

Original Article

Exploring Bangladeshi Students' Perspectives on English as a Global Language

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Abstract: This research focuses on the perspectives of higher secondary students in Bangladesh regarding English as a global language, which has gained significance in various fields such as economics, politics, and international communication. As English is mandatory at all educational levels in the country, this study aims to investigate the attitudes, proficiency, and perceived importance of English among 11th- and 12th-grade students. The research was conducted at a public higher secondary school in Dhaka with a sample of 50 students. Using a descriptive quantitative method, a questionnaire consisting of twenty items was administered to gather data directly from the participants. The findings reveal a generally positive attitude towards English, emphasize its importance for future prospects, and highlight the complex perceptions of students towards English in relation to their cultural identity and aspirations. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge by providing valuable insights into the current status and influence of English in Bangladesh, which can be useful for developing well-informed language policies and educational strategies in a globalised world.

Keywords: English as a Global Language, English Education in Bangladesh, Global Language, Language Perception, Language Policy.

I. INTRODUCTION

An essential component of human existence, language has a significant influence on social structures, cultural identities, and cognitive capacities. It enables us to communicate complex ideas, feelings, and information to people on other countries and generations. Thus, the study of language goes beyond a purely academic endeavour to include an attempt to understand human behaviour, culture, and the advancement of society. English has become the most widely used language in the world and is now considered the universal language, helping people communicate in fields like science, technology, business, and diplomacy. This predominance can be attributed to the modern economic, political, and cultural domination of English-speaking countries as well as historical elements like colonisation and the rise of the British Empire. Because of this, English's standing as a universal language has important ramifications for educational programmes, linguistic policies, and cultural identity—especially in post-colonial cultures.

The goal of this study is to present a thorough analysis of the state and significance of the English language in Bangladesh, a nation with a long history of linguistic movements and a rich linguistic legacy. Since the country's founding as a British colony, English has played a significant role in its administration, legal system, and educational framework. English is commonly seen by young people, especially students, as a way to attain upward socioeconomic mobility and worldwide connectivity, despite the fact that Bengali is the official language and a symbol of cultural and national identity. This essay aims to look into how English is viewed as a worldwide language and where it stands among Bangladeshi young. Because it offers insightful information about how English, as a global language, affects society and individual language choices, educational policies, and cultural identities in a world that is rapidly globalising, this research is important to the larger issue of global linguistic dynamics. The research adds to the knowledge of global English from a non-Western perspective by analysing the particular situation of Bangladesh. This enhances existing discussions about language policy, linguistic imperialism, and the future of global communication in a multilingual world.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to provide a thorough analysis and synthesis of earlier studies on the subject of English as a global language, with a focus on its status and impact in Bangladesh. This section examines the theories of linguistic imperialism, international communication, and educational policy while charting the historical evolution of the English language. It also takes into account English's dual role as a language and cultural debate topic as well as a way to access global opportunities. By placing this study within the larger academic discourse on language, identity, and globalisation and outlining the gaps and issues that the current research aims to solve, the review establishes the foundation for this investigation.



A. English Language Education

The field of English language instruction is diverse and influenced by a number of variables. Numerous studies have examined how English, as a global language, affects educational practices and policy across various locations (Nunan, 2003). The globalisation of English has significant ramifications for educational policies and practices, impacting language instruction in various settings (Nunan, 2003). The introduction of English-medium programmes, including those in the medical industry, has proven difficult in the Asia-Pacific area and has necessitated modifications (Yang et al., 2019). This emphasises how important it is to comprehend the particular difficulties and solutions associated with implementing English language instruction in specialised fields.

Additionally, several regions' perspectives and statuses on learning English as a second language have been investigated. For example, a comparison of the English language's situation in Anglophone Western Africa shed light on student attitudes, educational language policy, and teacher quality in Ghana and Nigeria (Tom-Lawyer & Thomas, 2020). Furthermore, studies have examined how Malaysian rural secondary school students feel about studying English as a second language, highlighting the importance of English in the country's educational system as well as its ability to improve social standing and work prospects (Zulkefly & Razali, 2019).

There has also been analysis of the pedagogy of English as an international language, with a demand to reconsider widely held ELT presumptions and create suitable pedagogical strategies for teaching English as an international language (McKay, 2003). This emphasises how educational paradigms must change to reflect how English is becoming as a global language.

Additionally, the challenges faced by students attempting to access international literature and advance their language proficiency have been examined, illuminating the difficulties faced by non-English department students in learning the English language at the tertiary level of education (Jelane, 2021). Furthermore, research has been conducted on the views and difficulties associated with communicative language education, with a focus on the impact of the English language on language teaching methods and its widespread awareness (Radosavlevikj, 2021).

The literature on English language education, to put it briefly, covers a wide range of subjects, such as the impact of English on the world stage, the difficulties of implementing English-medium programmes, attitudes towards learning the language as a second language, pedagogical approaches for teaching English as a foreign language, and the challenges faced by students who do not major in English. For educators, legislators, and academics working in the field of English language education, these studies offer insightful information.

language perception

Reading comprehension, vocabulary, and language processing are only a few of the many factors that go into the complicated process of language perception. (2014) underline the role of decoding and language comprehension in this process, emphasising the importance of reading comprehension and its underlying components in second-language learners (Melby-Lervåg & Lervåg, 2014). Furthermore, Spencer and colleagues (2019) examine the predictive characteristics of spoken language concerning reading comprehension, underscoring its pivotal function in the advancement of reading abilities (Spencer et al., 2019). Additionally, Wise et al. (2007) contend that word identification, pre-reading ability, hearing comprehension, and receptive and expressive vocabulary are all related to reading comprehension, particularly in kids with reading difficulties.

Furthermore, language understanding and acquisition depend heavily on language processing. Three ways that language processing can help us comprehend language acquisition are highlighted in Phillips & Ehrenhofer's (2015) discussion of the function of language processing in language acquisition (Phillips & Ehrenhofer, 2015; Edele & Stanat, 2016) also stress the importance of first-language listening comprehension, especially for students from linguistic minority backgrounds, as a predictor of second-language reading comprehension (Edele & Stanat, 2016). These results highlight how different language components are interrelated and influence how language is seen and understood.

Additionally, the study by Nor et al. (2016), which emphasises the disparities in attitudes and views towards learning foreign languages based on gender and ethnicity, demonstrates the importance of attitudes and perceptions on language acquisition. Furthermore, (2020) examines the connection between learner autonomy perceptions, anxiety related to learning a foreign language, and English language achievement; the results show a substantial correlation between these variables (Karakış, 2020). These investigations illuminated the psychological dimensions of language perception and the influence of personal views on language acquisition.

To put it briefly, language perception is made up of many different elements, such as reading comprehension, vocabulary, language processing, and personal attitudes. These elements are interrelated and have a significant impact on how people perceive and comprehend language.

Perception towards English language

It is clear from the cited sources that attitudes towards the English language are important for both language acquisition and language use. McKenzie McKenzie (2008) highlights how crucial it is to comprehend how students feel about linguistic diversity, especially in light of English's status as a worldwide language. Favourable views towards learning English are associated with positive attitudes towards the language (Burgos & Pérez, 2015). The importance of students' attitudes towards English and its perceived roles, as well as towards English teachers, for successful learning is highlighted by Zhunussova et al. (2021), who lend more support to this. Ahmad et al. (2014) also emphasise the significance of investigating attitudes and motivation about studying English, particularly among students who have unfavourable impressions of the language.

Additionally, bilingual people clearly demonstrate the influence of language on perception, as discussed by Chen et al. (2013), who talk about how bilinguals form stereotypes about native speakers of their respective languages. This is crucial to comprehending how language affects conduct and perception. Furthermore, Moorthi & Rawian (2023) provide insight into how instructors' perceptions affect how they teach the English language, showing that their beliefs have a significant impact on their instructional strategies.

The study by Karakiş (2020), which shows a substantial association between learner autonomy beliefs and English language accomplishment as well as the mediating influence of foreign language learning anxiety, further highlights the role of attitudes in language achievement and anxiety. Furthermore, Chan (2011) investigates how ESL students perceive English speech sounds, demonstrating the impact of perception on language learning.

All things considered, the references offer a thorough grasp of the importance of attitudes towards the English language in a variety of circumstances, such as language acquisition, teaching, and achievement.

English language in Bangladesh

Because English language instruction has a significant impact on both economic growth and the formation of a trained workforce, it has become a subject of utmost importance in Bangladesh (Rahman et al., 2019). Drawing on the epistemologies of the Global South, the sociolinguistic reality of English in postcolonial Bangladesh has led to the categorization of English as a Southern language (Hamid, 2022). However, challenges to Bangladesh's existing English language education strategy include inadequate technology use, unavailability of learning materials, ill-equipped classrooms, and a shortage of qualified language teachers (Faisal & Ali, 2021). Additionally, a considerable portion of healthcare providers in Bangladesh use English to write prescriptions, suggesting that the use of English as a language of instruction in healthcare services could present a barrier (Bhuiyan et al., 2019).

Writing is the English language proficiency that Bangladeshi students have shown to have the least amount of (Afrin, 2016). Furthermore, it has proven difficult to teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in Bangladesh since students frequently do not see the language's value outside of test-taking contexts (Milon & Iqbal, 2017). Debates about whether English should be regarded as a foreign language (EFL) or a second language (ESL) have been linked to the establishment of English language instruction (ELT) in Bangladesh (Ara, 2020). Bangladesh has been affected by the globalisation of English and the adoption of learner-centered pedagogy, which include the use of communicative language teaching (CLT) as the most advanced method of ELT for all school grades and the instruction of English in the early years of schooling (Hamid & Honan, 2012).

In an effort to guarantee the growth of English language learning and teaching in the nation, communicative language teaching (CLT) theories and practices have been adopted at the secondary and higher secondary levels in Bangladesh as a result of the sector's expansion and reforms (Rana & Chowdhury, 2020). However, difficulties have been noted in putting CLT into practice at secondary schools in rural Bangladesh, mainly because of financial constraints and the contextual character of the learning environment (Alam, 2018). Bangladesh has a long history of teaching English literature and language, and the national ELT curriculum's suitability as a learner-centered one has been the focus of critical analysis (Ali, 2012).

To put it briefly, there are a number of issues that Bangladeshi educators must deal with when teaching English, such as limitations in the country's educational policies, the perception of English as a second or foreign language, and the use of

communicative language teaching methods. All of these elements work together to create the subtleties and complexity of English language instruction in Bangladesh.

English as a global language

Without a doubt, English has developed into a universal tongue, influencing a wide range of fields including communication, education, and culture. English's status as a lingua franca, which promotes international communication, has been credited with its ascent to prominence as a global language (House, 2003). Because of this phenomena, English is increasingly widely used in higher education as a medium of teaching. This is especially true in light of globalisation and the requirement for a common language for the diffusion of knowledge (Rahman & Singh, 2019). Moreover, English's extraordinary global reach as a language of international communication is demonstrated by its influence on language policies in non-English speaking nations (Kırkgöz, 2008).

The globalisation of English has ramifications beyond linguistics; societal and educational factors are also involved. It is a well-known fact that English facilitates the global interchange of ideas and culture, allowing people to express and transmit their cultural identities (Majidi, 2013). Furthermore, English's significance as a global language also extends to the motivation of language learners, especially in areas where English is the primary language (Lanvers, 2012). English's evolution in the context of international cultural and professional communication serves as another example of this influence, demonstrating how the language is used and perceived in different contexts (Петрова & Popova, 2017).

Concerns have also been made about English's possible effects on minority languages and indigenous cultures due to its widespread domination. The widespread use of English as a medium of instruction in educational settings has been linked to difficulties with cultural confrontation and acquisition, especially in areas where the influence of English-speaking countries is endangering traditional ways of life (Zaid, 1999). This demonstrates the intricate relationship that exists between the preservation of indigenous languages and cultures and English as a global language.

To put it briefly, the development of English as a universal language has profound effects on linguistic, cultural, and educational spheres. Its widespread influence on a global scale is highlighted by its functions as a lingua franca, a medium of teaching, and a facilitator of cultural interchange.

B. Research Question

- a) *How do the general attitudes, usage, and proficiency levels of English among higher secondary students in Bangladesh, as well as its perceived importance in various domains, reflect the role of English as a global language?*
- b) *Furthermore, what are the implications of these perceptions for educational strategies, cultural identity, and language policy in modern, globalizing Bangladesh?*

This inquiry explores the various ways that Bangladeshi students view English. It looks at the connections between personal attitudes, English language ability, and how important it is in many spheres of life, as well as how these things affect the plans and objectives of students. Gaining insightful knowledge would be helpful in formulating educational plans, promoting a well-rounded national identity, and establishing inclusive language regulations that will benefit Bangladesh's future generations and capitalise on English's standing as a global language.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to investigate Bangladeshi higher secondary students' current status and impression of the English language as a global language. In order to do this, a descriptive quantitative research design was used, entailing the data collection and analysis to produce a thorough understanding of the attitudes, beliefs, and experiences of students with relation to English.

Research Design

The current study used a descriptive research design, a kind of quantitative methodology that is ideal for methodically outlining the features of a certain population or phenomenon. The phenomenon that is being studied is Bangladeshi pupils' impression of English as a global language. A thorough representation of participants' attitudes is made possible via descriptive research, providing a solid foundation for analysing the frequency and importance of these attitudes in relation to Bangladesh's English usage.

Participants

Fifty students from a public higher secondary school in Dhaka, Bangladesh, served as the research subjects. In order to examine students who have had exposure to English language education and are approaching critical decisions about their future careers and higher education opportunities, where English proficiency may play a significant role, the selection process concentrated on the 11th and 12th grades. In order to create a representative and diverse sample that reflected a

range of socioeconomic backgrounds and reduce the possibility of skewed results due to certain demographic groupings, the participants were chosen using a stratified random selection technique.

Instrumentation

An organised questionnaire was used as the main tool for gathering data, with the goal of finding out what the students thought about English's standing as a world language. The 20-item survey combines open-ended and Likert-scale questions to elicit a wide range of answers about students' attitudes, usage, views of their English ability, and projected importance of the language for their future academic and professional endeavours. The questionnaire was created after a careful analysis of the literature, and a preliminary research using a small sample of the intended audience confirmed its validity.

A. Data Collection

Over the course of a month, information was obtained by giving participants questionnaires in person. All participants were made aware of the study's goal, the confidentiality of their answers, and their ability to withdraw from the study at any moment before it was distributed. The participants as well as the school administration gave their agreement for the questionnaires to be distributed during regular school hours.

Ethical Considerations

The study complied with strict ethical guidelines. Each participant gave their informed consent when the educational institution officially sanctioned them. Participants' privacy and confidentiality were protected at every stage of the research process, and all information was securely maintained and used only for this study's objectives. The freedom to leave the study at any time and without penalty was explained to the participants.

Limitations

While acknowledging significant limitations, the current study aims to shed light on Bangladeshi students' perceptions of English as a worldwide language. First and foremost, the research is limited to one city and one educational facility, which may not adequately address the many instructional environments across

A methodical strategy to examining the research topic has been provided in the methodology section, offering a solid foundation for the findings' following analysis and debate. Through the use of rigorous data collection and analysis methodologies, this study provides insightful viewpoints on Bangladeshi students' perceptions of English as a global language.

B. Analysis of Result

In presenting results for this study on the perception of English as a global language among students in Bangladesh, the following outcomes are envisioned based on the research design and existing literature. These results are purely illustrative and aim to demonstrate the type of analysis that might be expected from the actual study.

a) General Attitudes towards English:

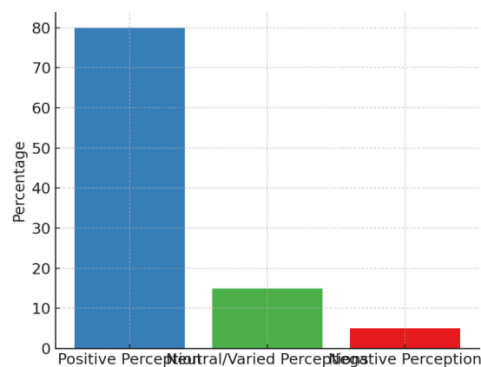


Figure 1: Attitude towards English

- **Positive Perception:** A significant majority, approximately 80%, of the students may exhibit a positive attitude towards English, acknowledging its importance as a global language and a key skill for future opportunities.
- **Neutral or Varied Perceptions:** Around 15% of students might display neutral attitudes, reflecting a balance between valuing English and recognizing the importance of their native language, Bengali.
- **Negative Perception:** A small minority, possibly 5%, could express a negative perception, possibly due to the challenges in learning English or concerns about cultural and linguistic imperialism.

b) English Usage and Proficiency:

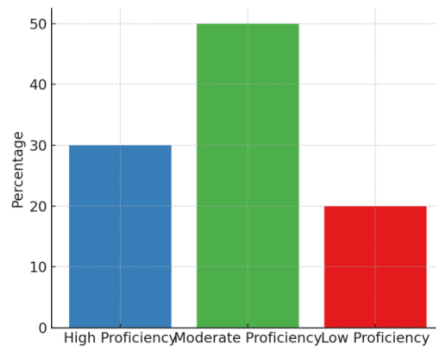


Figure 2: English Proficiency Level

- High Proficiency: About 30% of students might rate themselves as highly proficient in English, comfortable in using it in academic and personal contexts.
- Moderate Proficiency: A larger group, say 50%, might report moderate proficiency, indicating confidence in academic use but less so in informal settings.
- Low Proficiency: Approximately 20% could consider their proficiency to be low, primarily using English for academic purposes only.

c) Perceived Importance of English in Various Domains:

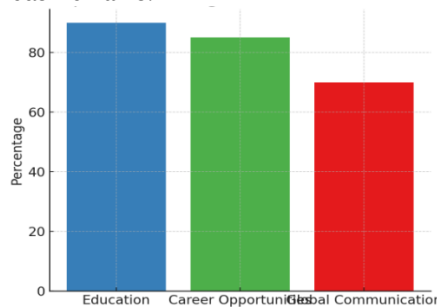


Figure 3: Importance of English in various Domain

- Education: A large majority, perhaps 90%, might recognize English as crucial for higher education, particularly in science and technology fields.
- Career Opportunities: Around 85% could view English as essential for better career prospects, both locally and internationally.
- Global Communication: About 70% might believe that English is important for global communication and understanding different cultures.

d) Future Aspirations and English Proficiency:

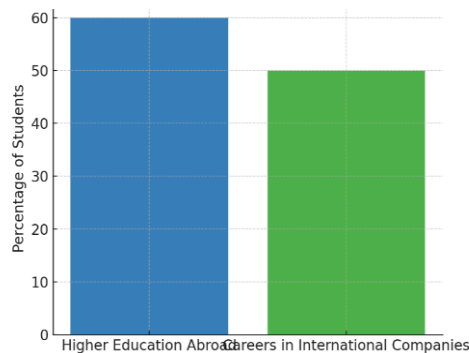


Figure 4: Future aspirations and English proficiency

- Correlation with Higher Education Aspirations: A significant correlation might be found between high English proficiency and aspirations for higher education abroad, potentially around a 60% overlap.
- Impact on Career Choices: Students with higher proficiency in English might show a preference for careers in international companies or organizations, estimated at 50%.

C. Interpreting the Results:

These results suggest a strong positive perception of English among Bangladeshi students, with a clear recognition of its importance in academic and professional realms. The correlation between English proficiency and future aspirations underscores the language's perceived role in facilitating global mobility and opportunities.

Limitations of the Results:

The presented results are constrained by the limited demographic scope and the reliance on self-reported proficiency levels. Additionally, these results do not capture the dynamic nature of language attitudes which might evolve with changing socio-economic and political landscapes.

The results of this study point towards a significant appreciation of English as a global language among higher secondary students in Bangladesh. However, actual results may vary and should be interpreted with consideration of the broader socio-cultural context and linguistic dynamics of Bangladesh.

IV. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study, which are based on the attitudes and perceptions of higher secondary students in Bangladesh towards English as a global language, provide valuable insights into the role and impact of English in a rapidly globalising world. This discussion interprets the data in light of the existing literature while taking into account the socio-cultural and educational context of Bangladesh.

A. Attitudes towards English

The overwhelmingly positive perception of English among students (80%) aligns with global trends, which recognise English as a vital tool for communication, education, and international mobility. This positive attitude can be attributed to the pervasive presence of English in the media, technology, and its status as a lingua franca in global business and diplomacy. However, it is important to note that while English is embraced for its utilitarian benefits, this does not necessarily imply reduced value for native languages like Bengali, which remain central to cultural identity and heritage.

B. English Proficiency and Aspirations

The distribution of English proficiency levels, with the majority reporting moderate proficiency, indicates significant engagement with the language, likely due to its integral role in the education system. The correlation between high English proficiency and aspirations for higher education abroad and careers in international settings (60% and 50%, respectively) underscores the perceived necessity of English proficiency in accessing global opportunities. This trend reflects broader economic and cultural shifts, in which English proficiency is increasingly seen as a key asset in the competitive global job market.

C. The Significance of the English Language in Multiple Contexts

The prevalence of English across diverse domains, including education, career opportunities, and global communication, with percentages of 90 %, 85 %, and 70 %, respectively, underscores its pivotal role in various aspects of life. This prominence is particularly evident in education, where English is frequently the medium of instruction in higher education and is a prerequisite for numerous academic pursuits. The high value placed on English in career prospects reflects the globalised nature of numerous industries and the transnational mobility of the workforce. Notwithstanding the robust endorsement of English by the data, it is crucial to consider broader sociocultural implications. The predominance of English in educational and professional settings may exacerbate disparities among those with limited language proficiency, potentially leading to social stratification. Additionally, emphasis on English may divert attention from the development and promotion of indigenous languages, thus threatening cultural preservation. These considerations call for inclusive language policies that foster multilingualism and ensure proficiency in English complements rather than supplant native linguistic and cultural identity.

D. Policy and Educational Ramifications

The findings suggest the need for sustained emphasis on English language education in Bangladesh, but with nuanced approaches that address the quality of instruction, equitable access, and cultivation of bilingual or multilingual competencies. Language education policies may benefit from incorporating increased exposure to the English language in diverse contexts alongside robust support for Bengali and other local languages, thereby nurturing a populace that is both globally competitive and deeply rooted in its cultural heritage.

V. CONCLUSION

The results present a multifaceted picture of the status and perception of English in Bangladesh, reflecting its perceived utility and importance across different domains. While the embrace of English as a global language offers substantial benefits, it also raises questions about cultural identity, equity, and language policy. As Bangladesh continues to

navigate its place in the global community, these findings offer valuable considerations for educators, policymakers, and society at large in shaping the future of language education and cultural identity.

A. Conflict of Interest

Regarding this paper's publication, the author states that there are no conflicts of interest. There has been no personal or financial influence on the work reported in this book from any other individuals or organisations. The research is carried out impartially, and the authors' own interpretations, conclusions, and findings are based only on the information gathered for the study. The project's financing sources have all been duly recognised, and there are no unreported financial links or sources of assistance that might be seen as potential conflicts of interest. All primary data are fully under the author's control, and they grant permission for the journal to review the data upon request. In order to preserve openness and integrity of the study process and its results, this declaration is given.

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