

A FOREIGN LANGUAGE OR THE SECOND LANGUAGE: THE FUTURE OF ENGLISH IN BANGLADESH

Rowshon Ara

Eastern university, Bangladesh

Email: rowson@easternuni.edu.bd

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Abstract

Bangladesh does not have an official second language. However, apart from Bangla, English is the only other language widely used in the country. There has been a sustained debate whether English is a foreign language (EFL) or English is the second language (ESL) in Bangladesh, for often it is found that the function of English in the country is much closer to that of the second language. English in Bangladesh had a turbulent past as well as has an undefined but overwhelming present. Due to globalization and major economic connections with the outer world the presence of English has always been there. The all-embracing state of English in Bangladesh now is undeniable. The function of English in Educational sectors, Government sectors, courts, private organizations, media and communication etc. reveal the overpowering effect of English in the lives of people in Bangladesh. As such the all obtruding impact of English in the present life posits the enquiry on the future of the language in the land. This paper is a qualitative study that analyzes the domains of language use. The results reflect an urgency of change of the official status of English in Bangladesh from a foreign language to a second language.

Keywords: English as a foreign language, English as the second language, official language, domains of language use, bilingualism, multilingualism

INTRODUCTION

English language in Bangladesh has gone through its fair share of ups and downs since the independence of the land in 1971 (Banu & Sussex, 2001a; Moniruzzaman, 2009; Rahman, 2005). English language in Bangladesh used to enjoy a superior position as the second language and was gladly replaced by the only national language, Bangla, due to the rising national feelings after the Liberation war. The language movement in 1952 plays a major role behind the conscious effort taken later to replace English with Bangla. From then on Bangla enjoys the status of the only official language in Bangladesh and English has lost its glory and till now the official status of English in Bangladesh is undecided. But in recent days, due to massive globalization, English has become the most influential international language of communication. Bangladesh, being a small country and politically as well as economically influenced by global technology

and commerce, is placed greatly under the influence of English. As of now, English in Bangladesh has become the second most, often considered even more important than the native language Bangla, language. In education sector it has gained a superior position as it is seen as a mode of development at a personal and national level (Erling et al, 2012). Now we find English language as an omnipresent phenomenon in every sphere of Bangladeshi life.

The study in this article endeavors to project on the futuristic condition of English in Bangladesh based on the historical background of the language and also on the present persistent impact of English on education, government sectors, law courts, media and communication. The visible impacts give the impression that the language is here to stay for a long time. But due to some confusion its position in Bangladesh is still undefined. As Bangla has a historical legacy behind it, there

is always a fear of English overpowering and overshadowing this language. Due to this, English, emotionally to some extent, is still being rejected by the people though in practical life the impact of the language is undeniable. This article attempts to analyze how English rose in Bangladesh in the past due to colonial rise of the English and how gradually it lost its position after the Pakistan era and in the time of Bangladesh being built as an independent nation. Moreover, to reflect on the present condition of English in Bangladesh, the important domains of language use in Bangladesh will be analyzed. An in depth observation on the use of English language in the domains reflect that English, in practical use, has more importance than Bangla. Thus the paper brings forth the intricate amalgamation of English in the life of Bangladesh and suggests on a declared and more permanent status of the language to get rid of the apparent confusion among people of Bangladesh on the use of English and Bangla. Eventually, this will uphold the emotional acceptance of English in Bangladesh and due to the importance placed on the language, the country will be able to move towards more qualitative development.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An appreciation of the available literature on the existence of the English language in the pre and post Bangladesh era helps to understand the importance of the language in Bangladesh better. In the following sections the historical and present condition of English in Bangladesh is elaborated for the understanding of the study.

The Historical Background of English in Bangladesh

Before 1947 Bangladesh was a part of the Indian subcontinent. Once being a part of

undivided India, it shares the colonial history of British rule for two hundred years with India and Pakistan. In 1947, after independence from the British colonial rule, Bangladesh becomes a part of Pakistan till the Liberation war in 1971. Gaining Independence from the rule of Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh emerges as a fairly new country in the world. For two hundred years in this region English language was the language of the ruler, hence often more important than the native language. Study of English language has always been there at various levels at different times in the Indian subcontinent. Starting from British rule till 1971, English, in this Bangla speaking area, had much priority. In administration, education, judiciary etc. the mode of communication was English (Moniruzzaman, 1979). English, during this time, enjoyed the status of the second language in Bangladesh. During the post-colonial era, the use of English in these three countries varied. In India and Pakistan, English still remained as a second language due to the variety of languages used by people of different areas in these two countries. On the other hand, in Bangladesh, the position of English changed.

After Independence in 1971, Bangladesh was greatly in need of a nationally declared language to maintain government works, educational purposes and other domains of ruling the nation (Sibayan, 1989). But the deliberate act of planning a language to rule the nation was not such an easy task (Rubin and Jemudd, 1971). It required selection and enhancements of various levels of language phenomenon (Lambart, 1994). But in Bangladesh the act of language planning in terms of selection and development was much simpler and easier due to the existence of only one native tongue, Bangla (also known as Bengali). In fact, the reason of Independence of the country is deep-rooted in the history of its native language, Bangla (Skutnabb-Kangas and Philipson, 1989). When India and Pakistan were divided in 1947, the Eastern part of

Bengal, even though separated by 1200 miles with India being in the middle, became a part of Pakistan. The two parts were very different in language with West Pakistan speaking Urdu, and East Pakistan speaking Bangla. Of the total population, 95% people in Bangladesh speak in Bengali or Bangla (Banbeis 1998, Farooqi 2007).

An arbitrary attempt of the government of Pakistan to declare Urdu as the state language for East Pakistan in 1952 eventually led to the separation of the two parts and Bangladesh was able to keep Bangla as the native tongue. In 1948 Jinnah declared his “Urdu, and only Urdu” policy for East Pakistan and this led to a continuous unrest at this Bangla speaking area. As a result political activists and students of Dhaka University and other Institutions protested on 21 February, 1952. Many student demonstrators were murdered on that day and this created unrest throughout the country. In 1956, Bangla was declared as the state language of East Pakistan. In 1999, 21 February was declared as the International Mother Language day by UNESCO to tribute the language movement of Bangladesh.

On the other hand, the constitution of Pakistan was written in English and the revolutionaries who led the later struggle for Independence for East Pakistan were also more comfortable in using the colonial language rather than their native tongue. As a result, it was difficult to remove English from the aspects of ruling the nation.

But the rising national feelings after separation from Pakistan brought a revolutionary change in terms of language policies. English lost its previous position. The constitution was written in Bengali and clearly declared Bengali to be the only official language (Part 1, Article 3). The status of English was not clearly mentioned thus degrading it from its previous position of a second language to a foreign language.

English in Post-War Bangladesh

Chowdhury & Kabir (2014) report that, the Constitution of Bangladesh was written in 1972 and it was declared that from then on Bangla will be used as the language of administration and judiciary. They also mention that Bangla was to be used as the medium of instructions in the education sector. Dr. Quadrat –e-Khuda formed the first Education Commission in the year 1972. According to Bangladesh education statistics (2003), his commission submitted a report to the Government in the year 1974. The report focused on the socio-economic, cultural and political importance of the use of Bangla and claimed that as a medium of instruction Bangla is more advantageous to appeal towards the originality of thought and imagination and natural flow of intelligence. Hossain and Tollefson (2006) report that the commission also talked in support of keeping English as the mode of instruction at the higher education level until the existing colonial system of education can be reformed. The commission recommended that English should be included in the education system from grade 6 to grade 12.

From 1972 the study of English at the primary level and tertiary level was withdrawn. Only at secondary level it remained as a subject to be studied. Farooqui (2007), reports “classes were taught in Bangla, with little active use of English language.” All university lectures were given in Bengali but there were a lack of sufficient vernacular and translated books to support (Islam 1975). This eventually led to the use of Bangla and English both the languages in educational institutions and in offices. Bengali was given the most importance and during this period there was no clear directive of the English language policy which previously had a great impact on the Educational system of Bangladesh (Sultana and Hoque, 1995). But due to lack of adequate supply of translated books in Bengali, English could not be removed from the system of education. Moreover, this period of transition

has never brought the presence or absence of English to the spotlight through proper discussion, planning and organization. As a result, even though not officially recognized, English never stopped marking its presence. Rahman, et al. (2006) exclaims that at this period “English went underground but kept up a furtive existence. Since the early 1980s, however, a realization of pragmatic and global needs has caused English to resurface (1).” The English medium schools have been summoned to teach in Bangla but some of them disregarded the rules and continued to teach in English. A group of elites has always felt the growth and importance of English as a world language. The booming English medium schools and the competition and demand to enroll children there proved the point.

On the other hand, apart from the education sector, job sector also had a demand of English due to the foreign influence over trade and commerce of the country. Banu & Sussex (2001a, 125) exclaim their surprise at the presence and vitality of English in Bangladesh. As a result a demand of the proficiency of English of the candidates at the job market has always been there.

English, however, was again included in the primary curriculum in 1976-1977 from year three. In July 1976, the National Curriculum and Syllabus Committee (NCSC) was formed with the hope to plan, prepare and execute syllabuses for each of the subjects studied in school and college. There was a separate committee for English. English, at this time, had two different modes of survival: one was a very weak and compulsory mode of existence in school curriculum and the other was a very strong presence among the progressive elite class of citizens open to the outer world. An English language teaching workshop was held in the year 1976 to explore and evaluate the teaching of English in Bangladesh as well as the writing materials used at the secondary level. The workshop reported on three basic needs of English in

Bangladesh namely, social, occupational and academic among which the academic need was affecting the students most (Harrison 1976:1). It evaluated the current courses as unsuitable remarking that they used materials literary in nature and was unsuitable for the level of proficiency of the students. Recommendation was made for a new textbook to be written with more materials less literary in nature and suitable to be copied by the students for reading and writing purpose (Kerr, 1976:2).

The Present Condition of English in Bangladesh

Rahman, et al. (2006, 1) provided their opinion that English has always been there showing a “furtive existence” throughout the time of the reestablishment of Bangla. They also proclaim that since early years of 1980s stakeholders became aware of the “global” and “pragmatic” need of the language in Bangladesh. Within the next ten years, English was introduced from year one of the primary curriculum. Then from 1992 English is reinstated at the tertiary level as the medium of instruction. This revolutionary change in the education of English at the tertiary level results from the failure of ‘pedagogical methods prevailing in the public universities, and a desire to use modern teaching techniques’ (Quddus& Rashid, 2000). To these attempts to reinstate English, the private English medium schools reacted and contributed positively. In Bangladesh the English medium schools are now more in demand than the government run public schools and colleges. From Bangla medium schools, before enrolling to universities students finish learning English for 12 years from class 1 to 12 in Secondary and Higher Secondary level of studies (SSC & HSC). In Secondary School Certificate exam and also in Higher Secondary School Certificate exam students are tested of their reading and writing skills in English. There is no test of their listening and speaking abilities. Bhattacharjee (2008), reports in SSC

and HSC level learners have exams of 200 marks where only the writing skill in English is assessed. Speaking is not assessed at all. Chowdhury and Kamal (2014) report in schools and colleges they learn English through 'rote learning of grammatical rules and memorization of vocabulary'. Thus, 'memorization' has become a much accepted technique of learning English with no emphasis on listening and speaking. As a result these "students are not quite prepared for the more complex demands of teaching and learning in English at the tertiary level." On the other hand as they provide ample scope for listening and speaking, the demand of English medium schools are increasing yearly. Another reason for this could be the affordability of the fees, even for the middle class people in recent years. These schools have now successfully been running in the capital city and expanding in other cities also. But the number of qualified teachers is always a concern due to their preference to stay at the center. Due to this the schools and colleges outside Dhaka and other major cities suffer a lack of better English teachers. They have to compromise with the quality of English teachers and are only able to provide education in English to the students of these schools at a minimum level. Awareness from the government's side may reach out to solve the problem.

On the other hand, the English medium schools follow British curriculum and students sit for GCE'S O-Levels (Ordinary Levels) and A-Levels (Advanced Levels) exams under direct supervision of the British government through the British Council. The British Council reports that since 1994/1995 every year 340 more students are taking these exams. So the proficiency of English of these students is more or less of the expected level. It has also been observed that the teachers of these English medium schools do not possess required level of proficiency in English. Most of these students aspire to study at the tertiary level abroad. Very few of them go for study at

the public and private universities of Bangladesh. Moreover, almost all the English medium schools are established in the capital or other cities for which students at the rural areas do not get any chance to enroll there. There are two more sets of schools- cadet colleges and madrasas. The number of secondary madrasas are 4,795(BANBEIS 1998) and they are all non-government and run by different organizations. The teaching system of these organizations is religious in nature. They have English as an optional subject in their curriculum but most of them teach English (Rahman 1999). Madrassas in Bangladesh are of two kinds - Dakhil and Kawmi. The Kawmi Madrasas are not recognized by the government. Even though English is taught at these madrasas, the emphasis is on Arabic, Persian and Urdu as the language of the Holy Quran (the holy book of the Muslims) is in Arabic. Because of being educated at a different system, these students fail to mingle in the mainstream education system and thus complete their education at the Madrasas. The cadet colleges are 11 in number and administered by the Defense Forces of Bangladesh. Recruitment is very rigorous and very competent. Students at the age of 12 enroll in these colleges and are taught by good quality teaching staff. Most of these students with high academic standards enroll in the Defense force. Some enroll in public universities and very few come to private universities.

At present there are 37 public and 92 private universities and 3 international universities in Bangladesh (University Grants Commission of Bangladesh, 2016). Most of the tertiary students at these universities come from Bangla medium background and have very little pre exposure to English as a foreign language (Jahan and Jahan, 2011). Due to rigorous competition at the admission examination of the public and international universities and a strict requirement to pass in compulsory English, recruitment at these universities ensure required level of student

proficiency in English. But the seats are very limited in number. At the private universities students come from Bangla medium studies and very few from English medium and Cadet Colleges. Of course the level of proficiency of these students is considerably low than that of the other two types of universities. As most of the students living and studying at the cities enjoy more privilege of being acquainted with English, they are likely to enroll at public universities. The leftovers and students from rural areas, wishing to receive higher education, enroll at private universities. Although emphasis is put on the curriculum of English teaching, the standards of the language, especially among the rural area students, are very poor (Sultana and Hoque 1995). Most private universities of the country now offer degrees of higher education (except M.Phil and Ph.D.) like B. A. (Hons.), B. Sc. (Hons.), B.S.S. (Hons.), B.B.A, LL.B.(Hons) B. Arch, B.Pharm; M. A., M.Sc., MBA, MSS, MS in many general and highly technical subjects like English, Economics, Computer Science and Engineering, Civil Engineering, Architecture, Pharmacy, Electrical and Electronic Engineering; Accounting, Human Resources Management, Management Information System, Business Administration, Marketing, and so on. The instructional medium in almost all the higher educational and professional programs in Bangladesh is English. Though instructions in certain educational programs in tertiary level colleges and public universities are given in Bengali, the students and teachers have to depend on foreign books written in English for reference and additional information.

To study at these purely technical subjects students are required to possess a certain level of proficiency in English. Despite studying the language for twelve or thirteen years these students fail to meet up this requirement. To remedy these problems and to bring the students near to the expected level of proficiency these private universities planned

out foundation English courses to help them be able to continue their studies. The foundation or remedial English courses focus on the four different language learning skills and are often named after those skills. But these courses vary from university to university as they are planned according to the level of proficiency of English of the admitted students. Some universities offer one course in the name of a foundation course having the four skills integrated, some offer two or three or more than three courses as remedial courses. Generally these courses are named English communication skill – I, English communication skill – II, and English communication skill–III or with more emphasis on compositional skills named as English composition–I and English composition –II. Students of regular academic programs attend these courses to improve their level of English to meet up the curriculum expectations.

Now-a-days students in Bangladesh learn English for both professional and academic success. Farooqui (2007) asserts that at present the importance placed on English language teaching in Bangladesh is due to the ever growing global demands of English in professional sectors. Students learn English all their school and college life before enrolling to university. Haque (1994), and Rahman (2005), refer to the “motivation” of the learners of English in Bangladesh as “instrumental”, for they learn English to make their higher education easy and thus hold better opportunities of employment. They are hardly motivated to learn the language for the sake of knowing about the culture and communication with the native English speakers. Their sole purpose is to gain practical benefits and they hardly possess any wish to do real life communication with native speakers. Banu (2005) reports that in Bangladesh English is in great demand due to “social” and “material” gains and as a result the system of education in the country makes a “linguistic divide” among

the students of Bangla medium who possess lower skills of English and the students of English medium schools who learn the language better at the given system.

A recent concern of the government of Bangladesh puts more emphasis on the promotion of English studies in the country. The then president, Iajuddin Ahmed, declared “with a view to promoting employment abroad and encouraging transfer of technology, emphasis will be laid on teaching English language along with the mother tongue (The Daily Observer, 2002).” Some recent initiatives of the government are also a reflection of these concerns. Since 1998, following an agreement between the Ministry of Education, the Bangladesh and the US government, around 200 US volunteer teachers come to Bangladesh to teach English at the secondary schools (467/2012870.html). Additionally, some English teacher training specialists from abroad come as resource persons every year to train English as Second Language (ESL) teachers of Bangladesh (The Daily Star, 2012). Also, with the help of British Council, the teacher training Curriculum is being updated, which, as applied is expected to lead to a positive outcome.

Even after all these efforts of the government, the policy makers and the teachers, students command over English has not improved. All the well concerned efforts are failing due to some unknown, unexpected and unavoidable reasons. A very possible reason for this could be related to the status of English in Bangladesh.

The Status of English in Bangladesh

In Bangladesh English is not an official language. Whether English in Bangladesh is an ESL (English as a Second Language) or an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) is still a controversial issue. Though it has been mentioned by Kachru (1986, p.33) and Jenkins (2009, p.16) that English enjoys the status of ESL in Bangladesh. But a number of researchers in Bangladesh oppose this view. A

strong and bold announcement is made by Farooqui (2007, p. 96) declaring English as a foreign language in Bangladesh. Shalahuddin, Khan and Rahman (2013) in their study mentioned that although in many aspects English works like a Second Language in Bangladesh, this does not make Bangladesh an ESL country. Ali (2013) supports them specifying the fact that English has not received an official status of a second language in Bangladesh. Rahman (2005), in his study declares that English is not used for interpersonal and inter-institutional communication and there is hardly any chance of it being the *lingua franca* in Bangladesh. On the other hand Siddique (2004) after examining the intensity and importance of use declared that English language is an ESL in Bangladesh (p.33). Hasan (2011) echoes saying “we can easily say ... English is the Second Language in Bangladesh”. A study of the SSC and HSC students of Bangladesh conducted by Chowdhury and Shaila (2011) concludes that the students hardly have any practice of speaking English in classroom or outside the classroom. Students at school learn English for 10 years and then 2 years at college. But in both these cases they learn the language for exams. An assessment of the SSC and HSC syllabus and examination system also supports this. Students only practice reading, grammar and writing and in the board exams they have 200 marks for reading and writing skills assessment. Listening and speaking skills are not examined at all. However, at the tertiary level the medium of instruction is English and students find an ESL environment inside the classroom. Here also the situation remains more or less the same as outside the classroom they hardly make practical communication using the language. Even though at the tertiary level Universities try to keep the medium of instruction as English, it is not unanimously followed. Some tertiary level colleges and public universities run some programs where lectures are given in Bangla but for references

the students and teachers of these programs have to rely on English books. In the private organizations of trade and business, English is extensively used but especially in formal situations. The economy of Bangladesh is heavily dependent on foreign aid. For this purpose communication with the countries and organizations giving foreign aid is carried out using English. Countries like Great Britain, United States of America, Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan and Australia etc. and organizations like the World Bank, USAID and International Monetary Fund (IMF) provide aids to Bangladesh. The growing export and import business of Bangladesh depends on other countries. So for business purpose, English is used to communicate with international buyers. In administration English is not used in Bangladesh. Though communication between international organizations and government offices are done in English, the internal official works are all conducted in Bangla. Except for a formal occasion no one speaks in English in Bangladesh. It is not used at home among the family members and friends at informal settings. But “learning a language is learning how to communicate using that language” (Richards and Rodgers, 2001:156). Students in Bangladesh can communicate through academic writing only, though the standard is very poor. They are hardly able to communicate in English in classroom and outside. However, because of everyday global communication many English words are frequently used in everyday Bangladeshi life through code switching and code mixing. In Judiciary many Judges, though not all, give their verdicts in English at the Higher and Supreme Court. But in the lower court Bangla is used for the understanding of the mass people. Lawyers practicing at the Higher and Supreme courts need to be proficient in English though in courtroom trials they often use Bangla.

At this situation English is having a co-habitation with Bangla in the lives of the people in Bangladesh. However, it does not have any official status here. This situation brings forward the query on the future of the language in this country. Should English remain as a highly functional yet a neglected language or should it be upheld by the government to ensure a more permanent status.

DISCUSSION

The Government of Bangladesh has taken initiatives and made English a compulsory subject to be studied from the Primary level of schooling up to the tertiary level. Moreover, keeping their demands in mind, the sectors of employment, business and communication technology have promoted English in Bangladesh at a very good level. A discussion on the presence of English in different domains of language use in Bangladesh is presented below:

English in Education Sectors

Since 1978, after the National Advisory Council of Education introduced the new curriculum, English has been taught at the primary school onwards as a compulsory subject. The target of this curriculum was to improve “communicative competence” of Bangladeshi learners so that they can avail access to more opportunities nationally and globally. Rahman (2005) mentions that in Bangladesh bachelor and masters programs in English are run by all the universities. The programs are on English language, literature and linguistics. Organizations like BELTA, NAEM, NCTB (National Curriculum Board), BIAM etc. arrange training and workshops for English teachers in Bangladesh. Moreover, National University, Bangladesh Open University and Teacher Training Colleges organize training programs for English teachers. All these organizations offer in-service trainings but graduates willing to be English teachers hardly have any opportunity

to attend a training program before joining a job. This is a major area where the government needs to pay attention to improve the condition of English teaching in Bangladesh. The stakeholders have already focused on the fact that English language teaching or ELT is a major “buzzword” in Bangladesh now. Das, et al. (2013) reflect on this saying, that already text reformations, professional developments for teachers and assessment of students and systems of public examinations are in the process. Different international, national, private and voluntary organizations are working on different ELT projects to improve the overall conditions of teaching English in Bangladesh.

English enjoys an “elite” status in Bangladesh whether accepted or not. The language is needed in every sphere of life in Bangladesh every day. However, a sort of denial is also present among the Bangladeshis to officially accept the language. This is mostly due to the emotional attachment with the historical background of the establishment of Bangla as the mother tongue through a bloody language movement in 1952. On one side the emotional attachment with the sacrifice and the struggle made for the language and on the other side the fear that Bangla may lose its glory because of the overpowering presence of English is holding back the nation to accept English officially as the second language. A very surprising issue is that most of the people in Bangladesh are able to understand and speak in Hindi by just watching TV programs and movies in Hindi language. In this case similarities between Bangla and Hindi language and culture make the language more receptive. On the other hand the cultural diversity of Bangla and English create an added difficulty for the learners of English in Bangladesh.

However, the fact can never be denied that as an international language English is more used than Bangla, especially while communicating with the world outside the

country. One important point to be noted is that though English is not officially the second language in Bangladesh, it is the only other language studied as a subject in schools and colleges.

English and Employment

Proficiency in English is one of the major criteria for getting a good job in Bangladesh now days. Multinational as well as national companies, Banks, government and private organizations all recruit candidates with very good proficiency in English. Often this becomes the sole criterion to select a candidate. As all the written communications are done in English and computer literacy is a basic requirement; different organizations recruit persons with good proficiency over written and spoken English. As a result candidates with a bad or mediocre proficiency in English often go to different coaching centers to improve their spoken and written proficiency of English even though they have learned English most of their lives. Learners of Bangladesh are motivated instrumentally to learn English that is for getting a good job.

English and the Judiciary

Ferdousi (2015) declares that Lawyers in the High Court often use English in courtroom activities even though a Law is there claiming the legal use of Bangla in High courts. The same practice is there in the Supreme Court. All the major works and decisions are made in English and this language is more encouraged than Bangla. As a result all the lawyers, judges and often staffs need to be well proficient in English and well articulate to use the language wherever necessary.

English in Media

It has been observed that the media has already become very comfortable in mingling Bangla and English. The radio jockeys use a type of language which is already known as “FM Banglish” which, according to them

shows their higher social status and education. This is basically a type of translanguaging or code-mixing between Bangla and English. It has been observed that their pronunciation is highly affected by their English pronunciation (Ahmed and Tinny, 2013). These Radio Jockeys are representatives of the young adults specially those who passed from English medium schools. Banu and Sussex (2001) report that to attract the customers advertizing companies use eye catching English words in advertisements, billboards, signboards, posters and banners. More over in everyday speech a person in Bangladesh will frequently stumble at English words which are very common in speech. Often they are so common that people find that they do not know the synonymous word in Bangla. In TV channels in different programs like talk shows, dramas and other programs anchors or actors are often seen using English as a mark of their higher social standards.

Translanguaging Between Bangla and English

A remarkable issue marked in the findings of the interviews is the use of English in everyday life of Bangladesh in the mode of translanguaging that is code-mixing. According to Begum (2012), code-mixing between Bangla and English is present in the classroom environment. Rahman (2012) echoed saying that code switching is present among students and different professionals. People have accepted this mode of language use happily. They frequently switch codes in everyday communication as this marks a superior linguistic ability, ensures class and projects power. Moreover, Alam (2006) asserts that this is a common practice in Offices. He also says that in corporate jobs like in multinational companies, banks , NGOs as well as the lawyers use English in their everyday communication mingling with Bangla because proficiency in English is significant for prestige and this helps them to

create a face as well as achieve higher performance score.

Sultana (2014), reports that the practice of code-switching is present among the young and adult Bangladeshi users. She emphasized on the fact that a young generation of Bangladeshis is emerging with a translanguaging habit proficiently switching between Bangla and English. She is confident that this will create a new linguistic practice in Bangladesh. The interview results show that translanguaging practice is there in oral communication whereas almost all the official written work is done in English. A major reason of this use of English in oral communication is to appear smart, confident and to show communicative competence. In English medium schools it is compulsory to speak in English in the premises for teachers and students and often for the staff. The practice is extending its horizons and gradually becoming a common everyday practice in Bangladeshi life. Banu and Sussex (2001b) claimed through evidence that the code-switching and code-mixing habit is present in TV advertisements as well as billboards to influence customers with their catchy words.

English and Bangla both the languages are used in Bangladesh but their coexistence is often conflicting and is always creating a confusion among the users in the land. Though one is a national language and the other one does not have any official status, the coexistence of the two languages is overwhelming. English often rises as the more influential language and frequently overshadows the native tongue. It undoubtedly plays a more significant role in communication in the public lives of national and international connections (Basu,2016, Khan,2012). The all encompassing use of English in the lives of Bangladesh is also reflected in the research works of linguists, ELT professionals and other specialists. They have analyzed the presence, use and the conflicting manner of the language in Bangladesh. Banu and Sussex (2001) see

English in Bangladesh as a means of achieving international acceptance. Rahman (2005) finds out the use of English can open global opportunities and Kirkwood (2013) wholeheartedly supports him. Erling et al (2012) echo them focusing on the global significance and function of the language and advice on impactful learning and use of the language in Bangladesh. They also emphasized on the failure of language policies in Bangladesh and criticized that though English is taught as a subject in Bangladesh now from the very beginning of school and extensively use at the tertiary level, improper implementation of the systematic learning and teaching process is causing a major hindrance for the policies. These scholars criticize the policy of neglecting English in the country while upholding the position of Bangla. As the use of English is much more overpowering globally, the same impact inside the country is undeniable. On the other side of all these, there are those people who have this emotionally overpowering feeling that Bangla is being neglected as we are still not able to ensure the use of Bangla in every sphere of life in Bangladesh. They regret the fact that English is still being used everywhere. They complain why English is still used in the higher judiciary and why many documents in government sectors and most in the private sectors are in English. They believe in the authenticity of a language and are vehemently against the mingling of English and Bangla in everyday oral and written practice. They are very strict on this issue and always focus on singular and proper use of Bangla as well as English where ever the languages are necessary to use. They consider this mingling a type of “pollution”. If this pollution continues Bangla will be immensely harmed and we will fail to uphold the desired respect for the language. In the 2011 the Law Commission suggested to uphold Bangla in every sphere of our lives through the Bangla Procholon Ain 1987 but all the efforts went in vain (Ferdousi, 2015). She

regretted that even after 62 years of the language movement and 43 years of Independence the government of Bangladesh is unable to implement Bangla in all public sectors. On 21 November 2012, while amending the Supreme Court (High Court Division) rules of 1973 there rose an option to use Bangla but the hindrances of use were also observed and it came to a conclusion that avoiding English just to uphold Bangla was an impossible work to do while implementing the decisions of the Higher Court.

Islam (2011) analyzes the language policy in Bangladesh to be ideologically overshadowed. He mentions “Resistance to English in Bangladesh now operates on an ideological level where a nationalist recovery of lost ground and recuperation of splintered Bengali identity demand a distance from the language which worked , for closely 200 years, as a colonial tool of consolidation and domination(3).”

Future of English in 21st Century Bangladesh:

According to the definitions of a Foreign Language and a Second Language, English in Bangladesh possess qualifications from both types. The educational institutions and the private organizations extensively use English and that gives English the nature of a second language. Though the scenario is different in the rural areas where, even in educational institutions, English is taught using Bangla.

Nevertheless, this is also true that outside a formal setting English is hardly used in daily life in Bangladesh. Moreover, English does not possess the legal position as a second language in Bangladesh. However, Banu and Sussex (2001a) exclaim that the continued and vital existence of English in Bangladesh is very surprising (125). There is no doubt in Bangladesh, English is leaping towards reaching at the state of a second language and it is highly recommended that the Government take a step to receive English formally as the

second language. Only then English will thrive towards reaching a higher standard than it has now. Till then, the legal and formal position of English shall remain as the most important foreign language in Bangladesh.

Considering the socio-cultural impact of English in Bangladesh it can never be denied that English has already entered the life of Bangladesh and amalgamated with the language and culture of the land. In this modern world better competence in English ensures better social status. Competence in English determines the cultural and educational superiority of the individual in the society. Thus English impacts the cultural status of Bangladesh. English has established its worth in the social settings of Bangladesh proving Crystal (1997) right when he theorized that when a new language enters a land it needs to prove its worth to stay in that land (68).

However, this new language needs to prove its worth through other trials and tribulations as well. Due to the historical rivalry with the English colonizers, their language is always in conflict with the emotional acceptance of the people of Bangladesh. As a result there has never been a definite language policy for English in Bangladesh. Moreover, the native language Bangla has the emotional attachment as the nation fought to preserve the language. The conflict between Bangla and English is a very unique one. Both are international languages. One has great emotional acceptance and the other has the most functional and overpowering presence in the lives of the people of Bangladesh. Crystal (1997) defines this situation as the result of two conflicting expectations namely, intelligibility and identity. Intelligibility requires competence in English to the level of a Lingua Franca whereas identity compels the users of the country to uphold the native language (115). Such type of conflicting attitude towards both the languages can have impacts on the national as well as the international setting. In this case Crystal (1997)

suggests employing a “bilingual” policy in the country defining the specific status of both the languages. Thus the country will be able to avoid the conflict between its non-English speaking inhabitants and the English speaking world as the undefined language policy may create controversy in the international society. He also mentions that an introduction of “bilingual” or “multilingual” policies for English will encourage people to “have the cake and eat it (116).”

Following Crystal’s suggestions a thorough analysis may be done by the government which will further focus on the specific position of English in the society of Bangladesh. Common people of Bangladesh are aware of the necessity and use of English in their everyday lives. They must be made aware of the fact that upholding the position of English in Bangladesh will never place Bangla behind or never be able to shake the position of Bangla. If Bangla is in the heart of the people of Bangladesh, English is in their head. Both the languages can equally appeal to the intellectual faculty of the people in the country. However, this can never be forgotten that English functions as the tool of global communication with the international community and is able to move the country towards development. So, for greater benefit of the country, English must be given an official status in Bangladesh

CONCLUSION

The paper helps to understand the glorious presence of English is a major reason the language stayed back in the land. As an international language it has always been gaining more momentum. It is high time that English language has an official and permanent status in Bangladesh. This will help the users of English in Bangladesh to accept the language with a positive approach. As a consequence, two international languages, Bangla and English will have enough importance and functional space to enjoy a

fruitful coexistence in Bangladesh. Very recently a writ has been filed demanding English to be placed as the official second language of Bangladesh with the High Court of Bangladesh. It has been mentioned there that English is the “de facto” second language in Bangladesh. All the domains of language such as legislative, judiciary, executive and social life use English every day. The petition also demands that at this digital time of globalization Bangladesh is in need of English as its own. So English must be declared the official second language of Bangladesh very soon. However, the court dismissed the petition bringing forth the “Bangla Procholon Ain” of 1987 at the front saying that upholding English as the second language is contradictory to this law. Given this situation, it is quite clear that the bar to establishing English as the second language of Bangladesh is the fear of Bangla losing its own status. The Government of Bangladesh must take necessary steps to clarify the confusions and uphold the benefits of English as the second language in Bangladesh.

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