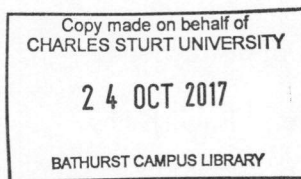


English as a Medium of Instruction in Bangladesh's Higher Education: Empowering or Disadvantaging Students?

Shaila Sultana

*Institute of Modern Languages (IML)
Dhaka University (DU), Bangladesh*



Bio Data:

Shaila Sultana, Associate Professor, Department of English, IML, DU, is a doctoral candidate at the University of Technology Sydney, Australia. She completed her BA (Hons) and MA in English from Jahangirnagar University (Dhaka). She also did a Post Graduate Diploma in TESOL (Monash University, Melbourne) and an MA in ELT and Applied Linguistics (King's College London). Her research interests include the post-structuralist approach to language, sociology and geography, sociocultural theories on identity, and significance of English in post-colonial countries.

Abstract

This paper reports on a mixed-method study that explored the effect of English as a medium of instruction. It specifically focuses on the academic discourse and socialisation experiences of 1st year students in universities of Bangladesh. A questionnaire survey of 115 students and interviews with students from three private and two public universities were conducted. The data illustrated that the language of instruction led some of them to perceive themselves as being deficient. They felt that they were systematically excluded from the classroom discussions and activities. Thus English severely impeded their possibilities of learning and the development of identity. In other words, English exacerbated inequalities between them. The paper implies the need for a more balanced English language policy in higher education in Bangladesh.

Keywords: English as a medium of instruction, higher education, learning and identity, Bangladesh

Introduction

English is “a sort of unstoppable linguistic juggernaut” (Demont-Heinrich, 2005, p. 80) which has widespread social, cultural, educational and political effects (Phillipson, 1992, 1998, 2004). It is the language of science and technology, globalisation, modernisation, internationalisation, and transnationalisation, which are features identified by Tsuda (1994) as the characteristics of the ‘diffusion-of-English’ paradigm in language policy. Hence, it has been adopted as a medium of instruction in education institutes in different countries around the world. However, “English has remained a source of failure, frustration, and low self-esteem” for many students (Tsui, 1996, p. 246). It is also a key cause of tension and social division between elite and ‘Englishless masses’ in Philippines (Tollefson, 2000), Nigeria, Tanzania, and Kenya (Bamgbose, 2003; Bisong, 1995), South Africa (Kamwangamalu, 2007), India (Annamalai, 2005; Bhatt, 2005), Hong Kong (Li, 2002), and so on. Bhatt (2005, p. 27), for example, mentions that the colonial legacy of English in India has formed a “social-linguistic apartheid, i.e., legalised segregation ... [and] sociolinguistically-based inequality”. The inequality is “pervasive and unalterable” (ibid.). In Asia Pacific countries, such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Japan, Korea, Taiwan, and Vietnam, English, as a medium of education, is creating division and discrimination between the “haves and have-nots and city and rural area dwellers” (Nunan, 2003, p. 605).

Decisions related to any language policy are ideological. These decisions are neither apolitical nor ahistorical. For example, in a critical-historical analysis of the medium-of-instruction policies in the USA, McCarty (2004) demonstrates that the Government manipulated the policies to obtain geographical and political control over the ethno-linguistic minorities, i.e., the Indians. In Hong Kong, the majority of school had to

use Chinese as a medium of instruction, when China took control over it from Britain (Evans, 2002). In other words, language policies reflect which language speakers are socially more esteemed. Pennycook (2001) also suggests that language policies involve people in constant struggles for political and economic participation. An analysis of British colonial policy in Basutoland shows that mother-tongue education was ensured only to serve varied economic opportunities to people (Brutt-Griffler, 2002). In Malaysia, for example, the Only-Malay policy marginalised the Chinese- and Tamil-speakers in the education system (David & Govindasamy, 2005). A similar ideological role of language policy is found in Singapore. The government allocated English for technological and economic domains and the mother tongue for social and cultural domains (Wee, 2006). However, interestingly, Mandarin received importance as an official language, but other languages, such as Malay or Tamil, were marginalised. In other words, decisions in relation to language policies are not always taken on the basis of pragmatic and pedagogic efficiency of a language. By contrast, decisions are taken “to legitimate, effectuate, and reproduce an unequal division of power and resources (material and immaterial) between groups which are defined on the basis of language” (Skutnabb-Kangas, 1988, as cited in Phillipson, 1998, p. 103). Note that the medium of instruction can also be a vehicle of emancipation. For example, the introduction of Welsh-medium education and bilingual education in Wales ensured the recognition of Welsh when it came under threat with the increased dominance of English at the end of the 20th century (Jones & Martin-Jones, 2004). In New Zealand, through inclusive medium-of-instruction policy, the indigenous language Maori was saved from extinction (May, 2004).

In Bangladesh, a South Asian country, Bengali or Bangla is the *de facto* and *de jure* national language (Banu & Sussex, 2001). It is the functional language in all the

significant domains of the society including government, education, law, administration, everyday communication, the media, as well as entertainment (Imam, 2005). It is the medium of instruction in the primary (Year 1-5), secondary (Year 6-10) and higher secondary (Year 11-12) education of the Bangla-medium schools. However, universities, specifically the private ones, have started to emphasise on English. These universities have strict rules about the enforcement of English and also offer remedial English courses for the weaker students. Nevertheless, the initiative is perhaps not so rewarding for all the students. Many of the students take a long time to adjust with the English-only environment of the university. They struggle to pass all the prerequisite English courses. They also do not perform well in the courses in which they need to read and write in English. As a university teacher, I observed students' constant sufferings and emotional turmoil in the English-only environment of universities. The experiences of these students indicate a dissonance between the pedagogic practices of these universities and the students' linguistic competence. In addition, there has not been much work on the role of English in the higher education in Bangladesh except for work by Hamid, Jahan & Monjural (2013). A thorough scrutiny of the three prestigious journals on ELT and Applied Linguistics in Bangladesh, i.e., *Dhaka University Studies*, *The Journal of the Institute of Modern Languages*, and *Harvest: The Journal of English Language and Literature* show that the most research has been done on English language skills and teacher education.

Research on the effect of the medium of instruction in higher education in Bangladesh is therefore timely and important. The paper identifies to what extent the English-only language policy in higher education advantage or disadvantage students. The attention is specifically focused on the experiences of students from a Bangla-medium educational background, a background that is often coupled with a lower

economic condition. There are some exclusive private Bangla-medium schools in cosmopolitan cities which are equally as good as their English-medium counterparts. However, the number of these schools is few. They are also far more expensive than the public ones. In the following section, the role of English in the education system of Bangladesh will be described, so that the necessity and appropriacy of the research can become clearer.

English in Education: Bangladesh in Focus

English is available in two forms in the education system in Bangladesh (Banu & Sussex, 2001; Sultana, 2003, 2004): as a content-based subject in government and non-government Bangla medium schools and colleges (BMSC) and as the only language of academic discourses in the elite English medium schools (EMSC).

English in BMSC

Bangladesh has one of the largest centralised systems of primary education in the world (Imam, 2005). The majority of students attend BMSC, both the government and private ones, which have comparatively lower tuition fees. They learn all the subjects in Bangla, including English. Public schools struggle to provide decent education to a huge number of students with their limited budget. Because of the inadequate number of teachers, classes are not held regularly. The numbers of classes are in fact fewer and alarmingly low. Students of Year 1 and 2 usually complete only 444 hours of classes per year in total (ibid.). The standard of education in public schools is also unsatisfactory. 28% and 44% of the students achieved the minimum level of competence in written Bangla and mathematics respectively after five years of basic education (World Bank, 2000).

The standard of English education in Bangla-medium schools has also been decreasing. Khatun and Begum (2000, as cited in Imam, 2005) did a survey on 200 students in Year 11 and 12 in Dhaka city. They expected that the urban dwelling students would be good at English. Many of them, in fact, scored zero and less than one in five students scored well. Several donor assisted ELT reform projects have been launched in Bangladesh in the last fifteen years. There has not been any noticeable development observed in students' communicative competence (A. Rahman, 2007; Siddique, 2004). This is also confirmed by the fact that every year the Institute of Modern Languages needs to run a significant number of pre-intermediate English language courses for the students of Dhaka University (Quader, 2001). Many of them do not know how to speak or write even a single sentence correctly.

English in EMSC

The EMSC may be considered as replicas of English private schools in the UK. They have high tuition fees and hence, only the rich parents can afford them. Only 10% of the student population attends EMSC (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007). Most of the EMSC have highly proficient and qualified teachers and some of them are native speakers of English. The schools are located in upmarket areas and provide all the amenities necessary for effective teaching and learning. The schools follow the curriculum and the syllabuses developed by the Cambridge International Examination Board, an examination board in the UK, and the exams (O' level and A' level) are administered by the British Council, Bangladesh. The scripts are marked by registered examiners in the UK. The textbooks for all the courses (except Bangla and Religious Studies) are published in the UK (Hossain & Tollefson, 2007; Imam, 2005).

Social Consequences of a Disparate Education System

The English education, as showed above, is not accessible to the poor and rural population and hence, it has naturally developed an ‘assumption nexus’. As defined by Ramanathan (2005), an ‘assumption nexus’ is a complete set of social beliefs and practices that make people believe in the superiority of a specific language speaking population. It also allows people to put them in a privileged position, relegating the speakers of other languages or indigenous languages in a subordinate social position. The social dynamics legitimise the mythical values of English. Most Bangladeshis have positive attitudes towards English and English speaking Bangladeshis. Elite English-educated Bangladeshis prefer to show off their linguistic skills. English represents status, culture, education, and intelligence (S. Rahman, 2005, 2009). English has also become an instrument for economic advantages. Private companies prefer to employ university graduates with a higher level of proficiency in English. Universities consequently tend to give more emphasis to English. However, the majority of students come to the higher education from Bangla-medium education background. The only experience they have of English is as a content-based subject in school and college. Hence, their experiences about English as a medium of instruction in higher education must be scrutinised. Therefore, I thought it fit to propose the research question given below:

What implications did English as a medium of instruction in the university have for students from different education backgrounds in relation to chances of learning and identity?

Language, Identity, and Learning

In the following sections, the intricate and intertwined relationship between language, power, identity and learning will be elaborated. The socially situated nature of these notions will also be revealed.

Bourdieu's notion of linguistic capital

Bourdieu (1992) wrote extensively on the relationship of language and power and the role that language plays in positioning people in different social hierarchies. According to him, language or linguistic encounters are instruments for the reproduction of social structures. Certain linguistic repertoire, i.e., 'linguistic capital', has higher values in the society (Bourdieu, 1992). For example, individuals may indicate that they belong to the upper echelon of the society when they use the language of the dominant social class. Bourdieu (1992, p. 82), hence, states, linguistic capital helps individuals to develop a *sense of their own social worth* and more generally, their stance in the social world. They are capable of more spontaneous interaction and obtain symbolic benefits than those who are less rich in linguistic capital (ibid.). In a formal educational institution, for example, students' knowledge, life experience, and other language resources may get unrecognised and underappreciated, if they do not have competence in the target language (Auerbach, 1995). Consequently, their self-esteem and self-confidence may become fragile. They may also suffer from a sense of powerlessness and feel physically excluded from classroom discourses.

The efficacy of linguistic capital, moreover, depends on extra-linguistic resources which designate individuals to different locations of the social space. These factors are intangible, but durable as they determine who tells in what situations. Bourdieu (1992) identifies varied kinds of capitals: economic capital, i.e., material wealth in the forms of money or properties; cultural capital, i.e., knowledge, skills, and educational or technical qualifications; and symbolic capital, i.e., accumulated prestige or honour, and so on. Nevertheless, linguistic capital is powerful, as interactions demonstrate and reproduce social structures. In other words, when people are engaged in conversation,

they are engaged in a potential “act of power” (Bourdieu, 1992, as cited in Roberts & Sarangi, 2001, p. 174). They act according to the asymmetric position they hold in the society. For example, a conversation shows what linguistic repertoire interlocutors possess, what social class they belong to, who holds the superior position amongst them and who has greater control over the conversation. Hence, with reference to Africa, Soyinka (1993) argues that social class is somewhat less dehumanising and dangerous than language as a boundary.

Identity and learning in the community of practice (COP)

Language is closely intertwined with individual’s identity and learning (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008; Mantero, 2007). One of the significant ways individuals present themselves to the world is through language. Hence, identity is “a dimension of linguistic enquiry” (Omoniyi & White, 2006, p. 1). Individuals also tend to regulate their group affiliation through language (Kamwangamalu, 2007, p. 263). Thus both language and identity are socially constructed. West (1992) also argues that individuals’ concept of self-identity is closely tied with their desire of recognition, desire of affiliation, and desire of security and safety.

The necessity of understanding the social nature of identity and learning has also been addressed in the framework of community of practice (COP). It was propounded by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998a, b) in their anthropological research and later on, adapted by applied linguists. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992, p. 464) define a COP as “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour”. In COP, mutual engagement in an endeavour creates “ways of doing things, ways of thinking, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short practice (ibid.). Thus, COP focuses on the role of social

participation in the emergence of group affiliation. In addition, Wenger (1998a, b, 2000) identifies learning as a socially situated process. He postulates that individuals require 'legitimate peripheral participation' in a community in order to learn. The more they participate peripherally and legitimately in practices in the COP, the more they learn. This also tallies with the sociocultural theory of second language acquisition (Lantolf, 2000). According to the theory, individuals' learning is affected by the objects in their environment and by others around them (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Thus learning is neither an independent process, nor a cognitive process, but an interdependent process. Therefore, absence of learning is not always resulted in by unintelligence, demotivation, or insincerity on the part of learners (Norton & Toohey, 2002). It may also happen because of "plain minimalist" uninvolvedness (Wenger, 1990, p. 84). Idealistically, learning in fact only occurs when individuals are socially engaged with their immediate environment. In other words, they need legitimacy in the COP in order to learn.

However, even the legitimate peripheral participation in the COP is complex. The nature of participation is determined by the hidden implicit power relations underlying the social structures of the COP. Hence, a new comer in the COP may not have access to all the resources necessary for claiming agency. The power organisation of COP either opens or debars the individual's participation (Hodges, 1998). Morita (2004, p. 577) observes the socialisation experience of a group of international graduate students in Canada and argues, "It is likely to involve struggles over access to resources, conflicts, and negotiations between differing viewpoints arising from differing degrees of experience and expertise and transformations of a given academic community's practices as well as of the participants' identities". Therefore, participating in the discourse community of the academia is not simplistic, i.e., it is

not only developing knowledge and skills. The COP needs to be populated by the ‘rule of the game’.

In summary, identity and learning are not always individualistic, but socially determined (Price, 1996). Individuals are socially constructed and constrained and consequently, participation in COP is vital both for learning and identity. This social notion of language, identity, and learning will be illuminating for unravelling the role of English in the COP of the university.

Research Design

A mixed-method approach was adapted for this specific research study. I believe that mixed-method approach is better than any single method, per se, quantitative or qualitative. It straddles both the quantitative and qualitative methods under one umbrella. Quantitative method on its own, for example, is criticised for being too “simplistic, decontextualised, and reductionist”, failing to draw in ‘lived’ experience of participants (Dornyei, 2007, p. 45). On the other hand, qualitative method is avoided by the perfectionist because of its context specific and unrepresentative samples (ibid.). Thus the mixed-method approach to research is considered as “hybrid vigour” which can be used for supporting and informing both the paradigm, i.e., the qualitative and quantitative inquiry (Dornyei, 2007). In other words, mixed-method approach is more inclusive than either qualitative or quantitative approach. For example, in this research study, a questionnaire survey gathered information about the role of English in higher education from a greater number of students in several universities in Bangladesh. The in-depth individual interviews of fewer students revealed specific personal experiences of participants in relation to English as the medium of instruction. Thus the mixed-method approach ensured ‘multi-level

analysis' for the research (ibid.). In addition, questions for the interview were developed for further in-depth analysis based on the factual information derived from the questionnaire survey.

In developing the questionnaire, Shaaban and Ghaith (2002) and Yihong et al. (2005) were consulted. Shaaban and Ghaith (2002) report university students' perception of the objective and subjective vitality of Arabic, French, and English in Lebanon. A language's vitality is:

The social, cultural, and educational factors that define the continued existence and prosperity of a language in heterogeneous communities. Heterogeneity may be based on ethnic diversity only, but it could be defined by diversity of belief systems, perceptions, and aspirations ... objective vitality is usually measured by objective data as facts and information about the domains of use of the language and the number of speakers and their economic, social, and political power. Subjective vitality, on the other hand, refers to the perceptions of group members of the language vitality of their group in relation to outgroups (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2002, pp. 558-560).

Yihong et al. (2005) report students' self-identity change in relation to learning English. These research studies were relevant to the one reported here for three specific reasons: 1. It is intended to understand to what extent students needed English in the university, i.e., the objective vitality of English on campus; 2. It is intended to reveal students' experiences, attitudes, and perceptions about English and to what extent their experiences differ because of their education, socioeconomic, and linguistic background, i.e., the subjective vitality of English on campus; and 3. It is intended to explore what implications English might have for their group affiliation. Therefore, the questionnaire had four parts (*See Appendix A*). The first part elicited data about the degree of necessity of English in the university. The second part elicited students' subjective perception and attitude about English on campus, specifically in relation to class participation, group affiliation, intergroup relations,

and intergroup particularities. The second section also drew information on students' self-identity changes in relation to English. The third section had two open-ended questions which intended to find out students' specific experiences in the use of English. The last section elicited information about participants' socioeconomic and education background. This section drew data to measure any possible co-relation between demographic economic, educational factors and perceived linguistic vitality of English as a medium of instruction. I hasten to mention here that questions regarding salary or monthly income are not considered personal or confidential in the context of Bangladesh.

Interviews were conducted in order to gain deeper understanding about the authentic experiences of the participants on campus. They were asked about their experiences in relation to English as a medium of instruction, possible group affiliation based on their competence in English, and social experiences in relation to English within the university. It was expected that their answers might reveal the nature of significance of English for their identity and chances of learning. They were also asked about their personal opinions about the findings drawn from the questionnaire survey (*See Appendix B*). The findings of the interviews were codified according to the major themes that emerged from the data. The interviews sometimes went beyond the semi-structured questionnaire, based on participants' responses. A word-by-word translation, without non-verbal expressions and pauses, are transcribed because detailed transcription as such was not relevant to the research.

Participants

First year students of different universities were informed about the research and 350 questionnaires were distributed. 115 students of 3 private universities and 2 of

government universities returned the filled-in questionnaires. Amongst them 102 were from BMSC and 13 were from EMSC. The participation in the research was voluntary and hence, equal participation of students from BMSC and EMSC could not be ensured. It also perhaps showed that students from BMSC were more willing to participate in the research because they, perhaps, wanted to make their voice heard. The six participants in the interviews were selected from the responses of the questionnaires. They had answered ‘strongly agree’ in section 2A of the questionnaire, demonstrating that they had had difficulties in English.

The following table summarises the demographic information of the participants.

Table 1

Demographic Information about the Participants

Type of Universities	%	Type of School	%	Location of School and Colleges	%
Private	76.5	Bangla-medium	88.7	Capital	41.2
Government	23.5	English-medium	11.3	Not in the Capital City	57.0
				Abroad	1.8

Data Analysis of the Questionnaire

The answers given by participants in the questionnaire were measured by a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree). Section 1, 2, and 5 of the questionnaire were analysed on SPSS 15.0.

Two categories of descriptive statistics were used: measures of central tendency and the measures of variability (Dornyei, 2007). They summarised the findings and identified the general tendencies in the data. The ‘mean’ of the data, i.e., the average of the scores, revealed the measure of central tendency. The ‘standard deviation’,

which indicates the standard distance of the scores from the 'mean' indicated the measure of variability. The standard deviation thus identified whether the participants varied extremely in their responses.

The 'independent-samples t-test' would compare the responses of the participants from BMSC and EMSC in the questionnaire. It would identify the magnitude of the differences in the means and measure the statistical significance of the differences. However, the number of EMSC students was fewer and hence, the assumptions of 'independent-sample t-test could not be met. For parametric technique, such as independent-sample t-test, the general assumption is that the sample size will have to be 30+ (Pallant, 2007). The following section presents some of the salient findings of the research.

Impact of linguistic ideology

The data shows that both the students of the private and government universities needed to use English extensively for understanding class lectures, answering questions in class, writing answers in examinations, and talking to teachers. Participants, however, coming from BMSC seemed to face problems in the university because of the immense importance given to English. On a 5-point Likert scale (1=strongly agree; 5= strongly disagree), the mean differences between the responses of the BMSC and EMSC were significantly different. This indicates that BMSC participants had greater difficulties when they had to participate in discussions in English inside and outside the class. Item 1 has the highest mean for both the BMSC and EMSC participants, showing that BMSC participants had greater difficulties. Table 2 shows the mean differences and standard deviation between the responses of the participants.

Table 2*Descriptive Statistics for the Difficulties Participants Faced in the Use of English*

Serial No.	Items	Types of Schools	Mean (M)	Std. Deviation
1.	I find it difficult to participate in class discussions in English.	Bangla-medium	2.65	1.248
		English-medium	4.31	.855
2.	I find it difficult to participate in any discussions or debates in English in the university.	Bangla-medium	2.40	1.137
		English-medium	4.23	.927
3.	I struggle when I require to interact with English-speaking students.	Bangla-medium	2.31	1.271
		English-medium	4.15	1.068
4.	When I have difficulties in English learning, I doubt my own ability.	Bangla-medium	2.39	1.325
		English-medium	3.62	1.121

When 22.5% and 40.2% participants from BMSC strongly agreed and agreed that they found it difficult to participate in any discussion or debates in English, 38.5% and 46.2% from English-medium background disagreed and strongly disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 31.7% and 35% from BMSC strongly agreed and agreed respectively that they struggled when they are required to interact with English-speaking students. However, 53.8% and 38.5% participants from EMSC strongly disagreed and disagreed respectively in this regard. Figure 1 shows the differences in a bar chart.

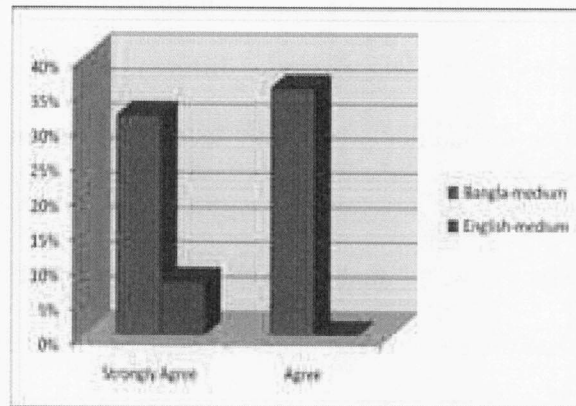


Figure 1. Responses of Participants in Item 3: I struggle when I am required to interact with English-speaking students

This indicates that participants from BMSC had problems not only inside the classroom, but also in their interaction with students who preferred to interact in English rather than in Bangla.

Location of participants' schools and colleges

A close relationship between the location of the school and the problems participants faced in the universities was found in the descriptive analysis. For example, participants with the education outside the capitals responded that they had difficulties to participate in class discussion or any discussion in English. They also stated that they struggled when they were required to interact with English-speaking students. Table 3 shows the stark differences between the responses of the participants.

Table 3

Demographic Location of the Schools and Participants' Difficulties in English

	Item in the Questionnaire	Location of the school	Strongly Agree	Agree
1.	I find it difficult to participate in class discussions in English.	Capital cities	4.3%	6.4%
		Semi-urban and rural	29.2%	43.1%
2.	I find it difficult to participate in any discussions or debates in English.	Capital	12.8%	8.5%
		Semi-urban and rural	26.2%	56.9%
3.	I struggle when I am required to interact with English-speaking students.	Capital	19.6%	15.2%
		Semi-urban and rural	35.4%	44.6%
4.	When I have difficulties in English learning, I doubt my own ability.	Capital	17.4%	30.4%
		Semi-urban and rural	32.8%	37.5%

Participants' social image

English also plays a significant role in their social recognition in the university. Both the participants from BMSC and EMSC strongly agreed that better competence in English would help them to get more attention from their teachers and from their

friends. In this instance, 63.2% of the participants strongly agreed and 28.9% agreed that with better English, they would have better access to teachers. On the other hand, 42.1% strongly agreed and 36.8% agreed that better English would help them to get more attention from friends.

There is a significant difference in the responses of the students coming from the BMSC and EMSC in the item: a better command of English will help me to have more friends. This indicates that participants from BMSC perhaps needed English for making friends, which their counterparts did not. Figure 2 shows the percentage of their choices on the item.

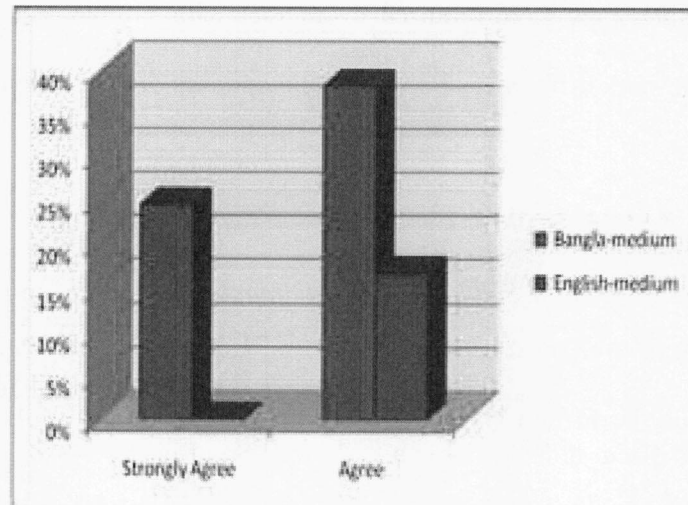


Figure 2. Responses of Participants in Item: A better command will help me to have more friends

Participants did not have the confidence that affluence could buy and hence, they longed for immaterial goods or resources, such as friendship, teachers' attention, and access to university clubs.

Regardless of their education background, all the participants considered English important for their self-image, i.e., for their confidence and sophistication. 83.3% of the participants strongly agreed that English would help them to be more confident

and 35.7% strongly agreed and 34.8% agreed that better competence in English would help them to be more sophisticated.

Participants' identity in the university

English played a significant role in marginalising the students who did not have adequate competence in English. Weaker students were not noticed by teachers, i.e., these students did not have chances to participate in-class discussions, whereas EMSC had better access to teachers. According to the research, 22.3% participants strongly agreed and 42% participants agreed that they remained unnoticed by their teachers. In other words, being fluent in English was necessary if participants wanted to participate in any class discussion. In addition, the responses also indicated fluency in English is mandatory if participants wanted to participate in extra-curricular activities in the university. For example, 35.4% participants strongly agreed and 36.3% participants agreed that students fluent in English had better access to university clubs. In other words, their participation in the COP of the university was determined, to a great extent, by their 'linguistic capital'.

The data revealed a significant trend on the following items which intended to identify participants' group affiliation based on their competence in English. A significant number of participants decided to give 'no opinion'. Here it should be mentioned that in other items of the questionnaire, fewer participants opted for the 'no opinion' option. This shows that participants were, perhaps, uncomfortable in answering this question.

Table 4*Percentages of Choices in the Role of English in Friendship*

Item in the questionnaire	Types of Schools	Strongly Agree	Agree	Have No Opinion
English-speaking students usually have their own groups of friends.	Bangla-medium	32.7%	30.7%	20.8%
	English-medium	7.7%	23.1%	30.8%
Students weak in English usually have their own group of friends.	Bangla-medium	23.0%	35.0%	20.0%
	English-medium	23.1%	23.1%	23.1%

There is no doubt that this issue is complex and hence, the data from the interview given in the following section can shed more light on it.

Data Analysis from the Interview

The data in the interview, in fact, was revealing in the sense that they uncovered to what extent English affected participants' socialisation on campus, self-image, identity, and chances of learning. The six participants (all referred to using pseudonyms herein) are from BMSC, in general, shared same kind of experiences in relation to English in the university. Their experiences indicated that the medium of instruction had turned the classroom into a place of tension and struggle for them. They did not have the access to the COP of the university. The content of the participants' responses had been analysed in terms of the themes that emerged out of the data: images of 'us' and 'them', symbolic capital and struggles of power, academic socialisation experiences and identity, reduced chances of learning, acceptance of discrimination, and changes in self-perception.

'Symbolic capital': 'Us' vs. 'them'

Students in the universities seemed segregated in groups based on their 'linguistic and symbolic capitals'. Bably, one of the participants mentioned that the students who were good in English interacted in English amongst themselves and had their own world. She did not belong to it.

They greet us when they see us, but at the same time, they are very cold and indifferent towards us. There is a gap. I can feel that.

They have their own circle. They do everything together. We have little communication with them. I cannot explain exactly how it happens. I feel that they get bored after one or two lines of conversations with me.

I also feel uncomfortable to be with them for long. Sometimes they act strangely. They have certain attitude that makes me conscious about myself and my background. I can't explain it to you precisely how they do it ... I just feel that we belong to two different worlds ...

I have already accepted it that I can never be a part of their world
(Bably; Interview 2; emphasis added).

Bably's metaphoric use of two different worlds, perhaps, appears to represent what Bourdieu defined as *habitus*. Bourdieu (1992) introduces the notion of *habitus*. *Habitus* makes speakers speak according to the society to which they belong to. The dispositions which form *habitus* become structured in them by the social condition i.e., the social milieu in which speakers acquire them. The notion of *habitus* is important to understand the feeling of one's being an 'insider' and an 'outsider'. Individuals with appropriate *habitus* have "a practical sense or 'feel' for the game" (Thompson, 1992, p. 17), and without the feel, they will be 'outsiders'. In other word, *habitus* develops in speakers *le sens pratique*, i.e., the sense that tells speakers how to act and respond in certain situation of the daily life. As she did not have the *habitus* of the English-medium students, she felt like an 'outsider'.

The separation, is moreover, not only caused by her lack of linguistic competence in English, but also caused by the amount and nature of ‘symbolic capital’. Bably seemed to know exactly why she would not be able to converse at the same level with those students:

I know that I can't socialise with them. We, especially who come from the village, are always treated as separate bodies. They have high status. They don't have to face any problems for money. I have to face them. Even if I consider this issue, we are not same. How can I be a part of them? These issues always make me feel separate. Even when I want to talk to them, I feel uneasy. I feel strange. I can't carry on a conversation with them (Bably; Interview 2; emphasis added).

Bably failed to perceive herself as the equal member of the same community. She was way too much conscious about the differences in the education background and socio-economic condition. Students with their embodied ‘symbolic capital’ made her to retreat to a different world. This appears to have affected her identity as she could not relate herself with the powerful social group or network of the class. Bably’s feeling of being in a different world was so ingrained that it was difficult for her to ignore it. Her repeated use of ‘they’/ ‘them’ shows the clear separation between the groups. They made Bably feel ‘strange’, ‘uncomfortable’ and ‘conscious’. Moreover, participants revealed their collective feeling about the issue by their constant use of ‘we’ instead of ‘I’. Bably, for example, aligned herself with a group of other students and folded others’ voice in her single voice with her ‘we-ness’. In other words, this is not only her individual voice (Bakhtin, 1981). This is the voice of others.

When Bably shared what happened to her at the emotional level, Koyel mentioned how students divided even the physical space of the classroom:

They ignore us. They never treat us as equals. As they speak English fluently, they think themselves bigger than us ... Even in the class, we sit in two groups... at one side who are good ... on the other side ... we

... *who are not so good at English* (Koyel; Interview 4; emphasis added).

Thus participants were relegated to separate positions even in the classroom. This was, in fact, a physical manifestation of their mental segregation, i.e., 'us' and 'them'.

Academic socialisation experiences and identity

All the interviews appear to have demonstrated one thread in common: participants were afraid of speaking in front of their classmates and teachers. All the participants shared their feeling of embarrassment, fear of making mistakes, and feeling of inferiority during the interviews. Naushad (Interview 5) narrated how he was laughed at by his teacher when he could not give directions to British Council. The teacher taunted him in front of the class, telling that he would never reach the destination if he followed his direction. Participants were so conscious about their linguistic inability in the 'legitimate language' that they questioned their legitimacy in the university. For example, Arafat (interview 1) mentioned about an event when one of his classmates told him off,

You can't speak English properly. Why did you come to study in a private university? You should have studied in a national college (Arafat, Interview 1).

Thus participants were afraid of voicing their responses in the class. They did not feel safe and secured in the classroom. Consequently, they failed to have academic socialisation experiences. In fact, they remained silent, unnoticed by both teachers and other students. They did not have the opportunity to construct their knowledge because of their silence. When these participants became passive or silent in the class, they themselves accepted and sustained the power of language. Thus power is realised in participants in two ways: the way they saw themselves and endorsed an identity

and the way how they thought the students from EMSC and their teachers recognised them. They were in constant struggles considering what those students and teachers thought of them. There is no doubt that this realisation would have strong impact on the collective psyche and emotional well-being of the participants.

Medium of instruction and chances of learning

Participants did not understand the class lectures which were all conducted in English. They had problems in teachers' pronunciation, fluency, and coinage of vocabulary. Even the content of the lessons remained beyond participants' comprehension. Arafat mentioned the reason why it was difficult for him to understand and respond in the class.

They [teachers] speak fast and we cannot distinguish one word from the other. We have troubles in these classes. We cannot understand the lectures of these teachers at all. How can we then respond in the class? (Arafat; Interview, 1; emphasis added)

The data also shows that participants failed to verbalise what they had understood in the class because of their low linguistic competence. Koyel, a participant in the interview stated that the major challenge she faced in the university was not being able to contribute to class discussion.

*All the classes are in English. No one uses Bangla in the class as our teachers in school and college used to do. **Most of us feel so helpless. We understand and yet we feel we haven't understood anything. We can never verbalise what we have understood or what we haven't understood.*** (Koyel; Interview, 4; emphasis added)

The vulnerability of Koyel becomes clear when she stated that she could not verbalise what she understood or had not understood, as if she was *gagged*. She was denied from 'legitimate peripheral participation' in the COP (Wenger, 2000). The

participants could not did not actively engage in classroom interaction or ask questions on the subjects taught because of the 'silencing by English'. They were suffering from alienation and deprived of the full participation in the COP. Thus English as the medium of instruction was detrimental for students like Koyel and Arafat. They were failing to engage in the learning process and develop critical understanding of the knowledge. Hence, the medium of instruction in the universities, were, in fact serving the interests of the privileged participants who had the perfect combination of linguistic, economic, cultural, and symbolic capitals, not the mass who had little access to them. It also demonstrates that the university authorities were reinforcing the English hegemony.

Acceptance of discrimination as natural

Another trend that came out of the data is the fact that participants learned to accept the subordination and subjugation by their English-speaking counterparts and teachers. Naushad and Arafat considered this process of subjugation and subordination as 'natural'. They did not question why they would be subordinated in the class when their linguistic competence did not represent their intellectual capacity.

While commenting on the groupings in class, Naushad stated,

*We come from sub-urban towns. We also come from Bangla-medium schools. We are weak in English. We sit separately in the class. Those who come from Dhaka, have their own houses in Dhaka [i.e., economical capital] and they are from English-medium schools. **They prefer to sit separately with other students from English-medium schools.** In their circle, they have interaction amongst themselves in English. We cannot be member of this group. We speak in Bangla. **We have separate groups. These differences exist. We naturally accept it.*** (Naushad, Interview 5; emphasis added)

This is the social and cultural reproduction and participants appear to have actively complied with the process of the linguistic hegemony. They also seem to have accepted the nonchalant and non-involved role of the teacher in the process. Thus they categorised themselves into groups, using BMSC synonymous to an education system that prepares linguistically crippled students. As stated in Norton (1997, p. 424), “The namer isolates the named, explains them, contains them, and controls them”. However, here the participants from BMSC named themselves. More tragic is the fact that they did not realise that they were not only being named, but they were naming themselves.

Participants themselves also believed the rationalisation or justification of the legitimacy of English and supremacy of the students from EMSC. They supported the necessity of learning English and showed their endorsement towards it. In the process, they unfortunately accepted themselves inadequate. This is ‘normalisation through consent’ (Giroux, 1981b) and ‘warping of mind’ caused by linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1998).

Arafat shared his opinions about the result of the questionnaire survey showing teachers’ preferences for English-speaking students. He mentioned that teachers tended to give more marks to them and quite rhetorically compared them to native speakers of English.

*Even in the exams, they [students from EMSC] perform better as they perform better in the class, right? **Teachers tend to give more marks to those students who participate in the class discussion.** As native English speakers have satisfying conversation only with native speakers, they [teachers who converse in English] get satisfaction from talking to English speaking students. Hence, they give more importance to those students (Arafat, Interview 1; emphasis added).*

There is a sense of ‘essentialism’ built in the process in which some students are predestined to be appreciated and rewarded, when others not. Nevertheless,

participants accepted it without questioning. They considered English as the *only* yardstick to judge their own academic potentiality. In other words, the ‘new colonisers’, the elitist universities, teachers, and students successfully ‘colonised’ the participants and controlled their perception, cognition, and preferences. This is the covert manifestation of linguistic ideology.

Participants’ self-esteem

Participants’ self-perception seemed to go through a rapid change with their entrance to universities. They became unsure of their general ability.

For example, Bably stated:

*I was a good student in the school and college. When I started my classes in the university, I realised right away that I am not a good student as I thought I was. I also realised that I wouldn’t be able to compete those students who are from English-medium schools. There are also students from Viqarunnisa and Notre Dame [considered to be the best Bangla-medium educational institutions in Dhaka] who speak English so fluently that I get upset. **I know that I can never speak like them. Even if I try, I know, I can never be like them.*** (Bably; Interview 2; emphasis added).

This excerpt shows that Bably’s self-confidence was shattered. It shows her ambivalent feelings about her limited English abilities. In fact, her emotional condition was the consequence of the linguistic hegemony and ideology propounded by the university. The hegemonic ideology made her think that her linguistic capacity was synonymous to her general intellectual ability. Participants also seemed to lose interest in their studies and they seemed disoriented when they talked about their future.

Conclusion

From the discussion above, it can be confirmed that English is creating a complex web of relations among students in the higher education in Bangladesh. This research, within a small scale, has problematised the ironical role of English in the universities. It is affecting students' participation in classroom activities, power negotiation, identity, and in other words, their legitimate peripheral participation in the COP. The symbolic valorisation of English is making language-based discrimination acceptable (Giroux, 1981a) in the universities in Bangladesh. It is also benefitting only those students who have competence in English. This is reminiscent of what is called "politics of representation" (Mehan, 1996, as cited in Blommaert, 1999, p. 9). Students and teachers with adequate competence in English appear to exert control over the politics of representation, while the others who are not so competent in English are constrained to accept it. Thus universities have become the sites of social and cultural reproduction. Universities are, in fact, "a kind of microcosm of the broader social order" (Auerbach, 1995, p: 9) and that students' role, behaviour, and identity, to a great extent, are decided by the dynamics of power and inequality enforced on them (Bourdieu, 1992). Both students and teachers perpetuate and effectuate the social, political, and ideological relations. Consequently, these students appear to develop an 'ascribed identity' based on their experiences in the classroom and their sense of what teachers and other students may perceive them to be. They learn to accept that they are somewhat deficient and eventually, they complete the perpetuation of the hegemony (Li, 2002). This also appears to support the view and belief that identity is something fluid, constructed and situated in the COP. It is not only biologically determined.

There is a commonality in the way students negotiate their participation in the

academia: silence. With their silence, they become invisible and position themselves in the “intermediate regions of the social space” (Bourdieu, 1992, p. 62). They do not participate in “meaning making” practices (Davies, 2005, p. 53) in the COP and miss out on better learning opportunities. Lave and Wenger (1991, p. 5) consider social participation not an “adjunct to learning process but the vehicle for learning itself”. These students unfortunately do not participate or own knowledge through participation, as Wenger mentions (1998b, p. 5), “knowledge is created, shared, organised, revised, and passed on within and among these communities”. Knowledge becomes a part of the process of knowing when learners interact, communicate, and use the knowledge for the negotiation of meaning.

The finding of this specific piece of research may not sound as something new. It somewhat revalidates the intuitive knowledge that linguistic and symbolic capitals privilege some, and marginalise and alienate others in society. Nevertheless, the extent to which English as a medium of instruction silences students can be revealed. Freire (1970) states that any education system that makes students silent in the class fails to ensure effective learning. Therefore, there is no doubt that the higher education in Bangladesh robs some students of their rights to knowledge. It is working as an undemocratic force, dissocialising and alienating linguistically weaker students.

Limitations

There were two limitations in the research. The main limitation, which was beyond my control, was the disparity of number of participants from both EMSC and BMSC. The participation in the research was voluntary and equal number of students from EMSC did not participate in the research. Moreover, 13 participants from the EMSC

and 102 from BMSC, perhaps, do not represent the entire student population of the universities in Bangladesh. Hence, it is not possible to state in more definitive terms the sort of conclusions that this research can make for the purpose of generalisability. However, this small-scale research can provide an informed ‘feel’ about the experiences of students in relation to English-medium education in the universities of Bangladesh.

Second, varied research tools could not be used in the research because of the time frame. An ethnographic study with other research tools, such as diary writing, focus group discussion, weekly interviews, and classroom observation would draw in more data on participants’ learning and socialisation experiences both inside and outside the university. A questionnaire survey and interviews were, perhaps, decontextualised and hence, may fail to adequately bring out the situated character of learning and identity.

Future Research

This research nevertheless can indicate possibilities for further investigation at three levels: policy level, pedagogic level, and conceptual level.

There has not been much research on policy formation and implementation in relation to medium of instruction at the tertiary level of education in Bangladesh. The present practice, i.e., keeping students in the Bangla-only environment for the first three levels of education and immersing them into English-only environment at the fourth level, demonstrates its limitation. The present practice seems even more unrealistic because it disregards the linguistic, social, and economic realities in students’ life. Hence, the research indicates the necessity of intervening into the activities of the universities and formulating a transparent medium-of instruction policy for all the levels of education: primary, secondary, higher secondary, and

tertiary. Therefore, only an effective language policy will ensure students' smooth transition from one level of education to the next. In addition, there should be a way to incorporate Bangla in the higher education, instead of considering it as "the poor cousin of English medium education, or the 'concubine' of English-medium education" (Tsui, 1996, p. 247).

On a more practical/ pedagogic level, the research shows the necessity of indigenous pedagogic intervention: a pedagogic practice that encourages students to identify the 'counter-hegemonic elements' in the education system (Giroux, 1981b). Students need to be aware of how the elite universities ensure "the perpetuation and legitimation of social hierarchies" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. xi). Only then, students may challenge the established hegemony of English. They can become 'critical co-investigators in dialogues' (Freire, 1970) if they reflect, participate in dialogues and ask questions. Only by learning to question, students may resist the inequality existing in the education system and gain control over their learning and identity.

On a conceptual level, this research demonstrated that classroom is not a neutral site of pedagogical transactions. Even a silence of a student may convey meaning worth of thousand words. Hence, there is a necessity of conducting ethnographic studies for drawing in students' voices and actions. This sort of investigation on a greater and equal number of students from different education backgrounds may reveal the dissonance and contradiction in academic practices.

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Ursula Wingate, my MA thesis supervisor at King's College London and two anonymous reviewers for their constructive and insightful comments on the earlier versions of my article.

References

- Annamalai, E. (2005). Nation-building in a globalised world: Language choice and education in India. In A. M. Y. Lin & P. W. Martin (Eds.), *Decolonisation, globalisation: Language-in-education policy and practice* (pp. 20-37). Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Auerbach, E. R. (1995). The Politics of the ESL classroom: Issues of power in pedagogical choices. In J. W. Tollefson (Ed.), *Power and inequality in language education* (pp. 9-33). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bakhtin, M. (1981). *The dialogic imagination: Four essays*. Austin: University of Texas.
- Banu, R. & Sussex, R. (2001). English in Bangladesh after independence: Dynamics of policy and practice. In B. Moore (Ed.), *Who is Centric Now?* (pp. 122-147). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Bamgbose, A. (2003). A Recurring decimal: English in language policy and planning. *World Englishes*, 22(4), 419-131.
- Bhatt, R. M. (2005). Expert discourses, local practices, and hybridity: The case of Indian Englishes. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. 25-54). New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Bisong, J. (1995). Language choice and cultural imperialism: A Nigerian Perspective. *ELT Journal*, 49(2), 122- 132.
- Blommaert, J. (1999). The debate is open. In J. Blommaert (Ed.), *Language ideological debates* (pp. 1-33). New York: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Bourdieu, P. and Passeron, J. (1990). *Reproduction in education, society and culture*. London: Sage Publications.
- Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Language and symbolic power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Brutt-Griffler, J. (2002). Class, ethnicity, and language rights: An analysis of British colonial policy in Lesotho and Sri Lanka and some implications for language policy. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 1(3), 207-234.
- Bucholtz, M., & Hall, K. (2008). All the above: New coalitions in sociocultural linguistics. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 12(4), 401-431.
- David, M. & Govindasamy, S. (2005). Negotiating a language policy for Malaysia: Local demand for affirmative action versus challenges from globalisation. In S. Canagarajah (Ed.), *Reclaiming the local in language policy and practice* (pp. 123-145). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Davies, B. (2005). Communities of practice: Legitimacy not choice. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 9(4), 557-581.
- Demont-Heinrich, C. (2005). Language and national identity in the era of globalisation: The case of English in Switzerland. *Journal of Communication Inquiry*, 29(1), 66-84.
- Dornyei, Z. (2007). *Research methods in applied linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eckert, P. & McConnell-Ginet, S. (1992). 'Think practically and look locally: Language and gender as a community of practice'. *Annual Review of Anthropology*, 21, 461-90.
- Evans, S. (2002). The medium of instruction on Hong Kong: Policy and practice in the New English and Chinese Streams. *Research Papers in Education*, 17(1), 97-120.
- Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- Giroux, H. (1981a). *Ideology culture and the process of schooling*. London: The Falmer Press.

- Giroux, H. (1981b). Hegemony, resistance, and the paradox of educational reform. *Interchange*, 12(2-3), 3-26.
- Hodges, D. C. (1998). Participation as dis-identification with/in a community of practice. *Mind, Culture, and Activity*, 5(4), 272 – 290.
- Hamid, O.M., Jahan, I., & Islam, M. M. (2013). Medium of instruction policies and language practices, ideologies and institutional divides: Voices of teachers and students in a private university in Bangladesh. *Current Issues in Language Planning*, 14(1), 144-163.
- Hossain, T. & Tollefson, J. W. (2007). Language policy in education in Bangladesh. In A. B. M. Tsui & J. W. Tollefson (Eds.), *Language policy, culture, and identity in Asian contexts* (pp. 241-258). Mahwah, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Imam, R. S. (2005). English as a global language and the question of nation-building education in Bangladesh. *Comparative Education*, 41(4), 471- 486.
- Jones, D. & Martin-Jones, M. (2004). Bilingual education and language revitalization in Wales: Past achievements and current issues. In J. W. Tollefson and A. B. M. Tsui (Eds.), *Medium of education policies: Which agenda? Whose agenda?* (pp. 43-70). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Kamwangamalu, N. M. (2007). One language, multi-layered identities: English in a society in transition, South Africa. *World Englishes*, 26(3), 263-275.
- Lantolf, J. (2000). *Sociocultural theory and second language learning*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lantolf, J. & Thorne, L. S. (2006). *Sociocultural theory and genesis of second language development*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lave, J. and Wenger, E. (1991). *Situated learning: Legitimate peripheral*

- participation*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Li, D. (2002). Hong Kong parents' preference for English-medium education: Passive victims of imperialism or active agents of pragmatism. In A. Kirkpatrick (Ed.), *English in Asia: Communication, identity, power, and education* (pp. 29-62). Melbourne: Language Australia Ltd.
- Mantero, M. (2007). (Ed.). *Identity and second language learning: Culture, inquiry, and dialogic activity in educational contexts*. NC, USA: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- May, S. (2004). Maori-medium education in Aotearoa/ New Zealand. In J. W. Tollefson and A. B. M. Tsui (Eds.), *Medium of education policies: Which agenda? Whose agenda?* (pp. 21-42). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- McCarty, T. L. (2004). Dangerous difference: A critical-historical analysis of language education policies in the United States. In J. W. Tollefson and A. B. M. Tsui (Eds.), *Medium of education policies: Which agenda? Whose agenda?* (pp. 71-96). London: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Morita, N. (2004). Negotiating participation and identity in second language academic communities. *TESOL Quarterly*, 38(9), 573-603.
- Norton, B. (1997). Language, identity, and the ownership of English. *TESOL Quarterly*, 31(3), 409-429.
- Norton, B., & Toohey, K. (2002). Identity and language learning. In B. R. Kaplan (Ed.), *The Oxford handbook of applied linguistics* (pp. 115-123). Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Nunan, D. (2003). The impact of English as a global language on educational policies and practices in the Asia-Pacific region. *TESOL Quarterly*, 37(4), 589-613.
- Omoniyi, T. & White, G. (Eds.). (2006). *The sociolinguistics of identity*. London:

Continuum.

- Pallant, J. (2007). *SPSS: Survival manual*. Sydney: The McGraw-Hill Companies.
- Pennycook, A. (2001). *Critical applied linguistics: Critical introduction*. London: Lawrence Erlbaum, Associates.
- Phillipson, R. (1992). *Linguistic imperialism*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Phillipson, R. (1998). Globalising English: Are linguistics human rights an alternative to linguistic imperialism? *Language Sciences*, 20(1), 101-112.
- Phillipson, R. (2004). English in globalization: Three approaches. *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education*, 3(1), 73-84.
- Price, S. (1996). Comments on Bonny Norton Pierce's social identity, investment, and language learning. *TESOL Quarterly*, 30, 331-337.
- Quader, D. A. (2001). Reaction to innovation in language teaching: Project in Bangladesh. *Journal of the Institute of Modern Languages*, June, 5-20.
- Rahman, A. (2007). The history and the policy of English education in Bangladesh. In Yeon H. Choi & Bernard Spolsky (Eds.), *English education in Asia: History and policy* (pp. 67-93). Seoul: The Asian Association of Teachers of English as a Foreign Language.
- Rahman, S. (2005). Orientations and motivation in English language learning: A study of Bangladeshi students at undergraduate Level. *Asian EFL Journal*, 7(1), 29-55.
- Rahman, S. (2009). ELT, ESP, and EAP in Bangladesh: An overview of the status and the need for English. In M. Krazanowski (Ed.), *Current developments in English for academic and specific purposes in developing, emerging and least-developed countries* (pp. 11-43). Reading, UK: IATEFL Publication.
- Ramanathan, V. (2005). *The English-vernacular divide: Postcolonial language*

- politics and practice*. Clevedon, England: Multilingual Matters.
- Roberts, C. & Sarangi, S. (2001). "Like you're living two lives in one go": Negotiating different social conditions for classroom learning in a further education context in England. In M. Heller & M. Martin-Jones. (Eds.), *Voices of authority: Education and linguistic differences* (pp. 171–192). London: Ablex Publishing.
- Shaaban K. & Ghaith, G. (2002). University students' perceptions of the ethnolinguistic vitality of Arabic, French, and English in Lebanon. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 6(4), 557-574.
- Siddique, R. (2004). CLT: Another assumed ideal from the West. *The Dhaka University Studies*, 61(1), 15-28.
- Soyinka, W. (1993). Language as boundary. In *Art, dialogue, and outrage: Essays on literature and culture* (pp. 82-94). New York: Pantheon.
- Sultana, S. (2003). The Political context of pedagogical practices in the EFL classroom in Bangladesh. *Harvest: Jahangirnagar Studies in Language and Literature*, 18, 115-131.
- Sultana, S. (2004). Teachers' perception of grammar in English language teaching (ELT) in Bangladesh. *Harvest: Jahangirnagar Studies in Language and Literature*, 19, 129-139.
- Thompson, J. B. (1992). Editor's introduction. *Language and symbolic power* (pp. 1-31). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Tollefson, J. (2000). Policy and ideology in the spread of English. In J. K. Hall and W. G. Eggington (Eds.). *The sociopolitics of English language teaching* (pp. 7-21). Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters.
- Tsuda, Y. (1994). The diffusion of English: Its impact on cultural and communication.

- Keio Communication Review*, 16, 32-34.
- Tsui, B. M. A. (1996). English in Asian bilingual education: From hatred to harmony. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 17 (2-4), 241-247.
- Wee, L. (2006). The semiotics of language ideologies in Singapore. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 10(3), 344-361.
- Wenger, E. (1990). *Towards a theory of cultural transparency elements of a social discourse of the visible and the invisible*. Irvine, California: University of California.
- Wenger, E. (1998a). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: CUP.
- Wenger, E. (1998b). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems Thinker*, June, 1-10.
- Wenger, E. (2000). Communities of practice and social learning Systems: *Organization*, 7, 225 – 246.
- West, C. (1992). A matter of life and death. *October*, 61, 20-23.
- World Bank. (2000). *Bangladesh: Education sector review*. Washington DC: World Bank.
- Yihong, G., Ying, C., Yuan, Z. & Yan, Z. (2005). Self-identity changes and English learning among Chinese undergraduate. *World Englishes*, 24(1), 39-51.

Appendix A

Questionnaire

Direction: Put a tick mark (√) in the box that says what you want to say. You may use either English, Bangla or both for answering the questions.

1) A. Please indicate to what extent you need English for the following situations in your university:

- a) Understanding class lectures
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- b) Answering questions in class
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- c) Writing answers in examinations
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- d) Talking to teachers
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- e) Talking to friends
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- f) Participating in university clubs
 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%

2. For each of the following questions decide whether you strongly agree (1), agree (2), have no opinion (3), disagree (4), or strongly disagree (5) and check the appropriate box with a tick mark (√). Read each item carefully.

A.	1	2	3	4	5
I find it difficult to participate in class discussions in English.					
I find it difficult to participate in any discussions or debates in English.					
I struggle when I require to interact with English-speaking students.					
I feel embarrassed when I make grammatical mistakes in front of English-speaking students.					
When I have difficulties in learning English, I begin to doubt my own ability.					
I feel great when I find my command of English is better than that of others.					

B.							
	A better command of English will help me to get good grades in the exams.						
	A better command of English will help me to be more confident.						
	A better command of English will help me to get more attention from my teachers.						
	A better command of English will help me to get more attention from my friends.						
	A better command of English will help me to get more friends in the university.						
	A better command of English will help me to be more sophisticated.						
C.							
	English-medium students usually have better access to teachers.						
	English-medium students usually have better access to university clubs.						
	English-medium students usually have their own groups of friends.						
	English education in school and college, in general, prepares students better for the university life.						
D.							
	Students weak in English usually do not respond to class discussions.						
	Students weak in English usually remain unnoticed by teachers.						
	Students weak in English usually suffer from lack of confidence.						
	Students weak in English usually avoid chances of socialisation.						
	Students weak in English usually have their own groups of friends.						

3. Do you recall any event in which you felt good about yourself as you could communicate in English?

Yes

No

If you answered YES, please tell me about the event.

4) Do you recall any event in which you felt bad about yourself as you couldn't communicate in English?

Yes

No

If you answered YES, please tell me about the event.

5. Personal information

1) Name of the University: _____ Department: _____

Semester/year: _____

- 2) Please indicate the percentages to what extent you talk to your family members in English:
- 100% - 75% 75% - 50% 50-25% 25% - 0%
- 3) Estimated monthly family income:
- Less than 10,000 taka
 Less than 20,000 taka
 Less than 30,000 taka
 More than 30,000 taka
- 4) Which school did you go? _____ Location

- 5) What type of school was it? Bangla-medium English medium
- 6) Which college did you go? _____ Location

- 7) What type of college was it? Bangla-medium English medium?
- 8) How many of your close friends in your university are from English-medium schools? _____%
- 9) If you are willing to be interviewed by me, please give your telephone number in the blank given below.
Phone Number _____

Appendix B

Semi-structured Questionnaire for the Interview

1. What role does English play in your life in the university? How do you feel about it?
2. Do you face any specific problems for that? What sort of problems do you face?
3. Do all the students face same level and same kind of problems?
4. 22.3% participants strongly agreed and 42% participants agreed that students weak in English remained unnoticed by their teachers. Have you personally observed any such discrimination?
5. 35.4% students strongly agreed and 36.3% students agreed that English-medium students have better access to university clubs. Do you agree to it?