

# **The Hegemonic Domination of English over Bangla in Bangladeshi English Medium Contexts**

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## **Abstract**

*The paper reports on a study which investigated the status of English and Bangla among the English medium (EM) school students in Bangladesh. The main objectives of this study were to find out the attitudes of the English medium (EM) students and their parents towards Bangla and English language and culture, and to identify to which language and culture the students are most frequently exposed. The study also aimed at addressing the issue of hegemony related to English and Bangla language and culture. This study was based on a questionnaire survey. The participants in this study were 65 EM students and 23 parents. The results revealed that the students had highly favourable attitudes towards the English language and culture. Their attitudes towards Bangla were not negative but their responses about their cultural and recreational involvement showed that they were highly exposed to the English language and culture, not to Bangla. These in conjunction with the parents' responses indicated that there is a potential linguistic and cultural hegemony at work for which the students are facing distancing from Bangla language and culture in favour of the English ones.*

**Keywords:** *English-only policy, Hegemony over L1, language and culture, English medium students, beyond-the-classroom contexts*

## **Introduction**

English has dominated the language domain all over the world for a long time. The importance of this language has grown so high that not only it has become a compulsory subject in numerous countries but also, according to a 2020 report by ISC Research, globally the number of registered English medium (EM) schools has more than tripled since 2000, bringing the total to 11,541 (Merriman, 2020). An EM school simply refers to an institution where the medium of instruction is English. Krashen (1977) claims in his input hypothesis that learners develop in their knowledge of the language when they comprehend language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level. This actually puts emphasis on keeping the learners exposed to the language so that they

get i+1 input of the language. With that view, EM schools apart from just instructing in English try to provide the students with an 'English' environment. Moreover, English has 'power' and parents want to equip their children with this powerful linguistic tool (Kachru, 1986) and it is also a sign of status and prestige (Tickoo, 2006). Therefore, parents prefer EM education for their children so that they always practice English for becoming better speakers. Hence, Bangla is highly discouraged in the EM school premises which Haque and Akter (2012) identify as a prohibition of Bangla. On the other hand, the students of EM schools in Bangladesh are frequently exposed to western culture instead of Bangladeshi culture which could have 'repercussions' in the long run according to Al-Quaderi and Al-Mahmud (2010).

This tension between English and the mother tongue(s) of the people of the Indian subcontinent can be traced back to the Macaulay Minute of 1835 on Education which placed English literature as superior to its oriental counterpart (Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Moreover, Bangladesh is included in Kachru's (1992) 'outer circle' and the country falls under the periphery-English countries as well which Phillipson (1992) refers to as countries on which English was imposed in the colonial times, and where the language has been successfully transplanted and still serves a range of international purposes. Therefore, certainly English has a colonial legacy in Bangladesh and it has been dealt with variously in different education policies over time (see Chowdhury & Kabir, 2014). Overall, historically English was placed in an antagonistic position in Bangladesh and all EM schools were abolished in 1972 as part of the process of Bengalisation (Banu & Sussex, 2001)

However, English regained its importance in policy gradually from National Education Policy 2003 to 2010, and simultaneously EM schools began to emerge rapidly. At present, there are 143 private EM schools in the Metropolitan areas of Bangladesh (BANBEIS, 2019). The number of these schools will be much higher than those registered (Hamid, 2016). Now as the schools act freely, the question of the dominance of English has regained its importance. In fact, the issue of students' getting away from Bangla language and culture has often been talked about in media (see Sultana, 2014) rather than in research. Among the two notable works in the Bangladeshi context, Al-Quaderi and Al-Mahmud's (2010) work basically brings out the EM school teachers' perspectives whereas Haque and Akter's (2012) work addresses cultural imperialism. Therefore, there is a gap in the contemporary literature for a study that directly brings in the students' and the parents' attitudes and addresses the issue of hegemony. To fill this gap, the present study deals with the following research questions:

1. What are the major attitudes of the EM school students towards Bangla and English language and culture?
2. To what extent are these students exposed to Bangla and English language and culture in the contexts beyond the classroom?
3. Does English have any hegemonic domination over Bangla?

## **Linguistic/ Cultural Hegemony**

The term was originally associated with hegemony, conceptualized by the Italian political writer Antonio Gramsci. According to Shannon (1995), Gramsci said that the intellectual leaders of a dominant group (representing the government, the church, etc.) function to persuade their followers to consent to domination. Namkung and Yoo (2012) remark that linguistic hegemony is a form of power that empowers some while disempowering others. Suarez (2002) interprets the Gramscian concept of hegemony, arguing that hegemony is established through consent and persuasion via the processes of leadership without force. According to Fontana (as cited in Mustapha 2014), this consent is secured through the manufacturing of mass consent, a mass belief of the naturalness and correctness of this social order. Suarez (2002, p.514) goes on to add that in a linguistically hegemonic situation “linguistic minorities will believe in and participate in the subjugation of the minority language to the dominant, to the point where just the dominant language remains.” The connection between linguistic hegemony and cultural hegemony is drawn by Macedo, Dendrinis, and Gounari (2003) who opine, “Since language is always intertwined with culture, the cultural invasion is intimately tied to linguistic invasion. Language is culture” (p. 34).

Hegemony, therefore, is a process of persuading others in such a way that the dominated class themselves contribute to the process of their own domination. In fact, when one language/ culture marginalizes the other, and the people of that marginalized language or culture participate in this process considering it as something for their own benefit, then the situation becomes linguistically and culturally hegemonic. In this article, linguistic and cultural hegemony will be referred to interchangeably since it is assumed that the existence of the latter is inevitable where the former exists.

## **English Language Policy and the Hegemony of English**

The fact that there is a growing tension in the relationship between English and the mother tongue is evidently widely researched and well-documented (see, for example, Hamid & Erling, 2016). The policymakers in Japan and Malaysia have struggled to balance the policy emphasis on the national and the global language. The Japanese policymakers suspect that the wide acceptance of English may have undue impacts on the national language, although they cannot deny the importance of English as a language for economic development. Similarly, the Malaysian government cannot endorse English fully due to the political sensitivity around Malay, their national language. Bangladesh, however, has dealt with the politics of national language in a different manner. Hamid and Erling (2016) trace how in Pakistan days, Bangla was given the highest status because of its being a symbol of national unity and identity. English was demoted from the status of a second language to the position of a foreign language in order to uphold the prestige of Bangla. Gradually, as Chowdhury and Kabir (2014) rightly point out, the language policy changed over time and English began to gain its importance again. In the National Education Policy 2000, English was set as

the medium of instruction for kindergartens. In 2003, the need for teaching English from the primary level was reemphasized and redevelopment of the entire English curriculum was stressed. Finally, the National Education Policy 2010 recognised English as an essential tool for building a knowledge-based society, and English was set as a compulsory subject and medium of instruction in the tertiary level and so on.

Hamid and Erling (2016) argue that Bangladesh maintains clear divisions between the public and private sectors maintains a clear division. As far as the public sector is concerned, the country pursued balanced planning for Bangla and English to ensure that the policy emphasis on English does not undermine Bangla. But the government has shown 'laissez-faire' attitudes to language issues in private sectors. The EM schools, for example, do not care about the national concern and thereby decides language policies on their own. While public schools generally produce linguistic competence in the form of grades, EM schools are seen to develop students' practical competence in English (Hamid & Jahan, 2015). In fact, the EM schools being generated out of "the fear of the elite that the restricted access to English in the national curriculum would not cater to the needs of their children" (Hamid, 2016, p. 48) now provides westernized education to the children of the elites in order to produce world-class 'products' that fit in the global linguistic market.

Because of this endeavour to provide international standard competence in English to the students, the EM schools adopt completely English-only policy and prohibit Bangla in the school premises (Haque & Akter, 2012), and thus the issue of hegemony with regard to the EM students acquires importance in research. Al-Quaderi and Al-Mahmud's (2010) study is probably the first work in Bangladesh that raised the question of culture in EM schools. It sampled 22 teachers and 94 students. The teachers had the experience of teaching in EM schools from four to twenty-two years. The study suggested that the question of culture was many a time silenced, elided, ignored, and not taken very seriously in teaching English literature at EM schools. Both the teachers and the students did not consider the hegemony of Western culture negatively. Likewise, Haque and Akter (2012) conducted a study by collecting data from both the students and the teachers through questionnaires and interviews. The participants of the study consisted of 400 students of class V and VI and 20 teachers. The study revealed that students of EM schools had the tendency to learn about western tradition, literature, geography, history, socio-political background, and lifestyle without emphasizing the Bangladeshi way of life. Rahaman, Quasem, and Hasam (2019) also found out that EM school is being largely dominated by language, norms, values, sanctions, and customs of the foreign culture and the English language is solely responsible for this. Although bringing a comparison between the practice by Bangla and English medium students is a strength of the study, it sampled only college-level students leaving scope for the examination of the secondary level context.

The question of the hegemony of the English language is also frequently addressed in research in other international contexts. Many scholarly articles including Wettewa

(2016), Boyle (1997), Safari and Razmjoo (2016), Freestone (2015), Troudi and Hafidh (2017), Guo and Beckett (2007), Anyanwu, Okecha and Omo-Ojugo (2013), Rugemalira (2005) bring in the question of hegemony. However, many of these works are knowledge-based reflections, not empirical studies. Most of these articles written in contexts of Sri Lanka, Iran, Hongkong, China, the Gulf, and so on focus mainly on the effects of hegemony including one common effect which is relevant to the current study – marginalization of mother tongue by the English language.

Wettewa's (2016) study was based on case studies on four contrasting international schools from four different provinces of Sri Lanka. The case studies showed that international schools did not offer students enough opportunities to assimilate with the local culture. Because of the primary focus put on English, the mother tongue was often overlooked. In extreme cases, international school students had such poor local language skills that they found it difficult to communicate with locals. Similarly, Troudi and Hafidh (2017) in their scholarly reflection in the context of the Gulf opine that English as a medium of instruction was introduced to the students to better prepare them for tertiary education. However, in this process, many students began to see Arabic, the language in which their heritage and culture are rooted, as a language of the past. There were also signs of the gradual demise of Arabic. By the same token, Guo and Beckett (2007) cite Xu Jialu, a well-known Chinese linguist, who notices that the learning of English is valued more in China than Mandarin Chinese. He states that nowadays, even most well-educated Chinese cannot write or speak the Chinese language correctly; mistakes are found even in dictionaries.

All the aforementioned studies indicate that the research problem of the current study is significant not only in the context of Bangladesh but also in the field of scholarship. It is also seen that the teachers' perspectives on the use of English as a medium of instruction and on the question of linguistic imperialism have been sufficiently represented in research whereas there is hardly any study that deals with the issue of hegemony related to the Bangladeshi EM school students based on data derived from both students and parents. The current study fills this gap in the literature.

## **Methodology**

This is a quantitative study that relies on a questionnaire survey. The populations of the study are primarily the three important stakeholders of education: students, teachers, and parents. Accordingly, five EM schools were approached for permission to conduct the questionnaire survey. However, the authority of two of these schools seemed to be reluctant to co-operate. Half-yearly examinations were taking place in the other two schools. Since it was becoming really difficult to get permission for the survey, teachers were excluded from the scope of the current study considering that other works like Al-Quaderi and Al-Mahmud's (2010) and Haque and Akter's (2012) have sufficiently represented their voices. Finally, only one school allowed the author to conduct the survey among the students. Data from only one institution seems less representative

but Cresswell's (2012, p.144) example on convenience sampling supports that data can be derived from one institution in case a large percentage of the population is available there and the researcher has permission. Although there was no direct research question on the parents, they were surveyed with a separate questionnaire because their responses were highly significant with regard to the third research question relating to hegemony.

## Samples

The total number of participants in this study was 88. They were divided into two categories in this study. The first category consisted of 65 students of a private EM school located in Dhaka including 44 males (67.7 %) and 21 females (32.3%). They were students of standard VI, VII, IX, and X. It was the Principal of the school who guided the author to different classrooms and he skipped standard VIII students because their class test was going on. Although there is a gap in the academic year between the students of class Six-Seven and Nine-Ten, t-test results revealed no significant difference between the responses of these two groups. The second category comprised of 23 parents/guardians of EM school students. This group consisted of 19 females (82.6%) and only 4 males (17.4%). All the participants were selected by convenience sampling i.e. selecting participants because they were available to be studied, and this sampling, according to Cresswell (2012, p. 144), "can provide useful information for answering questions and hypotheses." In the current study, convenience sampling was done because it was really difficult to manage permission from most of the school authorities and the author had to depend on the only available samples.

## Instrument

Two separate questionnaires were designed for both the group of participants. However, they were finalized based on the analysis of the questionnaires already used in other published research works (Al-Quaderi & Al-Mahmud, 2010 and Haque & Akter, 2012). The first questionnaire (See Appendix-1) used in this study consisted of three sections.

The first section (A) contained some demographic questions including the gender, age and academic level of the participants. The second section (B) contained 17 items on the students' attitudes towards Bangla and English language and culture. For this section, the questionnaire items were designed on a five-point Likert Scale and the students were asked to indicate their level of agreement with the item statements by using the five-point Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree given after each statement. The responses were rated as *strongly agree*=5, *agree*=4, *neutral*=3, *disagree*=2, *strongly disagree*=1. The third section (C) contained 15 items to find out the frequency in which the students got exposed to English and Bangla language and culture. The items in this section were designed again by using the five-point Likert Scale ranging from always to never given after each statement. The responses were rated as *always*=5, *usually*=4, *sometimes*=3, *often*=2, and *never*=1.

For the second category of the participants (parents), a questionnaire (See Appendix-2) containing two sections was designed. Section-A contained some demographic questions and Section-B contained ten close-ended questions. The participants had to answer in ‘yes’, ‘no’. An option was also provided to give their opinion in a separate box titled ‘any other opinion’ in case the participant’s opinion was beyond ‘yes’ or ‘no’. The responses were rated as *yes*= 3, *no*= 2, *any other opinion*= 1.

The questionnaire survey of the students was administered in a classroom setting. On the other hand, the parents were approached individually in an informal setting while they were waiting in the school premises to take their children home. The data generated from the questionnaire survey were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences version 20.

## Results

### *Students’ major attitudes towards Bangla and English language and culture (Research Question 1)*

In order to identify the students’ major attitudes towards Bangla and English language and culture, descriptive statistics were employed on each item from section B of the questionnaire. The results are presented below:

**Table 1: Students’ major attitudes towards English language and culture (responses are shown in percentages and Means in descending order)**

Item No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
11	I make more mistakes while writing in Bangla than in English	44.6	26.2	15.4	7.7	6.2	3.95	1.21
05	I feel proud of speaking in English	32.3	32.3	32.3	1.5	1.5	3.92	0.92
10	My teachers encourage me to speak more in English than in Bangla	33.8	30.8	23.1	10.8	1.5	3.85	1.06
01	Speaking in English makes me feel smarter	35.4	26.2	27.7	4.6	6.2	3.80	1.16
13	I think English songs are more enjoyable than Bangla songs	33.8	12.3	32.3	12.3	9.2	3.49	1.32
08	I think English language is easier than Bangla	18.5	26.2	40.0	10.8	4.6	3.43	1.06
17	I like English literary texts more than Bangla texts	21.5	24.6	33.3	15.4	6.2	3.40	1.17

5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, M=mean, SD= standard deviation

The results as in Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics along with percentages of different attitudes. The results as shown, of all the items of Section B, item-11 “I make

more mistakes while writing in Bangla than in English” has the highest mean (M=3.95). It is followed by item-5 “Feeling proud of speaking in English (M=3.92) and item-10 “teachers’ encouraging students to speak more in English than in Bangla” (M=3.85).

**Table 2: The participants have some favourable attitudes towards Bangla language and culture (responses are presented in percentages and Means in descending order)**

Item No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
03	I get poor grades in the course(s) on Bangla	13.8	12.3	30.8	30.8	12.3	2.85	1.21
16	I think ‘Lungi’ is a strange kind of attire	12.3	16.9	26.2	24.6	20.4	2.77	1.29
14	I love to celebrate the 31st night more than Pahela Baishakh	18.5	3.1	29.2	29.2	20.0	2.71	1.34
04	I do not find Bangla language course interesting	4.6	20.0	26.2	35.4	13.8	2.66	1.09
15	I know more about Halloween than ‘Nobanno’	10.8	12.3	18.5	32.3	26.2	2.49	1.30
12	I think Bangla songs are backdated	13.8	6.2	21.5	27.7	30.8	2.45	1.35
06	I do not feel comfortable when I speak in Bangla in a social setting	1.5	9.2	21.5	32.3	35.4	2.09	1.04
02	Learning Bangla language is not much important to me	6.2	7.7	9.2	38.5	38.5	2.05	1.16
07	I think my friends will criticize me if I talk much in Bangla	3.1	4.6	7.7	36.9	47.7	1.78	0.99

5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree, M=mean, SD= standard deviation

In Table 2, item-3 ‘I get poor grades in the course(s) on Bangla’ has a moderate mean (M=2.85) whereas item-7 has a low mean (M=1.78). Here it is seen that the participants have mostly disagreed with the statements suggesting Bangla is less important. Therefore, it can be said that the students’ attitudes towards Bangla language and culture are quite positive, if not highly favourable as towards English.

The extent to which the EM school students are exposed to Bangla and English language and culture in the contexts beyond the classroom (Research Question 2)

In order to find out to what extent the students are exposed to Bangla and English language and culture in the contexts beyond the classroom, descriptive statistics were employed on each item from section C of questionnaire-1. The results are presented below.



**Table 3: The students are most frequently exposed to the English language and culture (responses are shown in percentages and Means in descending order)**

Item No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
2	I watch English movies more than Bangla movies	52.3	29.3	7.7	9.2	1.5	4.22	1.03
1	I listen to English songs more than Bangla songs	32.3	29.2	16.9	20.0	1.5	3.71	1.16
15	While talking in Bangla I use a lot of English sentences	32.3	18.5	20.0	20.0	9.2	3.45	1.37
5	I read English novels/poems/short stories/comics, etc. which are not on the school syllabus	27.7	26.2	15.4	21.5	9.2	3.42	1.34

5= always, 4= usually, 3= often, 2=sometimes, 1= never, M=mean, SD= standard deviation

The results in Table-3 shows of the items regarding the students’ exposure to Bangla and English language, item-2, 1, 15 and 5 have comparatively higher means. Item-2 “I watch English movies more than Bangla movies” has the highest mean (M=4.22). In fact, the items with higher means all referred to English language and culture which showed that the students are most frequently exposed to English language and culture in the contexts beyond the classroom. It is true that the same way, Bangla medium students might also be more exposed to Bangla language and culture than to English, but that would seem to be acceptable or obvious since Bangla is their mother tongue.

**Table 4: Students are least frequently exposed to Bangla language and culture (responses are shown in percentages and Means in ascending order)**

Item No.	Statement	5	4	3	2	1	M	SD
3	I watch Bangla TV programmes	7.7	6.2	23.1	33.8	29.2	2.29	1.18
4	I read Bangla novels/poems/short stories/comics, etc. which are no on the school syllabus	10.8	9.2	13.8	32.3	33.8	2.31	1.32
6	I read Bangla newspapers	12.3	12.3	13.8	30.8	30.6	2.45	1.37
7	I use ‘English to Bangla’ dictionary	13.8	15.4	21.5	18.5	30.8	2.63	1.42

5= always, 4= usually, 3= often, 2=sometimes, 1= never, M=mean, SD= standard deviation

The results in Table-4 shows the items regarding the students’ exposure to Bangla and English language, item-3, 4, 6, and 7 had the lower means. Of the items related to the exposure to Bangla language and culture, item-3 (I watch Bangla TV programmes)

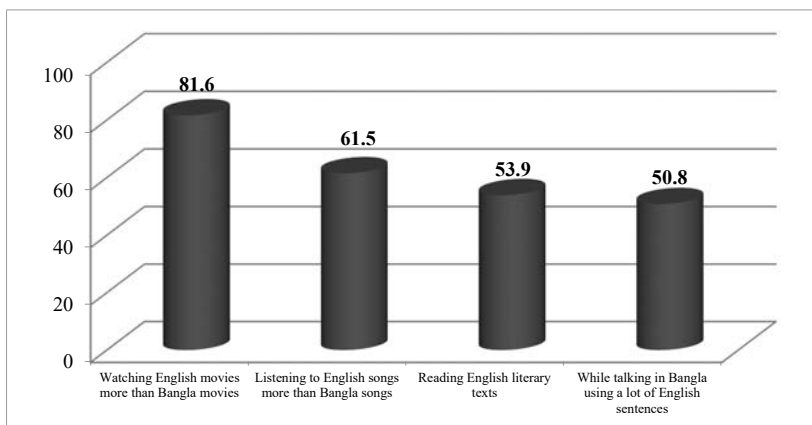
had the lowest mean (M=2.29). These results showed that the respondents are least frequently exposed to Bangla language and culture at home.

**Hegemonic domination of English over Bangla (Research Question 3)**

The answer to this third research question actually depends mostly on the results found under research question no. 1 and 2. The following graph shows how English is prioritized over Bangla in terms of the students’ frequency of encountering the two languages.

**Chart 1: Students’ greater use of English**

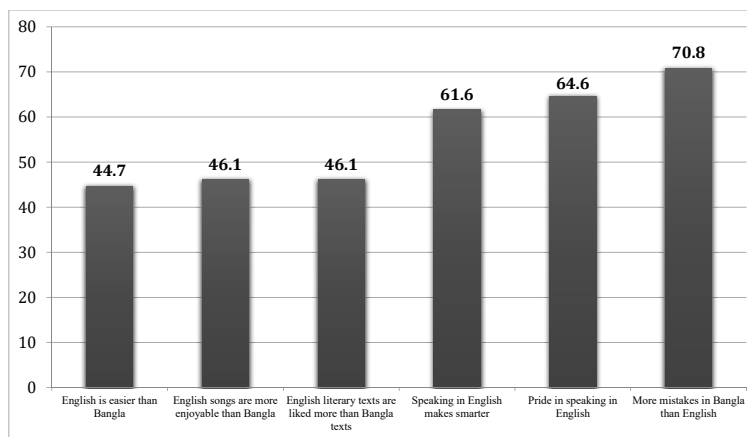
Chart-1 shows that the majority of the participants (81.6 %) watched English movies more than Bangla movies whereas at least 50.8% of participants reported that while talking in Bangla they used a lot of English sentences.



**Chart 2: Students’ preference for English**

Moreover, chart-2 demonstrates that 70.8 % of the participants always made more mistakes in Bangla than in English. It is followed by 64.6% of students feeling proud and 61.6% of students feeling smarter to speak in English.

Furthermore, the following questions asked to the parents also reveal the position of English and Bangla. The results shown in Table-5 came out after employing descriptive analysis on each item of the questionnaire for parents (Appendix 2).



**Table 5: Major responses of the parents**

Item No	Question	1	2	3	M	SD
2	Do you try to talk to your child in English?	4.3	13.0	82.6	2.78	.52
8	Do you think your child will not forget Bangla language because it is his/ her mother tongue?	4.3	21.7	73.9	2.70	.56
9	Do you want your child to study abroad?	4.3	39.1	56.5	2.52	.59
1	Do you think speaking in English makes your child smarter?	8.7	34.8	56.5	2.48	.67

3= yes, 2= no, 1= other opinion, M=mean, SD= standard deviation

The table shows that item-2 (Do you try to talk to your child in English?) had the highest mean (M= 2.78). Of all the items, item-7 (Do you encourage your child to talk more in English than in Bangla) had the lowest mean (M=1.87).

## Discussion

### *Students' highly favourable attitudes towards English language and culture*

The results of the analysis employed on the items of Section-B of the questionnaire for the students indicated that the items related to the attitudes of the students towards the English language and culture had higher means. That means the participants' attitudes towards the English language were very much favourable. The results of this section are consistent with other studies especially with Haque and Akter (2012) where it was found that teachers encouraged the students to talk more in English than in Bangla, and the students considered Bangla as a more difficult subject/ language than English. Although the students' mother language was Bangla, they agreed that they made more mistakes while writing in Bangla than in English. This finding is supported by Guo and Beckett's (2007) article where they cited Xu Jialu who observed that even many well-educated people in China made mistakes while writing in Chinese. Mistakes were found in books, even in dictionaries.

On the other hand, the students' attitudes towards Bangla language and culture was not that much favourable as towards the English ones because the means of the items referring to Bangla language and culture were lower. Yet good percentages of the participants expressed their disagreement with some items like 'Learning Bangla language is not much important for me' etc.

### *Students' frequent exposure to English language and culture in the contexts beyond the classroom*

Results of data analysis revealed that the participants were most frequently exposed

to the English language and culture at home. The majority of the participants watched English movies. They also listened to English songs more than the Bangla ones. Again, the students said in response to item-5 that they read English novels/ poems/ short stories which were not on their school syllabus. All of these are supported by Haque and Akter's (2012) findings. This notion of the students' greater involvement – voluntary or imposed – in the culture of the West, is similar to the findings of Wettewa (2016) who claimed that dominance of the English language created a Western cultural bubble around the learners.

In contrast, students were least frequently exposed to Bangla language and culture. The means of the items related to the use of Bangla language and access to the Bangla cultural domain were the lowest ones. Similar to the findings by Haque and Akter (2012), it was found in the current study that most of the respondents never watched any Bangla TV programmes at home. The majority of the students did not read Bangla literary texts like poems, short stories, novels. Only a few of them read the Bangla newspaper.

### *Hegemonic domination of English over Bangla*

The question of linguistic and cultural hegemony is relevant to the results of this study. The results showed that the majority of the students (64.6%) felt proud of speaking in English and 61.6% of them also agreed that speaking in English made them feel smarter. This association of a language with smartness and feeling proud about that instantly creates a boundary between that particular language and other languages, in this case Bangla. Moreover, not only the students, even 56.5% of the parents thought that speaking in English makes their children smarter. Likewise, Troudi and Hafidh (2017) described that in the Gulf, sending one's children to private EM schools is a sign of social prestige. Rugemalira (2005) also found that many parents do attach special significance to their children's mastery of the English language. So it is perceivable that English has taken a prestigious position in the beliefs of the students and the parents which could be an indication of the potential existence of hegemony.

Moreover, many of the parents emphasised the importance of English in the international platforms of the globalized modern world. They acknowledged that Bangla was 'also' needed. The majority of the parent respondents also agreed that they wanted their children to study abroad. In fact, their trying to rationalize the overemphasis on English and their pride in English revealed that probably a false consciousness was at work in them regarding their children's use of and exposure to English. This is what Phillipson (1999, p. 40) while discussing linguistic hegemony, calls "an ideology that glorifies the dominant language and serves to stigmatize others, this hierarchy being rationalized and internalized as normal and natural, rather than as the expression of hegemonic values and interests."

Literature and the entertainment domain are inseparable parts of culture. The attitudes

of the participants of this study revealed that although all of them had a Bangladeshi cultural background, most of them (81.6%) watched English movies and listened to English songs. Though the majority of the students did not think Bangla songs are backdated, they considered English songs more enjoyable than the Bangla ones. 53.9% of the participants read English novels/poems/short stories which were not on their academic syllabus. On the other hand, 66.1% of the participants never read Bangla literary texts. These showed that the students were getting distanced from Bangla literature and culture in favour of the English ones. This finding is supported by Al-Quaderi and Al-Mahmud (2010, p. 121) who remarked, "The students remain comparatively unaware of other non-western literature, including to some extent, Bengali literature."

In terms of language use, it was found that English was dominating over Bangla. In total 50.8% of the respondents used a lot of English sentences even while talking in Bangla. This is worth noting that this code-mixing is not in the level of words or phrases, rather in the sentence level. This situation is similar to the condition in Troudi and Hafidh's (2017) article where a principal reported that the L1 vocabulary of the students was 'suffering'. In addition, this notion is supported by Phillipson (1992) who remarks that because of the language policy of the inner-circle countries (based on Kachru's concentric circles), the languages of the periphery countries were being displaced or were at stakes. The finding goes with Wettewa (2016), Safari and Razmjoo (2016), and Guo and Beckett (2007) as well.

"Hegemony invades private space as well" (Haq, 2007). It is noteworthy that 19 out of 23 parent participants (82.6%) were female. And the same percentage of parents said that they tried to talk to their children in English. Such a situation seems to be ironic because even when Bangla is the mother language of the participants, in a social setting like Bangladesh, most of the mothers (female parent participants) talk to their children in English, not in Bangla. Therefore, it is seen that such a private affair like the conversation between a parent and her/his child is being invaded by the English language and they are getting distanced from Bangla. And it is happening not because of any force; rather the students and the parents themselves are, with their consent, contributing to this process of getting away from their own mother language. This contribution by the speakers of Bangla in the subjugation of the same language is what Suarez (2002) would describe as a sign of hegemony.

## **Implications of the study**

The findings indicate that the students of EM schools are getting distanced from their mother tongue Bangla both in terms of their beyond-the-classroom language activities and cultural involvements. Even the parents ignore the risk of getting away from Bangla. Therefore, the study implies that parents should encourage and the students themselves should enhance their interaction with the Bangla language and culture. Again, the situation seems to be a consequence of the English-only policy in

their schools. The teachers and the policymakers should not impose this policy since it impacts the normal linguistic and cultural practices of the students. The curriculum and textbooks of the EM schools should incorporate sufficient Bangla cultural materials which will ensure extensive exposure to Bangla for the students.

### **Limitations of the study**

The current study definitely provides some insights into the linguistic and cultural dominance of English over Bangla in Bangladesh. It was a limited scale study and the generalizability of the findings may have its limitations. Firstly, it would have been better if more students and parents could be sampled from different schools. Secondly, along with the questionnaire data, if more data could be derived from classroom observations and focused group interviews, it would reveal to what extent the English-only policy and classroom practices can be set responsible for the English-centred linguistic and cultural activities of the EM students. Finally, the scope of the study did not include Bangla medium students. If the comparison with Bangla medium students could be drawn, it would make the findings of the study more reliable. There is, therefore, a need for further research in this area to determine the extent and type of domination English exerts in the linguistic landscape of Bangladesh.

### **Conclusion**

To sum up, it is quite evident from the results of the study that the students of private EM schools are very much oriented to the English language and culture. They use English more than Bangla. The parents mostly try to rationalize the overemphasis on English by referring to globalization and the importance of English in international platforms. There is no scope of denial that they also consider Bangla as important or at least not ignorable. It cannot be claimed, based on the limited data of the current study, that linguistic or cultural hegemony is completely evident between Bangla and English in all the parameters. However, there are a number of signs that indicate that hegemony underlies the linguistic and cultural activities and exposure of the EM students.

To this respect, both Fanon (1963) and Said (1978) focus on dynamism as a key characteristic of culture. Said (1978), for example, describes culture as something which is influenced by some other cultures and also influences others in return. Taking that definition for granted, it can be said that by virtue of being in an English environment and taking education completely in English medium, the students of EM schools can be influenced by the English culture. However, if this transfer of cultural elements is only one way (from English to Bangla) in nature, then this will undoubtedly be imperialistic. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure that the students become competent in the Bangla language and remain exposed to the Bangla culture to such an extent that in a multicultural setting, like when they study in an English speaking country, they appear as a source of native culture with enough potentiality to influence back.

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## Appendix-1

### *Research Questionnaire for Students*

Dear participant,

The information you provide will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential.

#### **A. Personal Information:**

Your Gender :  Male  Female

Your Age Range :  12-15  16-20

The class you are in :

#### **B. Please read the following statements and put a tick (✓) in only one box to show your attitudes towards Bangla and English language and culture.**

No	Statements	Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1
1	Speaking in English makes me feel smarter.					
2	Learning Bangla language is not much important to me.					
3	I get poor grades in the course(s) on Bangla.					
4	I do not find Bangla language course interesting.					
5	I feel proud of speaking in English.					
6	I do not feel comfortable when I speak in Bangla in a social setting.					
7	I think my friends will criticize me if I talk much in Bangla.					
8	I think English language is easier than Bangla.					
9	My parents always tell me to speak in English.					
10	My teachers encourage me to speak more in English than in Bangla.					

11	I make more mistakes while writing in Bangla than in English.					
12	I think Bangla songs are backdated.					
13	I think English songs are more enjoyable than Bangla songs.					
14	I love to celebrate the 31st night more than Pahela Baishakh.					
15	I know more about Halloween than 'Nobanno'.					
16	I think 'Lungi' is a strange kind of attire.					
17	I like English literary texts more than Bangla texts.					

C. Please read the following statements and put a tick (✓) only in one box to show about your experience of Bangla and English language beyond the classroom.

No.	Statements	Always 5	Usually 4	Often 3	Sometimes 2	Never 1
1	I listen to English songs more than Bangla songs.					
2	I watch English movies more than Bangla movies.					
3	I watch Bangla TV programs.					
4	I read Bangla novels/poems/short stories/ comics, etc. which are not on the school syllabus.					
5	I read English novels/poems/short stories/ comics etc. which are not on the school syllabus.					
6	I read Bangla newspapers					
7	I use 'English to Bangla' dictionary					
8	I use English while talking to my teachers outside the classroom.					
9	I converse with my school friends more in English than in Bangla.					
10	At home I talk more in English than in Bangla.					
11	I participate in Bangla debates.					
12	I prefer English to Bangla for chatting on Facebook and other social networking sites.					

13	I prefer English to Bangla for writing Facebook posts.					
14	I can type in Bangla (Avro/ Bijoy etc.) on the computer.					
15	While talking in Bangla, I use a lot of English sentences.					

Thank you very much for your valuable time and co-operation.

## Appendix-2

### Questionnaire for parents

Dear Sir/ Madam,

The information/opinion you provide will be used only for research purposes and will be kept confidential.

#### A. Personal Information:

Your Gender :  Male  Female

Your Age Range :  25-34  35-44  Above 44

#### B. Please answer the following questions only by putting a (□) before 'Yes' or 'No'. If you have any other opinion regarding the questions, you can write them in the given boxes.

1. Do you think speaking in English makes your child smarter?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Any other opinion:
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2. Do you try to talk to your child in English?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Any other opinion:
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3. Do you try to introduce your child to Bangla literature, songs and other cultural aspects?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Any other opinion:
---	--------------------

4. Do you feel proud that your child can talk in English?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	Any other opinion:
---	--------------------

5. Do you think English language has some connection with elitism?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

6. Do you think your child does not like the course(s) on Bangla language?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

7. Do you encourage your child to talk more in English than in Bangla?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

8. Do you think your child will not forget Bangla language because it is his/ her mother tongue?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

9. Do you want your child to study abroad?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

10. Do you think your child is getting distant from Bangla language and culture?

<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	Any other opinion:
<input type="checkbox"/> No	

Thank you very much for your valuable time and co-operation.

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