

English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) 'Bottled' in English Version Education: Dream and Reality¹

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Abstract

The strengths and limitations of English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) have been extensively studied in the field of English language teaching. However, limited attention has been given to the aspirations of non-elite middle-class parents in Bangladesh, who strongly value EMI for its perceived instrumental benefits, thereby creating a grassroots linguistic market. This study investigates the effectiveness of English Version Education (EVE), a recently developed educational system introduced by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB). EVE delivers the national curriculum in English, using textbooks translated from Bangla, aiming to enhance learners' English language skills while retaining alignment with the national educational framework. Using a mixed-methods approach, the study finds that parents view EVE as a means to secure better socio-economic opportunities for their children. However, their expectations are often unmet due to significant challenges, including teachers' limited English proficiency and the absence of an immersive English-speaking environment in schools. Although EVE offers affordable tuition, it frequently fails to deliver the anticipated improvements in students' English competence and justifies the financial investment by parents. The study concludes that while EVE serves as a cost-effective alternative to traditional EMI, its rapid expansion risks exacerbating social inequalities, potentially leading to new forms of societal division.

Resumen

Las fortalezas y limitaciones del inglés como medio de instrucción (EMI) han sido ampliamente estudiadas en el campo de la enseñanza del idioma inglés. Sin embargo, se ha prestado poca atención a las aspiraciones de los padres de clase media no pertenecientes a la élite en Bangladesh, quienes valoran fuertemente el EMI por sus beneficios instrumentales percibidos, creando así un mercado lingüístico de base. Este estudio investiga la efectividad de English Version Education (EVE), un sistema educativo desarrollado recientemente introducido por la Junta Nacional de Currículo y Libros de Texto (NCTB). EVE ofrece el currículo nacional en inglés, utilizando libros de texto traducidos del bengalí, con el objetivo de mejorar las habilidades de los estudiantes en inglés al tiempo que mantiene la alineación con el marco educativo nacional. Utilizando un enfoque de métodos mixtos, el estudio concluye que los padres ven a EVE como un medio para asegurar mejores oportunidades socioeconómicas para sus hijos. Sin embargo, sus expectativas a menudo no se cumplen debido a desafíos significativos, incluido el dominio limitado del inglés de los maestros y la ausencia de un entorno inmersivo de habla inglesa en las escuelas. Aunque EVE ofrece una matrícula asequible, con frecuencia no logra las mejoras previstas en la competencia en inglés de los estudiantes y justifica la inversión financiera de los padres. El estudio concluye que, si bien EVE sirve como una alternativa rentable a la EMI tradicional, su rápida expansión corre el riesgo de exacerbar las desigualdades sociales, lo que podría conducir a nuevas formas de división social.

Introduction

The hegemonic power of English has ensured its status as an international language (McKay, 2018), which is also referred to as a global language (Crystal, 2003) or a lingua franca (Jenkins, 2009). Over decades, English as a medium of instruction (EMI) has received importance at various levels of education and in diverse educational settings, even in primary schools in many non-native English-speaking countries (Dearden, 2014; Kirkpatrick, 2011; Roshid & Sultana, 2023). The expansion of EMI has been determined by socioeconomic, political, cultural, and educational forces (Roshid & Phan, 2024). Scholars have identified various educational and non-educational purposes for adopting EMI policy in educational institutions. There are numerous types of perceived benefits of EMI, and stakeholders of EMI seem to have a variety of objectives in mind. One of the critically recognised determiners of adopting the EMI policy is that of improving the English language proficiency of students (Ali, 2013; Hamid et al., 2013; Macaro et al., 2018). However, others have argued that the purpose of EMI is not to develop students' language proficiency, but to build content knowledge (Airey, 2012 [Sweden]; Costa, 2012 [Italy]; Rose et al., 2020 [Japan]; Tatzl, 2011 [Austria]). Costa, for instance, observes that in the Italian academic setting, EMI teachers were primarily concerned with providing content knowledge, implying that linguistic achievements were not a

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priority. Likewise, Rose et al. (2020) argued that EMI does not explicitly attempt to increase students' English skills in Japan. There, the focus was on students' content knowledge through English.

However, some researchers have combined these two focuses and argued that EMI equips students with English competence while also negotiating content knowledge. In other words, EMI creates a perfect learning environment for students to attain both objectives. Coleman (2006), for example, suggested that many active European CLIL projects were attempting to achieve the dual benefit of topic knowledge and enhanced target language ability. Policymakers have viewed this changing paradigm in language planning in non-native English-speaking country (NESC) classrooms to address students' weak English language development (Ali, 2013). Rose et al. (2020) considered this paradigm shift as the benefit of EMI that kills two birds with one stone by allowing students to learn English and content knowledge simultaneously. However, the successful implementation of policy is believed to be contingent on several elements, including language proficiency, adequate resourcing, and individual teacher and student agency (Tatzl, 2011).

Along with global disparities in EMI objectives and aims (Hamid et al., 2013), the implementation of programs varies according to contextualized educational demands (Roshid & Phan, 2024). Though the above studies have been conducted in NESC classrooms, the focus was on the university level, and data were collected from teachers and students. Little is known about how parents as crucial stakeholders perceive success in EMI in English Version Education (EVE) – a new paradigm of education in Bangladesh at the primary level of education. As a result, this paper aims to explore more parents' perspectives on EMI, associated dreams, and reality (e.g., language proficiency, quality education/content learning, and satisfaction) in the context of EVE at the primary level of education in Bangladesh.

English Version Education (EVE) in Bangladesh

EVE has increased exponentially across the country over the last decade. In a short period, EVE has attracted the attention of parents, particularly those from a middle-class socioeconomic background, who have put pressure on education entrepreneurs to open more English Version Schools (EVSs) in Bangladesh (Roshid & Sultana, 2023). The primary reason for the proliferation of EVS is the desire of parents to improve their children's English language skills. They believe that EVE education develops the English language proficiency of students. With this belief, more and more are sending their children to EVSs. Parents also feel that EVE promotes quality education (Roshid & Sultana, 2023). However, no empirical research has been conducted to examine whether the EVE develops students' proficiency and ensures quality education. Against this backdrop, this paper has explored the following research questions to contribute to ongoing debates related to EMI in a non-native English-speaking context.

1. *How does the EMI influence students' development of English language skills in EVSs in Bangladesh?*
2. *What other factors strengthen or hinder students' development of English language skills in EVSs in Bangladesh?*
3. *What perceptions do parents have regarding the features of quality education, and how does the EV school fulfil their desires regarding quality education?*

Literature Review

Debates on EMI and its connection to students' proficiency and content learning

Applied linguistics has adequately dealt with the strengths and weaknesses of EMI across the world, particularly in non-English educational backgrounds. In a mixed-method study, Rogier (2012) investigated student and instructor beliefs about what happens to students' English language skills while they are enrolled in English-medium classes at UAE universities. After four years of EMI, the participants in this study showed statistically significant improvement in all four of the English-language ability areas measured by the IELTS exam. Speaking showed the most significant improvement, followed by reading, writing, and finally, listening. Based on institutional language proficiency test results, Coşgun and Hasircı (2017) compared the general level of English language skills of Turkish English-medium university students before and after 4–8 semesters of study. The findings showed that students' reading, listening, and total English competence improved dramatically when attending an English-medium school. More recently, Tran et al. (2021) studied lecturers' and students' opinions of the effects of EMI on students' language proficiency in Vietnam using a mixed-methods methodology of questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups with students and lecturers at six Vietnamese institutions. According to the findings, both students and lecturers were positive about their students' language growth.

However, other empirical studies have raised serious concerns about the expected effectiveness of EMI in enhancing English proficiency. Lei and Hu (2014) look at whether English-medium instruction (EMI) affects

Chinese undergraduates' English competency and attitudes toward studying and using English. The findings revealed that the medium of instruction had no statistically significant impact on English competence, learning, or usage. In Nepal, Sah and Li (2018) claimed that participants (parents, students, and instructors) believed that EMI would help them improve their English skills and improve the quality of their education, allowing students to pursue higher education and boost their chances of social and economic mobility. However, it failed to deliver on those promises in practice because schools lacked sufficiently skilled teachers, resources, and infrastructure support. Instead, EMI was seen as a hindrance to teachers and students who did not have adequate competence in English (Sah & Li, 2018). While teachers managed to give instructions in English, students failed to understand the content. As a result, it is argued here that rather than serving as an equalizing tool in education, EMI aided in the (re)production of linguistic marginalization, educational inequality, and injustice for children from poorer socioeconomic backgrounds (Roshid & Phan, 2024; Roshid et al. 2024; Sultana, 2014). Considering the outcomes, Sah and Li (2018) asked whether EMI in Asia was perhaps an alternative hegemony increasing marginalization.

Possible improvements in student proficiency with EMI

Taking the assumption that enhancing the quality of education is an important goal for policies related to the medium of instruction (MoI), students' comprehension of lectures or lessons has been measured in several EMI policy studies (Dafouz et al., 2014; Hellekjær, 2010; Joe & Lee 2013; Tatzl, 2011; Vinke, 1995). Adopting an experimental design, Vinke contrasted second-year students in EMI and non-EMI classrooms taught by the same instructor regarding material understanding and learning in the Netherlands. The results showed that, in terms of lecture comprehension, the group of students who used their first language in the MoI scored better than those who used the EMI. Equally, a European study by Hellekjær (2010) compared the listening comprehension levels of business and engineering students in university lecture halls with their listening comprehension levels in L1MoI courses. The findings based on descriptive statistics suggested that the students' listening comprehension of EMI lectures was lower than the L1MoI lectures. The main difficulty seemed to be unfamiliar and unintelligible words and expressions. In contrast, Joe and Lee (2013) looked at how well Korean medical students understood and liked English-medium lectures and their overall English ability. It was found that the medium of instruction did not affect the comprehension of the lecture. The empirical study by Dafouz et al. (2014) looked at the impact of teaching business administration in English as a foreign language on the academic performance of Spanish students. The findings revealed that students' ability to learn educational content was unaffected by the language of teaching.

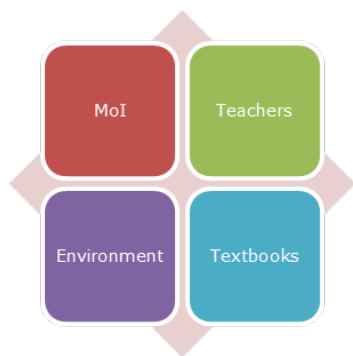


Figure 1: The underpinning factors in developing English language skills (based on the literature review)

As can be seen in Figure 1, besides the MoI, other factors contribute to students' effective learning or quality education, such as teachers, learning environments, and teaching and learning resources (Fredriksson, 2004; Kember & Leung, 2009; Leu & Price-Rom, 2006). Richards et al. (2013) explored foreign language teachers' language proficiency and teaching practices in New Zealand. Their study suggested that teachers needed to provide relevant explanations, and rich linguistic input for students, and answer their students' inquiries on language and culture spontaneously and knowledgeably. To maximise the language learning experience for their students, teachers were expected to continuously expand their subject knowledge while also possessing advanced target language proficiency. Likewise, Shin (2008) investigated the linguistic and pedagogical abilities required for teaching English as a second language to immigrant children in primary and secondary schools in the United States. Shin concluded that non-native teachers needed to endeavour to improve their written and oral English proficiency. However, it was equally important that they familiarized themselves with the cultures and discourses of their respective schools and communities.

Like EFL teachers, the learning environment also significantly plays a role in learning. In a study, Wu and Wu (2008) argued that the EFL learning environment was determined to be a barrier to learning for Taiwanese students. Physical habitat, instructional arrangements, and social contact were all found to be favourably connected with student motivation in the learning environment. Similarly, O'Neill (1990) recognized the significance of textbooks, claiming that most of them are appropriate for students' requirements since they give well-presented materials and allow teachers to adjust and improvise while teaching.

Based on the above literature review, this study problematized the relationship of EMI with proficiency development and content knowledge/quality education where MoI, teachers, environment, and textbooks are considered important factors, and further contribute to this debate in the EVE—a new paradigm of education in the Bangladeshi non-native English-speaking context.

Methodology

This study aimed to see how EMI affected students' development of English language abilities in EVSs in Bangladesh. Both quantitative and qualitative data were obtained from parents from five schools using a mixed-method approach. Three of the schools were located in Dhaka (pseudonyms: UD, SP, UL), while the other two were in Narayanganj (HS) and Chottogram (CT).

Data collection methods and participants

A total of 120 parents of children in grades two, three, and five were randomly selected using a simple random sampling technique and took part in the survey. The purpose of this survey was to explore to what extent the EV instruction played a role in developing the English language skills of the children as perceived by the parents to fulfil their desires. Parents received a survey questionnaire from their children's schools. After completing them, their children returned them to their class teachers along with a filled-out consent form from their parents with detailed explanatory statements, including the purpose statement of the study, the study design, how the data would be used, and how confidentiality would be maintained.

Among the participating parents, 40% were male, and the remaining 60% were female. They were between the ages of 26 and 46. A total of 30 parents were chosen at random from each school with the help of the classroom teachers.

In addition to the survey, qualitative data from 14 parents were acquired via three Focus Group Discussions (FGDSs) from three EVSs - UD, HS, and SP. FGDs were attended by parents, who allowed the researchers time to collect the data. Six males and eight females were among the parents who took part in the study. Five of the parents were jobholders, and nine of the participants were stay-at-home parents. Jobholders included a doctor, a businessman, a government employee, and an engineer. Before collecting FGD data from parents, they were provided with explanatory statements, and they went through them and signed them.

Data collection instruments and process

A survey questionnaire containing both open-ended and closed-ended questions and FGD guidelines for parents were employed for data collection. The goal of these tools was to discover why parents were so eager to send their children to EVSs, and how well, in their opinion, EVSs developed English language proficiency in students, particularly in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as the determinants of language proficiency development and their satisfaction. All materials were tested on one individual who was not part of the final data collection. The goal of the piloting was to ensure that the tools had validity to achieve their purpose. Before deploying these in the field, required adjustments were made based on piloting. All materials were in the Bangla language. The FGDs were also held in Bangla so that participants could provide detailed information. Each FGD lasted between 60 and 70 minutes. All FGDs were held at the respective school office, following the appropriate process, and obtaining permission and consent from school officials.

Once the quantitative survey data were collected, they were cleaned and entered into SPSS. Two research assistants translated all qualitative survey data from Bangla to English, and the first author double-checked it. Following that, the qualitative survey data were carefully analyzed and collated in an *Excel* file with different categories/codes (for example, why E-version: Reason 1; Reason 2). It was then quantified with frequency. Qualitative data gathered with the FGD were transcribed and translated into English. Following that, all qualitative data (texts) were carefully reviewed and coded in columns of tables in Word files. The next step was to scan and analyze the codes and pertinent texts, and various sub-themes were created

using the codes. Keeping the study objectives in mind, central themes were generated based on the sub-themes. The results of this study were organized into main themes. This data-driven thematic analysis employed an inductive method (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Data were triangulated by following two methods of data collection (e.g., surveys and FGDs) that maintained the study's reliability (Golafshani, 2003).

Findings

EVE and students' English language proficiency

Analysis of the qualitative data from open-ended questions from the survey and FGD with parents showed that most (n=105) of the parents argued that they sent their children to EVSs to develop their children's English language skills to prepare them for higher education's English proficiency requirements (n=48), to allow them to receive quality education (n=24), and to allow them to be within the national curriculum and culture (n=19). Some parents also wanted to remove the fear of the English language from their children.

Accordingly, one of the study's queries was to determine how much parents felt EVEs helped their children improve their English language abilities. Nearly half of the parents (n=55, 47%) considered their children were acquiring "average" level English language abilities, while slightly more than a quarter (n=32, 27%) stated their children were developing "poor" (n=27, 23%) or "very poor" (n=5, 4%) level skills. Almost the same number of parents (n=30; 26%) reported their children were acquiring English language abilities at a "good" (n=27, 23%) or "excellent" (n=3, 3%) level. The above findings indicate that although parents had mixed opinions, most had the impression that their children were developing an average level of English language skills.

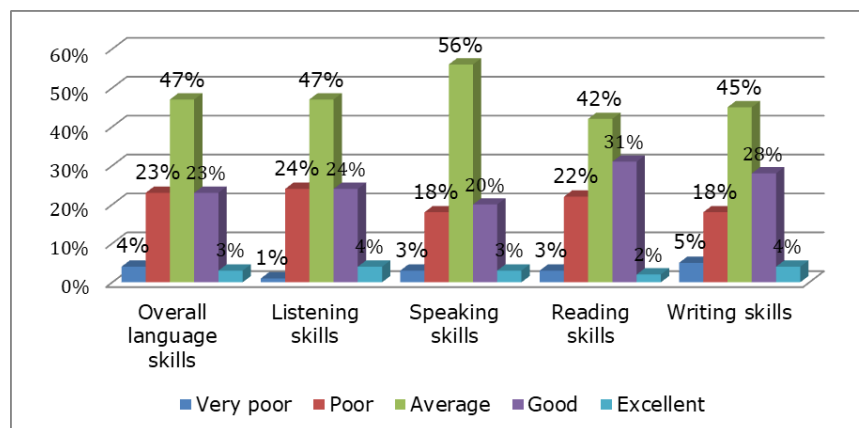


Figure 2: Parents' perceptions about developing learners' English language skills

The researchers were also interested in learning how parents viewed their children's development of individual language abilities (listening, speaking, reading, and writing). More than a quarter of parents (n=34; 28%) believed their children were developing "good" (n=29, 24%) or "excellent" (n=5, 4%) listening skills through EVS, while slightly less than half (n=55, 47%) believed their children were developing "average" listening skills through EVS. The remaining one-fourth of parents (n=29, 25%) said their children were developing "poor" (n=28, 24%) or "very poor" (n=1, 1%) listening abilities. According to this statistic, most parents believed their children were developing average listening skills.

According to many parents, one possible explanation is that there was insufficient opportunity for students to develop listening skills in EVSs because teachers frequently conducted lessons or communicated with students in Bangla. According to Krashen's (1992) input-output hypothesis, it is challenging to build English language abilities if there is no English input in listening. As students are not getting listening input in English in the school environment, particularly in the classroom because teachers give instructions in their mother tongue, they are getting less listening output in English.

In terms of speaking ability, more than half of the parents (n=65, 56%) thought their children's English-speaking skills were improving at an "average" level. However, more than one-fifth of parents (n=27; 23%) stated their children were acquiring a "good" (n=24, 20%) or "excellent" (n=3, 3%) level of speaking ability. Almost one-fifth of the parents (n=25; 21%) thought their children were developing "poor" (n=21, 18%) or "very poor" (n=4, 3%) speaking skills. These results suggest that the majority of parents believed their children were acquiring average speaking skills. The reason might be that, like listening skills, students of EV had little opportunity to speak English in classroom interactions. Parents claimed that speaking English

was not practiced or encouraged in classrooms. Even when students wanted to speak English in the classes, the teachers' attitudes toward it were not always positive enough to allow them to do so.

Most parents (n=49; 42%) stated that their children were gaining "average" reading skills from EVs. However, one-third of the parents (n=38, 33%) said their children were learning to read at a "good" (n=36, 31%) or "excellent" (n=2, 2%) level. A quarter of the parents (n=30, 25%) thought their children were developing "poor" (n=26, 22%) or "very poor" (n=4, 3%) reading skills. This study suggests that, while parents had a wide range of perspectives, they thought that their children's English reading skills were, on average, higher. This perception may be since the EV students study many English books. Some EVs engage students in reading additional books, going beyond the number of NCTB-prescribed books, which has positive outcomes for developing the students' reading skills.

When it comes to their children's writing skills, parents had a favourable opinion of their children's progress. More than half of the parents believed their children were acquiring "average" (n=53; 45%) level writing skills. However, one-third of the parents thought their children's writing skills were "good" (n=33, 28%) or "excellent" (n=38; 32%) or "very poor" (6, 5%). This statistic reveals that most parents had views on the role of EV as enhancing their child's average level of English writing skills.

Similar outcomes were reported in FGDs with parents, who, while expressing varying satisfaction levels, unanimously agreed that the EVE was improving their children's English language skills (n=14). They noted, however, that the expectations they had for their children's English language skills as a result of studying in the EVs were not being met. The percentage of satisfied parents with their children's English language proficiency ranges from 40% to 60%. When parents compared the EVs to the Bangla medium schools, they expressed the opinion that the students in the EVs were performing better in English language skills than those in the Bangla medium schools. One of the parents (Naju) from SP school commented, "If we compare a student of the EV and Bangla medium in English language skills, I think the English version is doing better." One parent further indicated that her child was doing much better than she had done in her school life. Nevertheless, dissatisfaction was also revealed in the opinions of some participants (n=4). This finding suggests that the EVE's current generation outperformed their parents' generations in English.

Quality education and perceived barriers to developing students' English language skills

As seen earlier, several parents mentioned that they sent their children to EVE to ensure them a quality education. The data analysis reveals that less than half of the parents (n=53, 46%) said that EVs produced an "average" level of quality education. Almost one-third of parents (n=32, 27%) reported that EVs provided "good" (n=26, 22%) or "excellent" (n=6, 5%) education levels, while an equal number of parents (n=32, 27%) considered that EVE ensured "poor" (n=6, 5%) or "very poor" (n=26, 22%) levels of education. These findings indicate that most of the parents believed EVE provided an average level of quality education. Participants did not define the concept and elements of quality education; however, the literature suggests that quality education is a dynamic idea that adapts to its social, economic, and environmental surroundings as it develops over time. It will come in a variety of shapes around the world and needs to be regionally and culturally suitable (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, 2005).

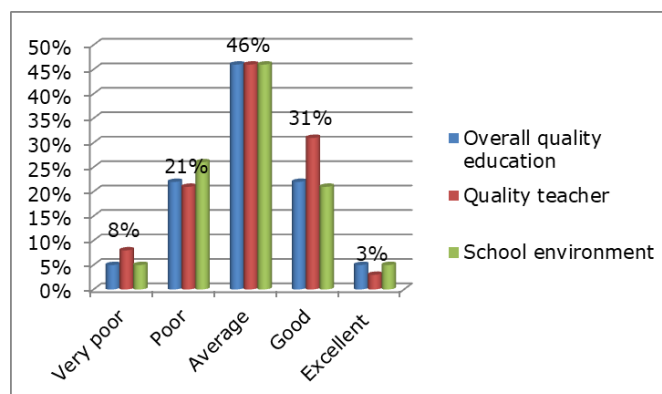


Figure 1: Parents' perceptions about quality education in EVE

Participants stated that they did not believe that EV meant quality education; however, they believed that EV had an indirect impact on developing English language skills because students were in an English environment in EV schools for longer time.

A quality education and the use of English are two different things. The use of only English can't ensure quality education. The environment is really important. When they [students] are in an English environment seven or eight hours, they get to talk in English and their language will automatically develop.

Other participants, by contrast, criticized the EVE for not ensuring quality education and improving learners' English language abilities in line with their parents' expectations. In their opinion, the dependence on less proficient teachers erroneous translated textbooks an unsuitable English learning environment make teaching in EVE ineffective.

Teachers as an element of quality education

More than one-third of the parents (n=43, 37%) gave the opinion that teachers in the EV were "average" in quality, while more than one-third of the parents (n=41, 34%) reported them to be as "good" (n=37, 31%) or "excellent" (n=4, 3%). On the other hand, fewer than one-third (n=34, 29%) of the parents said they were "poor" (n=25, 21%) or "very poor" (n=9, 8%). This conclusion reveals that the majority of the parents thought they were average. In qualitative findings, all parents complained about the lack of teachers' English proficiency. One of the parents from HS school said the following r about the teachers: "Teachers lack training and cannot offer courses in English due to their lack of proficiency in English." As a result, most of them talk Bangla in class.

According to parents, EV teachers were primarily from Bangla-medium backgrounds and were not fluent enough to smoothly converse in English in the classroom. Parents urged the school authorities to hire teachers who were fluent in English. Another HS parent believed that EVE was a new system in its infancy and that teachers in this educational system were not yet ready to speak fluently in English in class. In describing challenges further related to the teachers, they reported that no organization offered training to develop teachers and address their needs. The training institutions available were mainly focused on developing teachers for Bangla-medium schools. It was considered a barrier to promoting quality education in the EV in the county, and they were not aware whether the government had any policy to develop teachers for this type of education. While the government has had a massive role and has conducted activities over the decades to develop teachers for teaching in Bangla, no government policy papers or activities were identified to develop the EV.

Parents also shared their thoughts about the overall learning environment (e.g., physical, psychological, and social) of EVs, particularly as it relates to offering high-quality education. EVs had an "average" degree of a learning-friendly school environment, according to a substantial number of parents (n=51, 43%), while nearly one-fifth of parents (n=31, 26%) said it was "good" (n=25, 21%) or "excellent" (n=6, 5%). However, more than a third of parents (n=36, 31%) rated it as "poor" or "very poor." This conclusion implies that most parents perceive it at an average level.

In explaining the learning environment in EVs parents provided diverse opinions in FGDs. All parents from the HS school stated high levels of satisfaction with the learning environment in schools, citing physical facilities such as huge playgrounds, the school's neatness and cleanliness policy, spacious classrooms, digital attendance, online messaging system, and child safety as examples. Similarly, parents from SP schools expressed their delight with the setting in which their children are educated. On the other hand, parents from UD expressed their displeasure with the lack of environmental facilities in schools that help students develop quality education (along with English language skills). As a result, one of the parents suggested that the school infrastructure for the EV and Bangla mediums of education be separated. Two parents, however, objected to the former participant's decision to provide a separate setting for the two streams of schooling, viewing such separation as a sort of "discrimination" among the children.

In addition, parents complained about the translated textbooks that students use as their main learning materials or resources. Parents repeatedly mentioned two issues with the textbooks. One is that the textbooks are not well translated into English, which means they lack a smooth flow of reading. Another issue that they pointed out is that the books are not interesting in terms of content, which means they are overloaded with information with fewer pictures and limited space between lines, making learners demotivated to study with these books.

EVE and its perceived ability to fulfil dreams and desires

This study was also interested in understanding parents' overall satisfaction with the EV. The quantitative data analysis showed that more than half of the parents ($n=61$, 54%) were "moderately" satisfied with their children's education in EVs. In contrast, more than one-fifth of the parents ($n=24$, 21%) were either "highly" ($n=42$, 37%) or "extremely" ($n=11$, 10%) satisfied. On the other hand, fewer than one-fourth ($n=27$, 24%) of the parents were either "slightly" ($n=20$, 18%) or "not at all" ($n=17$, 15%) satisfied. This finding suggests that, though parents had varying levels of satisfaction, most parents were moderately satisfied.

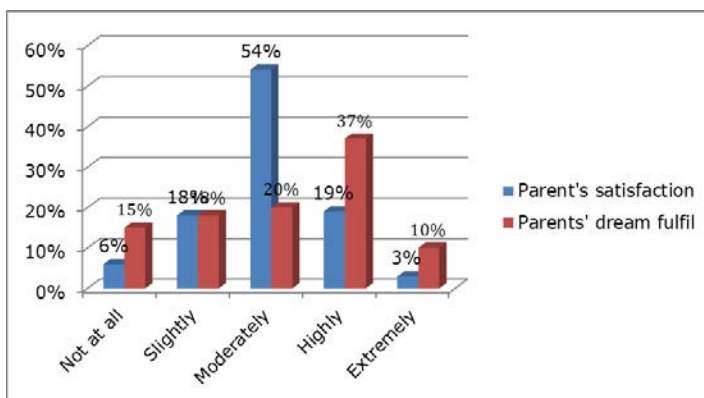


Figure 4: Parents' level of satisfaction and dream fulfilment

In this scenario, the question is whether the EV effectively realized the parents' dreams and expectations. According to quantitative data analysis, slightly fewer than half of the parents ($n=53$, 47%) believed that the EV could fulfil their dreams "highly" ($n=42$, 37%) or "extremely" ($n=11$, 10%). In contrast, around one-third of the parents ($n=37$, 33%) thought the EV was unlikely to fulfil their dreams, expressed through "not at all" ($n=17$, 15%) and "slightly" ($n=20$, 18%). Only one-fifth of the parents ($n=23$, 20%) thought the EV could help them achieve their objective "moderately."

FGDs data also showed that most parents were moderately satisfied with the services they received from EVs. However, in terms of the money that parents spent on their children's education in EV schools, they were not so happy. This cost of EVs was relatively expensive, particularly in HS and SP. One of the parents from HS commented, "Yes [I am satisfied], but the tuition fee is very high, and the quality is not up to the mark."

Discussion

This study aims to understand the congruence between the dream and reality of EMI-based EV education in Bangladesh by exploring the perceptions and preferences of parents of students in EVs.

The efficacy of EVEs in fulfilling the desires and aspirations of parents indicates the nature of the interrelationship among sociocultural realities, the economy, linguistic ideologies, and middle-class aspirations concerning EVE. As it stands, parents perceive EVE as a ticket to a better lifestyle and a brighter future for their children. Hence, parents pay higher tuition fees for EVE to develop their children's communicative abilities. However, their dreams and desires seem to be compromised by the quality of education in EVs in four ways: first, students do not develop adequate communicative abilities; second, the environment of EVEs does not support students' use of English; third, students' access to knowledge is compromised because of their inadequate communicative abilities; and fourth, teachers struggle to engage students with the learning process because of their limited proficiency in English.

This reality appears to jeopardize parents' dreams and desires to see their children in economically lucrative jobs in both local and transnational situations. In addition, according to participants, the teachers' inadequate language proficiency affects students' development of communicative abilities—an outcome of the inadequacy of the English-in-education policies in Bangladesh (Doiz et al., 2012; Hamid et al., 2013). Since teachers themselves studied in Bangla-medium schools, they seem to have failed to develop adequate communicative abilities themselves. The finding indicates the futility of introducing new education reforms while keeping the education system's policies and practices the same. In emphasizing the teacher's language proficiency in teaching the English language, Shin (2008) notes that one of the most significant features of excellent foreign language teachers is having a great grasp of the target language (p. 59). Likewise, Murdoch (1994) claimed that "language proficiency will always represent the bedrock of their professional confidence"

(p. 254) for non-native teachers. Scholars also have identified how the lack of target language proficiency of teachers can affect language teaching and learning. According to Farrell and Richards (2007), teachers' inadequate English language ability is likely to influence various aspects of their teaching. This lack of language competency may not only cause them to give incorrect responses, but may also affect their ability to recognize student faults in language use. In the context of EVE, it has been recognised that many teachers are not proficient in the English language, and in many cases, they deliver their lessons in Bangla. This may have a positive impact on content understanding but does not have the slightest positive effect on developing English language proficiency.

This finding also indicates that the environment is a crucial factor for language learning and students' proficiency. Chang and Shu (2000) developed four guiding principles to define an excellent learning environment and argued that a good learning environment: a) helps to improve the learning outcome; b) provides the student with care and support; c) inspires and boosts the learning spirit; and d) cultivates responsibility in the student. Labrie and Clement (1986) contended that a lack of complete immersion or an authentic environment is the cause of low learning proficiency. According to Hsieh (2002), there is a link between the learning environment and student motivation (see also Alzubaidi et al., 2016). In EVE in Bangladesh, participants blamed the school environment for the students' low proficiency because it provided little motivation for practicing English.

Teachers' subject knowledge is widely acknowledged as a critical component of effective teaching (Shin, 2008). It essentially allows language teachers to provide high-quality language instruction for students (Gibbs & Holt, 2003) while also managing a variety of important components of instructional strategies (Richards et al., 2013). In the foreign language context, subject knowledge includes language proficiency and language awareness of the target language (Pachler et al., 2007; Richards et al., 2013). Scholars have explained both terms – language awareness and language proficiency. According to Richards et al. (2013), language awareness denotes “knowledge of underlying language systems such as syntax, morphology, semantics, and phonology” (p. 5), while language proficiency can be defined as “knowledge competence or ability in the use of a language” (Bachman, 1990, p. 16). It seems that teachers in EVE cannot help their students' language proficiency because of their (teachers') limited ability in language awareness and language proficiency (Roshid & Sultana, 2023).

Similar and various other forms of limitations of English as a medium of instruction have been observed in higher education in Bangladesh (Hopkyns et al., 2024; Roshid et al., 2024; Roshid & Aziz, 2024; Sultana, 2014; Sultana & Fang, 2024) and other non-English-speaking countries where English has been introduced as a medium of education (Cho, 2012; Sert, 2008). That is why scholars viewed the link between effective learning and an L2 used as an MoI as the “social (mis) perception” (e.g., Hamid et al., 2013), while some others took it for granted that English-medium schools were synonymous with good schools (e.g., for Hong Kong, see Lin, 1999). However, there is a controversy regarding the relationship between MoI and a better understanding of the class content, particularly at the early stage of education (Brock-Utne, 2001; Kirkpatrick, 2011). Several scholars have advocated for mother-tongue-based multilingual programs in the Maldives, Nepal, and Timor-Leste (Mohamed, 2013 [the Maldives]; Phyak, 2014 [Nepal]; Taylor-Leech, 2013 [Timor-Leste]). According to Phyak (2013), the MoI setting in Nepal is one in which a minority language is employed for instruction. Therefore, the emergence of EVE contradicts the current trend in educational research.

Conclusion

In conclusion, there should be rising concern about the socio-psychological outcome of EVE. Bangladeshi society is already starkly stratified by language and other social dynamics, such as class, education, demographic location, gender, and so on. There is a gulf of difference in the lifestyles of people based on their linguistic capital of English. The privileged English-speaking Bangladeshis are considered educated, elite, cultured, and civilized. Amidst the conflicted socio-psychological complexities and realities, the students from EVE who have studied there to receive the benefits of linguistically advanced English-speaking Bangladeshis may experience feelings of dismay and desolation because of their inadequate development in English (Sultana, 2023). In addition, they may fail to negotiate positive identity attributes with English-speaking Bangladeshi students in higher education. As a result, similar to people with little competence in English, students from EVE may feel marginalised and, even more so, may feel manipulated by the system, specifically because of their parents' investment in education. A new form of socio-economical segregation may emerge because of the presence of students from the EVE system who may feel stuck in an in-between

space where they can neither feel associated with students from Bangla-medium students nor with students from English-medium students.

Since this study has been conducted with a relatively limited sample, it does not intend to generalise its findings. However, results from this study can have multiple implications for EMI policymaking, teacher recruitment, teacher development, material development, and overall curriculum development, including the educational environment. Parents argue that EVE is now at its embryonic stage, and it will overcome its challenges over time by taking some pragmatic initiatives like hiring proficient teachers, offering training for the existing teachers to develop their English proficiency, receiving error-free translated books from the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB), and increasing the English-speaking environment in school. The paper shows parents' feelings of desperation and hope. It indicates the simultaneous sustenance of and resistance to linguistic, economic, social, and educational ideologies in various forms and shapes.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

English version schools – A new paradigm of education:
Expectations, challenges, and prospects

Questionnaire: Parents

Instruction:
You are invited to participate in this research because your child is studying in an English-version school. Please respond to the following questions by using tick marks, writing text, or numbers where appropriate. We will maintain the confidentiality of your responses. You have the freedom to withdraw your opinion at any time.

Part One: Background information of the respondent

1.

Your gender

a. Male

b. Female
2.

Your highest education qualification

a. Masters and above

b. Bachelor (Honours)

c. Bachelor (pass)

d. HSC

e. SSC
3.

Your age range

a. 20-25

b. 26-30

c. 31-35

d. 36-40

e. 41-45

f. 46 and above
4.

Distance of school from home: -----Kilometre
5.

How many children do you have?

a. One

b. Two

c. Three

d. Four and above
6.

How many children are studying in the English version?

a. One

b. Two

c. Three

d. Four and above
7.

In which grade does your child (children) study? -----
8.

How many years does s/he study in the English version? -----

Part Two: Key Questions

1.

Why have you chosen the English version for your child/children?

2.

Why have you not chosen the XXX medium for your child/children?

3.

Why have you not chosen the English medium for your child/children?

4.

In your perception, to what extent is the English version developing the overall English language skills of your child/children?

a. Excellent

b. Very good

c. Good

d. Average

e. Poor

5. In your perception, to what extent is the English version developing the English listening skills of your child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
6. In your perception, to what extent is the English version developing the English-speaking skills of your child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
7. In your perception, to what extent is the English version developing the English reading skills of your child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
8. In your perception, to what extent is the English version developing the English writing skills of your child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
9. In your perception to what extent is the English version able to ensure quality education for child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
10. In your perception, to what extent are the English version teachers skilled in teaching in this medium of education?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
11. In your perception, to what extent is the English version school environment suitable for developing the English language skills of your child/children?
 - a. Excellent
 - b. Very good
 - c. Good
 - d. Average
 - e. Poor
12. Many people consider the English version as a product. To what extent do you agree or disagree with them?
 - a. Strongly agree
 - b. Agree
 - c. Neither agree nor disagree
 - d. Disagree
 - e. Strongly disagree
13. To what extent has the English version fulfilled your expectation?
 - a. Extremely
 - b. Highly
 - c. Moderately
 - d. Slightly
 - e. Not at all
14. To what extent are you satisfied with the English version?
 - a. Extremely
 - b. Highly
 - c. Moderately
 - d. Slightly
 - e. Not at all

15. To fulfil your desire for your children, to what extent is the English version capable?
- a. Extremely
 - b. Highly
 - c. Moderately
 - d. Slightly
 - e. Not at all

16. What is your perception about the future of the English version in XXX?
- a. Very good
 - b. Good
 - c. Neither good nor bad
 - d. Bad
 - e. Very bad

17. How do you compare the English version with the English medium?
- The English version is...
- a. Much better
 - b. Somewhat better
 - c. Stayed the same
 - d. Somewhat worse
 - e. Much worse

18. Why do you think so?
- Write here:-----
-
-

19. How do you compare the English version with the XXX medium?
- The English version is ...
- a. Much better
 - b. Somewhat better
 - c. Stayed the same
 - d. Somewhat worse
 - e. Much worse

20. Why do you think so?
- Write here:-----
-
-

21. What are the challenges of the English version?
- Write here:-----
-
-

22. How to overcome those challenges to improve the English version?
- Write here:-----
-
-

23. If you have any additional comments, please write here.
-
-
-

Name and signature of the respondent: -----

Thank you for your time and opinion