	34 (28.3)	25 (20.8)
English belongs to anyone who can speak it.	5.07 (1.86)	8 (6.7)	11 (9.2)	6 (5)	13 (10.8)	11 (9.2)	44 (36.7)	27 (22.5)

Note: n = 120

Participants showed moderate willingness to engage with non-native English learning programmes (59.1%). However, some level of disagreement revealed a degree of hesitation, possibly rooted in traditional expectations for HE. The inclusion of non-native English varieties in lessons was widely supported by 70% of participants, indicating a recognition of its value for teaching and learning. Support for the promotion of local English varieties was moderate (59.9%), indicating some acceptance of local forms in everyday use. There was also strong support for the idea that English belongs to everyone who can speak it (68.4%), suggesting a democratised view of language ownership. The *M* scores across all items fell within ∈ [4.74, 5.27], with *SD* ∈ [1.14, 1.97], indicating generally supportive views with moderate variability. While the findings demonstrate increasing openness toward linguistic inclusivity and diversity, the presence of disagreement on several items reveals the continued influence of standard language ideologies in shaping perceptions of English use and instruction.

The respondents were thus largely in favour of WE. This demonstrated a clear shift in perceptions of the legitimacy of different varieties of English, moving away from traditional, standardised notions of what 'correct' English is (cf. McKenzie, 2008; Proshina, 2016; Reagan, 2016). This recognition was complemented by a willingness to engage in English language

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learning programs for non-native speakers (NNSs). Furthermore, the data emphasised the importance of integrating non-native English varieties into curricula (cf. Bieswanger, 2008; Lowenberg, 1986), reflecting an awareness of the global nature of English and the need for inclusive teaching. Furthermore, the promotion and use of local English varieties was viewed positively, emphasising a desire to preserve and celebrate linguistic heritage within the wider English-speaking community (cf. Chien, 2018; Kanoksilapatham, 2020; Prastiwi, 2013). This perspective was consistent with the belief that English belongs to all who speak it, regardless of their cultural or geographical origin (Kubota, 2015; Trifonovitch, 1981). Overall, these results indicated that non-native varieties of English are gaining wider acceptance in Bangladesh alongside a growing appreciation of linguistic diversity both in education and society.

5.3.2 Bangladeshi English

The questions in Table 5.6 were designed to assess the participants' recognition of BdE as a distinct, developing English variety. They explored participants' perceptions of BdE in terms of its linguistic identity and its potential for promoting the wider acceptance of WE in general.

Table 5.6: Linguistic Characteristics and Development of BdE

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
BdE is an emerging variety of English.	5.3 (1.54)	4 (3.3)	8 (6.7)	5 (4.2)	10 (8.3)	13 (10.8)	64 (53.3)	16 (13.3)
BdE exhibits unique lexical features.	5.1 (1.72)	4 (3.3)	14 (11.7)	6 (5)	12 (10)	7 (5.8)	59 (49)	18 (15)
Grammatical variations do not occur in BdE.	4.95 (1.82)	6 (5)	16 (13.3)	8 (6.7)	9 (7.5)	3 (2.5)	65 (54.2)	13 (10.8)
BdE adapts phonology to local demands.	5.24 (1.66)	4 (3.3)	7 (5.8)	12 (10)	11 (9.2)	8 (6.7)	55 (45.8)	23 (19.2)
Linguistic features in BdE indicate its potential to evolve into a distinct variety.	5.1 (1.75)	6 (5)	11 (69.2)	7 (5.8)	10 (8.3)	12 (10)	54 (45)	20 (16.7)

Note: n = 120

Participants' perceptions of the linguistic characteristics and developmental trajectory of BdE demonstrated that a large majority (77.4%) agreed that BdE is an emerging variety of English, indicating strong overall recognition of BdE's evolving status. Support for the view that BdE exhibits unique lexical features was also high (69.8%), suggesting that most participants acknowledge lexical variation as a defining characteristic of BdE. The perception of grammatical variation in BdE was the opposite: 67.5% of the participants agreed that there were none, reflecting different views on structural distinctiveness. Phonological adaptation was

more widely accepted, with 71.7% agreement indicating that BdE adjusts its pronunciation to meet local communicative needs. Similarly, 71.7% of participants expressed strong belief in BdE's potential to evolve into a distinct variety, suggesting optimism about the future codification and recognition of BdE in the global English landscape. Overall, the *M* scores across all items were ∈ [4.95, 5.30], with *SD* ∈ [1.54, 1.82], reflecting consistently positive attitudes with moderate variability. These findings indicated the participants' perception of BdE as a legitimate, locally grounded and evolving variety of English (cf. Mesthrie & Bhatt, 2008; Mourchid et al., 2023; Mufwene, 2020).

The development of BdE occurs according to the communicative demands shaped by the local context. For example, participants frequently recognised its distinctive phonological and lexical features (cf. Clopper & Pisoni, 2001; Khan & Alzobidy, 2018). This supported the assumption that BdE may continue to consolidate as a recognised variety in the context of WE research. However, the extent of its grammatical variation remains controversial (cf. Balouch & Panhwar, 2019), with some participants undecided as to whether BdE truly deviates from established English norms in its syntax. These findings reflected its dynamic nature and indicated areas requiring further empirical investigation, particularly regarding the role of grammatical innovation in shaping BdE's status as a fully distinct English variety. This complexity paralleled Matsuda (2003), who found that Japanese high school students expressed a desire for the recognition of Japanese-accented English, reflecting a broader move away from a single standardised model (cf. Saud, 2020). Table 5.7 shows participants' perceptions of BdE regarding linguistic identity and acceptance.

Table 5.7: BdE in Acceptance and Linguistic Identity

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
Speaking with a Bengali accent is not embarrassing.	5.18 (1.67)	3 (2.5)	13 (10.8)	6 (5)	11 (9.2)	13 (10.8)	53 (44.2)	21 (17.5)
BdE is crucial for shaping personal identity.	5.15 (1.82)	4 (3.3)	8 (6.7)	9 (7.5)	15 (12.5)	11 (9.2)	50 (45.8)	18 (15)
Bangladeshis should use BdE to show their identity.	5.57 (1.43)	1 (0.8)	7 (5.8)	4 (3.3)	13 (10.8)	12 (10)	52 (43.3)	31 (25.8)
BdE should be recognised as a distinct marker of national identity.	5.54 (1.36)	0 (0)	7 (5.8)	4 (3.3)	15 (12.5)	12 (10)	55 (45.8)	27 (22.5)
Bangladeshi accents should be acceptable and respected.	5.31 (1.54)	3 (2.5)	7 (5.8)	8 (6.7)	12 (10)	14 (11.7)	54 (45)	22 (18.3)

Note: n = 120; BdE = Bangladeshi English.

Overall, the responses strongly supported the legitimacy of BdE and its role in personal and national identity. A total of 72.5% of participants agreed that speaking English with a BdE accent is not embarrassing, supporting the broad acceptance of local phonological identity. Regarding the role of BdE in personal identity, an agreement rate of 69.9% indicated that many viewed BdE as a meaningful aspect of cultural belonging. The idea that Bangladeshis should use BdE to express their identity received even stronger support (79.1%), affirming BdE as an identity marker. Similarly, the belief that BdE should be recognised as a distinct marker of national identity was widely endorsed (78.3%), reflecting strong support for the institutional and symbolic recognition of BdE. Finally, 75% of respondents agreed that Bangladeshi accents should be acceptable and respected, underscoring positive attitudes toward accent diversity and local linguistic norms. Across all items, M ranged from $\in [5.15, 5.57]$ and $SD \in [1.36, 1.82]$, indicating consistently strong levels of agreement. These findings indicated a growing recognition of BdE not only as a legitimate form of English but also as an important element of personal and national identity.

Meanwhile, research in diverse contexts has similarly underlined the need for the formal acknowledgment of localised Englishes within educational policies, as evidenced in Indonesia (Adityarini, 2018) and India (Nihalani, 2010). The above positive reception of local accents (whether Bangladeshi, Japanese, or otherwise) underscores a more inclusive perspective on accent variation (Gluszek & Dovidio, 2010; Niculescu et al., 2008) aligned with the recognition of cultural identity as a legitimate linguistic force (Hino, 2012). These observations have been further corroborated by recent studies (Chotimmah et al., 2023), highlighting the increasing valorisation of localised English forms as important markers of identity. Taken together, this growing body of research reinforces the view that BdE is not merely shaped by external norms but is gradually consolidating into a legitimate variety within the larger ecosystem of WE. Table 5.8 shows the perceptions of the relationship between BdE and cultural identity, heritage and institutional support.

Table 5.8: BdE in Cultural Identity and Heritage

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
BdE represents cultural identity.	5.40 (1.50)	3 (2.5)	6 (5)	7 (5.8)	11 (9.2)	13 (10.8)	57 (48.3)	23 (19.2)
BdE integrates local cultural practices.	5.44 (1.48)	2 (1.7)	6 (5)	8 (6.7)	11 (9.2)	13 (10.8)	54 (45)	26 (21.7)
BdE helps preserve cultural heritage while engaging with global communities.	5.19 (1.63)	4 (3.3)	9 (7.5)	7 (5.8)	13 (10.8)	15 (12.5)	51 (42.5)	21 (17.5)
The local government promotes BdE.	2.6 (1.39)	21 (17.5)	58 (48.3)	10 (8.3)	16 (13.3)	9 (7.5)	6 (5)	0 (0)
Bangladeshis should use BdE to promote their cultural identity.	5.3 (1.68)	4 (3.3)	10 (8.3)	7 (5.8)	9 (7.5)	11 (9.2)	52 (43.3)	27 (22.2)

Note: n = 120

A significant majority (78.3%) agreed that BdE represents cultural identity. Moreover, participants similarly endorsed BdE as part of local cultural practices (77.5%), indicating that they viewed BdE as deeply embedded in local socio-cultural contexts. Meanwhile, 72.5% agreed that BdE contributes to maintaining cultural heritage while allowing engagement with global communities. This reflected support for BdE as a linguistic bridge between local identity and global participation. However, perceptions of governmental support were overwhelmingly negative. The lowest M (2.6) was recorded for the belief that local governments promote BdE ($SD = 1.39$), with 74.1% of participants disagreeing and no respondents strongly agreeing. This indicated a perceived absence of institutional encouragement or support. Finally, 74.8% of respondents agreed that BdE should be used to promote cultural identity, expression and representation. The $M \in [2.6, 5.44]$ and $SD \in [1.39, 1.68]$ demonstrated strong overall endorsement of BdE's cultural value, alongside a clear lack of perceived institutional support. While BdE was widely recognised as a marker of cultural identity and heritage, its promotion at the policy level remains a critical area for development.

BdE is thus being increasingly recognised as an important component of cultural identity (Yeh, 2013) as it incorporates local cultural practices and new linguistic features. Nevertheless, there was still reluctance to accept BdE as a fully distinct marker of WE in the national context (cf. Spiering, 1992), as evidenced by the mixed support for its wider use. While BdE was valued for its cultural relevance, its status as an established or accepted variety in Bangladesh remained unclear, suggesting that further efforts are needed to consolidate its role in the country's linguistic and educational sphere. This was emphasised by the ongoing development of BdE, which contains structural changes and borrowed elements from various WE (cf. Yajun,

2003). Overall, these findings indicated that while BdE is increasingly recognised as an important cultural and linguistic asset, its role in shaping national identity and gaining wider acceptance within local norms is still evolving. Meanwhile, Table 5.9 shows that most respondents also perceived BdE as a form of resistance to linguistic hegemony.

Table 5.9: BdE as a Resistance Against Linguistic Hegemony

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
BdE challenges the dominance of standard English	5.43 (1.54)	3 (2.5)	8 (6.7)	4 (3.3)	10 (8.3)	16 (13.3)	53 (44.3)	26 (22.5)
BdE challenges the traditional linguistics hierarchy of English varieties.	5.65 (1.29)	0 (0)	5 (4.2)	9 (7.5)	7 (5.8)	12 (10)	61 (50.8)	26 (22.5)
BdE reflects the freedom to shape English in an individual way.	5.42 (1.57)	4 (3.3)	7 (5.8)	6 (5.0)	8 (6.7)	13 (10.8)	57 (47.5)	25 (20.8)
BdE defies linguistic homogenisation based on colonial legacies.	5.42 (1.52)	3 (2.5)	7 (5.8)	5 (4.2)	11 (9.2)	14 (11.7)	56 (46.7)	24 (20)
BdE content should be included in education.	5.05 (1.54)	4 (3.3)	9 (7.6)	6 (5)	15 (12.5)	21 (17.5)	54 (45)	11 (9.2)

Note: n = 120

Specifically, 66.8% of participants believed that BdE challenges the dominance of SE. Meanwhile, 73.3% held the view that BdE challenges the traditional linguistic hierarchy of English varieties. A majority (68.3%) agreed that BdE reflects the freedom to shape English in locally meaningful ways and 66.7% indicated a belief that BdE resists linguistic homogenisation through English's colonial heritage. The idea that BdE content should be formally included in the curriculum received even stronger agreement (71.75%). These results demonstrated participants' strong belief in BdE's ability to challenge prevailing SE norms, while simultaneously indicating some reluctance (or perhaps ongoing debate) regarding the institutional integration of BdE into formal education. The $M \in [5.05, 5.65]$ and $SD \in [1.29, 1.57]$ demonstrated consistently favourable perceptions of BdE's role in challenging linguistic hegemony. These findings suggest BdE's symbolic and practical significance in resisting dominant English norms and promoting linguistic decolonisation.

The findings demonstrated that BdE plays a pivotal role in resisting ELI and challenging the conventional hierarchy favouring SE. More specifically, BdE was viewed as actively counteracting the homogenising effects of colonial linguistic practices, thereby asserting its autonomy and distinct identity. This stance underscored BdE's function as a counterforce to the dominance of SE, fostering a pluralistic, inclusive linguistic environment. Furthermore,

BdE was seen as embodying the agency and creativity of its speakers, who adapt and reshape the English language in alignment with local needs and preferences. In this regard, BdE serves both as a symbol and a practical instrument of linguistic independence, underpinned by local cultural contexts and practices among non-native English speakers (cf. Bhatt, 2001; Bolton, 2019). By resisting the 'homogenization of English varieties' (Stojković, 2019), BdE solidifies its position in promoting a more diverse conceptualization of English in global contexts and challenges the 'domination of [SE]' (cf. Zeng & Tian, 2022; Hornberger & Vaish, 2009).

5.4 Attitudes Towards Bangladeshi English

5.4.1 Attitudes Towards Bangladeshi English and its Varieties

The perceived prestige and social value of different English variants was also assessed. Figure 5.2 presents the distribution of responses across six specific variants: BrE, AmE, BdE, Canadian (CaE), Australian (AuE) and Indian (InE).
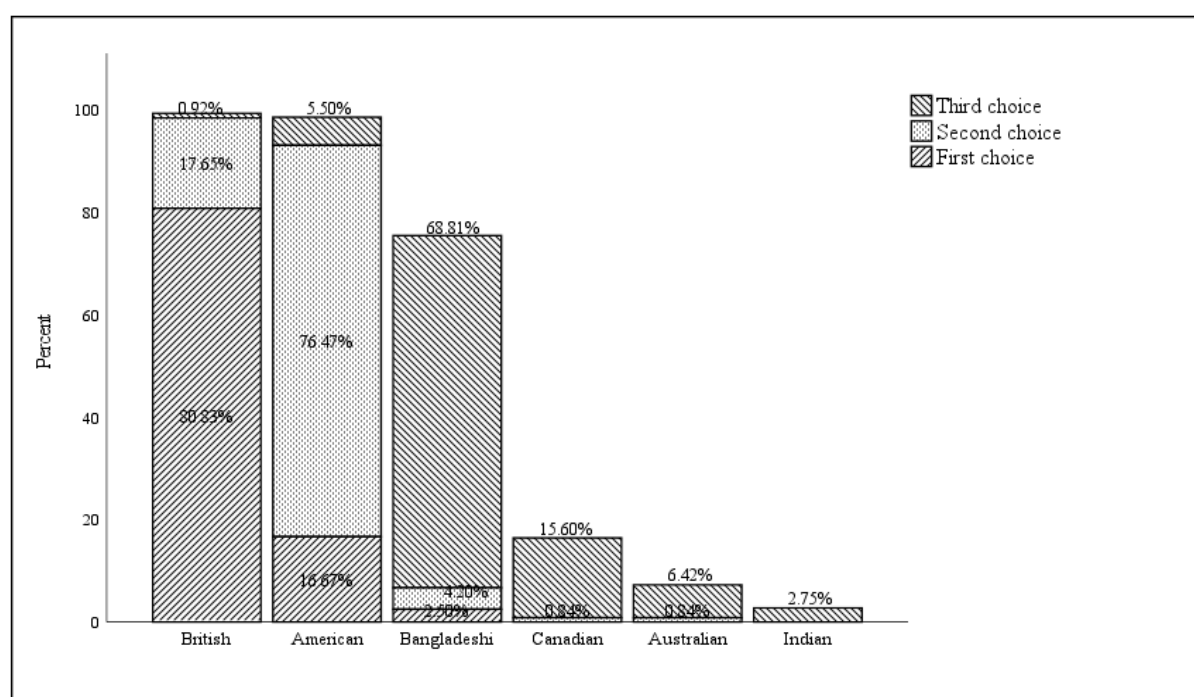
Figure 5.2: Preferred English Variants

As can be seen, BrE was regarded as the most prestigious, with 80.83% of participants identifying it as having the highest societal value, 17.65% as the second highest, and 0.92% as the third. This suggests a strong perception of BrE as the most socially valued variety. AmE was considered the second most prestigious, selected by 16.67% of participants as holding the highest societal value, 76.47% as the second, and 5.50% as the third. These results suggest a

strong perception of AmE as a socially significant variety, particularly in secondary ranking. BdE was identified by 4.20% of participants as having the highest societal value, 2.50% as the second, and 63.81% as the third. While BdE is rarely perceived as the most or second most valued variety, a large proportion recognised it as having moderate societal importance. CE was perceived as the third most socially valued variety by 15.60% of participants, with no selections in the first or second positions. This suggests a limited, yet present, societal recognition of CE. AuE received 0.34% of first-place rankings and 6.42% of third-place rankings, reflecting a relatively low perceived societal value. InE was selected by 2.75% of participants as the third most valued, with no indications of first or second-place rankings. This points to minimal perceived societal prestige for InE among the varieties listed. The strong preference of the majority of participants for BrE indicates a deep-rooted academic influence in the Bangladeshi education and social system, where it is considered the standard norm. We know from studies (e.g., Cargile, 2000; Cargile & Giles, 1998; Cargile et al., 2006; Chiba et al., 1995; Matsuura et al., 1994) that familiarity and increased exposure lead to a more favourable rankings of languages and accents.

5.4.2 Preferences and Acceptability

Higgins (2003) explored the concept of ownership in relation to legitimacy, asserting that for speakers of various Englishes, the key determinant of 'owning' the English language hinges on whether a group perceives their specific variety to be legitimate in social, political and economic contexts (p. 621). In line with this finding, the study investigated how Bangladeshi participants rated speakers of BdE and BrE with respect to solidarity, power, competence and status. Table 5.10 provides descriptive statistics of participants' evaluations of BdE and BrE speakers' accents across these four constructs. The Cronbach's alpha (α) values for these categories indicated acceptable reliability for both varieties, with α = 0.67 and 0.62 for solidarity (ownership) and power and α = 0.65 and 0.78 for competence and status, respectively. Given these estimates, an average score from all items in each group was determined to be a sufficiently robust measure of each construct (see Sasayama, 2013). Table 5.10 presents the results of the Verbal Guise Technique (VGT) with rating scale-ranged from 1 to 3.5 for negative evaluations and from 3.5 to 7 for positive evaluations.

Table 5.10: Descriptive Statistics for Each VGT Item for BdE and BrE

Scales	Traits	Min	Max	BrE		BdE	
				M	SD	M	SD
Solidarity **α = 0.67**	Likeable/Unlikeable	1	7	5.57	0.49	4.82	1.36
	Honest/Dishonest	1	7	5.07	0.67	4.73	1.63
	Interesting/Boring	1	7	5.44	0.5	4.71	1.52
Power **α = 0.62**	Rich/Poor	1	7	6.49	0.49	4.55	1.35
	Confident/Not confident	1	7	6.54	0.5	4.88	1.32
	Fluent/Not fluent	1	7	6.42	0.48	5.02	1.31
Competence **α = 0.65**	Smart/Stupid	1	7	6.58	0.62	4.64	1.33
	Educated/Uneducated	1	7	6.56	0.39	5.08	1.57
	Good English/Bad English	1	7	6	0.58	4.9	1.54
Status **α = 0.78**	Beautiful/Ugly	1	7	5.45	0.54	4.82	1.49
	Modern/Outdated	1	7	5.51	0.72	4.93	1.44
	Sophisticated/Crude	1	7	6.47	0.45	4.82	1.39

Note. n = 120; BrE = British English; BdE = Bangladeshi English.

A diverse array of adjectives was used to describe BdE accents favourably; for example, descriptors like 'good English,' 'beautiful,' 'educated,' 'modern,' 'honest' and 'smart' were employed frequently. Although some variability existed across the 12 items, the overall pattern of speaker ratings remained consistent. However, the descriptive analysis of the VGT items indicated that the BrE speaker was consistently rated higher across all twelve traits. In the competence domain, the BrE speaker achieved the highest mean ratings for both 'smart' ($M = 6.58$, $SD = 0.62$) and 'educated' ($M = 6.56$, $SD = 0.39$). Although the BdE speaker also received a relatively high rating for 'educated' ($M = 5.08$, $SD = 1.57$), this suggests that participants do not inherently equate BdE with a lack of intelligence or education.

Within the power dimension, 'fluency' emerged as the second highest-rated attribute for BdE ($M = 5.02$, $SD = 1.31$), indicating that, despite its lower overall evaluations, BdE does not detrimentally affect perceptions in this area. Conversely, the BdE speaker received the lowest rating for the 'rich/poor' trait ($M = 4.55$, $SD = 1.35$), implying that colonial socio-economic hierarchies continue to influence perceptions, with native speaker (NS) English accents being viewed more favourably than NNS accents. This finding aligned with Jenkins's (2007) assertion that NS accents are typically placed at the top of evaluative hierarchies, with even those who value their own accents tending to describe NS accents using more favourable adjectives like 'good,' 'nice' and 'perfect'. Collectively, these results indicated a persistent preference for BrE over BdE, reflecting the enduring impact of colonial legacies on linguistic and socio-economic evaluations in Bangladesh.

Overall, when participants' attitudes were analysed by the varieties of English (Table 5.11), the *M* for BdE and BrE were found to be have a significant difference reflecting the

earlier claim at 4.86 (*SD* = 0.89) for BdE and 5.34 (*SD* = 0.49) for BrE, reflecting the continued perception of BrE as more prestigious and desirable in academic and professional settings for linguistic and social accessibility.

Table 5.11: General Attitudes Towards Bangladeshi and British English

	M	SD
BdE	4.86	0.89
BrE	5.34	0.49

Note. n *= 120; BdE = Bangladeshi English; BrE = British English.*

Table 5.12 provides a descriptive overview of participants' attitudes toward BdE and BrE across four evaluative dimensions: solidarity, power, competence and status. The *M* for BdE was relatively moderate in solidarity (*M* = 4.79, *SD* = 1.23), power (*M* = 4.81, *SD* = 1.33), competence (*M* = 4.92, *SD* = 0.99) and status (*M* = 4.89, S*D* = 1.26). In contrast, the ratings for BrE were substantially higher, particularly in power (*M* = 6.48, *SD* = 0.46) and competence (*M* = 6.38, *SD* = 0.21), with solidarity (*M* = 5.35, *SD* = 0.61) and status (*M* = 5.8, *SD* = 0.76) also receiving elevated scores. These findings demonstrated that participants viewed BrE more favourably than BdE across all dimensions, suggesting that BrE was associated with higher perceptions of social capital and linguistic prestige. Moreover, the lower standard deviations for BrE implied greater consensus among participants regarding its positive attributes, whereas the higher variability in ratings for BdE may reflect more diverse opinions about its social and linguistic merits.

Table 5.12: Attitudes Towards Bangladeshi and British English

Variable	M	SD
BdE		
Solidarity	4.79	1.23
Power	4.81	1.33
Competence	4.92	0.99
Status	4.89	1.26
BrE		
Solidarity	5.35	0.61
Power	6.48	0.46
Competence	6.38	0.21
Status	5.8	0.76

Note. n *= 120; BdE = Bangladeshi English; BrE = British English.*

The results of the repeated measures MANOVA (Table 5.13) indicated that participants' evaluations of language varieties differed significantly across the dimensions of solidarity, power, competence and status. Specifically, statistically significant differences emerged for solidarity ($F[1, 119] = 19.72$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.41$), power ($F[1, 119] = 189.82$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.62$), competence ($F[1, 119] = 245.33$, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.67$) and

status (F[1, 119] = 70.29, $p < 0.001$, partial $\eta^2 = 0.37$). These findings demonstrated that participants consistently rated BrE more favourably than BdE across all four dimensions, with particularly large effect sizes observed for power and competence.

Table 5.13: Repeated Measures MANOVA Summary

Source	Sum of squares	*Df*	Mean square	F	*p*	Partial η2
Solidarity	18.89	1	18.89	19.72	< 0.001	0.41
Error	113.99	119	0.96			
Power	168.89	1	168.89	189.82	< 0.001	0.62
Error	105.88	119	0.958			
Competence	127.6	1	127.6	245.33	< 0.001	0.67
Error	61.89	119	0.52			
Status	50.11	1	50.11	70.29	< 0.001	0.37
Error	84.83	119	0.71			

These results demonstrated that the language attitudes of participants were not monolithic but multi-layered, varying considerably depending on the social and linguistic characteristics analysed. Given these findings, it is evident that social aspects, such as solidarity and power, play a crucial role in the perception of language varieties (cf. Sasayama, 2013) and the complexity of language attitudes. This also suggested that the superiority in evaluation attributed to BrE reflected enduring social hierarchies and the prestige associated with standard varieties, thus offering important insights into the interplay between language, identity and social power.

Further, Bangladeshi participants' attitudes towards BdE, both in terms of preference and acceptability, was assessed using a five-item attitude questionnaire. The responses, which were recorded on a seven-point Likert scale, were converted into percentages (Table 5.14). Reliability analyses revealed that the personal preference subscale (items 1 and 2) showed moderate internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.56$), while the international acceptance subscale (items 3–5) showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha = 0.66$).

Table 5.14: Descriptive Statistics for Attitude

Statements	Mean (± SD)	SD (%)	D (%)	PD (%)	N (%)	PA (%)	A (%)	SA (%)
1. When I speak English, I want to sound like a NS. (PP)	4.38 (1.91)	10 (8.3)	23 (19.2)	5 (4.2)	17 (14.2)	10 (8.3)	48 (40)	7 (5.8)
2. I envy those who can pronounce English like a NS. (PP)	2.84 (1.97)	35 (29.2)	41 (34.2)	6 (5.0)	16 (13.3)	0 (0)	12 (10.3)	10 (8.3)
3. I am embarrassed when Bengali people speak BdE even when they have fluent conversations in English. (IA)	2.75 (1.7)	33 (27.5)	41 (34.2)	5 (4.2)	19 (15.8)	10 (8.3)	10 (8.3)	2 (1.7)
4. I am embarrassed when Bengali people speak BdE in international contexts. (IA)	2.98 (1.91)	32 (26.7)	37 (30.8)	7 (5.8)	14 (11.7)	10 (8.3)	15 (12.5)	5 (4.2)
5. BdE should be accepted in international communication provided it is intelligible. (IA)	5.65 (1.67)	4 (3.3)	8 (6.7)	3 (2.5)	10 (8.3)	7 (5.8)	42 (35)	46 (38.3)

Note: n = 120, PP = personal preference; IA = international acceptability

For the first item, 54.1% of the participants expressed a desire to speak English like a NS. Similar patterns have been observed in studies involving Omani (Buckingham, 2015), Japanese (Sasayama, 2013) and Chinese students (Li & He, 2009). This trend could be due to the influence of EMI textbooks, curricula and Western media. This followed Jenkins' (2007) observation that NNSs 'desired a native-like English identity as signalled by the native-like accent'. Notably, however, these attitudes toward NS-like pronunciation did not appear to adversely affect participants' evaluations of BdE speakers. This finding indicated that although native varieties are often idealized as models of pronunciation, BdE is nonetheless regarded positively. As Jenkins (2007) noted, 'those who had been positive about their English accent nevertheless expressed a strong desire for an NS English accent'.

Conflicting responses were evident for item 2, which exhibited the highest variability (SD = 1.97); only 18.6% of participants indicated envy toward those who could pronounce English like a NS, while the majority (68.4%) disagreed, making this the most strongly opposed item. Similarly, in item 3, 65.9% of participants reported that they did not feel embarrassed when a Bangladeshi speaker participated in fluent English-language conversation using BdE, a response that may reflect a strong sense of national pride. This phenomenon was also observed among Chinese students in Pan's (2019) study. In item 4, 63.3% of the participants did not feel embarrassed when BdE is employed in international settings. The final item revealed that 79.1% of respondents considered BdE acceptable for international communication, provided it is intelligible to people using other English varieties.

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Overall, the data revealed ambivalence in participants' attitudes toward their own English accents. As seen above, BdE was typically ranked in the third position within the perceived hierarchy of English accents. Conversely, the language aptitude test results (Table 5.14) demonstrated that while many participants aspired to NS-like proficiency, they did not experience shame regarding their own accent, even in international contexts. This contradictory stance, wherein participants simultaneously valued both NS-like and local varieties, has been described by some as 'linguistic schizophrenia,' a 'double standard' or 'conflicted' (Jenkins, 2007). Nonetheless, the overall trend indicated a predominantly positive attitude toward the use of BdE in terms of both personal preference and international acceptability. The $M \in [2.75, 5.65]$ and $SD \in [1.67, 1.97]$ reflected a general openness to BdE, particularly in global contexts, alongside more mixed views regarding personal preferences.

The findings further demonstrated that participants primarily viewed English as a tool for academic purposes while acknowledging BdE's overall legitimacy. Although BdE was recognised as an emerging variety, the marked differences in ratings between BdE and BrE underscored the persistence of a deeply ingrained linguistic hierarchy. Across the dimensions of solidarity, power, competence and status, BrE consistently received higher ratings, reflecting its established prestige and association with academic and professional authority. Nevertheless, participants expressed a clear desire for BdE to gain wider acceptance. This dual perspective implied that, while BrE was favoured in formal and status-driven contexts, BdE was valued for its role in fostering cultural identity and local affiliation. Contemporary Bangladeshi speakers, therefore, may aspire to achieve BrE pronunciation for perceived social mobility and global recognition while simultaneously upholding BdE as a legitimate variety and an important marker of local identity. As Lippi-Green (2012) argued, lifelong exposure to language bias in educational, media, corporate and institutional contexts can significantly shape individuals' attitudes toward specific linguistic varieties.

5.5 Perceptions of World Englishes and Linguistic Imperialism

The observation of English's pervasive influence across educational, cultural and social domains in Bangladesh signified a heightened awareness of the mechanisms of ELI. This awareness was not merely a recognition of English's dominance but an understanding of the underlying power structures that systematically privilege English, often at the expense of local languages and cultural identities (cf. Maftoon & Esfandiari, 2013; Saraceni & Jacob, 2019). However, multiple studies have documented a positive correlation between speakers' awareness of

diverse English varieties and their openness and favourable reactions toward these varieties (Dalton-Puffer et al., 1997; Dooly, 2005). These studies contend that personal experience significantly influences one's attitudes toward language, suggesting that increased familiarity with a particular variety is associated with more positive evaluations. The current study therefore investigated a potential correlation between WE as resistance and ELI awareness.

The scatter plot (Figure 5.3) shows the relationship between the mean value of five statements (Tables 5.3, 5.9). Figure 5.3 represents participants' positive perceptions of BdE as a form of resistance (x-axis) and their awareness of ELI and its impact on education, culture and society (y-axis). The regression line is represented by the equation $y = 1.45 + 0.78x$. The slope of 0.78 indicates that for every one-unit increase in awareness of ELI, the perception of BdE as resistance increases by an average of 0.78 units. The intercept of 1.45 suggests that even when awareness of ELI is absent (i.e., at 0), the baseline perception of BdE as resistance is moderately positive. The R^2 value of 0.722 indicates that approximately 72.2% of the variance in the perception of BdE can be explained by participants' awareness of ELI, demonstrating a strong positive linear relationship. Overall, the figure suggests that participants with higher awareness of ELI were more likely to view BdE as a strategic response to linguistic hegemony.
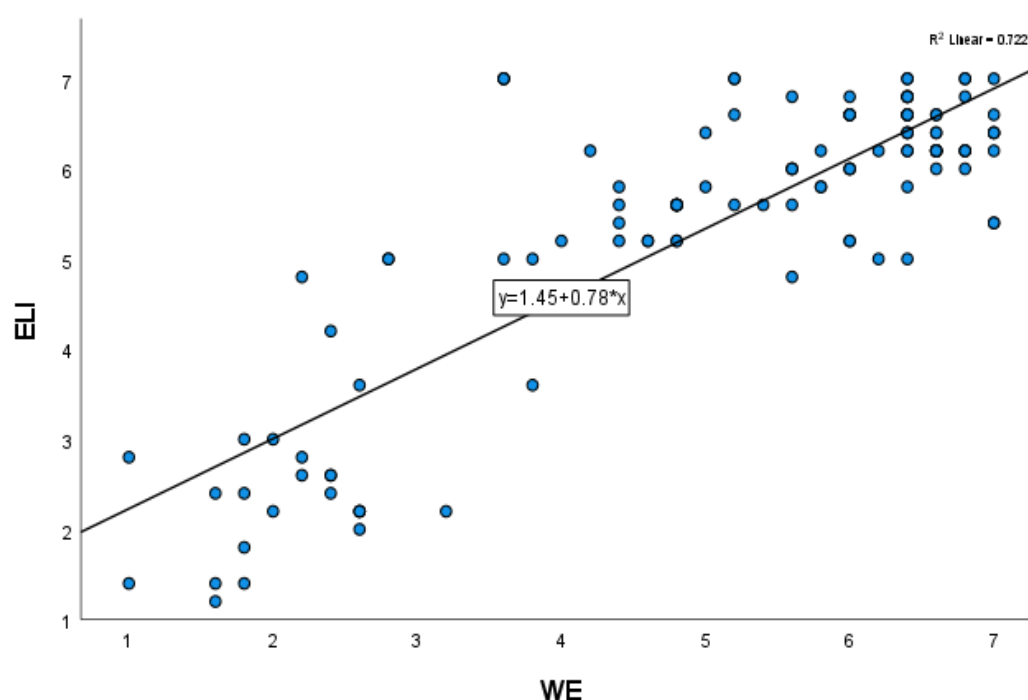
Figure 5.3: Scatter Plot Between WE and ELI

Table 5.15 presents the Pearson correlation between participants' perceptions of WE and their awareness of ELI. There was a significant positive correlation between ELI and WE, $r(118) = 0.85$, $p < 0.001$. This result indicates that higher perceptions of English LI are associated with greater acceptance of WE. A possible interpretation of this finding could be that participants who were more critically aware of the hegemonic role of English were also more likely to embrace the ideological and functional legitimacy of WE as linguistic identities within post-colonial countries. As students can be introduced to many English varieties, they often struggle with their own linguistic identities against the imposed variety of imperial centre. For instance, a study on Chinese university students highlighted the tension between a desire to conform to native English norms and the recognition of their own English varieties as valid forms of communication (Pan et al., 2021).

Table 5.15: Pearson Correlation Between World Englishes and Linguistic Imperialism

		ELI	WE
WE	Pearson Correlation	.850**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	120	120

Note. n = *120; **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

This conflict underscores the importance of fostering an environment in which students can explore their identities through language without feeling pressured to conform to a singular standard (Zeng et al., 2023). Moreover, several studies (e.g., McKay, 2002) have considered the need of cultural resistance to ELI by developing indigenous ELT material using local varieties, although the number of NNSs has immensely surpassed NSs. Other studies (Chew, 1999) support the link between WE and ELI, echoing Phillipson's (1992) argument that 'ELT reconstitutes cultural inequalities between English and other languages' (p. 47).

5.6 The Development of New Englishes

Schneider's (2007) Dynamic Model of Postcolonial Englishes can help explain how English has developed in Bangladesh based on its colonial history and language use. As a former British colony, Bangladesh fits Schneider's model through its current sociolinguistic situation. Two questions were selected (See Appendix A) for each phase to reflect the distinct developmental phases of BdE. Questions like Q11 and Q14 address the 'Foundation' phase by capturing the influence of colonial history and post-colonial legacies in shaping language use. The 'Exonormative Stabilisation' phase is reflected by Q10 and Q13, which explore the dominance of BrE

norms and their role in maintaining colonial hierarchies. Questions Q31 and Q33 reflect 'Nativisation' by examining local lexical and phonological adaptations in BdE. The 'Endonormative Stabilisation' phase is assessed through Q30 and Q34, focusing on the growing recognition of BdE as a distinct variety. Finally, Q32 and Q43 represent the 'Differentiation' phase, exploring internal grammatical variation and the role of local institutional support. The total score of these two variables was placed under their respective phases. The stages were then classified based on their highest composite score and visualised (Figure 5.4).
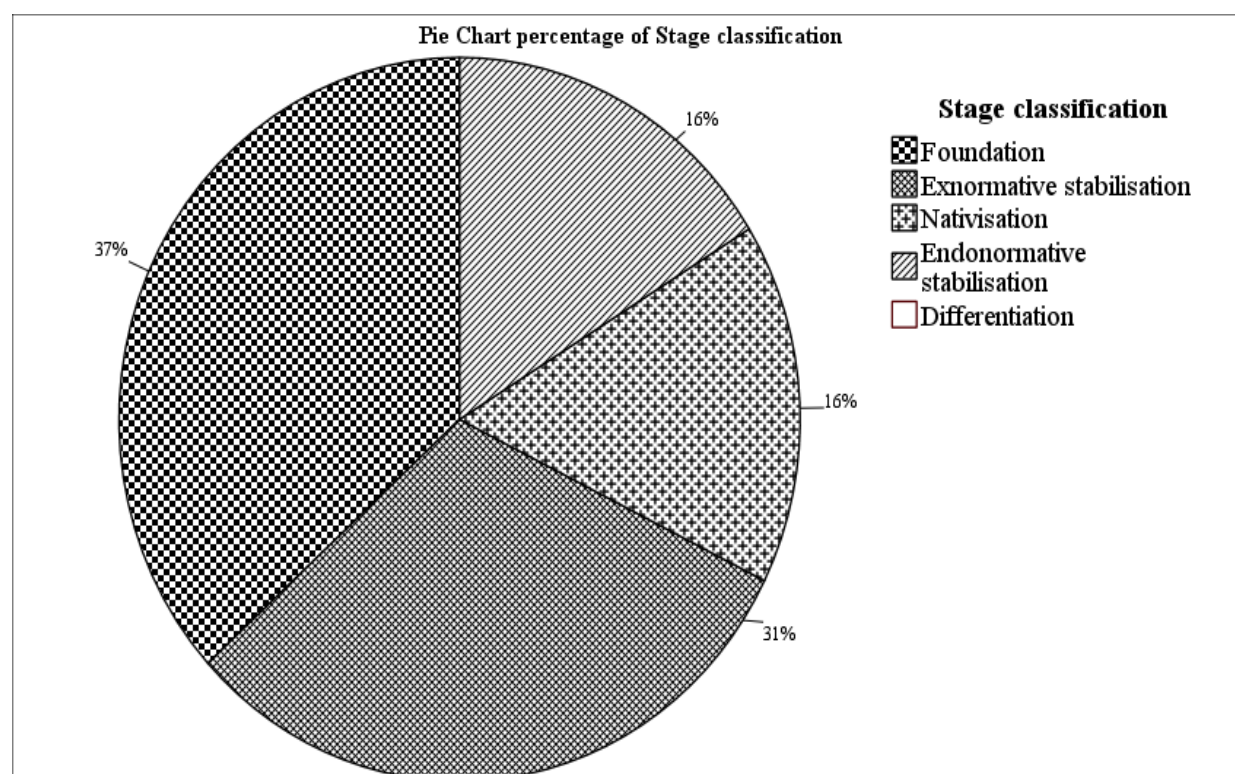
Figure 5.4: Dominance of Developmental Phases

English is introduced during colonial rule in the case of British India. The language is mainly associated with administration, law and education, while the indigenous population has only limited access to it. The establishment of English-medium schools influenced linguistic practices in the region. English remained a marker of colonial power, with limited penetration into local linguistic and cultural practices due to this long historical influence. The Foundation has the highest score of all at 37%, indicating a strong foundation.

Norms of English use are heavily dependent on the external standard BrE. Local elite groups adopt English, often for prestige or administrative reasons, and indigenous languages

co-exist alongside English. During the British period, English norms followed British pronunciation RP and grammatical standards. English was mainly used by the educated elite for administrative, academic and legal purposes. For this reason, exonormative stabilisation is in second place with 31%.

The Foundation phase had the highest score at 37%, indicating its historical strength following its introduction during colonial rule (1757–1947 in the case of British India). In Bangladesh, it is now mainly associated with administration, law and education, while the indigenous population has only limited access to it. The establishment of EMI schools influenced linguistic practices in the region. English remained a marker of colonial power, with limited penetration into local linguistic and cultural practices due to this long historical influence.

The 'Exonormative Stabilisation' phase was next (31%). During the British period, English norms followed British pronunciation and grammatical standards. English was mainly used by the educated elite for administrative, academic and legal purposes. Currently, the norms of English use are still heavily dependent on the external standards of BrE. Local elite groups have adopted English, often for prestige or administrative reasons, as indigenous languages co-exist alongside it. The dominance of this phase reflects this transition.

English is beginning to adapt to local contexts of Bangladesh as part of the 'Nativisation' phase (16%). Local cultural and linguistic elements have influenced the use of English and led to innovations in vocabulary, pronunciation and grammar. There is a continued tension between local identity and the foreignness of English. In contemporary Bangladesh, English is being increasingly nativised in various ways, including the integration of Bengali or local words, phrases and cultural references (e.g. *Bauls, mela-space, Deshi cow, shariah-based, hijras, hartals, Chanda fish, Aman paddy, Aman rice, Kathak dance, Shishu Park, Parjatan Motel, Shabash Bangladesh, Bandar area, gram police* and many others) (Islam & Hasim, 2024). Pronunciation and intonation patterns have been influenced by Bengali phonology (see Chapter 6). English is taught in schools, but often reflects local adaptations, such as certain grammatical or lexical features. Code-switching between Bengali and English is common in urban and professional environments (cf. Basu, 2016).

The local variant of English has mostly stabilised and been accepted as a legitimate standard within the community as part of the 'Endonormative Stabalisation' phase (16%). Local norms dominate over external (e.g., BrE) ones, reflecting the national identity. Bangladesh

has thus not quite reached this stage. While BdE's characteristics of are increasingly recognised, the country still relies heavily on British norms in education and official communication. Efforts to develop a recognised BdE are limited compared to other countries (e.g., India). English is still predominantly considered a functional tool for international communication rather than a marker of local identity. Meanwhile, the 'Differentiation' phase has not yet been initiated. Bangladesh is therefore still in 'Endonormative Stabilisation' phase.

Summary

This chapter has provided a comprehensive analysis of Bangladeshi teachers' and students' attitudes towards and perceptions of the different varieties of English, situating these within the framework of historical influence, sociolinguistic practice and evolving language ideologies. The chapter began with an overview of the demographic profile of the sample and an examination of the predominant contexts of English use, particularly in academic and institutional settings. This contextual basis was essential for understanding the subsequent analyses. The chapter's primary focus was on the ongoing effects of colonial influence and ELI. The data showed that BrE remains the normative standard, a remnant of the colonial period that reinforces established social hierarchies and marginalises indigenous language varieties. The continued prevalence of BrE in education thus reflects wider historical and political forces that continue to shape language attitudes in Bangladesh.

In addition, the chapter has described the increasing recognition of BdE as a distinct, viable English variety, characterised by unique lexical and phonological features that reflect local cultural practices. The study's participants argued for a more inclusive approach to teaching English that recognises multiple standard varieties rather than exclusively favouring NS models. The analysis also revealed a duality in language attitudes. While there was a clear preference for BrE in formal contexts, many participants simultaneously aspired to NS proficiency and valued BdE as a symbol of national identity. Finally, the identification of developmental phases within BdE provides a foundation for further theorising about its evolution as a distinct variety. This chapter has therefore argued for a nuanced understanding of the language dynamics of BdE, which has significant implications for education policy and language pedagogy in the postcolonial context. These sociolinguistic observations have been supported with empirical evidence. The next chapter will extend these findings by providing an acoustic phonetic analysis that explores the phonological characteristics of BdE in detail.

CHAPTER SIX
AN ACOUSTIC ANALYSIS OF BANGLADESHI ENGLISH

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of an acoustic analysis conducted on audio recordings using PRAAT tool of ten participants. The analysis focuses on the phonetic realisation of vowel and consonant sounds in the speech of BdE speakers to identify phonological variations in comparison to RP. This investigation is situated within the broader framework of WE, where the emergence and localisation of English varieties are explored through both sociolinguistic and phonetic perspectives. The main aim of this chapter is to answer RQ3, to what extent phonological variations manifest themselves in BdE, as evidenced by acoustic analyses.

In this context, phonological variation refers to systematic differences in the production of segmental features that indicate emergent local norms. Building upon the methodological framework outlined in the previous chapter, this analysis adopts key acoustic parameters such as vowel formant frequencies (F_1 and F_2) and consonantal voicing and place of articulation. These measures enable an objective comparison between BdE and RP, providing empirical insights into how English is phonetically realised in the Bangladeshi context. Given the growing use of English in academic and professional domains in Bangladesh, understanding these variations contributes significantly to the documentation and theorisation of BdE as a distinct and evolving variety of English.

6.1 Vowel Characteristics

6.1.1 Gender-Based Formant Frequencies

When investigating the vowel frequencies of BdE speakers, gender-specific differences that were consistent with the results of previous studies in different linguistic contexts were found. Figure 6.1 shows the comparative formant frequencies of F_1 and F_2 for male and female BdE speakers for short vowels.
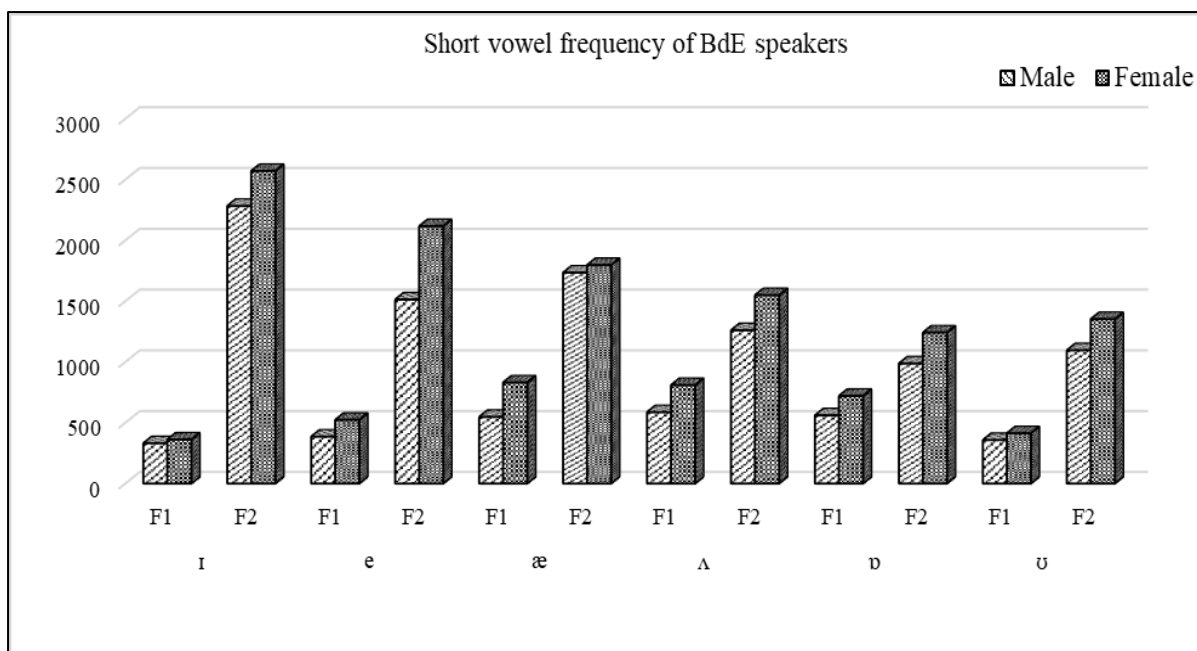
Figure 6.1: Short Vowel Frequency of Male and Female Speakers of BdE

Figure 6.1 shows the frequency of F_1 and F_2 for male and female BdE speakers. As can be seen, the vowel /ɪ/ had the lowest mean F_1 values of 331.092 Hz and 361.632 Hz for males and females, respectively. Conversely, its F_2 values of 2273.51 Hz and 2570.621 Hz were significantly higher compared to other short vowels. The lower F_1 and F_2 values for male speakers indicated that the vowel /ɪ/ was articulated higher and further back compared to female speakers. The female participants also had higher F_1 and F_2 values for the front vowel's /e/ and /æ/, which indicates a somewhat more open and frontal production. This pattern continued for the middle and back vowels, for which the females consistently had higher F_1 and F_2 values. Thus, this shows the clear articulatory features of short vowels depending on the gender of the BdE speakers. Figure 6.2 shows a comparison of the formant frequencies F_1 and F_2 for male and female speakers of BdE for long vowels.
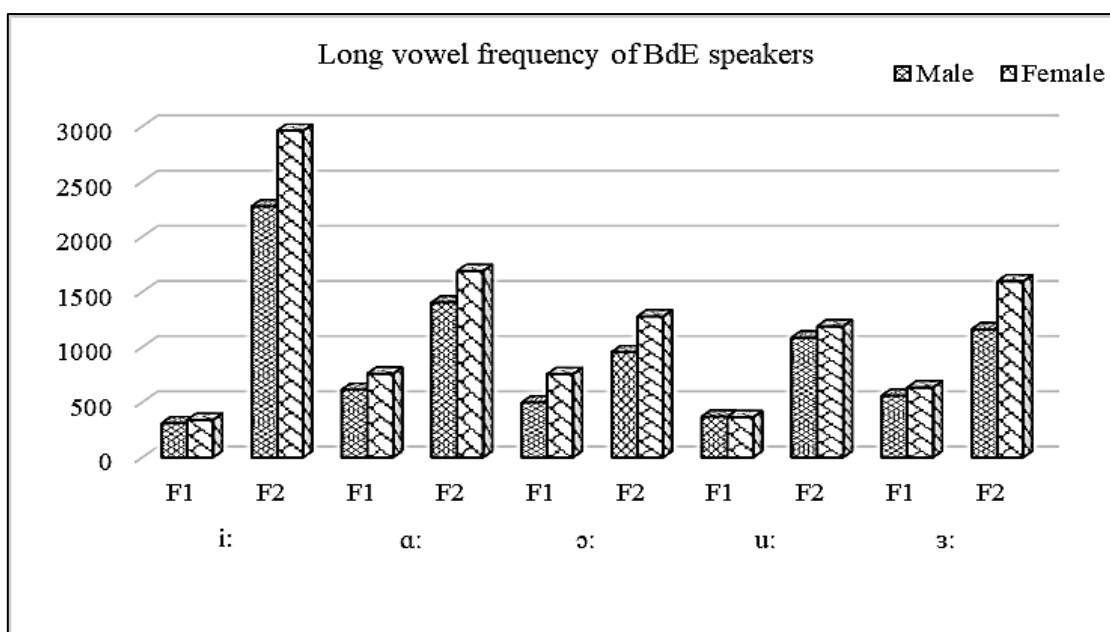
Figure 6.2: Long Vowel Frequency of Male and Female Speakers of BdE

Moreover, Figure 6.2 shows the differences in the formant frequencies (F_1 and F_2) for long vowels produced by male and female BdE speakers. As can be seen, the vowel /iː/ had low F_1 values of 308.564 Hz for both genders and high F_2 values (2273.51 Hz for males and 2959.214 Hz for females), with significantly higher F_2 values for females. For the vowels /ɑː/ and /ɔː/, the F_1 values for female speakers were close to each other at 757.698 Hz and 754.046 Hz, respectively. However, the males' F_1 values for these vowels showed remarkable differences, and were 611.562 Hz for /ɑː/ and 495.356 Hz for /ɔː/. The vowel /uː/ had relatively similar F_1 values for males (367.822 Hz) and females (363.446 Hz), with the slightly higher F_1 value for males indicating a more open vowel articulation. Finally, the vowel /ɜː/ showed a consistent pattern, with females having slightly higher F_1 and significantly higher F_2 values compared to their male counterparts.

Overall, female speakers consistently had higher F_1 and F_2 values compared to male speakers for most vowels, with the exception of the long vowel /uː/. Increased F_1 values indicated that the female speakers produced vowels with a slightly more open articulation, while higher F_2 values indicated a tendency towards a more frontal vowel production. This consistently higher frequency for female speakers is a well-documented phonetic feature that can be attributed to gender-specific differences in the length and size of the vocal tract. The variation in formant frequencies, which is inversely proportional to the length of the vocal tract, reflects the larger vowel tracts of male speakers and the correspondingly lower frequencies compared

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to female speakers (Goldstein, 1980; Pépiot, 2012; Peterson & Barney, 1952; Titze, 1989). Figure 6.3 shows the general formant frequency of vowel phonemes in BdE.

F1-F2 Frequency of BdE Speakers

	iː	ɪ	e	æ	ɜː	ʌ	uː	ʊ	ɔː	ɒ	ɑː
F1 (Hz)	324	346	455	689	595	698	366	386	625	640	676
F2 (Hz)	2616	2427	1815	1766	1377	1405	1136	1224	1114	1115	1519
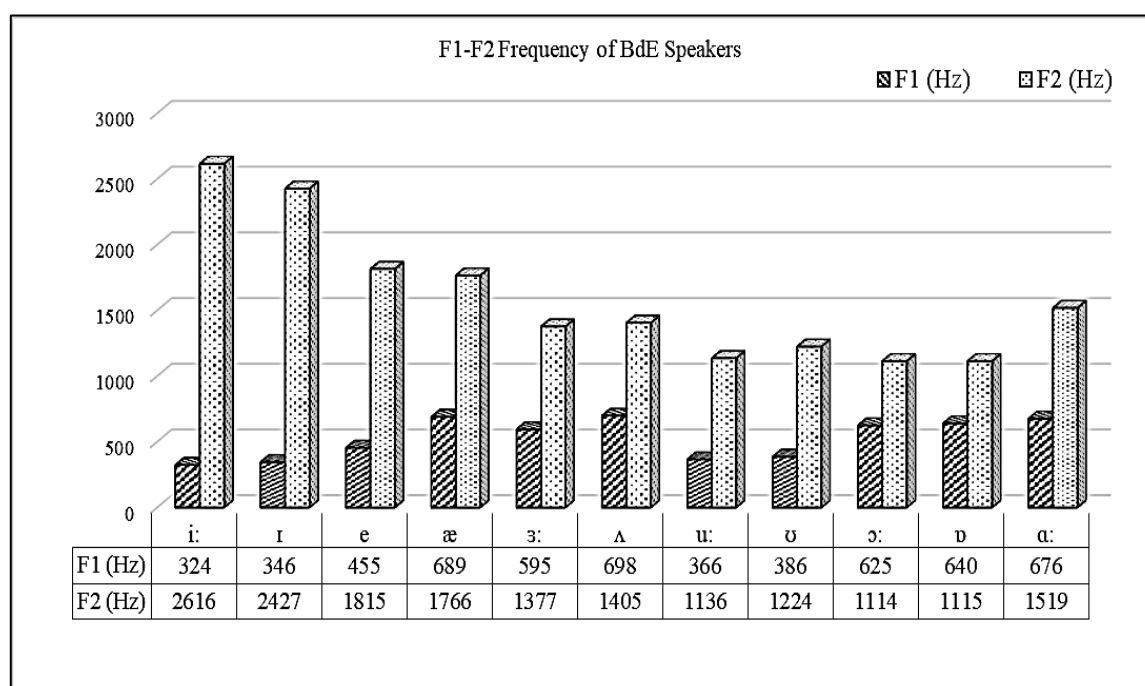
Figure 6.3: Overall Vowel Frequency of BdE Speakers

As can be seen, the front vowels in BdE for /iː/ were F_1 = 324 Hz and F_2 = 2616 Hz. Other front vowels in BdE, /ɪ/, /e/ and /æ/, had formant frequencies of F_1/F_2 = 346 Hz/2427 Hz, 455 Hz/1815 Hz and 689 Hz/1766 Hz, respectively. Central vowels, including /ɜː/ and /ʌ/, had formant frequencies of F_1/F_2 = 659 Hz/1664 Hz and 595 Hz/1377 Hz, respectively. By contrast, the vowel /ɑː/ (F_1 = 676 Hz, F_2 = 1519 Hz) had a similar range of F_1 and F_2 values to the mid vowels. The results also showed that the formant frequency patterns of the back vowels could provide valuable insights into their articulation in BdE. For /uː/ (F_1 = 366 Hz, F_2 = 1136 Hz) and /ʊ/ (F_1 = 386 Hz, F_2 = 1224 Hz), the low F_1 and relatively high F_2 values indicate an articulation with a high tongue position and backward placement, which is characteristic of close back vowels. It is noteworthy that the vowels /ɔː/ and /ɒ/ had similar formant values (F_1/F_2 = 625 Hz/1114 Hz and 640 Hz/1115 Hz, respectively), suggesting minimal acoustic and articulatory differences between them. This overlap could indicate the possible merging or shared phonetic features of these vowels in the BdE variety, highlighting subtle variations in vowel production compared to other English varieties. The distance between F_1 and F_2 was more pronounced in the front vowels, reflecting highest vowel tract positions. Conversely, back vowels

had a narrower and lower F_2 relative to F_1, which is consistent with Parson's (1987) observations. These results emphasise the phonological features of BdE, particularly the restructuring of vowels, which is consistent with the tendencies observed in non-native English varieties in which native sounds are adapted to local linguistic needs.

6.1.2 Vowel Charts

The Bark scale introduced by Zwicker (1961) is a psychoacoustic measure that reflects the human auditory perception of sound frequencies and differs from the physical Hertz scale. In this framework, F1 and F2 represent the first and second vowel formants, which are converted into Bark units, better reflecting the perceptual experience by taking into account the characteristics of auditory processing.

Table 6.1: Formats of BdE

Vowels	F1 (Hz)	F2 (Hz)	F1 (Bark)	F2 (Bark)
iː	324	2616	3.143	14.787
ɪ	346	2427	3.354	14.326
e	455	1815	4.337	12.470
æ	689	1766	6.303	12.289
ʌ	698	1405	6.371	10.748
ɑː	676	1519	6.199	11.283
ɒ	640	1115	5.915	9.213
ɔː	625	1114	5.714	9.211
ʊ	386	1224	3.714	9.834
uː	366	1136	3.532	9.338
ɜː	595	1377	5.542	10.623

Figure 6.4 presents a comparative visual of vowel charts from three language varieties: RP English, BdE, and Bengali (L1). It highlights the phonetic positioning of vowels based on F1 and F2 Bark values. The RP and BdE charts show noticeable variation in vowel placement, especially in back and central vowels. The Bengali vowel chart illustrates a different phonemic inventory, with fewer vowel contrasts. This comparison supports trace the influence of L1 on the production of English vowels by Bangladeshi speakers.
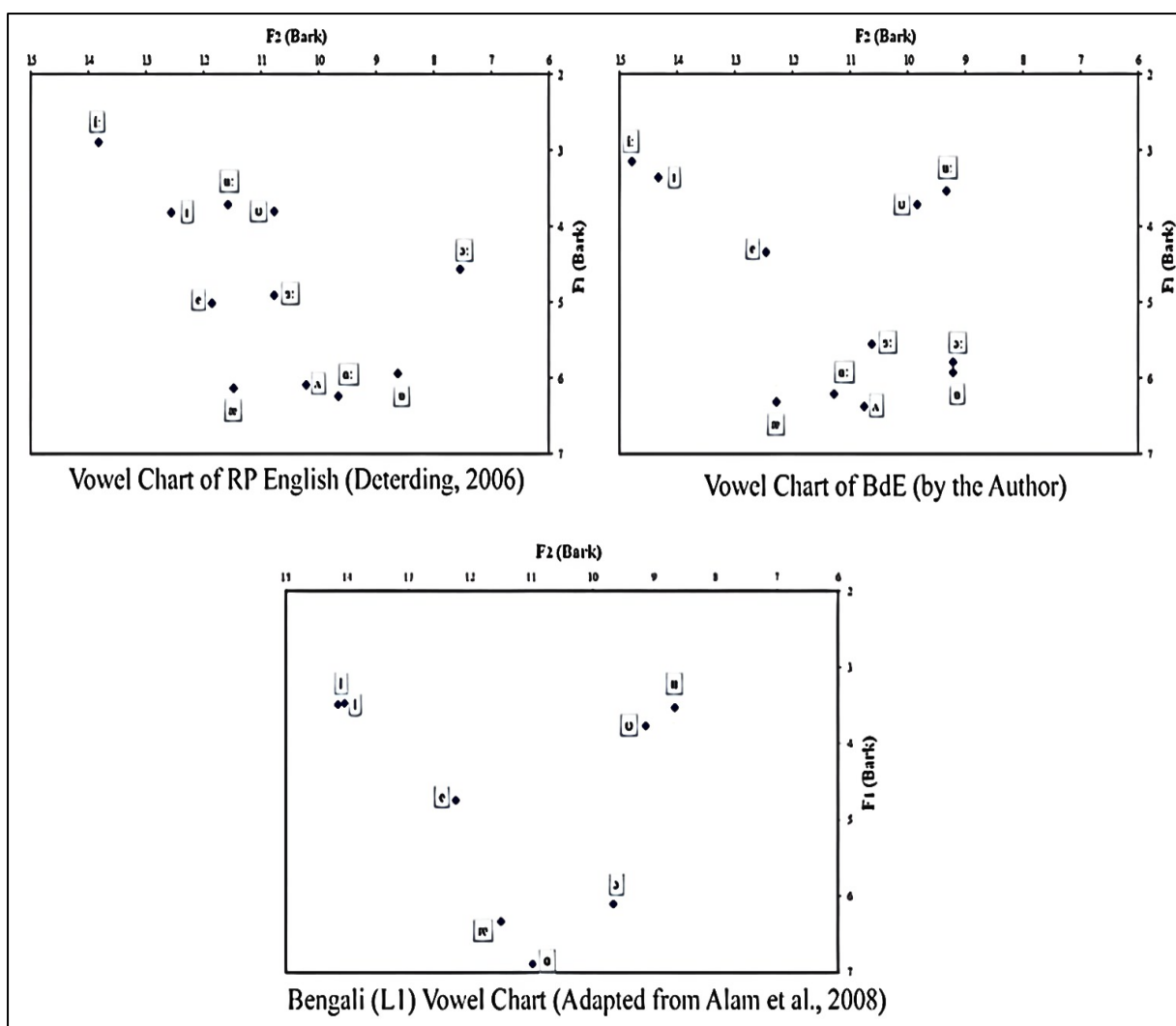
Figure 6.4: Comparative Vowel Chart of RP English, BdE & Bengali language

The BdE vowel chart displays a reduced and restructured vowel space in comparison to RP. Figure 6.4 shows that the phoneme /i:/ with F1/F2 values 3.14/14.79 Bark remains relatively fronted, while /ɪ/ with F1/F2 values 3.35/14.33 Bark shifts further front and higher in the vowel space. Thus, the acoustic distance between /i:/ and /ɪ/ is reduced in BdE compared to RP. A possible reason for this is that two Bengali vowels [/i/ and /ĩ/] in the BdE speaker's first language (L1) are also pronounced with the same tongue height with reduced distance. Similar to BdE, /i:/ and /ɪ/ are also pronounced with frontal proximity in some parts of India (Lazarov, 2019). The study's findings revealed that there was no significant difference in the positions of front middle [/e/] and front low vowels [/æ/] in RP or in BdE.

Furthermore, in RP the long /ɜ:/ (e.g., 'urban'), a mid-rounded vowel, and the short /ʌ/ (e.g., 'hut'), a low central vowel (Ladefoged & Johnson, 2011). Additionally, RP includes the

mid-central vowel /ə/ (schwa), which generally occurs in unstressed syllables. In relation to the RP vowels (/ɜː/ and /ʌ/), the corresponding vowels in BdE show notable differences. In particular, the BdE vowel /ɜː/ and the mid-low vowel /ʌ/ show an approximately similar degree of F2 value (10.6 Bark); however, /ɜː/ is articulated with a slightly greater openness compared to its RP counterpart, which positions it as a low-central vowel in BdE. This deviation can be attributed to the lack of a central mid vowel in the phonemic inventory of L1 Bengali, which causes BdE speakers to articulate /ɜː/ more openly. This is similar to Indian English (IndE), in which /ʌ/ and /ɜː/ are pronounced acoustically the same (Ali, 2015). In contrast to BdE, Platt et al. (1984) described some general tendencies of speakers of non-native varieties to shorten vowel sounds, as in 'purse', in which /ɜː/ is sometimes replaced by the sound /ʌ/. There are significant findings about the absence of the English vowel /ə/ in BdE, possibly because there is no such vowel in L1 Bengali (see Figure 6.4).

In BdE, both /uː/ and /ʊ/ tend to be realised as more back and close vowels, likely influenced by the Bengali vowel phonemes /u/ and /ũ/, which exhibit comparable F1/F2 values 3.53/9.34 Bark and 3.71/9.83 Bark, respectively, indicating backward articulation. The high-back vowels /ʊ/ and /uː/ are more forward in RP, the increased F2 values in RP indicate a stronger tendency towards vowel fronting. A mid-back articulation /ɔː/ in RP has F1 = 4.56 Bark and F2 = 7.55 Bark and the low-back vowel /ɒ/ has F1 and F2 values of 5.94 Bark and 8.63 Bark, which shows their special position in the RP vowel table (Deterding, 2006). However, in BdE, /ɔː/ has F1 = 5.71 Bark and F2 = 9.21 Bark, which shows a more open and frontal articulation and a changed position to a low-back vowel than the approximately equal Bark value of /ɒ/. The F1/ F2 values for /ɒ/ are 5.91 Bark and 9.21 Bark. Bengali speakers combine these two phonemes into a single phoneme /ɔː/, similar to their L1 phoneme /ɔ/, which exists in the same region, with F1/F2 = 6.105/9.66 Bark. The mid-back vowel /ɔː/ and the back vowel /ɒ/ in RP English are therefore not distinguished by BdE speakers. Both vowels are more retracted and higher in BdE, with /ɒ/ being slightly more open, but this difference is negligible. Similar results have been reported for Pakistani English (PakE), in which these vowels are merged into one phoneme (Shahid et al., 2024). In IndE, /ɔː/ is replaced by /ɒ/, indicating no difference between the two vowels (Bansal & Harrison, 1994).

The low-back vowel /ɑː/ in RP, with F1 = 6.23 Bark and F2 = 9.66 Bark, is pronounced in BdE with similar openness (F1 = 6.19 Bark) but with a slightly frontal articulation (F2 = 11.28 Bark), which places it in the central region as is the case for the Bengali vowel /a/ (F1 =

6.89 Bark, F2 = 10.98 Bark). In BdE, /ɑ:/ is pronounced as a lower middle vowel based on the Bengali vowel /a/, which is equivalent in sound. The results of this study also indicated that BdE comprises 10 monophthongs, as opposed to the 12 monophthongs in Standard British English (RP/SSBE). BdE retains four front vowels, which correspond to RP; however, the system of middle vowels differs considerably. In particular, the schwa (/ə/) is missing in BdE, and the lower back vowel /ɑ:/ in RP is shifted to a central vowel in BdE; thus, there are three middle vowels. Furthermore, the merging of low and mid vowels reduces the number of back vowels to three, emphasising a clear phonological feature of BdE and highlighting its unique treatment of back vowels.

Table 6.2: Comparative Vowel Realizations in RP and BdE

Vowel	RP Height	RP Backness	BdE Realisation
/i:/	High	Front	More frontal and with similar tongue position
/ɪ/	High	Front	More frontal and higher tongue position
/e/	Mid	Front	Similar to RP
/æ/	Low	Front	Similar to RP
/ə/	Mid-central	Central	Absent in BdE due to lack of equivalent in L1 Bengali
/ɜ:/	Mid-central	Central	Low-central vowel in BdE
/ʌ/	Low-central	Central	low-central vowel in BdE
/ɑ:/	Low	Back	Shifted to central position in BdE, a lower middle vowel
/ɔ:/	Mid		Merged as /ɔ:/ in BdE; lower back vowel
/ɒ/	Low		
/u:/	High	Back	More back and close vowel; influenced by /u/ in Bengali
/ʊ/	High	Back	More back and close vowel; influenced by /ũ/ in Bengali

6.2 Consonants

An acoustic analysis of the pronunciation of consonants in BdE is presented in this section. Here, voice onset time (VOT) is used as a key metric to measure the temporal coordination between the release of the stop and the onset of the vocal fold vibration, with voiceless stops typically having longer VOT values compared to their voiced counterparts (Allen et al., 2003; Ladefoged, 1993) The analysis evaluates voiced and unvoiced plosives in BdE and focuses on aspiration and non-aspiration patterns in comparison to RP.

6.2.1 Plosives

Table 6.3 presents a comparative analysis of the VOT values for plosive consonants in BdE and RP, categorised into voiced (/b/, /d/, /g/) and voiceless (/p/, /t/, /k/) segments. As can be seen, mean VOT durations in milliseconds for each phoneme in both varieties, followed by the percentage differences and key phonetic observations.

Table 6.3: VOT Differences of BdE to RP Plosives

Con-so-nant	Category	Mean (ms) BdE	Mean (ms) RP	Difference (%)	Key Phonetic Features in BdE
/b/	Voiced	-118	19	Δ% = 721.05%	Strong pre-voicing; advanced (dentalised) articulation in BdE bilabial stop retained.
/d/		-82	21	Δ% = 490.48%	Enhanced voicing with probable dentalisation in BdE; voicing contrast preserved.
/g/		-68	35	Δ% = 294.29%	Marked pre-voicing; velar place retained; minimal articulatory shift.
/p/	Voiceless	10	58	Δ% = 480.00%	Reduced aspiration; retracted articulation; bilabial stop retained.
/t/		14	70	Δ% = 400.00%	Reduced aspiration; possible dentalisation; voicing distinction maintained.
/k/		23	80	Δ% = 247.83%	Lower aspiration: velar place retained; influenced by Bengali phonetics.

The results show clearly negative VOT values for all voiced plosives in BdE, indicating considerable pre-voicing compared to RP, probably due to Bengali phonological influences such as dentalisation and advanced articulation. The voiceless plosives also show significantly reduced VOT in BdE, indicating reduced aspiration because of L1 transfer. Despite these differences, the place of articulation remains largely stable in both varieties. Overall, these results highlight the phonetic characteristics of BdE and emphasise the wider impact of the influence of the substrate language on postcolonial English varieties.

The analysis of VOT for BdE plosives compared to RP reveals significant phonological differences that are influenced by the Bengali substrate. For voiced plosives, BdE shows clearly negative VOT values for /b/, /d/ and /g/ with average VOTs of −118 ms, −82 ms and −68 ms respectively, while RP shows positive VOTs of 19 ms, 21 ms and 35 ms. The Δ% differences of 721.05%, 490.48% and 294.29% emphasise the dependence of BdE on voicing, a feature that may originate from Bengali phonetics. For voiceless plosives, BdE has lower VOT values compared to RP, with /p/, /t/ and /k/ having mean VOT values of 10 ms, 14 ms and 23 ms, respectively, compared to 58 ms, 70 ms and 80 ms in RP. The Δ% differences of 480.00%, 400.00% and 247.83% for voiceless stops indicate a notable reduction in aspiration in BdE, bringing it closer to the Bengali phonological system, which does not have strong aspiration contrasts. These results emphasise the deviation of BdE from RP norms in terms of intonation onset and aspiration.

6.2.1.1 Voiceless: /p/, /t/ and /k/

Aspiration refers to the burst of turbulent airflow that follows the release of a stop consonant and is characterised by a delay before the intonation of the following vowel (Saraceni & Jacob, 2019). The voiceless plosives of the English phoneme's /p/, /t/ and /k/ are aspirated in syllable-initial positions, with the aspiration being indicated by a longer VOT (Ogden, 2009). They are classified as long voice-lag phonemes that typically have longer VOTs compared to voiced stops. Therefore, aspirated voiceless stops such as /pʰ/, /tʰ/ and /kʰ/ typically have VOTs of 60–80 ms (Lisker & Abramson, 1964). The length of the VOT is directly correlated with the strength of the aspiration; the longer the VOT, the stronger the aspiration (Aziaku, 2021; McCrea & Morris, 2005; Smith, 1978).
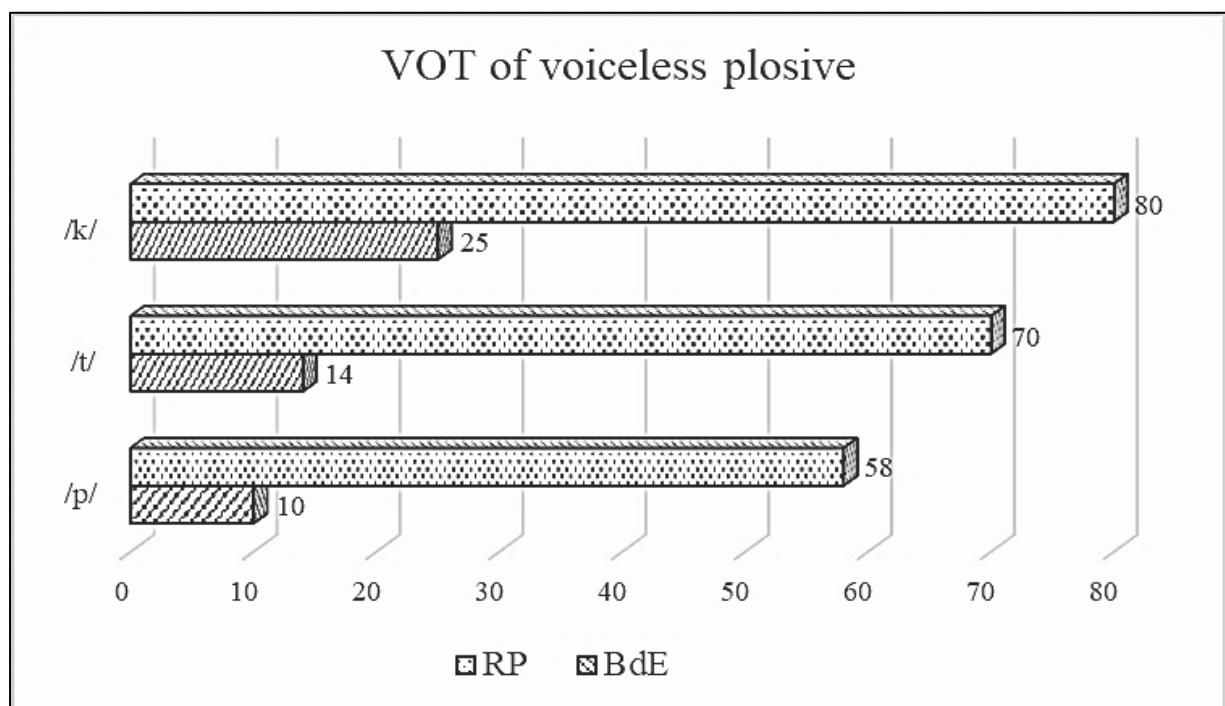
Figure 6.5: Comparison of VOT in RP and BdE Plosives

Note: RP VOT data from Lisker and Abramson (1964)

Figure 6.5 shows significant differences in the VOT of voiceless plosives (/p/, /t/ and /k/) between BdE and RP. As can be seen, voiceless plosives of RP are typically aspirated, resulting in longer VOT values that mark the temporal delay between the release of the plosive and the onset of the vocal fold vibration. For example, Lisker and Abramson (1964) found VOT values of 58 ms for /p/, 70 ms for /t/ and 80 ms for /k/ in RP. This aspiration characterises the voiceless RP stops according to their prolonged VOT, a feature that is absent in BdE.
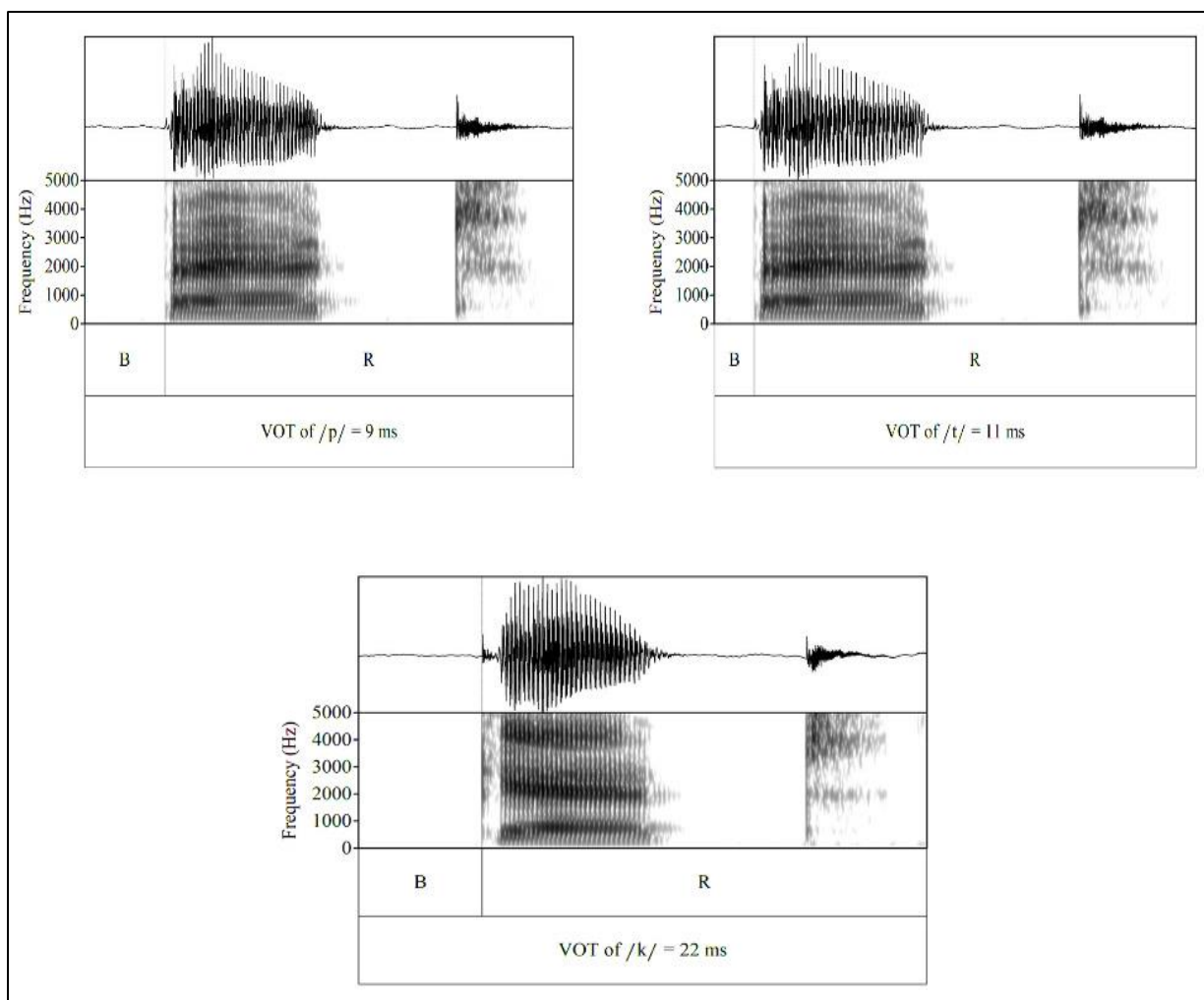
Figure 6.6: Unaspirated /p/, /t/ & /k/ in BdE ('pat', 'time', 'cat')

By contrast, voiceless plosives in BdE consistently have shorter VOT values, indicating the absence of aspiration. For example, the bilabial /p/ in 'pat' is realised as /pɒt/ in BdE with a VOT of 10 ms, compared to the aspirated /pʰæt/ in RP with a VOT of 58 ms (Lisker & Abramson, 1964). Similarly, the alveolar /t/ in 'time' is articulated as /ʈaɪm/ in BdE with a VOT of 14 ms compared to the aspirated /tʰaɪm/ in RP, and the velar /k/ in 'cat' follows this pattern, with a BdE VOT of 23 ms compared to the aspirated counterpart in RP. Anderson (2022) noted that VOT values of 30–40 ms may still indicate aspiration; however, the voiceless BdE stops are consistently below this range, supporting their classification as being unaspirated.

This divergence from RP norms illustrates the influence of the Bengali phonological substrate, in which aspiration contrasts are less pronounced or are absent. Despite these differences, BdE and RP show a consistent VOT hierarchy: The bilabial /p/ has the shortest VOT,

followed by the alveolar /t/, with the velar /k/ having the longest VOT. This hierarchy is consistent with the results of Yavas (2011), which confirmed that velars had longer VOTs than alveolars, and that alveolars were longer than were bilabials in terms of VOT duration in all varieties.

In addition, the aspiration patterns in the voiceless plosives in BdE have distinct phonological features that differ from English plosives. In contrast to the aspirated voiceless plosives in RP, the BdE voiceless stops are not aspirated, reflecting a lenis articulation and closely matching the voiceless plosives in South Asian languages, suggesting the influence of Bengali phonology. The consistently shorter VOT values in BdE in all the places of articulation emphasise this feature of reduced aspiration. These results corroborate the findings of previous studies. Auzou et al. (2000) observed that VOT offsets of 15 ms or less for /t/ and 30 ms or less for /k/ were categorised as unaspirated, which is consistent with the VOT range of BdE. Similarly, Spanish shows weak aspiration, with VOT values of 5–30 ms for voiceless stops (McCrea & Morris, 2005). Lisker and Abramson (1964) reported comparable VOTs in Korean, namely 20 ms for /p/, 25 ms for /t/ and 50 ms for /k/. Byrd and Toben (2010) also documented lower VOTs for General American English (GAE), with average values of 25 ms for /p/, 34 ms for /t/ and 42 ms for /k/.

In RP, aspiration is particularly pronounced in voiceless stops such as /p/, /t/ and /k/, with VOTs that typically exceed 30 ms and are classified as aspirated sounds (long-lag VOT; Lieberman & Blumstein, 1988). However, the result for BdE (see Figure 6.5) shows a clear contrast. BdE voiceless plosives consistently have VOTs below 20 ms; thus, /p/, /t/ and /k/ are unaspirated in all positions, which categorises them as unaspirated stops. This is consistent with the classroom observations by Hoque (2011), who found that BdE speakers pronounced the voiceless plosives /p, b, t/ as "not aspirated at all", although he labelled this as less practised and not as a variant. Jakir (2020, p. 210) identified low aspiration (14.11%) in empirical data from Bangladeshi learners of EFL who were trained in native pronunciation. The absence of aspiration in BdE probably reflects the influence of Bengali phonological norms, in which aspiration is not a characteristic feature of the corresponding phonemes.

The results of the present study can be compared to the results of previous studies in other regions. For example, with regard to PakE, Shahid et al. (2024) showed that aspirated consonants in RP, such as /p/, /t/ and /k/, were pronounced as voiced or weakly aspirated sounds by Pakistani speakers. In addition, Syed et al. (2017) found a lack of aspiration in Pakistani

plosives. This indicates unaspirated or weak aspiration, which is a common trend in South Asian varieties of English. In addition, Japanese voiceless stops exhibit VOTs with a medium delay (20–30 ms), which differs from the long-lag VOTs in English (Kong et al., 2012). Korean (Kim, 2012) also show 'partially' aspirated stops, which illustrates how differently languages use aspiration as a phonetic feature.

6.2.1.2 Voiced: /b/, /d/ and /g/

English voiced plosive consonants (/b/, /d/, /g/) are characterised by shorter VOT values compared to their unvoiced counterparts. Numerous studies have documented these patterns, emphasising the variability depending on the context and the speaker. For example, Anderson (2022) reported VOTs of between 0 and 10 ms for voiced stops, while Kessinger and Blumstein (1997) found VOTs of 15 ms for /b/ and 20 ms for /d/. Earlier studies by Klatt (1975) recorded slightly lower VOT values, such as 11 ms for /b/, 17 ms for /d/ and 27 ms for /g/, while Caruso and Burton (1987) observed higher VOTs, reporting 19.7 ms for /b/, 21.4 ms for /d/ and 35.2 ms for /g/. In addition, the basic studies by Lisker and Abramson (1964) documented even shorter VOT values of 1 ms for /b/, 5 ms for /d/ and 21 ms for /g/. This was confirmed by Docherty (1992), who found VOT values of 15 ms for /b/, 21 ms for /d/ and 27 ms for /g/, which further emphasised the short-lag characteristic of voiced stops.

Typically, voiced English stops exhibit a short lag in intonation; however, variations in VOTs allow for both pre-voiced (negative VOT) and short-delayed realisations depending on phonetic and contextual factors (Lisker & Abramson, 1964). Negative VOT, in which the vibration of the vocal folds begins prior to the release of the stop, has also been documented in varieties such as GAE (Lisker & Abramson, 1964). This phenomenon, which is referred to as 'voicing lead', is consistent with the classifications of voiced stops in several studies (Kaur, 2015). These findings regarding BdE plosives provide a basic understanding for the study of VOT features of voiced plosives in BdE and their divergence or convergence with English plosives (RP/ AmE and/or SSBE).
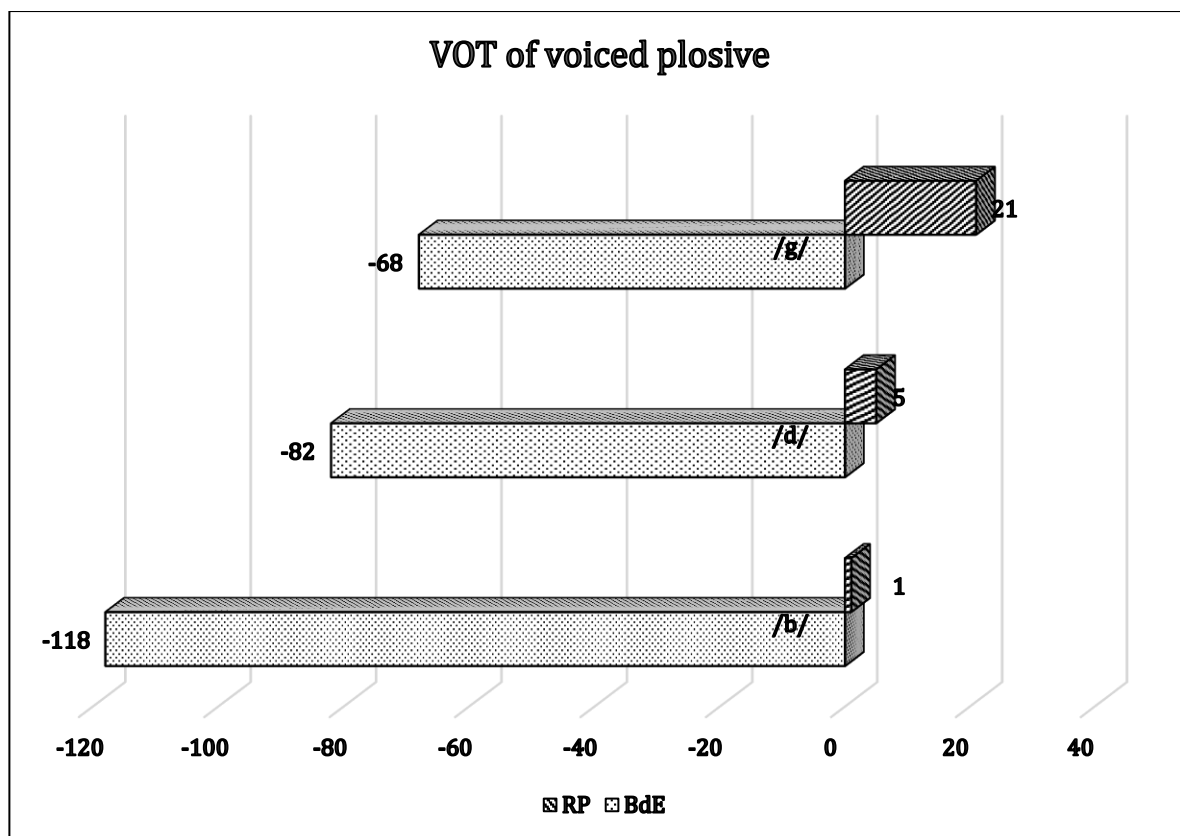
Figure 6.7: VOT Comparison Between RP and BdE

Note: RP VOT data from Lisker and Abramson (1964)

Figure 6.7 shows that the BdE speakers consistently produced voiced plosives with negative VOT values, indicating pre-voicing, while RP speakers had short VOT values. As can be seen, the mean VOT values for BdE plosives were -118 ms, -82 ms and -68 ms for /b/, /d/ and /g/, respectively. Similarly, (Caruso & Burton, 1987) RP values of 19 ms, 21 ms and 35 ms. This trend reflects the dependence of BdE on early voicing initiation, which is influenced by the phonological norms of Bengali, in which pre-voicing is a characteristic feature. Of note, the negative VOT in BdE increases as the place of articulation shifts forward, an inverse of the pattern in RP, in which the VOT increases as the articulation shifts backwards.

This divergence is consistent with findings regarding other languages, such as Arabic, for which (Yeni-Komshian et al., 1977) found pre-voicing for voiced stops (/b/: -109 ms, /d/: -90 ms, /g/: -78 ms), and Greek, in which the negative VOTs were similar (Arvaniti, 1999). Spectrogram analyses support these observations, as can be seen in Figure 6.8, in which a pre-voiced /b/ token showed a vibration of the vocal folds that started well before the release of the stop and produced a negative VOT of -89 ms. Such patterns illustrate the phonetic divergence of BdE from RP, in which there is no pre-voicing and voiced stops have short-lag VOTs.

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It may be difficult for learners with a BdE background to master the short-lag VOT system in RP. Studies such as those by Medina-Rivera (2014) and Olson (2021) have shown the effectiveness of explicit pronunciation instruction in improving VOT production in learners of languages with pre-voicing who are learning languages with short-lag stops. In addition, developmental studies (Lowenstein & Nittrouer, 2008; Yu et al., 2014) have shown that VOT variability in children decreases with age as articulatory precision improves, suggesting the importance of early phonetic training to enable BdE speakers to acquire RP norms. Overall, the results of the present study emphasise the interplay between linguistic backgrounds and VOT features, and highlight both the challenges and the potential strategies for aligning BdE production patterns with RP norms.

Figure 6.8: Pre-voiced Plosive /b/, /d/ and /g/ Sounds ('bed', 'dog', 'get')

Figure 6.8 shows that this spectrogram of a pre-voiced token of /b/ indicates that the participant's vocal folds began to vibrate well before the stop sound was released. As can be

seen in the spectrogram, there is a low-frequency energy bar before the release of the /b/ plosive. The measured negative VOT was -89 ms. In the context of second language (L2) acquisition, E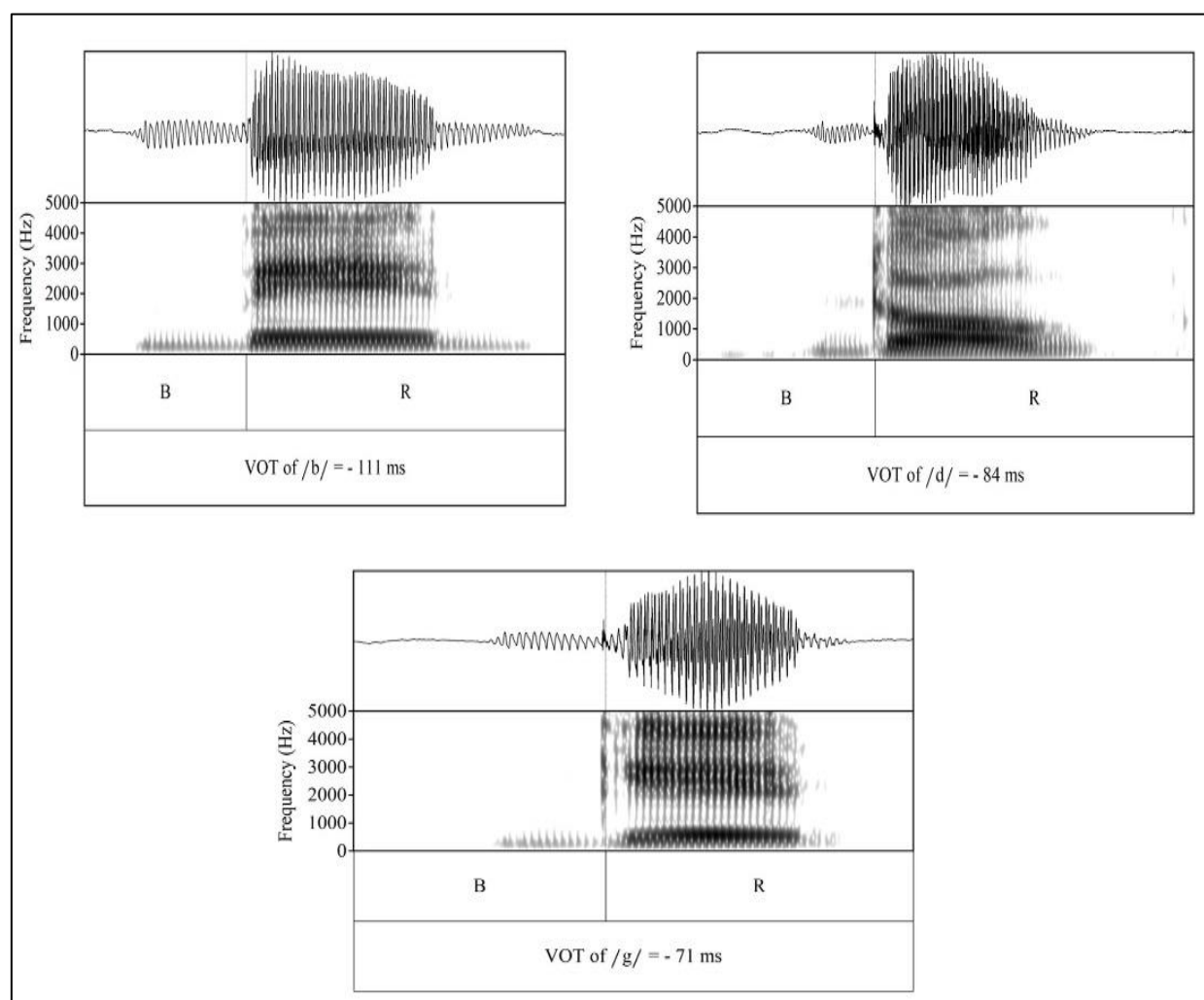nglish learners who are L1 speakers of languages that have other VOT features may encounter challenges in mastering the English VOT system. For example, studies have shown that explicit pronunciation instruction can lead to improvements in VOT production amongst L2 learners, as they are better able to adjust to the acoustic cues that differentiate voiced and voiceless stops (Medina-Rivera, 2014; Olson, 2021).

This distinction is crucial for phonetic categorisation, and is reflected in the production patterns of speakers with different linguistic backgrounds. For example, studies have shown that English-speaking children exhibit variability in VOT, with younger children producing longer VOT values and having greater variability compared to adults (Lowenstein & Nittrouer, 2008; Yu et al., 2014). This developmental aspect emphasises the importance of age in VOT production, as children's articulatory precision improves with age, leading to more consistent VOT values (Yu et. al., 2014).

6.2.3 Fricatives

Since English fricatives differ from plosives and affricates in that they do not have a complete closure of the articulators and produce turbulence due to a narrow constriction in the vocal tract, sibilants (/s, z, ʃ, ʒ/) have longer intervals for the sibilant sound and higher amplitudes (58–68 dB) compared to non-sibilants (/f, v, θ, ð, h/), which are between 46 and 52 dB (Yavas, 2011). In this study, an irregular, scribbled pattern was identified on the spectrogram that differed from the clear lines observed in voiced or fully closed sounds indicating English fricatives. In addition, the airflow and acoustic patterns were analysed to differentiate English fricatives from other sounds in which the airflow is temporarily interrupted (e.g., Jongman, 2024). In RP English, /f/ and /v/ are labiodental fricatives that are produced via the close approximation of the articulators in such a way that the airflow near to the constriction point can produce turbulence and fricative sounds (Ogden, 2009).

6.2.3.1 The Bilabial Place of Articulation

In RP, speakers articulate the labiodental fricatives (/f/, /v/) with the upper teeth touching the lower lip; the airflow escapes through a small space and then makes "a hissing sound" (Roach, 1991: 47). As noted in many studies (e.g., Barman, 2009; Mostafa, 2013; Islam, 2017), there are no labiodental fricative phonemes in Bengali consonant phonemes (see Bhattacharja & Shishir, 2006; Khan, 2010, for a different opinion, particularly for Bengali in West Bengal).

The different phonetic characteristics of Bengali fricatives thus influence the production of English fricatives, resulting in unique variations. For example, the articulation of /f/ and /v/ is frequently altered, with /v/ posing particular difficulties for Bengali speakers due to the lack of a labiodental position in their L1 phonology. Consequently, Bangladeshi speakers often produce /v/ as a bilabial fricative, reflecting the influence of their L1 [Bengali] on their L2 [English] phonetic system (Islam, 2017).
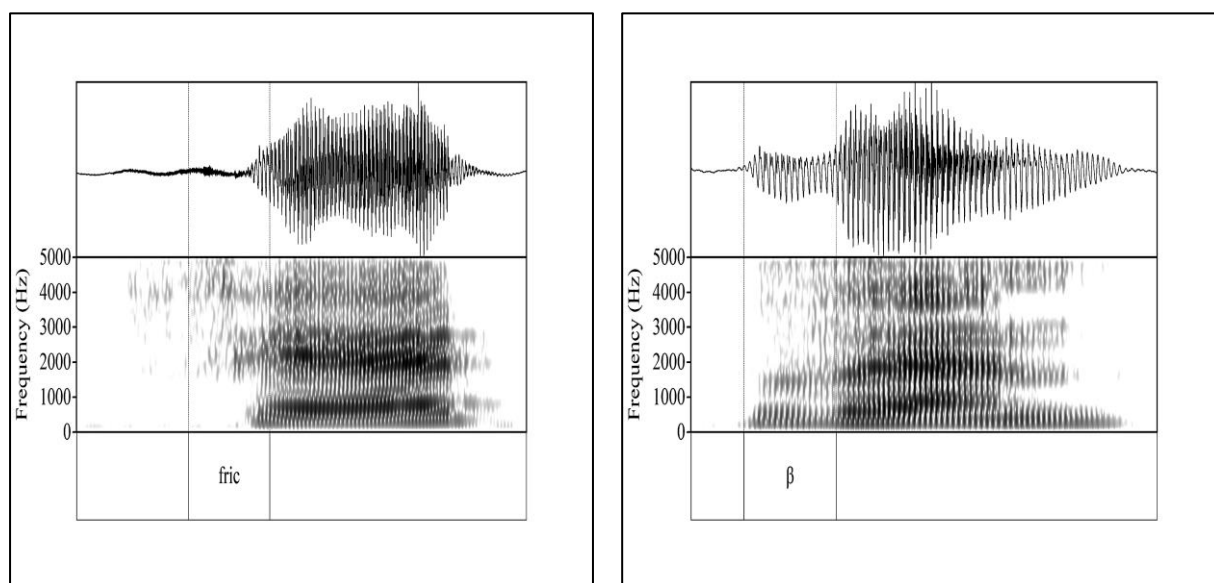
Figure 6.9: Labiodental Fricatives /f/ and /v/ in RP as the Bilabial Fricatives /ɸ/ (Left) and /β/ (Right) Used by BdE Speakers ('fat', 'van')

The spectrogram for the fricative /ɸ/ in Figure 6.9 shows air vortices concentrated around 2000 Hz and above to articulate 'bold'. BdE speakers produce /fæt/ as [ɸæt] ([fæt] → [ɸæt]), with no visible voicing, indicating its voiceless nature. By comparison, the English /f/ exhibits higher frequency turbulence, typically between 3000 and 4000 Hz (Ladefoged, 2011). Similarly, the voiced bilabial fricative /β/ in (/v/ → /β/) is characterised by the presence of a voiced bar, lower fricative energy (as indicated by lighter spectrogram shading) and lower formant values (~2000 Hz). By contrast, the English /v/, the voiced labiodental fricative, exhibits high-frequency turbulence above 4000 Hz, albeit less intense than /f/ (Ladefoged, 2001). In addition, the duration of voiced fricatives is consistently shorter than that of their unvoiced counterparts, a feature that is observed in all the pairs of fricatives. The lower formant value of the bilabial fricatives /ɸ/ and /β/ in BdE compared to the English labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/ can be attributed to a less restricted airflow and to a larger oral cavity during bilabial articulation. The bilabial fricative [β] also has lower F1 and F2 values compared to the labiodental

/v/, probably due to the effects of rounded lips and a larger resonant cavity. These acoustic features explain the lower formant values of /ɸ/ and /β/ in BdE speakers. As Maddieson (2006) found, the lower F1s next to the bilabials and the visual distinctiveness of the lip configurations allow listeners to distinguish effectively between bilabial and labiodental fricatives.

The BdE realisation of /f/ and /v/ as the bilabial fricatives [ɸ] and [β] was also shared by Japanese speakers with the same place of articulation (D'Angelo et al., 2022). In addition, Indian speakers have difficulties with the /f/ and /v/ sounds, and most Indians cannot differentiate between the /v/ sound and the /f/ sound (Grolman et al., 2021). This reflects a phonological adaptation influenced by Bengali phonetics. In Bengali, the aspirated labial consonants [pho] and [bho/vo], which are close to /f/ and /v/, cause BdE speakers to produce /f/ as the voiceless aspirated bilabial fricative /ɸ/ and /v/ as the voiced aspirated bilabial fricative /β/. These results emphasise the interaction between acoustic properties and articulatory configurations in shaping the phonological adjustments in BdE. The spectrogram analysis shows a consistent substitution pattern amongst BdE speakers, in which the English fricatives /f/ and /v/ (voiceless and voiced labiodental fricatives, respectively) are replaced by /ɸ/ and /β/ (voiceless and voiced bilabial fricatives, respectively). Some of the sounds that Indian students find problematic are the consonant sounds /f/-/v/. Most Indians cannot differentiate between the /v/ sound and the /f/ sound (Grolman et al., 2021)

6.2.3.2 The Dental Fricatives: /θ/ and /ð/

As has been noted, the dental fricatives [/ θ/, / ð/] are not present in the Bengali consonant system (Barman, 2009, Mostafa, 2013). The English dental fricatives [/θ/, /ð/] are typically articulated with the tongue between the front teeth, creating the turbulent airflow that is characteristic of fricatives (Eldika & Zainil, 2022; Roach, 2009). By contrast, BdE speakers approximate these sounds by placing the tongue against the upper teeth, but with a different mode of articulation that releases a puff of air without producing the friction that is typical of English dental fricatives. This divergence can be attributed to the phonemic inventory of Bengali that includes several dental sounds (Barman, 2009), which allow BdE speakers to approximate the place of articulation while modifying the manner of articulation to align with their L1 phonological system.
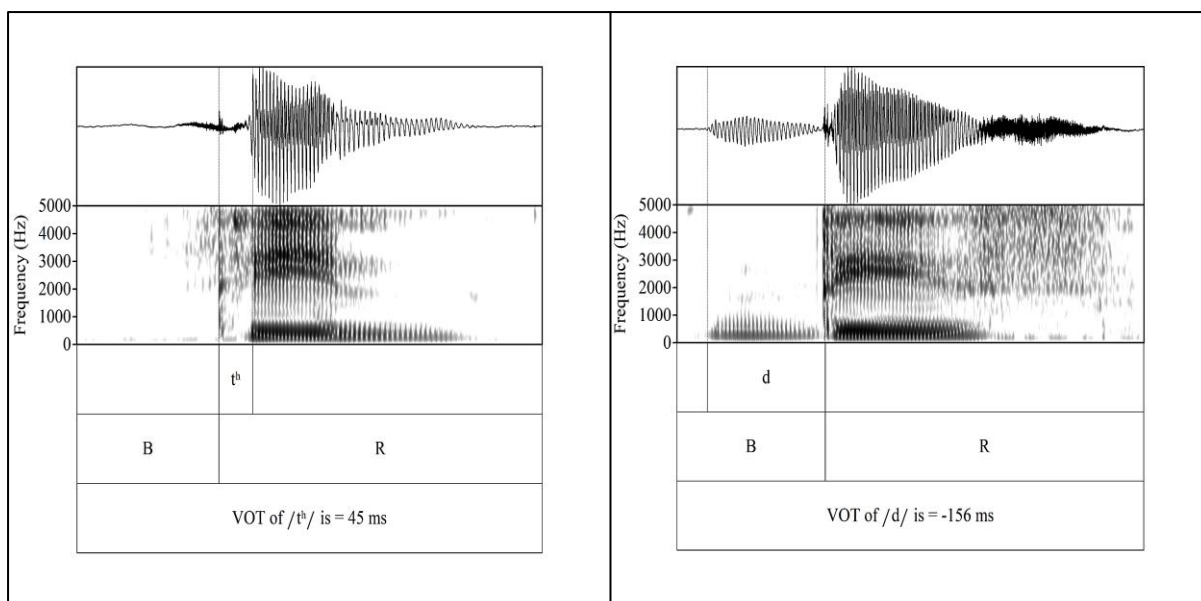
Figure 6.10: The RP Dental Fricatives /θ/ and /ð/ as the Dental Plosives t̪ʰ ('thin') and /d̪/ ['these'] in BdE

Figure 6.10 shows that BdE sounds are articulated as plosives as the sudden release of built-up air pressure following closure, thus producing a distinctive burst of acoustic energy (cf. Ladefoged, 2001, p. 47). Specifically, the results revealed that the BdE articulations of /t̪ʰ/ and /d̪/ had distinct plosive features compared to English (/ θ/ and / ð/). They are characterised by an abrupt transition from minimal acoustic energy to a high-energy burst over a wide frequency range. However, in contrast to the chaotic turbulence of fricatives, which typically show a random distribution of energy in their high-frequency regions, voiced plosives such as /d̪/ are characterised by a dark intonation bar below 200 Hz, a key indicator of pre-voicing as observed in voiced stops such as /b, d, g/. This is also in contrast to the BdE voiceless stop, which has a short aspiration period on the left-hand side of the spectrogram. In addition, the absence of energy peaks is a characteristic feature of fricatives (Reetz & Jongman, 2009). Furthermore, plosives demonstrate smooth transitions in the spectrogram (Ladefoged, 2001); for example, the labiodental /t̪ʰ/ has a medium aspiration (45 ms), which is visible as a vertical energy spike, while the voiced /d̪/ has a low-frequency pre-voicing bar (-156 ms) during the closure phase.

In BdE, the manner of articulation of the RP sounds (/ð/ and /θ/) has changed, and they are pronounced as the dental plosives [t̪] [t̪ʰ] or [d̪][d̪ʰ]; this is because the RP sounds (/ð/ & /θ/) are very difficult for Bengali L1 speakers by default (Islam, 2017). Based on the spectrogram, it is evident that the two BdE sounds /t̪ʰ/ and /d̪/ are stops. Similar to the results of the

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study, there are different ways of pronouncing these sounds in different regions of South Asia. For example, in Pakistan, /ð/ is substituted as a voiced alveolar plosive [/d/] and [/θ/] as an unvoiced alveolar plosive [tʰ] (Shahid et al., 2024). In addition, the consonant phonemes of /θ/ and /ð/ articulated by Pashto speakers differ from those in Standard English (RP); they are produced as 'dental plosives' instead of as 'dental fricatives. The participants had great difficulty pronouncing the English dental fricatives /ð/ and /ɵ/ (Khan, Shehzad, & Ullah, 2017). Moreover, these particular sounds are usually difficult for speakers of IndE. In Standard English, the voiceless sound [θ] is sometimes pronounced, while the voiced sound [ð] is almost non-existent.

This leads to misunderstandings amongst native speakers when Indian speakers replace [θ], the aspirated voiceless dental plosive [th], with [ð], the unaspirated voiced dental plosive [d]. IndE uses retroflex plosives of the sounds [T] and [D], although there are alveolar plosives such as [/t/] and [/d/] (Grishechko et al., 2021). The sounds /ð/ and /θ/ are also rarely heard in their BrE form and sound similar to a dentalised /d̪ʰ/ and a dentalised and aspirated /t/ instead. However, most speakers maintain a contrast between 'tin' and 'thin' and with 'den'; this is why the symbols /θ/ and /ð/ are used in the IndE model of OED in the same way as in Irish English to emphasise the prominent dental place of articulation, even if it is plosive rather than fricative. The use of /θ/ and /ð/ also facilitates the contrasts that are required for some of the root languages to differentiate between the dentalised alveolar plosives and retroflex plosives (see also Gargesh, 2008; Wiltshire, 2020.) [θ] may sometimes be articulated, but [ð] is almost completely absent (as in IndE in Sailaja, 2009, p. 21). Whenever they are produced, they cannot be treated as perfect examples of ESL; they are usually replaced by the dental stops /t̪ʰ /and /d̪/ as also seen in IndE.[56]

6.2.3.3 Fricative Alveolars: /s/ & /Z/

In English, the /s/ sound is an unvoiced fortis consonant, while /z/ is voiced and lenis. Both are classified as 'alveolar fricatives' because the tongue blade comes into partial contact with the alveolar ridge during their production, creating a constriction through which the airflow is forced. In this articulation, a significant part of the tongue (tip, tongue blade or front) approaches the alveolar ridge and the front of the hard palate. The airflow is channelled through a relatively shallow groove, which is characteristic of the articulation of these fricatives (Collins & Mees, 2013). In addition, the voiced fricative /z/ produces less fricative noise in English

speakers compared to the voiceless /s/. This difference is because the vibration of the vocal folds in voiced fricatives reduces the airflow through the vocal tract, as the vocal folds remain closed for about half of the vibration cycle. The reduced airflow results in less turbulence and, consequently, in less fricative noise (Ogden, 2009). Figures 6.11 and 6.12 show the /s/ and /z/s sounds produced by RP speakers with marked friction and intonation on the left-hand side of the image and the spectrogram on the right-hand side.
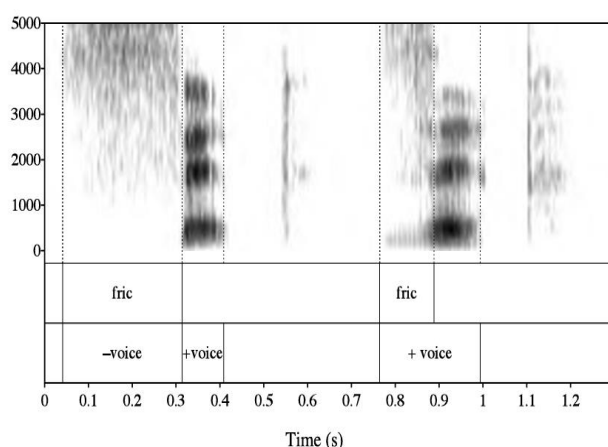
Figure 6.11: Spectrogram of /s/ and /z/ of RP ['sip', 'zip'] (Left) (Ogden, 2009)
Figure 6.12: Spectrogram of /s/ and /z/ of BdE ['saw', 'zoo'] (Right)
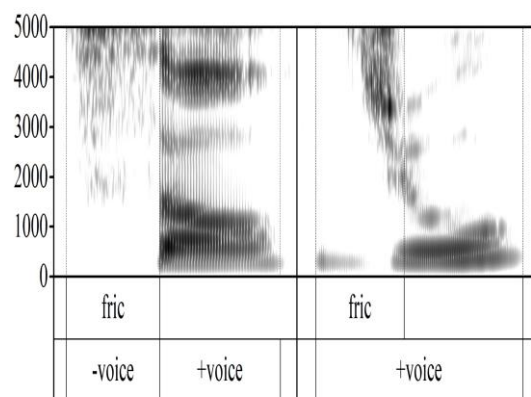
Figures 6.11 and 6.12 provide the acoustic features of /s/ and /z/ as produced by RP and BdE speakers, highlighting the main similarities in turbulence, duration of friction, and voicing. In Figure 6.11, the spectrogram for RP speakers shows /s/ with turbulence centred at 3500 Hz, characterised by sustained, high-energy friction, which appears longer and darker than /z/ in the spectrogram. For /z/, the frictional noise overlaps with the intonation throughout the frictional period, with a distinct voicing bar visible below 1000 Hz indicating the simultaneous vibration of the vocal folds (Ogden, 2009). By contrast, Figure 6.12 shows /s/ and /z/ for BdE speakers with /s/ produced with high-energy friction, which appears longer and darker than /z/, similar to RP. However, the turbulence in /s/ is at a lower frequency of around 3000 Hz. Similarly, for /z/, BdE speakers produce a shorter friction with an intonation bar below 1000 Hz, like RP speakers, indicating less sustained airflow and lower frictional energy. These results emphasise the alignment of the acoustic properties of /s/ and /z/ between RP and BdE speakers.

In line with this, most Indian languages, except Urdu, lack the voiced alveolar fricative /z/ (Grolman et al., 2021); accordingly, Indian speakers often produce /s/ and /z/ in different ways. While /s/ is voiceless in relation to English consonants, Indian speakers typically articulate /z/ voicelessly in such a way that it sounds acoustically similar to /s/ (Grolman et al., 2021). By contrast, PakE speakers show variability in the articulation of /s/ and /z/ and pronounce them as dental fricatives (Shahid et al., 2024) or as alveolar fricatives (Syed et al., 2017).

6.2.3.4 Fricative Palato-Alveolars: /ʃ/& /ʒ/

English speakers produce the fricatives /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ with a constriction that is further back in the vocal tract than are /s/ and /z/, at a place of articulation that is commonly referred to as palato-alveolar or postalveolar. Compared to /s/ and /z/, the tongue forms a wider canal that is convex rather than concave behind the groove. Similar to /s/ and /z/, the fricative /ʃ/ can be articulated with either a raised or a lowered tongue tip, demonstrating the variability of the tongue posture (Ogden, 2009).
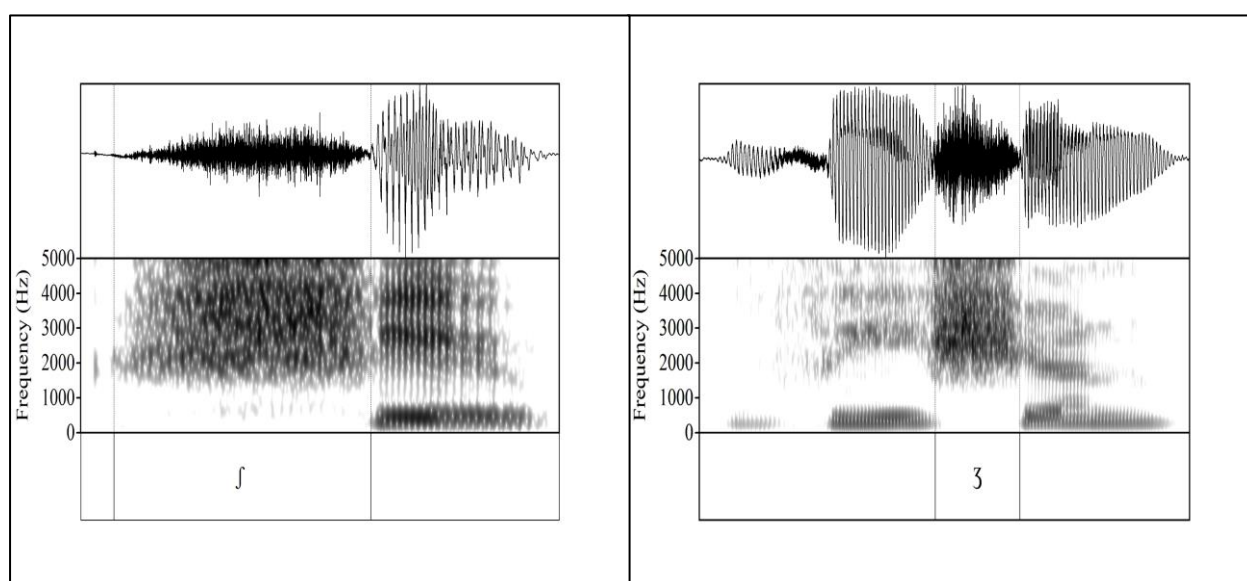
Figure 6.13: Spectrogram Showing the Production of /ʃ/ (ship) and /ʒ/ (vision) by BdE Speakers

Figure 6.13 shows the spectrogram of BdE speakers' articulation of the word 'ship'. As can be found that the energy concentration in the fricative part of /ʃ/ is significantly lower compared to /s/, with a significant energy peak at around 2000 Hz. This is in line with Yavas (2011), who stated that the energy range for palato-alveolar fricatives was 2,000–7,000 Hz. The results of the study indicate that /ʃ/ is pronounced as a palato-alveolar in BdE, suggesting that the place of articulation does not differ significantly between BdE and RP. Other studies

(Barman, 2009) have referred to the place of this /ʃ/ sound in BdE as postalveolar (palato-alveolar), meaning closer to the palate, resulting in a softer and less intense realisation (via the degree of force or friction). This approximation reflects a phonetic transfer process in which L1 Bengali speakers substitute the closest phonetically available sounds in their native language to approximate the target RP sounds.

In addition, the /ʒ/ sound is not particularly common in English and mainly appears in words borrowed from French or Latin. In terms of feature geometry, the RP speaker pronounced it as a voiced alveo-palatal shrill fricative, which refers to sounds that are produced with a high-intensity, loud airflow, particularly fricatives that are produced with a narrower constriction that amplifies certain frequencies. Figure 6.13 shows that the /ʒ/ sound produced by the BdE speaker was a strident sound similar to the RP sound because it had a concentrated noise energy in the high-frequency range (around 2.5–5 kHz), which is consistent with the typical 2000–6500 Hz range for palato-alveolar fricatives (see Yavas, 2011). However, this result is consistent with a previous study in which the /ʒ/ sound was found to be the most difficult sound for Bengali speakers to pronounce (Islam, 2017). Moreover, the /ʒ/ sound is largely absent in IndE; it is realised as /d/, /z/ or /j/, as in [ple:dr], [ple:zr] or [plaɪjr] ('pleasure') (Gargesh, 2008). Jamaican speakers have replaced the /ʒ/ sound with the alveolar fricative /dʒ/ (Mousa, 2015). The acoustic analysis confirmed that BdE speakers did not lose the fricative sound when producing these consonants; therefore, BdE speakers pronounced /ʒ/ in similar places and in similar manners.

6.2.3.5 Glottal Fricative: /h/

Some studies (e.g., Ogden, 2009) have shown that the glottal fricative [/h/], which is absent in some varieties of English, is classified as a fricative due to glottal fricatives that vary in accordance with the following vowel. Words such as 'heat', 'heart', and 'hoot' have different initial fricative qualities that are influenced by the following vowel (Ogden, 2009). In RP, /h/ is articulated in the word-initial position as a voiceless fricative, which is characterised by the absence of vocal fold vibrations and a comparatively less intense acoustic production compared to other fricatives.
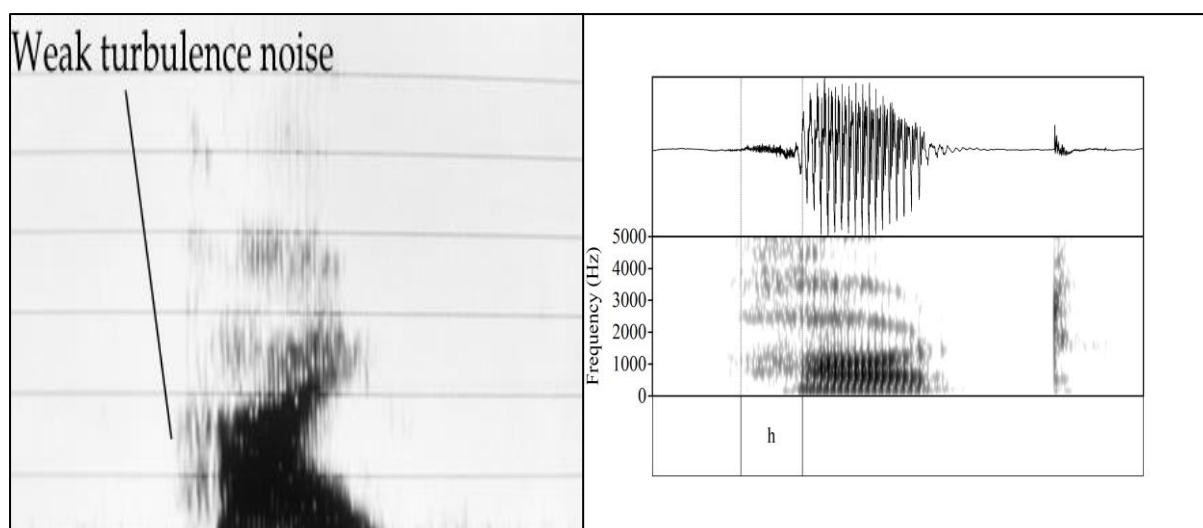
Figure 6.14: /h/ Sound in RP (Yavas, 2011) (Left) and in BdE ('hard') (Right)

The glottal fricative /h/ is articulated in the same way in both RP and in the BdE variant. As with the Bengali consonant, a glottal fricative /h/ (cf. Barman, 2009), BdE speakers can control the sound in the same way as the English /h/. Similar to this study, Barman (2009) found that both English and Bengali speakers produced the glottal fricative /h/ with the vocal folds wide open to allow air to flow freely through the glottis. In English, this sound is represented orthographically by the letter 'h'; however, its pronunciation is often omitted, as in words such as 'hour' and 'heir', which can be challenging for non-native speakers (Barman, 2009). By contrast, there is a clear orthographic symbol for /h/ in Bangla, and its pronunciation is realised consistently, unlike in English. In particular, there is no significant difference in the articulation of /h/ between the two languages (Barman, 2009). In Figure 6.14, there is no voicing bar for /h/ for either RP or BdE speakers. However, a strong turbulence around 1000 Hz can be identified in both pronunciations (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012). Therefore, the /h/ sound exhibits phonetic consistency between RP and BdE, without any variations in articulation being observed in BdE.

6.2.4 Palato-Alveolar Affricates: /ʧ/ & /ʤ/

English speakers articulate two primary affricate consonants, namely the palato-alveolar affricates /ʧ/ and /ʤ/. The voiceless /ʧ/ is classified as fortis, while the voiced /ʤ/ is called lenis (Ogden, 2009). The IPA symbol /tʃ/ indicates a combination of a plosive /t/ followed by a fricative /ʃ/ articulated with the body of the tongue in the palato-alveolar region. This symbol also indicates the voiceless nature of the sound (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012). As with plosives,

these sounds involve a complete obstruction of the airflow in the oral cavity. However, in contrast to plosives, the release of the accumulated air is gradual and not abrupt, resulting in a less explosive and more controlled release. This distinct articulation is characteristic of affricates and distinguishes them from other categories of consonantal sounds (Ogden, 2009; Roach, 1991, 2009).
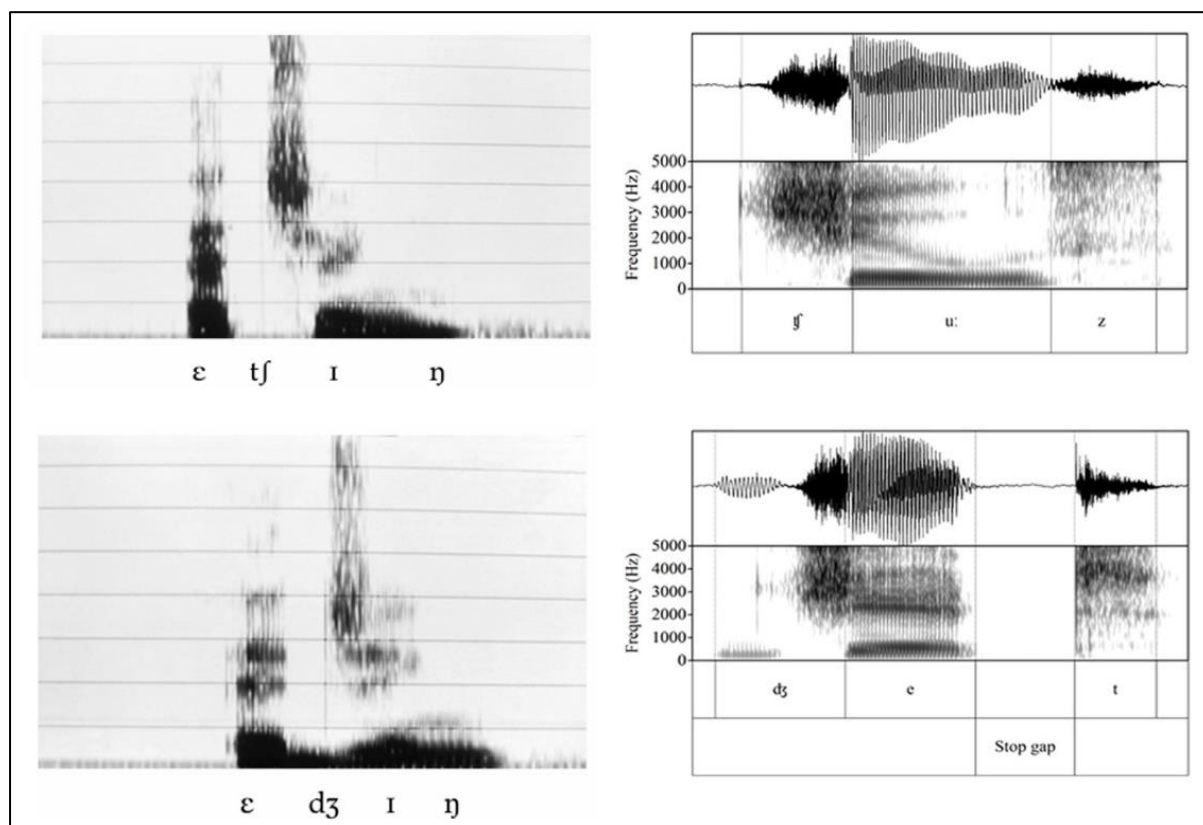
Figure 6.15: /ʧ/ & /ʤ/ Sounds Produced by RP Speakers (Yavas, 2011) (Left) and by BdE Speakers ('choose', 'jet') (Right)

Figure 6.15 shows the spectrogram of BdE speakers articulating /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ with a silent interval for the closure, followed by a sound on release. The release of the fricative is shorter than the closure, reflecting the typical acoustic characteristics of affricates. Studies have shown that the voiceless /ʧ/ is longer than is the voiced /ʤ/, which is consistent with general phonetic principles (e.g., Yavas, 2011). The turbulence energy for /ʧ/ and /ʤ/ is concentrated above ~ 2,000 Hz for both RP and BdE speakers, indicating similar acoustic properties (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012). This suggests that BdE speakers use the same manner and place of articulation to produce these affricates as RP speakers. While the Bengali phonemes /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ are consistent with RP articulation as palato-alveolar articulation (Khan, 2010), IndE generally uses

palatal affricates for /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ (Roy, 2020). The results of this study highlight the alignment of BdE with RP standards in terms of the articulation of affricates, while also emphasising the regional diversity in the different dialects of English in South Asia.

6.2.5 Nasals: /m/, /n/ & /ŋ/

Nasals, which are characterised by air flowing through the nose and not through the mouth, have the same constriction pattern as plosives. English nasals include /m/ (bilabial), /n/ (alveolar), and /ŋ/ (velar), which are all voiced consonants. They are formed with an oral closure and an open velar opening to allow acoustic vibrations and airflow to enter the nasal cavities. Nasal consonants have lower energy because the nasal canals do not radiate sound efficiently. The spectrograms show distinct formant transitions before each nasal (cf. Ladefoged & Disner, 2012; McMahon, 2002; Minkova, 2013).
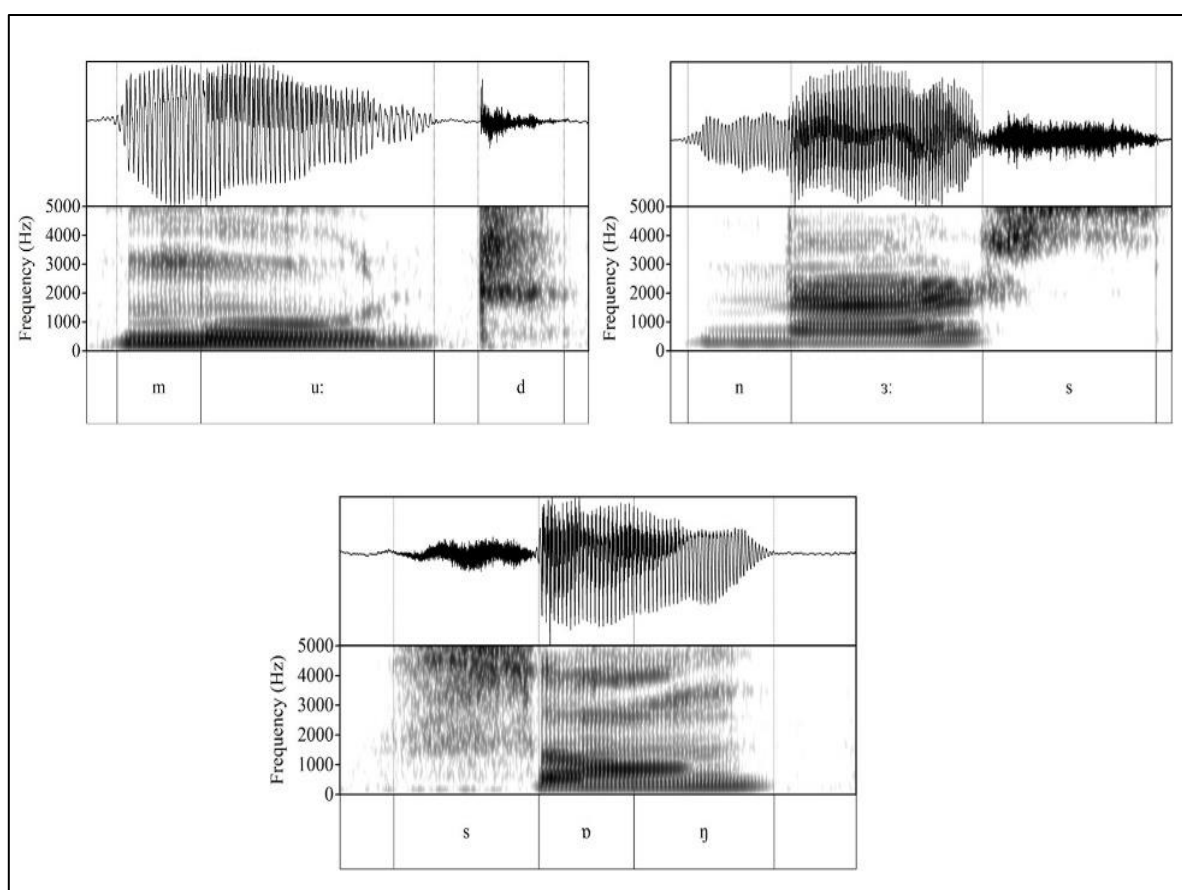
Figure 6.16: Spectrogram of Nasal /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ Produced by BdE Speakers

In studies of English speakers who articulate nasal consonants, Yavas (2011) emphasised that these sounds acted as nasal counterparts to English speakers' voiced plosives, the main difference being that the airflow is diverted through the nasal cavity rather than through

the mouth. This redirection results in characteristic intonation bands in the low-frequency range, with F_1 having a very low-frequency around a prominent voicing bar, confirming its voiced nature and vowel-like formant structure. However, due to the dampening effect of the nasal tract, other formants appear to be considerably weakened. In particular, all three English nasals (/m/, /n/, and /ŋ/) show a weak and low-frequency F1, typically in the 200–450 Hz range, while F3 is visible around 2,500 Hz and F2 is often absent (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012; Yavas, 2011). The production of nasal consonants in English is characterised by a marked and abrupt loss of overall acoustic energy, which is mainly due to the lower efficiency of the nasal cavity in radiating sound compared to the oral cavity. This reduced energy output emphasises the unique articulatory and acoustic characteristics of nasals that distinguish them from other consonants in English (Yavas, 2011).

Figure 6.16 shows the acoustic features of BdE nasal consonants that are consistent with the standard norms in English. The bilabial nasal /m/ has a downward F2 transition, while the alveolar nasal /n/ has a stable F2, and the velar nasal /ŋ/ has an upward F2 that transitions to F3. In addition, /m/ has a stable F1 and a downward-sloping F2, /n/ has a downward-sloping F2, and /ŋ/ has an upward F2 trajectory. These patterns confirm that BdE speakers produce /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ as nasal consonants with formant transitions that correspond to the characteristics of Standard English (cf. Ladefoged & Disner, 2012; Yavas, 2011).

Both English and Bengali share the nasal consonants /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ (Barman, 2009), and Bengali speakers do not usually distinguish these phonemes in terms of place or manner of articulation. The velar nasal [ŋ], which frequently occurs at the end of words in IndE, often receives an additional [g] sound when it occurs medially, as pronounced in 'ringing' [ˈriŋgiŋ] (Bytko, 2017). This corresponds to the velar place of articulation of /k/ and /g/ (Roach, 1991). These nasal consonants are pronounced with minimal deviation from the Standard English norm. Although velar nasals, such as in 'getting' [ɡetɪŋ], do not exist in Japanese phonology, speakers of Japanese English (JE) can produce them with ease (D'Angelo et al., 2022). Similarly, the alveolar lateral /l/, the bilabial nasal /m/, and the alveolar nasal /n/ correspond to the standard forms in General Indian English (Roy, 2020). These patterns illustrate both the phonological alignment and the slight variations that are present in non-native English varieties.

6.2.6 Laterals

Lateral approximants, commonly referred to as 'laterals', are a feature of English phonology and are typically represented orthographically by the letter l. Phonetically, these sounds are

characterised by the letter l; these sounds exhibit considerable variability, both amongst individual speakers and between different varieties of English (Ogden, 2009). English also has a lateral approximant, /l/, with two allophones in many accents. The clear l [l], as in 'lamp', for example, occurs before vowels and is articulated as an alveolar lateral approximant with neutral tongue position. The dark l [ɫ], as in 'casual', appears before consonants or in the word-final position and is pronounced as a velarised alveolar lateral approximant, with the tongue forming a spoon-like shape with the back raised. These variants have no difference in meaning in English and function as a single phoneme (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012). However, the study showed that these phonemes existed separately in BdE (Figure 1.17). The acoustic analysis of a BdE speaker shows different realisations of the lateral in different syllable positions.
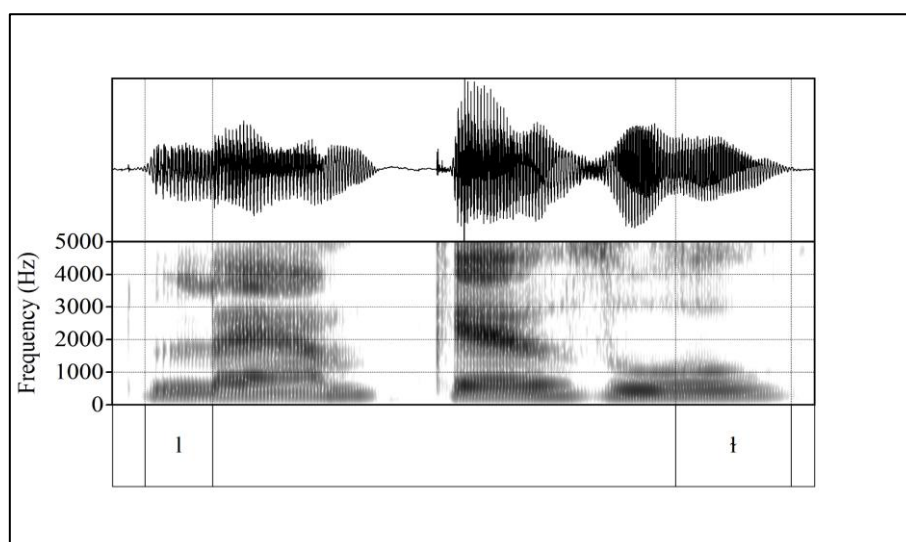
Figure 6.17: Clear /l/ ('lamp') and Dark /ɫ/ ('casual') Produced by BdE Speakers

The spectrogram in Figure 6.17 shows the acoustic properties of laterals in two different words and illustrates the difference between clear and dark laterals. On the left-hand side, the spectrogram shows the production of a clear lateral [l] that occurs at the beginning of a word. This variant is articulated with the tip of the tongue and is characterised by the feature geometry [+ anterior, - high, - back] (cf. Clements & Hume, 1995). On the right-hand side, the spectrogram shows the dark lateral [ɫ], which is typically produced at the end of a word. This darker variant involves articulation with the back of the tongue, represented by the feature geometry [-anterior, +high, +back] (cf. Clements & Hume, 1995). The analysis emphasises the positional variation and articulatory differences between clear and dark laterals in English.

The alveolar lateral /l/ in BdE shows a phonetic alignment with RP, as the spectrogram analysis shows. According to Ogden (2009), 'F2 during the lateral portion is just about visible

at around 1600 Hz', which corresponds to the characteristics of a clear lateral. The left-hand side of the BdE spectrogram confirms this observation and shows an F2 at around 1600 Hz, indicating the production of a clear lateral [l] (Ladefoged & Disner, 2012; Ogden, 2009). A clear lateral [l] is also characterised by a reduced amplitude in the spectrogram, which is due to the lateral airflow and results in a lighter acoustic pattern.

By contrast, the right-hand side of the spectrogram shows an F2 value of around 1000 Hz, which is characteristic of the darker lateral [ɫ]. This darker variant is associated with syllable-final positions, in which the tongue shape and posture produce a velarised articulation. As Ladefoged and Disner (2012) notes, syllable-final laterals are 'more posterior, velarised or darker' and have longer durations compared to their syllable-initial counterparts. This observation, illustrated in Figure 1.17, emphasises the positional variation and articulatory characteristics of the laterals in BdE.

The analysis shows that syllable-initial and syllable-final laterals in English are not mirror images of each other. According to Ogden (2009), two main differences can be observed: Syllable-initial laterals are clearer with a higher F2 value, while syllable-final laterals are darker and have a lower F2 value. In addition, syllable-initial laterals show a more abrupt transition from the lateral, while syllable-final laterals show slower transitions to the lateral. In the present study, the acoustic analysis of lateral BdE phonemes is consistent with Ogden's results. This confirms the presence of two different lateral sounds in BdE, namely the alveolar lateral /l/ and the velarised alveolar lateral approximant /ɫ/. In contrast to RP, in which both the clear and the dark laterals are allophones of a single phoneme, BdE distinguishes between these variants as separate phonemes.

By contrast, previous research on PakE has shown that speakers do not maintain an allophonic variance between clear and dark laterals. PakE speakers consistently produce /l/ as a clear lateral in both syllable-onset and coda positions (Syed et al., 2017). However, PakE speakers can perceive the difference between clear and dark laterals, suggesting that they have the potential to acquire allophonic variation in these sounds. Assessments by native BrE speakers revealed that PakE laterals in onset positions were near-native like, while those in coda positions were different but intelligible.

This is consistent with Bansal's (1972) findings that G.I.E. only contained one non-velarised allophone, /l/. Similarly, Davenport and Hannahs (2010) found that BrE laterals had

a clear [l] in syllable-initial positions and a dark [ɫ] in syllable-coda positions. The results of this study assist in understanding how BdE adapts to or deviates from native English varieties in the phonetic realisation of lateral sounds.

6.2.7 Approximants

Approximants are produced when two articulators approach each other without creating frictional noise to allow air to flow freely through the vocal tract. The velum is raised during articulation, preventing air from entering the nasal cavities. This feature brings approximants closer to vowels, as the mechanism described applies to both types of sounds (Ogden, 2009).

6.2.7.1 The Bilabial Approximant

The approximant /w/ is known as a 'glide', or as a 'semivowel' in some reference works. This phoneme sounds like a vowel and functions like a consonant. In production, /w/ is similar to the vowel /u/, but functions like a consonant because it does not occupy the syllable nuclei and always needs a vowel to support it (Yavas, 2011).
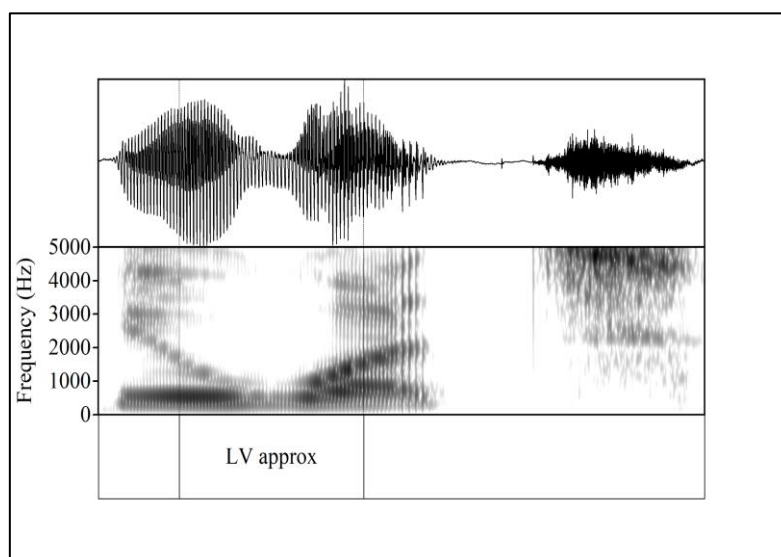
Figure 6.18: Spectrogram Analysis of 'a watch' Produced by a BdE Speaker

The spectrogram of BdE in Figure 6.18 shows the production of the labiovelar approximant, /w/. The segment labelled 'LV approx' shows the special characteristics of labiovelar articulation. During production, the lips are rounded and the back of the tongue is raised towards the velum. This configuration leads to a decline in F_1, reflecting the low F_1 values that are typical of back vowels such as [/u/]. At the same time, F_2 showed a significant downward

transition that is characteristic of posterior tongue constriction, with F_1 values between 250 and 450 Hz and F_2 values between 600 and 850 Hz. F_3, which is affected by lip rounding, also showed a reduced intensity below 3000 Hz (cf. Ladefoged & Disner, 2012). The spectrogram shows that the constriction of the vocal tract during articulation leads to a reduced intensity, which is reflected in a limited acoustic energy above 1000 Hz (cf. Ogden, 2009). These acoustic patterns, particularly the reduced F_3 intensity and the downward F_2 transition, are characteristic of the labiovelar approximants. The results indicate that the place and manner of articulation of /w/ produced by BdE speakers correspond to those in Standard English. Consequently, BdE speakers showed no significant differences in the pronunciation of the phoneme.

6.2.7.2 The Palato-Alveolar Approximant

In most cases, the 'r' sounds belong to one of the 'interrupted' types (taps, flaps, and trills); there is momentary contact between the articulators in both taps and flaps. The Spanish [Q] in *caro* [kaQo] 'expensive' (or the American English intervocalic /t/, as in writer), is produced via a flicking movement of the tip of the tongue against the upper articulator. Taps are sometimes equated with flaps, but this is incorrect. Firstly, taps are usually dental/alveolar, whereas flaps are retroflex. In addition, these two sounds differ in the direction of movement; the movement is from top to bottom in taps and from back to front in flaps (Yavas, 2011).
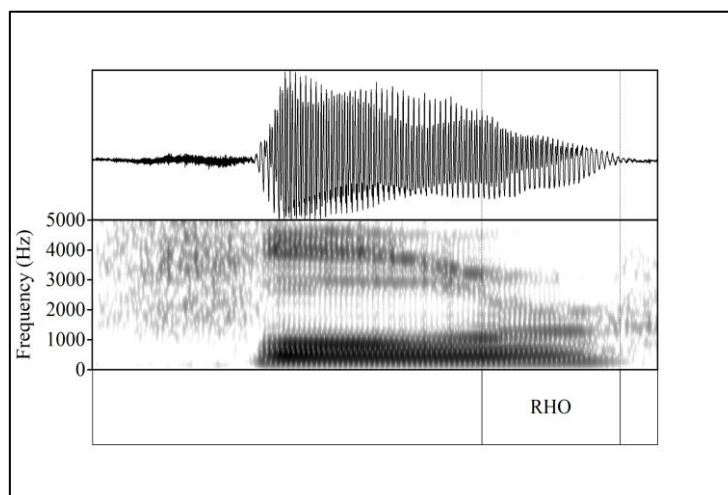
Figure 6.19: Spectrogram of the Word 'four' Produced by a BdE Speaker

In RP speakers, /r/ is a non-rhotic sound that is only pronounced when it immediately precedes a vowel, a phenomenon that is known as r-loss or non-rhoticity (Gick, 1999, p. 30). For example, /r/ is silent in words such as 'car' or 'fear', but is pronounced in words like 'red'

or 'very.' By contrast, BdE speakers produce /r/ in all contexts, including word-final and pre-consonantal positions. The spectrogram of the BdE speakers in Figure 6.19 shows the rhotic pronunciation of /r/. Rhotic sounds typically have a low F3 value (~1800 Hz) (cf. Ogden, 2009) and occasionally drop to 1500 Hz when produced by English speakers (cf. Ladefoged, 2011, p. 54). Cox also found that /r/ was characterised by F_1 (300–350 Hz), which indicates lip rounding, as well as F_2 (1000–1200 Hz) and F_3 (1600–1750 Hz), all of which are visible on the spectrogram. In addition, /r/ in BdE is pronounced as a liquid alveolar flap (ɾ), which often includes a short tap on the alveolar ridge and diverges from the RP of a palato-alveolar approximant.

As observed in the southern zone of IndE, speakers often replace voiced fricatives and affricates with voiceless counterparts, thus turning /r/ into a retroflex flap (Chakraborty, 2020). In general, /r/ is a rolled or trilled postalveolar sound in IndE, and most Indian speakers articulate /r/ in all positions (Roy, 2020). These results emphasise the regional differences and the influence of substrates on rhotic pronunciation in the different varieties of English that are spoken in South Asia.

6.2.7.3 The Palatal Approximant

The palatal approximant [j] is closely related to the cardinal vowel [i], and many phoneticians and phonologists treat [j] as the consonantal equivalent of [i]. In English spelling, it is usually represented by the letter y, as in 'you', 'yet', and 'York', and is often part of the letter value in words such as 'use', 'computer', and 'cue' (Ogden, 2009). Figure 6.20 shows the spectrogram of the /j/ sound produced by a BdE speaker.
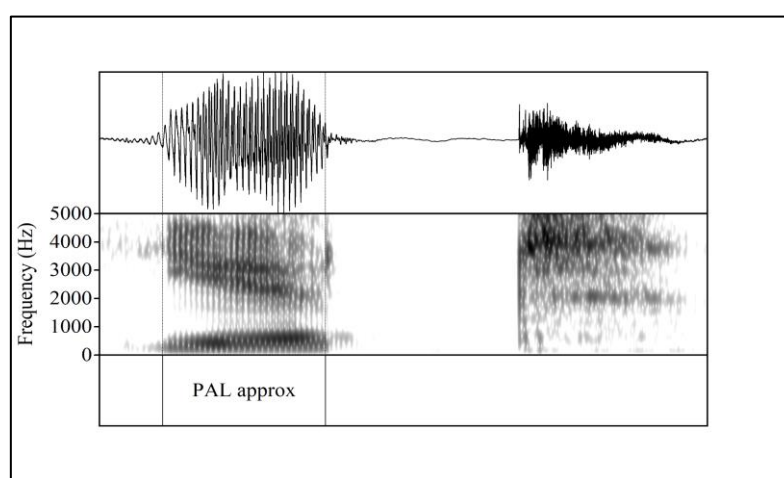
Figure 6.20: /j/ Sound Produced by a BdE Speaker

The spectrogram (see Figure 6.20) shows that the /j/ sound in BdE is voiced, which is consistent with RP. In the articulation of /j/, the tongue is in an anterior, high position near the hard palate, resulting in a formant pattern similar to that of the vowel /i/. A low F_1 (~200–300 Hz) indicates a raised tongue body, while a high F2 (~1850–2100 Hz) reflects the anterior position of the tongue in the mouth (cf. Ogden, 2009). In addition, F3 (~2620–3050 Hz) supports this characterisation of palatal approximation (cf. Ladefoged & Disner, 2012).

The segment of the spectrogram labelled 'PAL approx' (Figure 6.20) also highlights the palatal approximation with visible voicing, which is characterised by even vertical striations. The lips remain neutral and do not spread, but adapt to the roundness of the following vowel. Since the observed acoustic features and articulatory gestures are consistent with the criteria for palatal approximants, they confirm that BdE speakers do not produce /j/ differently from RP speakers in terms of place, manner, or voicing.

6.2.8 Consonant Chart

Table 6.4: Consonants in BdE

Manner of Articulation		Bilabial	Libodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar/ Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
A	**Plosive**	p b		[t̪] [d̪]	t d			k g	
	Fricative	ɸ β			s Z	ʃ ʒ			h
	Affricate					tʃ dʒ			
B	**Nasal**	m			n			ŋ	
	Lateral				l			ɫ	
	Approximant	w					j		
	Liquid				ɾ				

Table 6.5: An IPA Chart of BrE (Roach, 2004, p. 240)

Manner of Articulation		Manner of Articulation	Libodental	Dental	Alveolar	Postalveolar/ Palato-alveolar	Palatal	Velar	Glottal
A	**Plosive**	p b			t d			k g	
	Fricative		f v	θ ð	s Z	ʃ ʒ			h
	Affricate					tʃ			

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				dʒ	
	Nasal	m	n		ŋ
	Lateral		l		
B	**Approximant**	w		r	j

The consonant inventories of BdE and RP show remarkable differences in both the presence and in the distribution of sounds, as shown in Tables 6.4 and 6.5 In BdE, the bilabial and dental plosives include /p/, /b/, /t̪/ and /d̪/, reflecting phonetic features of this variety, while RP contains the alveolar plosives /t/ and /d/ in these positions without dental counterparts. In terms of fricatives, BdE has the labiodental approximants /ɸ/ and /β/, whereas RP uses the labiodental fricatives /f/ and /v/ together with the dental fricatives /θ/ and /ð/, which are not present in BdE. Both variants share /s/, /z/, /ʃ/ and /ʒ/ in the alveolar and postalveolar positions, although BdE also introduces phonetic variations in the articulation. With regard to affricates, /tʃ/ and /dʒ/ occur in both variants, while nasals such as /m/, /n/ and /ŋ/ are also present in both. The lateral approximants differ slightly, with BdE having a velarised /ɫ/, which is not present in RP. In addition, BdE contains a liquid /ɾ/, which is absent in RP, in which the approximant /r/ is used instead. Finally, both varieties contain the glottal fricative /h/, with BdE emphasising certain phonetic distinctions in certain environments. This comparison illustrates the influence of linguistic and cultural factors that shape the phonological system of BdE in comparison to RP.

The phonological differences between BdE and RP have significant sociolinguistic implications, highlighting issues of linguistic identity, language ownership, and socio-political power dynamics. The localised features of BdE, such as the use of dental plosives /t̪/ and /d̪/ and the absence of certain RP fricatives such as /θ/ and /ð/, reflect the nativisation of English in Bangladesh and emphasise its adaptation to local linguistic norms. This differentiation challenges the traditional exonormative recourse to RP as 'Standard' English and promotes a sense of belonging and the legitimacy of BdE as a distinct variety within the paradigm of World Englishes. However, these differences also influence perceptions of prestige and intelligibility, as RP continues to be associated with colonial heritage, global communication, and socio-economic privilege. Consequently, the phonological features of BdE can reinforce linguistic stratification by stigmatising speakers of more localised forms or giving them less access to opportunities in contexts that favour RP-like accents, thus perpetuating inequalities that are rooted in language ideologies.

Table 6.6: IPA Consonant Inventory for BdE and BrE

Manner of Articulation	Place of Articulation	BdE Consonant	BrE Consonant
Plosive	Bilabial	p, b	p, b
	Dental	[t̪], [d̪]	–
	Alveolar	t, d	t, d
	Velar	k, g	k, g
Fricative	Bilabial	ɸ, β	–
	Libo-dental	–	f, v
	Dental	–	θ, ð
	Alveolar	s	s
	Postalveolar/Palato-alveolar	Z	Z
	Palatal	ʃ, ʒ	ʃ, ʒ
	Glottal	h	h
Affricate	Postalveolar	tʃ, dʒ	tʃ, dʒ
Nasal	Bilabial	m	m
	Alveolar	n	n
	Velar	ŋ	ŋ
Lateral	Alveolar	l	l
Approximant	(various)	w, j	w, r, j
Liquid	(context-dependent)	ɾ	–

The results provide a comparative phonological analysis between BdE and BrE, systematically highlighting both convergences and divergences in consonant phoneme production based on manner and place of articulation. Consonants sharing a high degree of phonemic similarity across the two varieties include bilabial (/p, b/), alveolar (/t, d/), and velar (/k, g/) plosives, alveolar (/s/) and postalveolar (/ʃ, ʒ/) fricatives, glottal (/h/) fricative, postalveolar affricates (/tʃ, dʒ/), and nasal consonants (/m, n/), suggesting relative phonemic stability. Notable phonological divergences, however, appear prominently in the dental and labio-dental fricatives and approximants: BdE exclusively employs dental plosives (/t̪, d̪/), bilabial fricatives (/ɸ, β/), and the alveolar tap (/ɾ/), which are absent from BrE. Conversely, BrE uniquely includes dental fricatives (/θ, ð/) and demonstrates a richer approximant inventory (/r/) not fully mirrored in BdE, signifying phonological divergence influenced by the Bengali substrate. These phonological variations highlight the interplay between language universals and language-specific constraints, emphasising the significant role of substrate language influence (Bengali) in shaping the consonantal inventory of BdE, thus reflecting broader sociophonetic processes of adaptation and divergence.

Summary

In this chapter, I examined the segmental phonological features of BdE via a detailed acoustic analysis with a focus on vowel and consonant realisations in comparison to SSBE, or RP. The

findings revealed systematic phonological variations that not only identified BdE as an emergent variety of English, but also reflected the influence of the speakers' L1, Bengali. With regard to the vowel system, key differences were observed in the articulation of front, central, and back vowels. The front vowels in BdE were found to be more frontal and higher. However, there was no significant difference in the positioning of the mid-front vowels.

The central vowels in BdE presented more marked variation, particularly due to the absence of a central mid-vowel in the L1 Bengali vowel inventory. One of the most significant findings was the absence of the schwa /ə/ in BdE, which was attributed to its nonexistence in Bengali phonology. In the back vowel space, RP speakers consistently produced more retracted and close vowel qualities, whereas BdE speakers merged the mid-back and low-back vowels, and failed to maintain a contrast between the two. These findings point to a BdE vowel inventory that consists of 10 monophthongs in contrast to the 12 in RP.

A consonantal analysis revealed further divergences. Of note, voiceless plosives in BdE were produced without aspiration, in line with the phonetic patterns that were observed in other South Asian languages. Voiced plosives were consistently prevoiced in BdE, as indicated by the negative VOT values. Phonemic substitutions were observed in the plosive and fricative categories: BdE utilises bilabial and dental plosives rather than the dental fricatives of RP due to their absence in the Bengali phonetic system. In addition, BdE speakers used bilabial fricatives in place of the RP labiodental fricatives, with lower formant values suggesting a less constricted airflow. However, the alveolar fricatives, palato-alveolar fricatives, and glottal fricatives showed consistent realisation across both groups. In terms of nasals, Bengali speakers exhibited limited distinction in the articulation, suggesting the influence of the L1 phonetic system. BdE also demonstrated the presence of two lateral approximants: a clear alveolar lateral and a velarised option. Furthermore, the labiovelar approximant and the palatal approximant were produced similarly by speakers of both varieties. However, a prominent feature of BdE was the consistent rhoticity in word-final and preconsonantal contexts, marking a divergence from the typically nonrhotic RP.

CONCLUSIONS

The Research Problems in the Current Study

The language situation in Bangladesh is gradually deteriorating under the grip of linguistic imperialism. Bengali is increasingly losing its prestige and functional value due to the overwhelming dominance of English; Bengali is now perceived as being inferior to English (and in some cases, Arabic), particularly in educational and commercial domains in which it no longer has a respected position. Although Bengali is still the MOI in many schools, the management of language education is poor. This has led to a steady decline in parents' interest in enrolling their children in BMI schools. Consequently, it has also affected the language proficiency of both teachers and students. As a result, the expansion of EMI continues to engulf BMI education, and the semantic integrity of Bengali is being eroded by the pervasive influence of English.

Instead of focusing on those who genuinely need English proficiency within the education system. The state and affluent classes have prioritised mass training in English. This approach overlooks the actual needs of specific groups. This shift is giving rise to numerous adverse social and cultural consequences, including the emergence of a nation that aims to be proficient in English as an L1, fuelled by a misinterpretation of the concept of globalisation. At present, globalisation has become an empty ideal, disproportionately benefiting capitalist states while causing political and cultural subjugation in underdeveloped and developing countries. The unplanned imposition of English as a foundational component of education in the absence of any guiding policy or ideology has resulted in increasing inefficiencies and wasted resources in the education sector. Thus, Bangladesh's education system is plagued by unplanned and disorganised foreign-language instruction, resulting in a directionless and chaotic foreign-language education system taking root in the country.

Although Bangladesh is a multilingual country in terms of linguistic diversity, there is little evidence of multilingual practice, particularly in major urban centres such as Dhaka. This indicates that non-Bengali linguistic communities remain marginalised and largely excluded from the mainstream. Their limited access to education and employment further perpetuates this exclusion. Despite some implicit language policy being embedded in national education strategies, no explicit and inclusive language policy has yet been formulated. Most L1 Bengali speakers only have limited English proficiency, often restricted to interpreting documents in

the private sector. By contrast, the elite English-speaking groups are poised to dominate Bangladesh's future political and economic landscape, thereby marginalising Bengali speakers in their own nation. This situation poses a significant threat to the cultural and political sovereignty of the Bengali people, as the English-speaking class may ignore national values to establish a lifestyle and a cultural system tailored to their own interests, funded by the resources of the Bengali nation.

Sociolinguistic Perceptions of English

In this study, I demonstrated that the sociolinguistic perceptions of English in Bangladesh are shaped by a complex interplay of historical, economic, educational, and ideological factors. The dominance of English in educational institutions, labour markets, and global mobility discourses is not merely a matter of linguistic preference. It represents a deeply embedded structure of power. This structure is rooted in postcolonial legacies and is sustained by neoliberal and neoimperial mechanisms. English is widely seen as a means of upward mobility and social transformation. Learners and teachers associate it with development, employment, competence, intellectual legitimacy, connectivity and global opportunity. English enjoys institutional prestige and is embedded in job recruitment criteria, higher education admission processes, and business communication. Thus, English is becoming a prerequisite for success in a globalised and technologically driven world. However, this positive perception carries sociopolitical consequences and is marked by ambivalence, resistance, and identity negotiation. The dominance of English creates a labour market dualism that systematically disadvantages BMI graduates. They experience lower salaries and limited career opportunities.

This marginalisation reinforces a "dualistic policy contradiction". The state promotes "English for Development" while neglecting fair and inclusive language planning. The devaluation of Bengali in professional and academic spaces results in the broader disempowerment of local linguistic capital. This is further intensified by the over-valuation of EMI institutions and the idealisation of British-accented English. Teachers largely support English as an academic lingua franca and a conduit for accessing global knowledge. However, they are also concerned about the ideological asymmetry and class-based exclusion that EMI policies perpetuate. The stratification of schooling systems along linguistic lines, with EMI for the elite and BMI for others, worsens socioeconomic inequalities and weakens cultural ties. Teachers describe this as a "dependency complex" (Fanon, 1952/1986) that promotes subtractive bilin-

gualism. They observe that EMI disproportionately benefits the urban elite while creating systemic inequalities. Thus, it divides society along linguistic lines, which some teachers have described as linguicism embedded in neoliberal schooling.

The most important interrelationship that was evident in this study was between parental agency and institutional agency which, combined, drive the commercialisation of English education in Bangladesh. Parents, particularly those with middle and upper-income backgrounds, are acutely aware of the structural disadvantages associated with BMI. Motivated by the perceived educational, economic, and migratory advantages of EMI, these parents actively choose EMI despite the high financial cost. In response, school and institutional agencies have aligned their objectives with this parental demand by rapidly expanding EMI institutions and promoting foreign curricula alongside English-only environments.

Many such institutions, including unregistered EMI models from kindergarten onwards, are proliferating in both urban and rural areas, thereby transforming EMI education into a commodified, profit-driven system. These institutions promise upward mobility; they often lack pedagogical grounding. Thus, reinforces educational elitism and exacerbates inequalities in access to quality education. The demand for EMI is not merely aspirational but structurally motivated, as English is perceived as linguistic capital essential for avoiding social marginalisation and securing access to elite institutions, foreign curricula and quality education overseas. The symbiotic relationship between parents seeking upward mobility and schools commodifying that desire creates a self-perpetuating cycle, where English is both the cause and the consequence of sociolinguistic inequality.

The symbiotic relationship between parents seeking upward mobility and schools commodifying that desire creates a self-perpetuating cycle, where English is both the cause and the consequence of sociolinguistic inequality. The neoliberal globalisation of education forces many lower-income parents into precarious financial situations in the pursuit of EMS. This phenomenon of early English enrolment becoming not just common but expected, thus reinforcing elitism and weakening linguistic diversity in children's early education. Consequently, students face increasing pressure to excel in English, and failure to do so often results in negative perceptions from family, teachers and society. Additionally, Bengali teachers also face systemic challenges, such as salary disparities.

Furthermore, the implementation of EMI has contributed to a growing disconnection from the Bengali language and culture, alongside dissatisfaction with limited domestic opportunities and institutional dysfunction. As a result, both teachers and students increasingly aspire to migrate initially for educational purposes, but often with the long-term objective of securing permanent residency abroad. Diaspora communities further reinforce this migratory orientation by offering both material and symbolic support. They function as cultural brokers, validating the perceived necessity of English fluency for survival and success abroad. The aspiration to study or migrate abroad further amplifies the sociolinguistic significance of English.

Learners' agency is increasingly directed towards escaping social, political, and economic domestic hardship. This movement is further supported by diaspora networks and state-backed English courses via embassies. These phenomena indicate the transnational shaping of language policy across the global south. However, the internationalisation of English comes at a high cost. Standardised language tests function as gatekeeping tools, placing disproportionate economic burdens on nonnative speakers despite their qualifications and potential. As a result, the role of English as both an enabler and as a barrier contributes to the global brain drain, as intellectual capital that is nurtured in the South is absorbed into the economies of the North.

This dynamic further exemplifies neoimperialism in the global south, where English operates as a technologically advanced, structurally imposed language. In the technofeudal age, English has the highest capital, while Bengali struggles for epistemic legitimacy in the digital world. The limited presence of Bengali on digital platforms, coupled with the dominance of English in science, technology, and administrative systems, reinforces top-down language hierarchies. Furthermore, the government is complicit in this trend under the guise of modernisation; this trend also reflects the influence of corporate and NGO interests in shaping linguistic preferences and practices. Despite the structural domination of English in every sector, the feasibility of resistance is limited but is not absent. This suggests the existence of limited counter-discourse that is rooted in technological empowerment and cultural reclamation.

Ownership of English in Bangladesh exists along a continuum. At one end, the participants expressed instrumental and integrative orientations as they valued English for ease, communication, and professional integration. Conversely, there is an increasing demand for pluricentric recognition, which rejects the notion that British or American varieties should be upheld as the sole standards of correctness. Many participants embraced a personalised form of English, BdE, as a valid and expressive medium. Although BdE is not yet grammatically codified,

its unique lexical innovations, phonological features, and sociolectal traits signal movement towards endonormative stabilisation, a defining stage in the evolution of WE. The perception of Bengali accents is particularly telling. Contrary to older stereotypes of linguistic inferiority, most of the students no longer considered the Bengali accent to be embarrassing. While many still expressed aspirational leanings towards British pronunciation particularly in high-stakes contexts they acknowledged the role of Bengali-inflected English in shaping their identity. This nuanced attitude reflected both accommodation and divergence, suggesting that English in Bangladesh is not simply an imposed language, but is an evolving resource that is negotiated within local realities. Nevertheless, the participants showed a strong interest in a broader acceptance of BdE. This indicates a double perception: BrE is favoured in formal or prestige-oriented settings, while BdE is valued for its connection to cultural identity and local belonging.

Colonial Legacies and Language Policy and Planning

The study's findings showed that LPP in Bangladesh is deeply rooted in the colonial past and shapes the educational ideology, the linguistic landscape, and social perceptions. Furthermore, in this thesis, I argued that the LPP process is actively shaped by a persistent colonial legacy. This legacy is reinforced by the collaboration between foreign and state agencies and is legitimised through economic arguments and dominant global language ideologies. For example, English continues to have a dominant position (colonial linguistic hierarchies) in NEP as a compulsory subject across all levels of education. In higher education, English is the only MOI at all private universities, medical colleges, and professional institutions, as mandated by the state, and is prevalent both explicitly and implicitly at the majority of public universities. Furthermore, the continued reliance on British curricula and textbooks perpetuates Western ideologies, often at the expense of local histories, cultures, and epistemologies. Instead of challenging this colonial inheritance, the postindependence state has appropriated it as a mechanism for maintaining economic, ideological, and educational control.

The role of the state agency has been pivotal in sustaining these linguistic hierarchies, particularly in terms of aligning NEP with global neoliberal imperatives. The state has elevated English from being a simple communicative tool to being a symbol of prestige, modernity, and economic advancement through policies. These policies are designed to attract foreign investment and to cultivate knowledge-based societies. These policy orientations are further reinforced by foreign aid and international ELE agendas, which have facilitated the proliferation of EMI. In effect, both state and foreign agencies work together to maintain a specific linguistic

order. Within this order, English functions as the primary language for national progress, while Bengali is becoming increasingly relegated to informal, cultural, or symbolic spaces. This macro-level strategy has produced significant territorial and social shifts in linguistic practices and perceptions. English is no longer confined to elite domains; instead, it has penetrated deeply into everyday life, reshaping communicative norms, influencing aspirations, and redefining the value and status of languages within the broader sociolinguistic ecology.

The current LPP further reflects a structural imbalance that privileges English while neglecting linguistic diversity and inclusivity. The NEP fails to incorporate indigenous languages into the developmental agenda and does not sufficiently recognise the cognitive and cultural benefits of multilingualism. Consequently, the national curriculum remains largely unlocalised, inadequately responsive to the sociolinguistic needs of learners, and poorly aligned with pedagogical goals rooted in local contexts. This systemic inequity has produced a linguistic economy in which English accrues disproportionate economic and symbolic value, driving a labour market that rewards English proficiency above other linguistic competencies. The convergence of language and economic policy has given rise to a regime of "language economics" (Grin, 2003; Grin, Sfreddo, & Vaillancourt, 2010), in which language operates both as a gatekeeping mechanism and a commodified resource. Such short-term utilitarian strategies compromise long-term educational autonomy, cultural sustainability, and linguistic equity.

These macro-level policies cause micro-level disruptions that affect identity and equality at the individual level. Language policies that favour English dominance have led to significant psychological, cognitive, and pedagogical consequences. Students frequently experience challenges due to their limited familiarity with English, leading to an overreliance on rote memorisation and replication which, in turn, curtails opportunities for critical thinking, creativity, and independent knowledge production. Their confidence and classroom engagement are often undermined by institutional environments that reinforce monolingual norms, ranging from the English names of institutions to the exclusive use of English in academic documents. Teachers, particularly those at private universities, also face restrictions on the use of Bengali, as English-only policies are either explicitly mandated or tacitly imposed.

Parents, motivated by the perceived social prestige and economic advantages of English proficiency, increasingly prioritising early English immersion for their children. This hinder the L1 development, leading to generational gaps in language competence and weakening in-

tergenerational communication and cultural continuity. What is particularly striking is the relative absence of collective resistance to this English-centric paradigm. The normalisation of English as a prerequisite for socioeconomic advancement has resulted in the internalisation of linguistic inequality across multiple sectors of society. This tacit acceptance reflects a form of cultural amnesia regarding the historical, political, and symbolic significance of Bengali, thereby exacerbating the erosion of the linguistic and cultural heritage.

With regard to cultural and epistemic consequences, the declining status of Bengali as a medium of higher education, knowledge production, and public discourse represents not just a linguistic issue but a broader cultural and epistemic crisis. This shift signifies a loss of epistemic autonomy, as it reinforces the dominance of Western knowledge systems; diminishing indigenous intellectual traditions. For students, particularly those who struggle to reconcile the imposed linguistic norms with their capabilities and lived experiences, this results in identity conflicts, psychological distress, and academic alienation. As several teachers observed, such misalignment compromises students' engagement and academic performances. By promoting English as a universal solution, current policy frameworks disregard the diverse linguistic capital that students bring to the classroom and undermine their fundamental right to learn in a language that they understand and value. Ultimately, the hegemony of English engenders structural inequalities by transforming language into both an instrument of exclusion and a mechanism of cultural assimilation.

The findings of this study highlight the urgent need to rethink LPP in Bangladesh. A reformed policy should acknowledge past injustices, correct existing inequalities, and restore the cultural and intellectual value of indigenous languages. Promoting linguistic justice does not mean rejecting English, but rather using it in conjunction with Bengali and other local languages in a balanced way. This includes designing curricula that reflect local contexts, encouraging bilingual teaching methods, and creating an inclusive environment in which all language practices and identities are respected. Without such changes, Bangladesh risks becoming more dependent on English, increasing social inequality, and losing touch with its cultural roots. Addressing the colonial influence in current language policy is essential, not only to ensure fairness in education but also to protect the national identity, cultural heritage, and the right of people to use and value their own language(s).

Cultural Displacement and Identity

The colonial legacies in NEP extend to cultural identity and epistemic sovereignty. In this study, I explored how ELT practices, curriculum design, and media consumption influence cultural norms and how local comprador classes facilitated cultural dislocation and identity fragmentation. The findings prove that LPP is not a neutral state administrative tool, but is a potent mechanism for cultural control. The LPP continues to manufacture dependency, to suppress indigenous voices, and to alter national awareness.

When examining how the colonial influence is perpetuated in knowledge and culture, the study's findings revealed that the ELT materials and the textbooks that were used in EMI, which were mainly published by multinational companies, were full of Western cultural references. This creates what can be called a "Western cultural inversion" whereby students are taught to see the world via Western perspectives that ignore or undervalue their own culture and experiences. As a result, many students feel disconnected from the learning materials because they do not reflect their lives or identities. This type of exclusion not only distances students from their cultural roots, but also reinforces unfair systems by presenting Western knowledge and values as being superior.

The use of foreign knowledge systems in higher education increases cultural disconnection, leading to the creation of what Fanon (1952/1986:69) called "extremely brown" individuals who were educated in English and who are out of touch with the real needs of their local communities and economy. National elites often referred to as "brown sahibs" not only adopt the language of the coloniser, but also internalise the worldview associated with it, thereby maintaining colonial hierarchies through linguistic and cultural assimilation. This phenomenon continues in many former British colonies, where such elites emulate their former colonisers and use the very tools of language to marginalise and oppress their own people (Shankar, 2023; Khurshid, 2009; Omar, 2017). This reflects a lasting "colonial habitus" (Bourdieu, 1991) supported by both global powers and local elites who promote English as a symbol of status and progress. As Western-style education continues to replace indigenous systems, particularly the idea of "pluriversity", which values diverse ways of knowing, Bangladesh risks becoming intellectually dependent on the West. This shift encourages people to focus on personal success measured by Western standards rather than on meeting local needs and responsibilities.

This cultural and knowledge imbalance creates problems in the classroom. Students often turn to online content made by native English speakers, whom they see as being more reliable and expert an effect of the lasting belief in the "native speaker fallacy" (Phillipson, 1992). As a result, local teachers may find it difficult to gain respect and authority in their classrooms. In addition, students who speak localised or nonstandard forms of English are often viewed as being less educated, which reinforces language-based elitism and widens the gap between teachers and learners.

This conflict between teachers and students disrupts the natural teaching and learning process, and creates classrooms in which respect, cultural understanding, and empathy are decreased. In such environments, younger generations begin to form "imagined communities" and take on "imagined identities", distancing themselves from their own culture and identifying with globalised, commercialised images instead. In some cases, this identity shift leads to what can be called "linguistic terrorism" (see Anzaldúa, 1987, for the term), which results in people who use nonstandard English being treated as inferior — their identities are rejected, and their cultural backgrounds are mocked or dismissed.

At the national level, the effects are equally serious. Students are showing less interest in Bengali, which is leading to a decline in their knowledge of Bengali literature and literary traditions. This weakens cultural identity, limits creativity in literature, and narrows the scope for diverse ways of thinking. At the same time, the widespread presence of foreign media, particularly on digital platforms promotes cultural dilution by encouraging people to adopt foreign values, styles, and beliefs. This trend is often referred to as the "McChicken phenomenon" (Hayat & AlBader, 2022), whereby a uniform global culture replaces rich and varied local traditions. Many individuals experience "linguistic schizophrenia" (Kachru's, 1984) as a result, as they feel torn between the pressure to adopt a foreign language and the suppression of their native one. The increasing acceptance of Anglo-American culture has led to the rise of "Anglomania" (Fishman, 1972), which refers to an intense admiration for English that threatens cultural diversity and weakens local knowledge systems.

This situation has led to what can be called aesthetic fetishism. The elite's push for the uniform use of English has turned the language into a marketable asset, particularly in terms of education, public services, and job opportunities. However, despite these language policies, there has been no clear progress in national development. Instead, English is increasingly becoming valued for its image and its prestige rather than for its practical use, thereby pushing

the country towards intentional monolingualism. This shift overlooks the rich linguistic diversity of the population and suppresses the multilingual abilities that are essential for fair and inclusive development.

The spread of English at the grassroots level through digital media, lifestyle trends, and education has led to a mindset which can be addressed as meta lingua fetish. People who have this mindset begin to imitate Western ways in terms of their clothing, food choices, and even thinking, in the belief that it will result in modernity and personal satisfaction. However, this form of imitation often masks a deeper issue, namely a postcolonial sense of cultural inferiority. What appears to be modern behaviour is, in fact, a form of mental slavery that gradually erodes local identity and self-worth.

Phonological Distinction and the Case for BdE

The findings from the acoustic and articulatory analysis of BdE provided compelling evidence for recognising it as a phonologically distinct variety of English. It is shaped by the linguistic ecology of Bangladesh and the phonemic inventory of L1 Bengali. In this chapter, I consolidate the key results and demonstrate that the systemic phonological variations that were observed in both vowel and consonant realisations were not marginal deviations from RP or SSBE, but were patterned, consistent, and linguistically motivated, thus warranting the classification of BdE as a legitimate WE.

The vowel system is characterised by systematic divergence and innovation. For example, the monophthong system of BdE exhibits structural divergence from RP with no significant positional difference and lacks the mid-central vowel because of the absence of a similar vowel in the Bengali phonemic inventory. The replacements with alternative realisations are influenced by L1 constraints, resulting in a restructured vowel space. Findings confirm that BdE has 10 monophthongs compared to the 12 in RP. This highlights a distinct phonological system that departs from RP's distribution and organisation, reflecting both L1 transfer and emerging internal norms in BdE. The consonant system of BdE is marked by systematic divergence from RP through substitution, addition, and phonetic conditioning. Key differences include replacing English sounds with similar ones found in Bengali, such as using dental sounds instead of alveolar ones and replacing certain fricatives with softer, bilabial sounds. Despite these differences, some consonants, such as certain fricatives and palato-alveolar sounds, are pronounced similarly in both BdE and RP, indicating areas of convergence.

Based on the axiological stance of linguistic identity, legitimacy, and standard resistance, these findings collectively reinforce the notion that BdE is not a deficient or transitional form of English, but is a structurally coherent variety emerging from substrate influence, phonological accommodation, and systematic internal variation. The observed patterns cannot be reduced to learner errors or to L2 interference; instead, they reflect the stable and recurring phonological features that are characteristic of a distinct variety. Such distinctions call for a reevaluation of normative models that continue to position RP as the benchmark of correctness, particularly in the contexts of education and assessments in Bangladesh. By identifying the precise acoustic and articulatory features that differentiate BdE from RP, my study also contributes to the broader understanding of WE and challenges the ideological dominance of inner-circle English norms. The BdE vowel and consonant systems illustrate how phonological systems evolve in contact zones, and are shaped by local linguistic ecologies, cognitive constraints, and identity negotiation.

Policy Implications

The sociolinguistic perceptions of English in Bangladesh are rooted in structural inequalities and historical power dynamics, but they are shaped by aspiration, adaptation, and agency. English is at once a gateway to global opportunity and a symbol of cultural alienation. Its dominance in education, migration, and communication reflects broader ideologies of neoliberalism, linguistic capital, and technomodernity. However, within this matrix of power, individuals and communities are actively reshaping the contours of English usage through resistance, reappropriation, and the gradual stabilisation of BdE.

Recognising these processes is essential for developing equitable and context-sensitive language policies. Any sustainable model must move beyond English-centrism to foster linguistic justice, to support bilingual and multilingual development, and to affirm linguistic identities as being central to national and educational development. As Bangladesh navigates the challenges of globalisation and digital modernity, its future lies not in resisting English but in redefining the ownership, function, and relationship with local languages, thereby reclaiming agency over its own linguistic destiny.

The case for BdE as a distinct phonological variety is supported by robust empirical evidence. The phonological inventory of BdE, its reduced vowel contrasts, the lack of schwa,

prevoiced plosives, bilabial approximants, dental substitutions, and consistent rhoticity constitute a system that is functionally adequate, socially embedded, and acoustically distinct. These features must be recognised not as deficiencies but as markers of linguistic diversity, postcolonial identity, and phonological innovation. Pedagogically, these findings call for the reconfiguration of ELT practices in Bangladesh, where the persistent idealisation of RP undermines local phonological realities. Curriculum design, pronunciation assessment, and teacher-training programmes should acknowledge the distinctive features of BdE to ensure inclusive, context-sensitive, and sociolinguistically aware language education. In essence, the legitimacy of BdE must be affirmed not only descriptively but also normatively. As a product of historical, linguistic, and social forces, BdE is both a reflection of Bangladesh's multilingual heritage and a contributor to the global landscape of WE. Embracing its phonological distinction is a step towards decolonising linguistic standards and fostering equitable representation in global English usage.

Suggestions

In order to restore the dignity of the Bengali language, it is imperative to ensure its mandatory use across all levels of education and administration. This requires decisive, state-level interventions to institutionalise Bengali as the primary MOI and communication in educational institutions and bureaucratic operations. Such a move would mark the foundational step in reaffirming the prestige of the national language. Enacting and enforcing comprehensive legislation to ensure the use of Bengali across various sectors is essential. These sectors include education, governance, commerce, and judicial processes. Such legislation should not remain in theory, but must be implemented effectively through a dedicated oversight body.

Simultaneously, the languages of indigenous communities must be recognised and evaluated based on their structure, prestige, and practical utility. Language institutes under government jurisdiction should support the development of Bengali and minority languages. National institutions with adequate infrastructure and funding should also take an active role in this process. These organisations must work together to promote linguistic growth across different communities. There is a need for a revival of cultural identity centred on language at both national and international levels. In addition to the geographical and political identity of Bangladeshi nationality, the cultural distinctiveness of Bengali identity must be rejuvenated. Planned efforts should be made to increase the use of Bengali in media, literature, music, and film. In particular, greater policy support is required to encourage the creative use of Bengali

on digital platforms and social media. The use of Bengali in research and technology must be widely encouraged to align language development with scientific advancement. Special initiatives are necessary to expand the scope of research and technological applications in Bengali, particularly at the level of higher education.

This will not only contribute to knowledge creation but also to the enrichment of the language. To ensure the technological advancement of Bengali, tools such as AI and ML should be leveraged, and a nationally coordinated plan involving the language institutes at public universities should be implemented. Due to technological influences and global cultural flows, all segments of today's society are increasingly being exposed to new and unfamiliar vocabulary. The lack of standardised Bengali terminology for many essential foreign terms presents serious challenges for advocates of the Bengali language. This problem is especially evident in education, administration, business, research, and governmental planning. In these sectors, appropriate Bengali equivalents for many technical or foreign terms are often missing.

Therefore, it is equally important to not only develop accurate and context-appropriate Bengali terminology, but also to ensure their consistent implementation and use across the relevant domains. In addition to teaching English, the teaching and learning of other foreign languages in Bangladesh must be made more realistic and development oriented, and the overall education system should undergo fundamental reform. Due to a limited understanding of globalisation, classical languages such as Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Pali have been largely confined to religious practice. This trend needs to be reversed. A broader curricular perspective is required to integrate these languages into wider academic and cultural contexts.

Due to a limited understanding of globalisation, classical languages such as Arabic, Persian, Sanskrit, and Pali have been largely confined to religious practice. This trend needs to be reversed through a broader curricular perspective is required to integrate these languages into wider academic and cultural contexts. Unless Bengali is implemented at all institutional levels, people from all classes will not have equal opportunities to participate in the country's development. Thus, despite its official status as the state language of Bangladesh, Bengali has now become a language in decline. This is precisely where the politics of language become evident. The responsibility of making political decisions to institutionalise the national language ultimately rests with the state itself.

Although Bengali is not yet an endangered language, it is not a thriving one; that is, it is experiencing a period of decline. This is evident in the increasing Anglicisation of banks and commercial institutions, as well as the in use of English as the primary communication medium in offices and courts. A hybrid language, often referred to as "Banglish/Benglish",[57] [58]a fusion of Bengali and English is spreading, leading to both visible and audible forms of linguistic disorder. In some English-medium schools, students are even fined for speaking their L1, Bengali. If this practice continues in the absence of a clear language policy, it will result in the emergence of a new generation that is alienated from Bengali. This alarming trend can be curbed by enacting legislation to halt such practices and initiating systematic efforts to revitalise the language.

Limitation

This study was subject to several limitations that may have impacted the scope and interpretation of its findings. First, its cross-sectional design limited insights into how the impact and perception of English and the status of WE may change over time. Longitudinal research would provide a more dynamic view of these developments. Second, the data were collected exclusively from urban institutions, leaving out rural areas where linguistic practices and attitudes may differ substantially. The study also covered only public and private universities, excluding other types of HEIs like religious institutions and vocational streams. This restricted the representativeness of the findings across Bangladesh's diverse academic landscape.

In terms of methodology, the sample sizes of 120 participants for the survey and 10 for the acoustic analysis may have limited the generalisability and statistical robustness of the results. The use of self-reported data from the FGDs and semi-structured interviews introduced the potential for bias and may have affected reliability. The data for the acoustic analysis was affected by changing environmental conditions and the qualitative data was only verified manually, which raises concerns about reproducibility and the consistency of coding across the dataset.

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[57] Tahereen, T. (2016, May). Banglish: Code-switching and contact-induced language change in a spoken variety of Bangla. Spectrum: Journal of the Department of English, 12, 143–164.
[58] Mostafa, M., & Jamila, M. (2012). From English to Banglish: Loanwords as opportunities and barriers? English Today, 28(2), 26–31.

Finally, the phonological analysis addressed only segmental features, such as vowel monophthongs and consonants. The exclusion of suprasegmental elements and diphthongs prevented a more comprehensive understanding of BdE phonology. These limitations should be considered when interpreting the findings and designing future research.

ABSTRACT

Situated within the frameworks of English linguistic imperialism and World Englishes, this doctoral thesis examines the contested status of English in Bangladesh. It pursues two core objectives: first, to investigate the role of English in postcolonial educational policy, institutional and social practices and the linguistic dynamics between language, power, identity, and recognition; and second, to analyse attitudes toward Bangladeshi English, with particular attention to its phonetic features. While English has been widely studied as a tool of global communication, its sociolinguistic influence, economical legitimacy, influence on national identity and the development of its local variety in the Bangladeshi context remain insufficiently explored. This thesis critically interrogates whether English in Bangladesh's postcolonial context functions as a vehicle for global integration and internal unity or as a conduit for colonial hegemony, serving Western interests and perpetuating economic, cultural and epistemic subordination. It also considers the emergence of linguistic resistance in Bangladesh and includes a study on the developmental status of BdE as a distinct variety. Through the analysis of sociolinguistic perceptions, practices and phonetic variation, it addresses a significant gap in understanding how English simultaneously empowers and marginalises communities in the Global South.

The study employed a mixed-methods research design, integrating qualitative and quantitative approaches to comprehensively investigate English linguistic imperialism and the status of BdE. Guided by a critical constructivist and realist philosophical stance, it combined interpretivist and post-positivist epistemologies. Qualitative data were collected through focus group discussions with students ($n = 100$) and semi-structured interviews with university teachers ($n = 20$), which were analysed thematically to explore perceptions of English in Bangladesh. The quantitative data included survey responses from students and teachers ($n = 120$), analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, and acoustic recordings ($n = 10$) to identify BdE's phonological features.

The findings illustrate a tension between imposed linguistic hierarchies and an emerging local variety. Educational and national language policies reproduce postcolonial and neoliberal ideologies that equate English with power, prestige, global access and modernity. These macro-level structures influence educational practices, cultural dislocation and personal aspirations in ways that undermine linguistic justice and epistemic sovereignty. While caught within a hegemonic structure, some participants demonstrated critical awareness of ongoing

cultural dislocation and linguistic inequity. Furthermore, a growing, pluralistic awareness of BdE suggested an incipient shift towards a distinct, systematic English variety shaped by Bengali phonological structures. As the acoustic data illustrated, these include a restructured vowel inventory, consistent rhoticity, and L1-influenced consonantal shifts, underscoring BdE's legitimacy within the World Englishes framework of linguistic self-recognition and identity assertion.

These findings also highlight the persistent marginalisation of Bengali in Bangladesh's institutional, educational and socio-economic spheres, reflecting the deeper entanglement of linguistic hegemony, postcolonial governance and global power dynamics. The dominance of English, despite legal and policy-level support for Bengali, reflects not only a failure of policy implementation but also an internalised colonial mentality that privileges foreign epistemologies over indigenous ones. This dynamic not only erodes linguistic diversity and cultural continuity but also reinforces inequitable access to knowledge and opportunity for much of the population while curtailing inclusive national development. The thesis thus underscores the urgent need for inclusive language policy reform, pedagogical pluralism and state investment in Bengali-medium knowledge production. More broadly, it offers a critical lens through which to understand how postcolonial nations can reclaim linguistic displacements. Ensuring the functional centrality of the mother tongue is essential for epistemic justice, equitable development and sustainable cultural identity in an increasingly globalised world.

STRESZCZENIE

Usytuowana w ramach teoretycznych angielskiego imperializmu językowego oraz World Englishes, niniejsza rozprawa doktorska analizuje sporny status języka angielskiego w Bangladeszu. Praca realizuje dwa główne cele: po pierwsze, badanie roli języka angielskiego w postkolonialnej polityce edukacyjnej Bangladeszu, praktykach instytucjonalnych i społecznych oraz dynamiki relacji pomiędzy językiem, władzą, tożsamością a uznaniem; po drugie, analizę postaw wobec bangladeskiego angielskiego (BdE), ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem jego cech fonetycznych. Pomimo szerokich badań nad językiem angielskim jako narzędziem globalnej komunikacji, jego wpływ socjolingwistyczny, legitymizacja ekonomiczna, oddziaływanie na tożsamość narodową oraz rozwój lokalnej odmiany w kontekście Bangladeszu pozostają niewystarczająco rozpoznane. Praca ta w sposób krytyczny bada, czy angielski w postkolonialnej rzeczywistości Bangladeszu pełni funkcję narzędzia globalnej integracji i wewnętrznej jedności, czy też stanowi kanał hegemonii kolonialnej, służąc interesom Zachodu i podtrzymując podporządkowanie ekonomiczne, kulturowe oraz epistemiczne. Uwzględniona została również kwestia pojawiającego się oporu językowego w Bangladeszu oraz studium nad statusem rozwojowym BdE jako odrębnej odmiany. Poprzez analizę socjolingwistycznych percepcji, praktyk oraz zróżnicowań fonetycznych, praca ta wypełnia istotną lukę w zrozumieniu, jak język angielski jednocześnie wzmacnia i marginalizuje społeczności Globalnego Południa.

W badaniu zastosowano projekt badawczy typu mixed-methods, integrujący podejścia jakościowe i ilościowe w celu wszechstronnego zbadania imperializmu językowego angielskiego oraz statusu BdE. Opierając się na krytycznym konstruktywizmie oraz realizmie, połączono epistemologie interpretatywistyczną i postpozytywistyczną. Dane jakościowe zebrano za pomocą dyskusji fokusowych z udziałem studentów (n = 100) oraz półustrukturyzowanych wywiadów z wykładowcami akademickimi (n = 20), które zostały poddane analizie tematycznej w celu zbadania percepcji języka angielskiego w Bangladeszu. Dane ilościowe obejmowały odpowiedzi z ankiet przeprowadzonych wśród studentów i nauczycieli (n = 120), analizowanych z wykorzystaniem statystyki opisowej i inferencyjnej, oraz nagrania akustyczne (n = 10), które posłużyły do identyfikacji cech fonologicznych BdE.

Wyniki badania ukazują napięcie między narzuconymi hierarchiami językowymi a wyłaniającą się lokalną odmianą języka. Polityki edukacyjne i narodowe dotyczące języka odtwarzają postkolonialne i neoliberalne ideologie, które utożsamiają język angielski z władzą, prestiżem, dostępem do świata oraz nowoczesnością. Struktury makrospołeczne kształtują praktyki

edukacyjne, przemieszczenie kulturowe i osobiste aspiracje, podważając sprawiedliwość językową i suwerenność epistemiczną. Choć uczestnicy funkcjonowali w strukturze hegemonicznej, część z nich wykazywała krytyczną świadomość trwającego przemieszczenia kulturowego i nierówności językowych. Ponadto, rosnąca, pluralistyczna świadomość BdE wskazywała na początkową fazę wyłaniania się odrębnej, systematycznej odmiany angielszczyzny kształtowanej przez fonologiczne struktury bengalskiego. Dane akustyczne wykazały m.in. przeorganizowany inwentarz samogłoskowy, konsekwentną rotacyjność oraz przesunięcia spółgłoskowe pod wpływem L1, podkreślając legitymizację BdE w ramach World Englishes jako narzędzia autouznania i budowania tożsamości językowej.

Omawiane wyniki wskazują także na utrzymującą się marginalizację języka bengalskiego w instytucjonalnej, edukacyjnej i społeczno-ekonomicznej sferze Bangladeszu, odzwierciedlając głębokie uwikłanie hegemonii językowej, postkolonialnego zarządzania i globalnych dynamik władzy. Dominacja języka angielskiego, pomimo wsparcia prawnego i politycznego dla bengalskiego, odzwierciedla nie tylko niepowodzenie wdrażania polityk, lecz także uwewnętrznioną mentalność kolonialną, która faworyzuje epistemologie obce kosztem rodzimych. Ta dynamika nie tylko osłabia różnorodność językową i ciągłość kulturową, lecz także wzmacnia nierówny dostęp do wiedzy i możliwości dla znacznej części społeczeństwa, ograniczając tym samym inkluzywny rozwój narodowy. Praca podkreśla zatem pilną potrzebę reformy polityki językowej w kierunku inkluzywności, pluralizmu dydaktycznego oraz inwestycji państwa w produkcję wiedzy w medium bengalskim. Szerzej rzecz ujmując, praca oferuje krytyczną perspektywę dla zrozumienia, w jaki sposób państwa postkolonialne mogą odzyskiwać utracone przestrzenie językowe. Zapewnienie funkcjonalnej centralności języka ojczystego jest kluczowe dla sprawiedliwości epistemicznej, równościowego rozwoju oraz trwałej tożsamości kulturowej w coraz bardziej zglobalizowanym świecie.

Słowa kluczowe:

Bangladeski angielski, komodyfikacja, przemysł ELT, imperializm językowy angielskiego, Globalne Południe, język i władza, polityki językowe, lingua franca, neokolonializm językowy, społeczeństwo postkolonialne.

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Appendix A: Survey Items

I.   **Demography**

Q1. How old are you?

❍ 18 - 24   ❍ 25 - 34   ❍ 35 - 44

❍ 45-54   ❍ 55 – 64   ❍ 65 - 74

Q2. Are you?

❍ Male   ❍ Female   ❍ Third gender

Q3. Role

❍ Student   ❍ Teacher

Q4. Education level

❍ Higher Secondary Education ❍ Bachelor's degree ❍ Master's degree ❍ Doctorate or higher

Q5. What is your primary language?

❍ Bengali

❍ Regional language (e.g., Sylheti, Chittagonian)

❍ Indigenous language (e.g., Chakma, Santali)

Q7. How would you describe your level of English proficiency?

❍ Basic user – Can understand and use familiar everyday expressions

❍ Independent user – Can deal with most situations likely to arise

❍ Proficient user – Can express ideas fluently and spontaneously

Q8. How often do you use English in your daily life?

❍ Daily   ❍ Weekly   ❍ Occasionally   ❍ Rarely

Q9. In which of the following academic domains do you regularly use English?

❍ Academic writing and publications   ❍ Lecture delivery and classroom interaction

❍ Examinations and assessments   ❍ Group projects and collaborative work

❍ Conferences, seminars, and training   ❍ Administrative communication

II. Perception Towards Colonial Influence and Linguistic Imperialism

Please read each statement carefully and put an X or √ your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
Q10. British English is regarded as the standard norm in Academia.							
Q11. Colonial history shapes societal preference for British English.							
Q12. Educational institutes emphasise British norms in teaching.							
Q13. The British English perpetuates colonial social hierarchies in Bangladesh.							
Q14. Post-colonial legacies influence current varieties in education.							
Q15. Dominance of English has an impact on education equity.							
Q16. English has a major impact on education policies.							
Q17. Bengali and native varieties are being marginalised for English.							
Q18. English is significantly impacting local cultural identity and cultural diversity.							
Q19. English is one of the main factors for creating class division within society.							

III. Perception of World Englishes and Bangladeshi English

Please read each statement carefully and put an X or √ your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
Q20. English varieties from Britain or America are not only standard varieties.							
Q21. Every variety of WE should be considered Standard English.							
Q22. Standard English should not be the only norm for teaching and learning English.							
Q23. WE should be accepted in various areas, alongside standard varieties.							
Q24. The acquisition of a standard accent is not necessary for effective communication.							
Q25. Every variety of English is correct English.							
Q26. Willing to participate non-native English learning program.							
Q27. Non-native varieties also need to be taught widely.							
Q28. Everyone should use and promote their local varieties.							
Q29. English belong to anyone who can speak it.							
Q30. BdE is an emerging variety of English.							
Q31. BdE exhibits unique lexical variation.							
Q32. Grammatical variations did not occur in BdE.							
Q33. BdE adapts phonology to local demands.							
Q34. Linguistic features in BdE indicate its potential to evolve into a distinct variety.							

Q35. Speaking with a Bengali accent is not embarrassing.							
Q36. BdE is crucial for shaping personal identity.							
Q37. Bangladeshi should use BdE to show their identity.							
Q38. BdE should be recognised as a distinct marker of national identity.							
Q39. Bangladeshi accents should be acceptable and respected.							
Q40. BdE represents cultural identity.							
Q41. BdE integrates local cultural practices.							
Q42. BdE helps preserve cultural heritage while engaging with global communities.							
Q43. Local government promotes BdE.							
Q44. Bangladeshi should use BdE to promote their Cultural identity.							
Q45. BdE challenges the dominance of standard English							
Q46. BdE challenges the traditional linguistics hierarchy of English varieties.							
Q47. BdE reflects the freedom to shape English in their way.							
Q48. BdE defies linguistic homogenisation from colonial legacies.							
Q49. Contents of BdE should be included in education.							

IV.   **Attitudes Towards BdE**

Q50. What is your preferred English varieties in academic context.

❍ British English   ❍ American English   ❍ Bangladeshi English   ❍ Others

Q51. If you could choose any English accent, which three would you most like to have (Select and rank top three):

❍ American English   ❍ British English   ❍Canadian English

❍ Australian English   ❍ Bangladeshi English   ❍ Indian English

Q52. **Attitudes Towards BrE and BdE Varieties**

Traits	Instructions: Please indicate your impressions of the Bangladeshi English speaker in terms of the given adjectives by choosing one response for each of the seven scales below. For example, if you think the Bangladeshi speaker sounds very modest, please choose the highest rating. Translate it into Bengali.							Traits
Stupid	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Smart
Dishonest	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Honest
Poor	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rich
Uneducated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Educated
Not confident	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Confident
Unlikeable	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Likeable
Bad English	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Good English
Not fluent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Fluent
Boring	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Interesting
Ugly	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Beautiful
Outdated	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Modern
Crude	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Sophisticated

V. **Attitudes Toward BdE: Preference and Acceptability**

Please read each statement carefully and put an X or √ your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statement	Strongly Disagree	Partially Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Partially Agree	Strongly Agree
53. When I speak English, I want to sound like a native speaker.							
54. I envy those who can pronounce English like a foreign speaker.							
55. I am embarrassed to see Bengali people speaking the BdE even when they are having fluent conversations in English.							
56. I am embarrassed to see Bengali people speaking the BdE in international activities.							
57. In international communication, the Bangladeshi variety of English should be accepted as long as it is intelligible.							

Appendix B: VGT Stimuli

Jony was excited about his new job. He moved to the city last month and found a small apartment near his office. Every morning, he walked to work, enjoying the fresh air. His colleagues were friendly, and his supervisor was supportive.

During the weekends, Jony explored the city. He visited museums, tried local restaurants, and made new friends. He often called his family back home to share his experiences. He believed that living in the city would help him grow both personally and professionally.

Appendix C: Semi-Structured Interview Guide

Introduction:

Greetings and brief self-introduction.
Purpose of the interview: Exploring teachers' perceptions of English in Bangladeshi higher educational institutes.
Assuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.
Obtaining written consent.

Background and Teaching Experience

Educational background? Teaching experience?
Subjects taught? Level?
Duration of teaching at this institution?

Perception of English in Education

Importance of English in education? why?
Impact of English on students' motivation? Positive or negative?
Main factors promoting English in your institution?
Institutional policies supporting English?
Government role in promoting English?

Colonial, Postcolonial, and Cultural Influences

Is English still influenced by colonial history? How?
Impact on educational policies and pedagogy?
Effect of English on cultural identity?
Role of global media in promoting English?

Neo-Imperialism and Digital Dynamics

Role of English in technological and digital spaces?
Does English dominance in academia reflect neo-imperialism?
Observed resistance to English?

Closing and Further Remarks

Anything else about your experience with English in higher education?
Suggestions for balancing English and local languages?
Thanking the participant for their time and insights.
Reiterating confidentiality and how the information will be used.

Appendix D: Sample Consent Form

Study Title: English in Bangladesh and Linguistic Imperialism: Emergence of World Englishes

Researcher name: ABDUL AWAL

Please initial the boxes if you agree with the statements:

For Four Instruments

I have read and understood the information sheet (insert date, version no. of participant information sheet) and have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.	
I agree to participate in the focus group/ semi-structured interview/ survey & provide voice recordings discussion for this research and allow my responses to be used for the purpose of this study.	
I understand that my participation is voluntary, and I may withdraw (at any time) for any reason without my rights being affected.	

Participant Information:

Name of participant (print name): ....

Signature of participant: ....

Date: ....

Name of researcher (print name): ....

Signature of researcher: ....

Date: ....