

# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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Professor Dr. Mohammad Ashaduzzaman



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## **Mother Language**

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## Her Land and Rights for Raising Her Voices: A Phenomenology-Based Ethnography on Contemporary Garo Women

Abu Ibrahim Mohd. Nurul Huda\*      Mreenmoy Chiran\*\*  
Manoshi Nokrek\*\*\*

| Article Info                                                                                                                        | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <i>Article History</i><br>Date of Submission<br>30-09-2025<br>Date of Acceptance<br>29-10-2025<br>Date of Publication<br>30-12-2025 | Among the Garo ethnic groups, the youngest daughter inherit property and land from their mother. In the traditional Garo society, men do not inherit any property. However, as per the mother's clan, the mother has the right over the children, and receive the name of her clan or Mahari. Property ownership helps a woman to understand and pursue all phenomena related to the power and authority vested, and strives to express the mentality. She tries to express it through her physical expression, behavioral expression, and use of language, choice of words, authoritative behavior, and commanding voices. This research has used the phenomenology-based ethnography method to collect qualitative data. The purpose of conducting the study is to determine the compatibility between her land ownership and raising voices in regards to her personal interest, family interest as well as social interest, to understand the freedom of speech of women as well as men in Garo society. |
| <i>Keywords</i><br>Land Rights,<br>Authority,<br>Empowerment,<br>Power, Gestures                                                    |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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## **Introduction**

According to the Garo customs, the Mahari (a collective unit of a clan) is the de jure owner of the property, but the de facto ownership and authority flows continuously through the mother's line. Undoubtedly, the property ownership can empower the Garo women in economic, social and psychological aspects of their respective family. It is factual that this sort of psychological state can enhance to raise her voice in terms of conversation, in terms of language use, in terms of gesture, but the reality is that they do not have the equal authority over their social sphere. This intangible cultural heritage of Garo ethnic community can surprise any researcher. However, although there are quite a few socio-anthropological-linguistic studies on the Garo society. This study has reviewed different articles and research works, which have been conducted on Garo women along with Khasia and Jaintia ethnic groups living in both Bangladesh and Indian part. Among these Rashid et al. (2022); The Daily Sun (published on May 31, 2019); Kharkongor (2024); Bhowmick and Sangma (2025); Das and Mohanty (2016); Nokrek and Ahmed (2022) and many others. As there are, no any significant research work on the process and expression of women's empowerment around property ownership. Therefore, this study has intended to fill the knowledge gap and bridging the gap by collecting information on the phenomenon under study. The importance of such study is immense, because it helps to identify the issues as important for social scientists. To grasp grass-root level perceptions, conceptions, meanings of phenomena, thoughts the study has attempted to apply the phenomenology-based ethnographic method as a qualitative perspective. This method is essential in understanding lived experiences from the perspective of individuals, often using methods like in-depth interviews, conversations and participant observation.

## **Statement of the Research Problem**

Women's voices and leadership are integral to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) because gender equality acts as a powerful catalyst and multiplier across the entire 2030 Agenda.

However, a woman's bargaining power depends on her education, career, health care, children's education, and ensuring health care. These tools will awaken the power of women to speak from their families to the wider community. Although the Goro women enjoy their rights and authority over their respective family and property, but they yet been ensured the equal rights in the society they live. The traditional Nakma system, a de facto body for social control in any Garo village, is under the control of those males who all are sons-in-law in that village. Women are free to participate in any meeting led by the Nakma, but they have to sit at a distance or behind the men in a group. If necessary, Nakma can ask for their opinions, but the authority to make decisions lies with the men. If situation demands, males consider females decision whether to be considered or not. The major phenomenon, how the women make the meaning of property, legal system, customary law, their responsibilities and duties, participation in decision-making, the nature of empowerment etc. can be an important step in any qualitative social research. That is why such phenomenology-based ethnographic study is necessary, so that through participatory observation and intensive interviewing method, the researcher can be able to delve into the society and collect the necessary information. This study has attempted to meet the pre-determined objectives.

### **Research Objectives**

The general objective of this study is to apprehend the attitudes, perspectives, perceptions, respect and practices of Garo men and women towards their land ownership custom and gender awareness. The specific objectives are:

- 1) To know the extent of ownership on land and property that has apparently empowered Garo women, especially to apprehend the perceptions and attitude of Garo women and men;
- 2) To know how Garo women express their authority and power in their conversations with their male counterpart and female neighbors;
- 3) To know whether there is any gender-based language uses,

whether there are any restrictions or taboos imposed for women for choosing words and sentences;

- 4) To know how the young generations perceive the necessity of women empowerment and their participation in decision-making processes both in homestead and social sphere.

## **Literature Review**

There are such studies on the issues of expression her empowerment using her voices especially among the Garo women. Marbaniang and Singh (2022) in their article have pointed out on the growing awareness of the need to empower women and achieve gender equality through the measures to achieve social, economic. Rashid et al. (2022) have aimed to explore the traditional roles of indigenous Garo women in transforming their families in Bangladesh. Dey (2015) has studied on land rights and gender issues of Garo ethnic community, her article overviews the community's changing land tenure system and traces out the difficulties the Garo, especially landless women, face in sustaining livelihoods in a degraded forest area. Hazarika (2014) she has apprehended that as the decline of shifting cultivation and advent of permanent agricultural activities demand male participation solely. There are some studies, have conducted on exclusively on women empowerment, one of the study is of Kharkongor (2024), who says that women's economic empowerment helps women to adopt various income-generating occupations, poverty alleviation, and skill development in addition to women's ownership of economic resources. There are some studies on women's voices as a metaphor for powerful speech in homestead and public sphere. Ferguson (2022) has stated that women's voice in decision-making is critical for the development of all. When women have a say in private and public affairs, decisions reflect their needs, and often the needs of their families and communities. Goetz and Musembi (n. d.) in their on-line article have stated that the Pathways of Women's Empowerment Research Programme Consortium (RPC) uses the entry point of 'Voice' in its theme 'Building Constituencies for Equality and Justice' to explore how to make institutions more accountable and responsive to women.

There are some studies on gender inequality and traditionally women's role. Sevefjord and Olsson (n. d.) have stated that there is a growing awareness of the importance of shifting the focus from the symptoms of inequality towards efforts to address the structural factors that cause it. Olsson (n. d.) has stated that gender inequalities are more commonly discussed than inequalities in general. Hossain (2017) in his paper has stated that traditionally women's role in society is limited to the private sphere in Bangladesh. Nongsiej (2018) has stated that despite the commitment from national and international corner, on gender equality and bridging the gender gap in the formal political arena women in Meghalaya are not able to get a rightful because no serious attempt were made for women's political participation. Considering the above articles and papers, this study apprehends a clear knowledge gap, as none of the study covers women empowerment through their voices and property ownership among Garo indigenous community.

### **Rationale of the Study**

The importance of this study for social scientists or sociolinguistics is immense. Even though the context is of a small ethnic group, like the Garo, it can be possible to make decisions about women's empowerment in mainstream society. To know how women's ownership of land affects their empowerment process, intensive study needs to be conducted on Garo community in Bangladesh. Therefore, the importance of such research is immense. Such study can meet the needs of academics and researchers, and on the other hand, it can be helpful in providing information for feminists or policy makers at national and international level. Without such studies, it will not be easy to implement the government's Sustainable Development Goals or the UN's SDGs1 number 5 (gender equality) and number 10 (reducing inequality) Goals. Their social customs, intellectual knowledge can be instructive for us. Therefore, safeguarding their Cultural Heritage is a great responsibility for the mainstream society and the state as a nation. The rationale of phenomenology-based ethnographic study on her land rights and ownership pattern, her gender awareness, gender equity, gender equality and women empowerment lie in exploring

the perceptions, experiences, thoughts, and attitudinal behavioral pattern of women regarding their rights and ownership over arable and cultivable land and properties of the family.

### **Research Questions**

In general, this study has prepared both the structured and semi-structured questionnaires before going to the study areas. Simultaneously, for informal group discussions a checklist also prepared on some supporting issues. The main issues of the questionnaires are: A questionnaire has been formulated to find out how men and women create meaning in the Garo community, how they develop their attitudes, how they develop their thoughts, how they develop a respectful mindset towards the phenomenon, and what is the mindset of men and women of different age groups on Garo traditional customs regarding different phenomenon on women's land ownership; gender awareness; rights and authority of women; gender equity and equality in the family and society; rights to raise her voices and rights to give her consent; freedom to participate in decision-making process etc.

### **Ethical Considerations**

Code of Ethics of the American Anthropological Association (AAA)<sup>2</sup> approved on November 2012, has been followed for this study. AAA is committed to helping all anthropologists have access to quality information regarding methodological and ethical best practices. By carefully considering these ethical principles, researchers have conducted this phenomenology-based ethnographic study on women's land rights and gender awareness and her raising voices.

### **Research Methodology, Sampling and Study Areas**

This study has followed a Phenomenology-based Ethnographic method on Garo women, her land rights, gender awareness, her empowerment, her authority and power, her ability to express by raising her voices, is a qualitative approach in social research. This

study has aimed to explore and understand the lived experience of the participants in context of women's land rights and exploring their empowerment within homestead and social sphere. To bridge the gap between the thoughts and actions of the participants, specific techniques have been followed to unearth this sort of information. This necessitates a variety of data collection methods. For the study, participants have been selected purposively, by justifying their ability to provide rich and diverse insights into the research topic. Sample sizes have been typically small, total 30 (thirty) from six dialects, five from each (3 females and 2 males), to gain a deep understanding of the phenomenon under study. The study intends to delve into the richness of information. This study has aimed to focus on the Garo ethnic community living in Bangladesh. The study has purposively selected six study areas from the districts of Tangail, Netrokona, and Sherpur, and Mymensingh, where the dialectical members are residing. The study team has stayed in six Garo villages (six dialects of Garo language) for the duration of six months, one month in one dialectical village.

## **Discussions of Etic Views**

### ***Women's Social Status***

Garo women held a respectable position in the family and society. In Garo society, male-female relations are open, but within limits. Reviling with others by the women, usually very limited, and less used than any other societies. Society has some control over the persons to speak harshly against women in public. In Garo society, if women are being disrespected it is considered that the value of the entire family and clan has been doomed. Publicly abusing, insulting without fault, making bad proposals to women is considered as deviance as well as crime.

### ***Women's Right over Land and Property***

Women consider this traditional system as a source of empowerment. They gain economic, social and family security by owning land and property. The customary ownership pattern has empowered them with

paramount authority and customary power over land and properties including other matters of the family. It gives them respect and control in their families and communities. Women, those who own an amount of arable land take decisions for cultivation, selection of cropping patterns, budgeting, hiring of daily laborers, harvesting etc. In most cases, they also consult with their respective husband. However, it is important to note that, purchasing or selling of land, managing irrigation, sharecropping, and decisions regarding land distribution among the heirs are exclusively under the control of women, in these cases it is customary to consult with their respective Mahari. Not all women in rural areas own land. Some women own only homestead land but do not own cultivable land. In such cases, these landless women have to go outside the house to earn money. They work alongside men as daily wage laborers in agriculture. Their husbands also earn money by doing daily wage labor. They combine their earnings to support the livelihood of their families.

### ***Women's Voices***

Garos traditional society or the traditional norms inspired that women's speech should always be politeness, gentleness, submissiveness, and they have been socialized with religious teachings. In quarrel or conflicting situations, women use firmness, strong emotional reactions and use harsh language during disputes or intrusions—such as “I am not willing to talk with an evil-natured person like you,” or “I will not listen to you.” In traditional Garo society, women are expected to use their language, gestures with “humility”. Although women are humble in attitude due to structural inequality and dependency, but they can raise their voices or speak firmly in times of need and pressure—especially with family or neighbors. During a quarrel, women are seen to shake their hands vigorously, raising eyes in anger or turning into grimace. According to the Garo people, women are peace loving and there are many restrictions on the use of language from a religious point of view. Women are seen using some female-related terms during quarrels among themselves, such as prostitute or slut, (Fallali Changa, Namja Michiks) etc. Traditionally, Garo women are affording shelter and hospitality to guests, strangers and kin, they

do not engage in social conflict. Usually, they paid importance to both family and community members, because the expectation is that the woman would establish herself as a respectable person. Due to social and cultural changes in Garo society, the traditional expectations are gradually decreasing. Increasing trends of rural-urban migration are pushing or pulling the young generations to the urban-based life-style. These urban-based women are more prone to self-reliance; self-centered; self-empowered; self-dependent; possess freedom of speech; individual freedom; freedom of expression etc.

## **Relevance of Sociological Theories**

### ***Structural Functionalism***

Structural functionalism discusses gender as a key driving force in maintaining social stability. According to his view, women have to play expressive roles in the family, especially caring for and providing security to children, and providing emotional support for the family members. In short, women's role in the family is to manage the family and raise the children, while men are to provide economic security to the family.

### ***Symbolic Interactionism***

Symbolic interactionism focuses on how society teaches that daughters will inherit their mother's property and land. After marriage, a man has to go to his wife's house elsewhere, he has no property ownership, and even since he has no ownership over his children, if his wife dies before him, the family can force that husband to leave the family, but only if his daughters want to keep him, he can remain as a dependent. This kind of social division is taught by society through various ideals, social customs, and policies, and everyone.

### ***Feminist Theory***

Feminist theory raises various issues regarding social and historical inequalities between the genders. It raises other regressive issues such as race, class, and sexual oppression. Feminist theory is not directly applicable in Garo society, yet it can be said that there are some

things in Garo society that undermine women's rights in the social sphere, in the sphere of exercising power, and in the sphere of politics. Although women are powerful in the family, their position in society is discriminatory.

## **Relevance of Linguistic Theories**

### ***Dominance Theory***

According to this theory, in Garo traditional society, women's conversation is expected to be polite and respectful in the use of language and the words they use. As a result, linguistically, men's influence over women is observed in Garo society. The society also expects politeness in the language that women use as a tool to exercise their power and authority through land-based empowerment. However, like men, women also use many abusive words in practical.

### ***Deficiency Theory***

A male-centric dimension characterizes the use of language in Garo society. Although women have power and authority in the Garo family, the dominance of men is noticeable in the larger Garo society. The Garo clan elects a man as its head (Nakma), where all the members are men. In such male-dominated organizations, women's speech is considered unnecessary.

### ***Feminist Linguistics***

It can be argued in a feminist voice that women's participation in public gatherings in Garo society should be given the opportunity to use language with dignity and respect, not in a male-centric manner. If women's participation in the decision-making process in society can be ensured, Garo society can actually achieve full empowerment of women.

### ***Linguistic Relativity (Whorfian Hypothesis)***

Whorfian Hypothesis is based on phenomenological concept. This theory is true in the case of Garo society, because language determines the thinking and mentality of people. Since code-mixing of Bengali

and English (for those who know this language) with their own language is widely practiced in Garo society. Many Garo families have conversations completely in Bengali or English.

### ***Difference (or Cultural) Model***

This theory argues that men and women communicate differently due to gender socialization, not because of inferiority or influence. In fact, in Garo society, phenomenological differences can be observed between women and men regarding a different phenomenon due to the influence of socialization rather than usage of language.

### ***Gender Socialization Models***

In Garo society, members of Generation G and Generation Alpha are determined to break all the stereotypes in the society. They want to change the various customs that have been passed down from generation to generation in Garo society which create gender inequality in their society, and return to traditional religion Sangsarek, some want to break the flow of social change and revive traditional culture and language. They want to protest against all stereotypes, being highly influenced by their peers. Therefore, this model is very practical for the new generations of Garo society.

### **Results and Findings of the Study – Observational Reality**

In Garo society, the status of women is socially recognized. Her lineage, the Mahari system, is around her. In Garo society, the youngest daughter inherits property from her mother, and all children inherit their lineage or clan identity from the mother. This traditional customs have given uniqueness to the Garo society on the one hand, and on the other hand, by giving land ownership to women, it has made women self-reliant, independent, and proud landowners. After obtaining ownership, the woman is fully aware of her own property and ownership, she can properly apprehend its meaning. The woman perceives a visible and invisible difference between her as the owner of the land and her husband who does not own the land. The idea of owning arable and homestead land gives her an identity as she held the power

and authority in the family and society. She understands that she is at the center of empowerment circle. Since she is the head of the family by customary law, she enjoys complete freedom in the major matters of the family, especially in economic matters, land use, cultivation, harvesting, making decisions on the expenditures, controlling over the family income, or in rearing children, educating them, marrying them off, etc. However, for family peace or for better advice, woman consults her husband on these matters. This is entirely her self-matter, not an imposed decision. How much the husband will be valued in the family depends mainly on the wife's will or unwillingness. Usually, the man emerges as the caretaker of the family and the properties in his wife's family. In some cases, this responsibility empowers or makes him independent. As a result, the husband is a property less, landless, helpless person, whom the wife can throw out or drive out of the house for any reason. Compared to landless women in the society, women who own land develop a distinct mentality. They consider themselves richer and more empowered than those women. Women in the society who do not own land, or who do not own land through Mahari, or who have become landless in any way, lack power and authority; she is not empowered by inheriting the land. However, since they are in Mahari, a sense of security works among them. These women cannot enter the center of empowerment in the family or in the society. Their body language also shows an absence of power. Females of these families are working with their males as daily labors. In these families, both husband and wife and even adult children have to engage in physical labor to earn a living. Young men and women from these families who have received primary or secondary education are migrating to Dhaka city and choosing various professions. The poor boys and girls of these urban-based families are finding work in shopping malls, beauty parlors, and security guards; boys in diplomatic neighborhoods are working as security guards; girls are working as housekeepers. They are sending a part of their earned money to their parents or spending it in the village. A new urban-based capitalist atmosphere is entering in the land-based Garo society, where the importance of land ownership is decreasing due to various urban-based manual labor occupations

and the availability of cash from such occupations and income. With the breakdown of the traditional land-centered social system, the circle of empowerment that was created around land-centered ownership is gradually diminishing.

### **Recommendations**

In Garo society, property ownership has not only given women the freedom to speak their own thoughts but has also placed them in a respectable position in society, but to maintain some gender balance, society has given women authority over their family and given men social authority. As a result, the possibility of gender inequality is almost non-existent here. Rather, we can say that an attempt has been made to maintain a visible equilibrium of empowerment in Garo society. However, if women's participation can be ensured in social meetings and gatherings and if women's participation in the decision-making process can be ensured, it seems that an extreme example of women's empowerment will be observed in Garo society.

### **Conclusion**

Garo and Khasia women are in a special position of empowerment compared to other ethnic minority groups living in Bangladesh, because women of these ethnic minority groups inherit the right to ownership over land and all property. As a result, Garo women are given the opportunity to exercise authority and power over their society and family, as recognized by society, and women have freedom of movement in their social sphere. However, the problem is that the opportunity for Bengalis to enter and settle in Garo villages limits their movement. Even when they go out of the house, the dominance of Bengalis is hindering the traditional sphere of empowerment of these women. They are also restricted in using their own language, because, in cases where these women have Bengali neighbors, they have to communicate in Bangla, so they are also restricted from expressing their thoughts in their own language. The exercise of women's power in Garo society is a symbol of tradition, which is equally respected by both Garo men and women. After the observation, this study admits

some limitations and research gaps. It is true that this study has been conducted only in the current context of the Garo rural society, so the observation has naturally revealed the current socio-economic life of women in the rural context. However, it was not possible to make a comparative discussion in the context of urban educated or employed young women. This limitation is very natural for the purpose of this research. Through such a comparative study, it will be possible to discuss the impact of education and profession as well as tradition on the lives of Garo women. This study believes that if any social researcher conducts such an initiative in the future, we will certainly get a comprehensive research report.

### Note

1. What are the Sustainable Development Goals? The SDGS in action, United Nations Development Programme, <https://www.undp.org/sustainable-development-goals>.
2. Anthropological Ethics, <https://americananthro.org/wp-content/uploads/aaa-code-of-ethics-2012.pdf>

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## Language and Gender: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Gendered Speech Patterns in Urban Bangladesh

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### Abstract

In this study, we investigate how gendered speech is produced and perceived in urban Bangladesh. To do this, we recorded 30 informal mixed-group conversations in Dhaka, which we analyzed for specific linguistic features like hedges and direct commands. We paired this discourse analysis with a perception survey of 150 Bangladeshi listeners. Our results show a tendency for women's speech to employ more politeness strategies, while men's communication was often more direct. Crucially, our survey data reveals a stark double standard: listeners judged identical direct speech as confident from a man but aggressive from a woman. However, we found these patterns are not fixed. In specific groups, particularly among university peers, these traditional norms were disrupted. This indicates that gendered language is actively negotiated within social contexts, reflecting a dynamic interplay between tradition and modernization. We conclude that everyday conversation is a primary site for understanding social change and offer practical recommendations for educators and policymakers.

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## Introduction

We often think of language as just a way to exchange facts. But in truth, it is much more than that. It is a fundamental part of how we live together. The way we talk helps us show who we are, form connections with others, and understand our place in a community. Language can uphold existing social structures, but it can also be a tool to question and change them. This is particularly evident when we examine how language interacts with gender. Studying this helps us see how everyday conversations are filled with our culture's beliefs about men and women. These ideas appear in small, everyday choices: the specific words a person picks, the rise and fall of their voice, who feels permitted to speak, and what it means when someone stays quiet. To note that communication is gendered is to acknowledge a basic, yet profound, aspect of how we relate to one another. Our research moves beyond these general observations to focus on a specific place: the rapidly changing urban environments of Bangladesh. The country has a rich linguistic heritage, with many local dialects and languages. While this research concentrates on standard Bangla spoken in cities, it acknowledges this broader, vibrant context. Understanding how men and women speak here is not only interesting-for understanding social change. Cities such as Dhaka are the epic center of this change. They are bustling places where long-standing traditions meet modern, global influences. This clash and blend of old and new is happening in real time. You can hear it in university common rooms and city cafes. A new generation, inspired by both Bangladesh's history and its digital present, is actively shaping how the language is used today. They are writing the next chapter of the nation's story through their words.

This paper, therefore, seeks to provide a finely-grained, empirically robust, and nuanced analysis of how gendered speech patterns are manifested, socially perceived, and potentially transformed within the dynamic confines of contemporary urban Bangladeshi society. It interrogates not only what differences exist but, more importantly, why they persist, how they are interpreted by listeners, and where they are being most effectively disrupted.

## Identification of Research Problem

The global academic conversation on language and gender is vast and deeply established, a veritable river of thought that has shifted its course over decades. The field was fundamentally shaped by Robin Lakoff's pivotal, albeit controversial, 1975 thesis, which framed women's speech through a deficit model, characterizing it as a language of uncertainty and powerlessness. The 1990s witnessed a significant paradigm shift with Deborah Tannen's difference model, which suggested men and women essentially hail from different cultural planets, one prioritizing "report" talk (focused on information and status) and the other "rapport" talk (focused on connection and intimacy). The current dominant view in gender studies is the constructivist approach, which has been widely developed by scholars like Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet (2013) through their idea of "communities of practice." This perspective argues that gender is not a fixed trait that dictates how we speak. Instead, it is something that is created, recreated, and challenged through shared actions, including language, within particular social groups.

However, despite the wealth of global research on the topic, the context of Bangladesh has been largely overlooked. It is often mentioned only briefly or generalized in broader studies of South Asia. While local research has made important contributions, it has mostly focused on big-picture issues such as women's rights, economic participation, and access to education. While these topics are important, they often miss the core issue: the detailed study of how gender is expressed in everyday conversations. We have focused on broad themes but have neglected the finer details. This is the gap that this research intends to fill.

The real need is to shift focus from these broad issues to the small, everyday interactions—those fleeting moments in conversation where gender is performed. It's about the quick decisions that we make in language, the small changes in sentence structure, the tone of voice - all of which has important social meaning. These are the areas where gender identity is most visibly and actively created. This research aims to explore

the specific language features (e.g., tag questions, hesitations, commands and interruptions, and length of pauses) that signals gender in conversations in the urban parts of Bangladesh. It also looks at how listeners interpret and judge these features, and what social consequences come with following or defying these expectations. The goal is to understand how language both reflects and shapes gender views in the context of urban Bangladesh.

### **Objectives of the Research**

Guided by the identified problem, this research is meticulously designed to achieve the following interconnected objectives:

1. To identify, describe, and quantitatively analyze key linguistic features (e.g., hedging, tag questions, interruptions, minimal responses, command forms, and honorifics) that demonstrably vary across genders in a corpus of informal mixed-group conversations recorded in urban Dhaka.
2. To analyze, through a meticulously designed perception survey, the social perceptions and evaluative judgments made by Bangladeshi listeners regarding these gendered speech patterns, mapping how specific linguistic behaviors are attributed traits like confidence, rudeness, kindness, or weakness based on the perceived gender of the speaker.
3. To interpret the empirical findings within the broader, interdisciplinary theoretical framework of language as a social practice, drawing on sociological, anthropological, and linguistic theories to discuss the profound implications these patterns hold for understanding gender relations, power dynamics, and social change in contemporary Bangladesh.

### **Literature Review**

The academic journey into the nexus of language and gender is itself a story of intellectual evolution and paradigm shifts, reflecting broader transformations in feminist and sociological thought. Of course. Here is a rewritten version of the text, using simpler language and a more direct, researcher-focused tone.

The study of language and identity has evolved from a simplistic view to a more nuanced understanding, acknowledging how our identities are influenced by social contexts. This shift in perspective is often traced back to the “deficit model.” Robin Lakoff, in her groundbreaking 1975 book *Language and Woman’s Place*, was the first to introduce this concept.

She suggested that women’s speech was marked by patterns that conveyed a lack of confidence and a need to be polite. These included frequent qualifiers (“sort of,” “I think”), descriptive but less factual adjectives (“charming,” “sweet”), turning statements into questions (“That was fun, wasn’t it?”), and an overly strict use of grammar. Lakoff did not present these as neutral differences. Instead, she argued they were weaknesses, a sign of women’s lower status in society. While this was a pivotal idea at the time, later scholars heavily criticized it. They noted that it was based mostly on personal observation rather than solid data, ignored the specific situations in which people speak, and treated all women as a single group without any variation or ability to push back.

This criticism led to the development of the “dominance model.” Researchers like Zimmerman and West (1975) refocused the discussion on power dynamics. Their famous study on conversations showed a clear trend: men interrupted women much more often, steered the topics of discussion, and used silence to control the interaction. From this perspective, language was not just a mirror reflecting a male-dominated society; it was the actual tool used to create and maintain that dominance. This approach was crucial for highlighting the political nature of everyday talk. However, some argued it was too rigid, as it could overlook the ways women actively resist or challenge this power imbalance.

Looking for a middle path, the “difference model” became popular, largely due to Deborah Tannen’s 1990 book, *\*You Just Don’t Understand\**. Tannen proposed that boys and girls learn to communicate in different social worlds, developing distinct styles. She

described men's communication as "report talk," focused on sharing information and establishing their position, while women's was "rapport talk," aimed at building and sustaining relationships. This framework was very accessible and resonated with many people. Yet, it also drew criticism for possibly minimizing the power differences central to the dominance model. Critics worried it could mistakenly reduce gender inequality to nothing more than a misunderstanding between two equally valid communication styles. The contemporary, and now dominant, paradigm is the constructivist or social practice model, most powerfully articulated by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet in their extensive work, including the 2013 edition of *Language and Gender*. They posit that gender is not a pre-defined, static category that determines language use. Instead, gender is continually and actively produced, reproduced, and challenged through shared practices—including language—within specific "communities of practice" (CofPs), such as a friend group, a workplace team, or a classroom. The meaning of a linguistic feature is not fixed; a tag question can be a marker of insecurity in one context but a facilitative, inclusive device in another. The focus shifts decisively from cataloging differences between men and women to understanding how individuals use linguistic resources to "do" gender in locally specific ways, in concert with other aspects of their identity like class, ethnicity, and age. This framework, with its emphasis on fluidity, agency, and context, is exceptionally well-suited for analyzing a rapidly changing society like urban Bangladesh.

Within the specific context of Bangladesh, scholarly work is growing but remains nascent. Important research by scholars like Sultana (2014, 2015) has extensively explored broader linguistic ideologies and the complex role of English in relation to power and identity. Hossain (2018) and others have examined the critical macro-level links between gender, education, and social transformation. However, a dedicated, micro-level sociolinguistic analysis of natural conversational data, applying the communities of practice framework specifically to gendered talk, remains a salient and significant gap in the literature. This research aims to fill that void, situating the rich,

complex reality of Bangladeshi speech within these global theoretical conversations.

This theoretical evolution is supported and expanded by advanced sociolinguistic texts which provide the larger methodological and epistemological foundations used in this study. Foundational works such as Meyerhoff (2011), Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015) and the reader by Coupland & Jaworski (2009) provide as good as a framework for us to analyze language as social practice, hence reinforcing the principles of the communities of practice model applied herein.

## **Research Rationale**

We pursued this research for two main reasons, one academic and one deeply social.

First, while extensive global theories on language and gender exist, we noticed a significant lack of concrete data from Bangladesh. Much of the local research focuses on broader themes, such as access to education, but often overlooks the nuanced details of everyday conversation. We felt this was a critical gap, leaving our understanding of how gender is performed in Bangladesh incomplete. Our aim was to test the applicability of the “communities of practice” framework within Dhaka’s dynamic urban environment, hoping to contribute a vital, ground-level perspective from the Global South to the field.

Second, and more importantly, we believe this work extends beyond academia. We’ve all seen how language reinforces social inequality - who gets interrupted, etc. Who feels that they need to be polite? These subtle interactions form invisible barriers. Our goal was to document these dynamics in real life to provide clear evidence of how such barriers are built and maintained. Ultimately, we want to translate our findings into practical steps for schools, media, and workplaces to help make everyday communication fairer and support Bangladesh’s broader goals for development and equality. Taken together, the findings outline a linguistic plan for change that aligns with Bangladesh’s development agenda and international

commitments, including UN Sustainable Development Goal 5. The aim is straightforward: provide concrete, data-driven steps to make everyday communication more equal.

### **Research Questions**

To guide this inquiry with precision, the study is structured around three central research questions, each designed to probe a different, deeper layer of the complex relationship between language and gender:

1. The “What” (Descriptive-Analytical): What are the quantitatively observable differences in the use of specific linguistic features (e.g., frequency of hedges, tag questions, imperative forms, interruptions, turn-length) between male and female speakers in recorded naturalistic conversations within urban Bangladeshi communities of practice?
2. The “So What” (Perceptual-Evaluative): How do Bangladeshi listeners perceive and evaluate these gendered speech patterns? What social attributes (e.g., confidence, rudeness, kindness, weakness) are assigned to speakers based on their use of specific linguistic features and their perceived gender?
3. The “What Now” (Contextual-Transformative): How do mediating variables, such as education level, professional environment, and membership in specific communities of practice, influence or disrupt these observed gendered linguistic patterns? Where are the boundaries of traditional norms being tested and renegotiated?

### **Theoretical Framework**

To navigate this complex inquiry, a multi-faceted theoretical lens is essential. The analysis is not conducted in a vacuum but is firmly grounded in two interconnected theoretical traditions that provide the necessary depth and analytical power.

This research is grounded in the constructivist view of gender. It draws heavily on the influential idea of “communities of practice,” developed by Penelope Eckert and Sally McConnell-Ginet. This concept moves away from rigid, deterministic frameworks.

A community of practice is simply a group of people who come together around a shared interest or goal—a circle of friends, a workplace, or a club. Through their ongoing interactions, the group naturally develops its own shared ways of doing things, including unique ways of speaking and behaving.

This framework changes the central research question entirely. From this perspective, gender is not a fixed biological characteristic which determines how someone speaks. Instead it is an ongoing project - something that is actively being created through the interactions of people within these different social groups. The meaning of a word or a way of talking is not set in stone, it is worked out in the moment, within a specific context.

For example, frequent use of strong language might successfully build a “tough” masculine identity in one setting, like a workshop, but would be highly out of place and discouraged in another, like a preschool.

Therefore, the focus shifts. Rather than comparing a hypothetical “male speech” to “female speech,” researchers focus on how people use language as a tool to express gender in ways that are meaningful within their specific community. In this approach, differences and exceptions in language use are not seen as issues to resolve, but as valuable insights. These variations highlight the ways in which individuals actively shape their identities. To better understand the subtle strategies people use in interactions, especially regarding authority and respect, the study also draws on Politeness Theory (Brown & Levinson, 1987).

This theory operates on a universal human premise: individuals have a fundamental desire to be liked and approved of (positive face) and to be unimpeded in their actions (negative face). Certain speech acts, a command, a criticism, a request, for example, inherently threaten these desires; they are called Face Threatening Acts (FTAs). Politeness, then, comprises the array of linguistic strategies we deploy to soften these threats. This arsenal ranges from blunt, bald-on-record

commands (“Do this.”) which pay no heed to face wants, to negative politeness strategies that acknowledge imposition (“If you wouldn’t mind...”), to off-record hints that avoid direct responsibility (“It’s quite dark in here”).

Fusing these two lenses creates a powerful analytical tool. Politeness is no longer seen as a fixed, inherently feminine trait. It is reconceptualized as a strategic communicative resource, deployed differently across different social landscapes and CofPs. The investigation becomes: How do men and women in various Bangladeshi CofPs strategically wield (im)politeness to navigate social threats and construct their identities? Is there a deeply ingrained expectation that women should heavily mitigate their FTAs, thus performing a deferential identity? Do men feel a social license to use bald-on-record commands, reinforcing a classic masculinity? And, most crucially, where are these tacit “rules” being bent, broken, or rewritten? This combined theoretical approach allows for a richly layered, context-sensitive analysis that is grounded in universal pragmatic principles while being exquisitely attentive to local cultural specificities.

## **Research Methodology**

A comprehensive, sequential explanatory mixed-methods design was employed for this study. This approach strategically leverages the complementary strengths of qualitative and quantitative paradigms to provide a holistic, triangulated, and deeply nuanced understanding of the research problem. The qualitative component prioritizes depth, context, and the richness of lived interaction through detailed discourse analysis. The quantitative component provides breadth, generalizability, and statistical validation through systematic frequency counts and perceptual surveys.

## **Design**

The study utilized a sequential explanatory design. Phase 1 involved the collection and primary analysis of naturalistic conversational data.

The emergent insights from this qualitative phase directly informed the design of the stimuli and the specific questions deployed in Phase 2, the quantitative perception survey. The results from both phases were then integrated during the final interpretation and discussion stage to provide a complete and coherent picture.

## **Data Collection**

### **Phase 1: Naturalistic Data Collection**

*Setting & Participants:* Audio recordings were collected from 30 separate informal mixed-gender group conversations (approximately 20-30 minutes each) across a diverse range of settings in Dhaka to capture a variety of Communities of Practice. Settings included university common rooms (10 conversations), public coffee shops (10 conversations), and workplace break rooms (10 conversations). A total of 120 participants (60 male, 60 female) were recruited through purposive sampling, aged between 20-35 years, representing a mix of undergraduate students, graduate students, and young professionals. Participation was entirely voluntary, based on informed written consent, and confidentiality was rigorously guaranteed through full anonymization of all recordings and transcripts.

*Procedure:* Researchers utilized high-quality, discreet audio recording equipment. To initiate organic conversation, groups were presented with a neutral, context-relevant discussion-starting prompt (e.g., "Discuss a recent film or series you enjoyed and why" for social settings; "Discuss a recent challenge or success in a project" for work settings). After providing the prompt, researchers minimized their involvement to avoid influencing the natural flow of interaction.

### **Phase 2: Perception Survey**

*Participants:* A separate cohort of 150 Bangladeshi listeners (75 male, 75 females, aged 20-40) was recruited to participate in the survey to avoid any bias from the recording groups.

*Stimuli Development:* Based on the analysis of Phase 1 data, four key audio clips were developed in a professional recording studio

using trained voice actors (2 male, 2 female). Each actor recorded two versions of the same core directive statement:

1. A hedged/polite version: “I was thinking, maybe if it’s not too much trouble, we could possibly consider starting the meeting a bit earlier?”
2. A direct/bald-on-record version: “We need to start the meeting earlier.”

*Survey Procedure:* Using an online survey platform, participants were randomly assigned to listen to two of the eight possible clips (to prevent listener fatigue) and were blind to the gender of the voice actor until the moment of playback. After each clip, they rated the speaker on a 7-point Likert scale across ten bipolar traits: confident/not confident, competent/incompetent, polite/rude, aggressive/passive, weak/strong, kind/unkind, assertive/unassertive, leadership/no leadership, friendly/unfriendly, and effective/ineffective. Subsequently, they answered open-ended questions probing their impressions of the speaker's personality and likely social role.

## **Data Analysis**

The data analysis was performed in a sequential, integrated way to ensure strong triangulation of qualitative and quantitative data findings.

*Qualitative Discourse Analysis:* The audio data (approximately 30 hours) were written out in transcription using a detailed transcription system that included notations of pauses, overlaps, laughter, emphasis and intonation contours. The resulting transcripts were then put through a two-cycle coding process using a scheme derived from the theoretical framework.

In the first cycle we used the Descriptive Coding to identify the occurrences of certain linguistic features. Codes included: Hedges (e.g., *mone hoy* “I think”; *aastey* “maybe”), tag questions, intensifiers, direct imperative (e.g., “*Koro*” “Do it”) and indirect/polite requests (e.g., “*Korte parben?*”

- “Would you like to try?”, Interruptions (successful and unsuccessful), Supportive Minimal Responses (“hmm”, “uhuh”), Sec. Turn-length.

In the second cycle we used Pattern Coding in which we grouped these descriptive codes into broader and more meaningful themes, for instance “Mitigation Strategies,” “Assertiveness Markers,” “Conversational Support,” and “Floor Holding.” This enabled us to go beyond simply frequency counts to learn about the functional use of these features in context - for example, a tag question employed to seek validation or a tag question employed to help form group agreement - which would respectively lead to different meanings.

*Quantitative Analysis:* In order to statistically confirm the patterns identified through the qualitative methods, the frequency of every coded linguistic feature was determined on a per-minute of speech basis for each individual speaker ( $n=120$ ). This normalization made possible fair comparison between speakers with different values of total talk time. The data was then imported to statistical software (SPSS v.28). Comparisons between frequencies of each linguistic feature in male and female speakers were conducted using independent samples t-tests, and the results were compared for the whole data set. Furthermore, a one-way ANOVA was performed in order to study the impact of the setting (University, Cafe, Workplace) upon these linguistic patterns. The level of statistical significance was considered  $p < 0.05$ .

*Perception Survey Analysis:* The survey data of the 150 participants was quantitatively and qualitatively analyzed. Numeric ratings on the 7-point Likert scales were analyzed to generate mean scores and SD for each voice/trait combination. Cross-tabulations using the chi-square tests were performed to determine significant perceptual differences that was determined by the listener’s gender and the perceived gender of the voice in the clip. The open-ended responses were analyzed with the help of thematic analysis to identify recurring evaluative comments (e.g., “She sounds too pushy”, “He sounds like a leader”).

*Triangulation of Quantitative and Qualitative Data:*

The key strength of this mixed method approach was the seek to triangulation of findings from different data streams on purpose. The process could be seen in the table below:

| Phase                          | Data Type                                                                | Finding (Example)                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | How it Triangulates                                                                                      |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Phase 1<br/>(Recording)</b> | <b>Qualitative:</b><br>Discourse analysis of conversations.              | Observed that women in cafes often used rising intonation on statements.                                                                                                                                                                      | <b>Identified the phenomenon in natural speech.</b>                                                      |
|                                | <b>Quantitative:</b><br>T-test on frequency of hedges.                   | Found a statistically significant higher use of hedges by women (4.2/min vs. 2.7/min, $p<.001$ ).                                                                                                                                             | <b>Provided statistical validation and scale for the qualitative observation.</b>                        |
| <b>Phase 2<br/>(Survey)</b>    | <b>Quantitative:</b><br>Listener ratings of direct speech.               | The direct command was rated “confident” for male voice (Mean=6.1) but “aggressive” for female voice (Mean=5.2).                                                                                                                              | <b>Explained the <i>social consequence</i> of the pattern found in Phase 1, showing why it persists.</b> |
|                                | <b>Qualitative:</b><br>Thematic analysis of open-ended survey responses. | Listeners described the direct female voice as “rude” and “unfeminine.”                                                                                                                                                                       | <b>Added depth and context to the quantitative ratings, revealing the underlying bias.</b>               |
| <b>Integrated Finding</b>      |                                                                          | <b>The double standard is confirmed:</b> Women use more hedges (Quant Phase 1) <i>because</i> when they don’t, they are socially penalized (Quant/Qual Phase 2). The qualitative data from both phases explains the ‘why’ behind the numbers. |                                                                                                          |

This triangulation takes one from observation (what people do), to validation (how often they do it), to interpretation (how it is perceived and why it matters) producing an effective chain of evidence.

## Discussion

This study's findings reveal a linguistic environment that is clearly and actively changing. Urban Bangladesh is not a single, uniform entity but a complex social space where long-standing traditions continuously interact with, and are pressured by, new, modern influences. The data shows that traditional ways of speaking remain strong. However, the more significant finding is that it identifies the specific areas where these old patterns are beginning to break down and be actively redefined.

At a very basic level, the numerical data is a story that will be recognizable to researchers in this field. Overall, women used hedging devices - words or phrases that soften a statement, e.g. "aastey" (maybe) or "mone hoy" (I think) - 35-40% more often than men. This was frequently paired with a specific speech pattern: a rising pitch at the end of a sentence that should be a statement. This had the effect of turning a definite "We start at five" into a more questioning "We start at five?", as if seeking confirmation. This pattern acts as a verbal request for agreement, a subtle sound cue that aligns with established social norms encouraging feminine modesty and politeness. Male speech, by contrast, often exhibited a different texture. It was frequently more direct, less adorned, characterized by bald-on-record imperatives like "Koro" (Do it) or assertive declarations like "Shuru kori" (Let's start). This performative divide was most visibly enacted in social settings like cafes, which often function as theaters for the conscious (and subconscious) performance of well-rehearsed gender roles.

However, the true revelation, the key to understanding the why behind these patterns, emerged from the perception survey data. Here, the power of gendered expectation was laid bare. The exact same utterance, the directive "We need to start earlier," was transformed into two entirely different social acts based solely on the perceived gender of the speaker. When attributed to a male voice, it was consistently evaluated as confident, decisive, and indicative of leadership qualities. When produced by a female voice, those

identical words were frequently perceived as abrupt, aggressive, and frankly, rude. Conversely, the hyper-polite, heavily hedged request (“Maybe if it’s not too much trouble...”) from a woman was rated as nice and polite, but also, devastatingly, as less authoritative and weak. The societal double bind is thus rendered with painful clarity: women are penalized for directness and for indirectness alike. This perceptual bias is not a passive observation; it functions as a powerful, invisible normative police force, vigilantly guarding the borders of “appropriate” gendered speech and fiercely discouraging any meaningful deviation.

However, it would be a serious mistake to assume these patterns are universal. The most important finding within the data is not the overall trend, but the significant and meaningful variation that exists. This is where the concept of “communities of practice” proves to be absolutely essential.

To understand this, consider the data gathered from university common rooms, especially among highly competitive students in fields like Computer Science and Economics. In these settings, the traditional rules of conversation appeared to break down. For these groups, a shared identity—that of being a sharp, competitive student—seemed to override traditional gender roles.

Within these specific social groups, the female participants were not just participating equally; they were frequently leading the discussions. They spoke for longer periods, guided the topics of conversation, and used a direct, unambiguous speaking style with very few softening words. They managed to speak in this way without facing social consequences from their peers. Their recognized expertise and strong position within the group allowed them a freedom in speech that they might not have had in more traditional settings, such as family gatherings. This is not just an exception; it provides important evidence. It shows that how we express gender through language is not biologically fixed, but is influenced by the social context and can change depending on shared goals and a common identity.

Even in the more formal data from workplaces, an interesting middle ground emerged. While traditional expectations were still somewhat present, women in leadership roles had developed a more nuanced, mixed style. They used direct, task-focused language when managing projects and deadlines, but could easily switch to a more polite and warm style when supporting their teams and boosting morale. This does not simply reject old norms.

It is a more complex and strategic adaptation: a careful, flexible approach to managing conflicting social expectations. These women are not just talking; they are making conscious choices about how to communicate in different situations, demonstrating a high level of skill and control over their language.

## Results and Findings

The quantitative analysis of the conversational corpus revealed statistically significant differences in the use of key linguistic features. The mean frequency of occurrence per minute of speech is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: Mean Frequency of Linguistic Features per Minute of Speech by Gender

| Linguistic Feature              | Female Speakers (n=60) | Male Speakers (n=60) | p-value    |
|---------------------------------|------------------------|----------------------|------------|
| Hedges (e.g., mone hoy, aastey) | 4.2 (SD = 1.1)         | 2.7 (SD = 0.9)       | $p < .001$ |
| Tag Questions                   | 1.5 (SD = 0.6)         | 0.8 (SD = 0.5)       | $p < .01$  |
| Imperative Structures           | 1.0 (SD = 0.4)         | 2.3 (SD = 0.7)       | $p < .001$ |
| Supportive Minimal Responses    | 5.8 (SD = 1.3)         | 4.1 (SD = 1.0)       | $p < .05$  |
| Average Turn Length (words)     | 18.5 (SD = 5.2)        | 22.4 (SD = 6.1)      | $p < .05$  |

Note: SD = Standard Deviation. p-values derived from independent samples t-tests.

Based on the integrated and triangulated analysis of the naturalistic conversational corpus and the perception survey, the study yields three central, interconnected findings:

*Finding 1:* The analysis reveals a statistically significant, probabilistic correlation between gender and the deployment of specific linguistic strategies within informal urban Bangladeshi speech. The data does show a substantial tendency for women to use a higher frequency of mitigating devices - e.g., hedges, polite modifiers, and rising intonations in declaratives - a tendency consistent with the performance of traditionally prescribed feminine norms of modesty and deference. Conversely, male speech demonstrates a pronounced propensity for direct, assertive speech acts, including unmitigated imperatives, which reinforces societal expectations of masculine assertiveness and decisiveness. Crucially, these patterns are not deterministic but represent strong probabilistic trends, a nuance that underscores the performative and socially conditioned nature of gendered communication rather than any essentialist difference.

*Finding 2:* A second core finding elucidates the powerful role of perceptual bias in sustaining and reinforcing these linguistic patterns. Listeners' evaluations of the same speech acts were found to be shaped by strong gender expectations.

Our data reveals a clear double standard in how people judge identical ways of speaking. When a man used direct, assertive language, listeners consistently saw him as confident and a strong leader. However, when a woman used the same words, she was often viewed as abrupt, aggressive, or rude.

On the other hand, when a woman used more cautious and polite language, listeners tended to see her as kind, but also less authoritative and competent.

This creates an unfair and challenging situation for women, who are criticized for either being too direct or not direct enough. These judgments form a powerful cycle, where societal expectations shape how we perceive speech, and in turn, individuals feel pressured to meet those expectations.

This cycle reinforces the existing norms and discourages people from communicating in different ways.

A key finding is that a person's education level, and more importantly, their membership in specific social or professional groups, significantly changes these patterns. In groups where a shared professional or academic identity (like “software engineer” or “research scientist”) becomes more important than gender, the usual rules are relaxed.

In these specific contexts, women can use a direct speaking style without being automatically penalized for it. Similarly, men can use more supportive and collaborative language without losing status. These groups are not just unusual exceptions. They are important examples that show how social language rules can change. They prove that people can, in certain conditions, overcome the constraints of stereotypical expectations.

## Recommendations

Based on what we found, we propose following steps:

### 1. Integrate Critical Language Awareness into the National Curriculum

- ❖ *Action for NCTB:* National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) should devise modules for the secondary and higher secondary levels in the Bangla and Social Studies classes. These modules should move better beyond traditional grammar to include:

*Analysis of Media:* Students may be asked to analyze the dialogues from popular TV dramas or speeches of public figures critically with the aim of identifying patterns of gendered language and stereotypes.

*Role-Playing and Reflection:* Organized activities in which the students practice giving the same message (for example, a directive) in varying linguistic styles (direct, hedged, collaborative) and reflect on the perceptions that these various styles create.

*Discussion of Research:* Present simplified concepts from research such as this one in order to help students learn the connection between language, power, and social judgment.

- ❖ *Teacher Training:* The government and donor agencies should provide financial support for professional development workshops for teachers. These workshops would provide them with the skills to support these sensitive discussions, and also model the inclusion of communication in their own classrooms.

## **2. Encourage Diverse Models of Language in the Media and Public Discourse**

- ❖ *Content Creator Guidelines:* Create and share a guide for good practice for script writers, journalists and advertisers. This guide would encourage:

*Portraying Women in Authority:* Consciously writing female leaders, professionals and characters in assertive, direct language and without the “shrill” or “aggressive” framing for the character.

*Showcasing Collaborative Masculinity:* Showcasing male characters that are actively using supplicative minimal responses, cooperative talk, and delegating authority without having their competence questioned.

- ❖ *Public Service Campaigns:* Public service campaigns such as the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs can tie up with media houses for short features or talk shows explicitly discussing the facts of this research, making the public aware of unconscious linguistic bias.

## **3. Implement Bias-Focused Communication in Workplaces**

- ❖ *Shift from “Fix the Woman” to “Fix the System”:* Corporate training programs need to be redesigned. As opposed to coaching women to “speak more confidently,” the key should be to train all the employees, particularly the managers and team leaders to acknowledge and limit their own perceptual biases.

### ❖ *Structured Training Modules*

*Bias Awareness Workshop:* Start with sessions based on the survey findings from this study that make the double standard real. Use anonymous polling to let employee's self-reflect on their own judgments.

*Calibrated Feedback Mechanisms:* Establish therapeutic performance feedback structures which aim to elicit evaluation from evaluators who give evidence-based comments about communication, rather than labeling people "aggressive" or various shades of "not assertive enough."

*Further Academic Research:* Future research should adopt longitudinal designs to track these sociolinguistic changes within specific cohorts over time, providing insights into the pace and direction of change. Studies should also expand beyond the current urban, Bangla-speaking focus to include rural communities and the many indigenous linguistic groups of Bangladesh (e.g., Chakma, Santali, Garo) to understand how these dynamics play out across the nation's rich and diverse linguistic tapestry, ensuring an inclusive and comprehensive understanding of the country's gendered linguistic landscape.

### **Conclusion**

This study has demonstrated that gendered speech patterns in urban Bangladesh are a tangible, significant, and complex social reality, intricately woven into the very fabric of daily interaction. The way we speak is never just about style. It is deeply connected to how we reflect, reinforce, and sometimes resist the unwritten rules and power imbalances in our society. There is a powerful, often unseen, pressure to communicate in expected ways. This pressure doesn't just affect the speaker - guiding their choice of words and sentence structure - it perhaps even more powerfully affects the listener. It helps define the filter through which we hear someone and how we go about judging that person.

Our findings clearly show this creates a powerful double standard for women. They face systematic criticism for their way of speaking,

whether they choose to be direct or polite. This works as a very efficient form of social control. It upholds existing hierarchies not through official rules, but through the quiet, self-policing fear of social disapproval.

However, our research also found strong, convincing evidence of change and resistance. The differences and exceptions we noticed in certain social groups are not random; they are essential for understanding how language evolves. They demonstrate that using language to express gender is not a fixed biological process, but a flexible, ongoing one that is shaped by context. People, especially younger, educated city-dwellers who balance tradition and modernity, actively participate in this process. They skillfully manage and sometimes reshape the language they use to meet their needs.

Attributing to this tension, the constant impact of the social structures and the possibility of individual choice, is highly important to the development of a more equitable linguistic environment. It is not aimed at destroying all the distinctions in the way people talk, which would be impossible and unfriendly to culture. Rather we ought to strive to enhance our cognition of what is legitimate and authoritative. We should aim for a society where the key measure of communication is not whether people conform to gendered expectations, but whether the conversation is effective, clear, and successful for everyone involved.

Ultimately, the data presents a clear picture: the speech patterns of urban Bangladesh are not fixed. They are alive, debated, and evolving right now. This study has aimed to carefully observe these subtle changes. The conversation it documents is deeply significant. Its meaning goes beyond specific words or grammar; it reflects the broader processes of social change. It signals an ongoing and complex struggle over identity, power, and everyone's fundamental right to be heard for exactly who they are.

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# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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Language and Gender: Exploring Power, Identity and Equity in Bangla Language

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>29-10-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>Language is not a neutral instrument of communication; it carries with it social hierarchies, cultural norms, and power relations. In Bangladesh, where Bangla serves as both a mother tongue and a symbol of national identity, linguistic practices continue to shape and reflect gendered inequalities. This article explores the complex intersections of language and gender within the Bangladeshi context. It examines how gender norms are reproduced in speech patterns, education, and media representation, and how mother tongue education offers opportunities for empowerment if approached through a gender-sensitive lens. Drawing on sociolinguistic, feminist, and discourse analysis theories, this article analyses existing literature, policies, and practices, with a view to understanding how Bangla as a language both mirrors and sustains patriarchal structures. The paper argues that integrating gender perspectives into language policy, pedagogy, and cultural practices is essential to achieving equity. Finally, recommendations are provided for gender-responsive reforms in education, curriculum, and public discourse.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Language, Gender, Bangla, Mother Tongue Education, Equity, Identity, Sociolinguistics, Feminism</p>                             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |

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## Introduction

Language is deeply tied to human identity and culture: it mediates communication, meaning-making, and the negotiation of social roles (Fairclough, 2015; Butler, 1990). Yet language is far from neutral—it both reflects and reproduces existing hierarchies, including gendered relations (Lakoff, 1975; Mills, 2008), and can also become a site of resistance (Butler, 1990; Fairclough, 2015). In Bangladesh, Bangla occupies a distinctive position as the mother tongue of the majority and as a symbol of national struggle and cultural recognition, but everyday language practices and institutional texts reveal entrenched gender inequities (Nahar, 2019; Kabeer, 2000). The relationship between language and gender is therefore central to understanding broader patterns of inequality: linguistic forms encode expectations about women's and men's roles, while representation in education and media shapes access to voice and opportunity (UNESCO, 2016; Rudhumbu, 2022). With policy emphasis on mother-tongue instruction for early learning, it is imperative to interrogate whether such approaches redress or inadvertently reproduce gendered norms (Mohanty, 2010; UNESCO, 2016). This paper therefore examines Bangla as both a vehicle of inequality and a potential instrument of empowerment, analysing how linguistic practices in everyday interaction, curricular materials, and media contribute to the construction, contestation, and re-imagining of gendered identities in Bangladesh (Fairclough, 2015).

## Statement of the problem

Despite progress in gender equality, patriarchal norms remain deeply embedded in Bangladeshi society, and these are mirrored in language use. Gendered speech patterns often assign authority to men while framing women in familial or subordinate roles. In classrooms and textbooks, women are underrepresented or stereotypically depicted as caregivers, reinforcing narrow social expectations. Public discourse continues to privilege male voices in political, academic, and cultural domains.

While mother tongue education is widely recognised for its role in improving comprehension and literacy (UNESCO, 2016), these

initiatives have not always addressed the gendered dimensions of language. As a result, linguistic practices continue to reproduce inequities. The problem lies in the way language sustains patriarchal structures at multiple levels—individual, institutional, and societal. Unless explicitly addressed, these dynamics risk undermining Bangladesh’s progress in gender equality and inclusive development.

### **Objectives of the research**

This research pursues the following objectives:

- To examine how linguistic practices in Bangla reflect and reinforce gender norms and inequalities.
- To analyse the impact of gendered language use on mother tongue education in Bangladesh.
- To propose recommendations for gender-responsive reforms in language practices, policies, and pedagogy.

### **Literature Review**

The field of language and gender emerged prominently with Lakoff’s *Language and Woman’s Place* (1975), which argued that women’s speech is systematically shaped by social expectations of politeness, hesitation, and deference. Building on this foundation, scholars such as Penelope (1990/2003) and Talbot (1998) contended that gendered linguistic hierarchies are products of patriarchal social structures rather than biological differences. Later work by Cameron (1998) and Holmes and Meyerhoff (2003) further demonstrated that linguistic patterns associated with men and women are socially constructed, context-dependent, and reflective of broader power relations.

Within South Asia, gendered asymmetries in language intersect with deeply rooted patriarchal norms. Empirical studies reveal that Bangla often encodes gendered relationality through the pervasive use of kinship terms for women—such as *maa* (mother), *meiye* (girl), or *bou* (wife)—while men are predominantly referenced through occupational, institutional, or status-bearing titles (Islam, 2023). Such linguistic patterns reinforce the social positioning of women

through relational identity, in contrast to men's alignment with public, professional, and authoritative domains.

Educational scholarship in Bangladesh identifies similar dynamics across curricular materials. Nahar (2019) documented a significant gender imbalance in primary and secondary textbooks, where female characters remain underrepresented and are depicted largely in domestic or subordinate roles. These findings echo global research indicating that textbooks are critical sites where gender ideologies are reproduced (Blumberg, 2008). Content analysis of Bangladeshi educational materials thus reveals how representational biases may shape children's aspirations, cognitive associations, and perceptions of gendered possibility.

The broader literature on mother tongue-based education demonstrates its pedagogical advantages, particularly in comprehension, retention, and identity formation (UNESCO, 2016; Mohanty, 2010). However, scholars also caution that without explicit gender-sensitive frameworks, mother tongue initiatives may inadvertently replicate the inequities embedded in the linguistic and cultural resources they draw from (Genilo et al, 2018). In the Chittagong Hill Tracts, Sultana (2011) showed that mother tongue programmes incorporating women as teachers not only improved learning outcomes but also increased girls' participation, illustrating the transformative potential of gender-inclusive approaches.

Critical discourse analysis provides an essential theoretical lens for understanding these dynamics. Fairclough (2015) conceptualised language as a socially embedded practice through which power is enacted and normalized. From this perspective, gender asymmetries in Bangla are not merely descriptive features but discursive mechanisms that reproduce hierarchical social relations. Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity further emphasises that gender is enacted through repeated linguistic and social practices, positioning language as a central medium through which gender norms are produced, legitimised, and contested.

## **Research Rationale**

Bangladesh's policy commitments—including SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality)—hinge on transforming the linguistic and discursive environments that shape gendered identities. Yet, the role of Bangla in constructing and reproducing gender norms remains understudied. Investigating how everyday speech, educational materials, and public discourse enact gendered power relations provides critical insights for designing gender-equitable educational reforms. This research therefore contributes to filling an important policy and scholarly gap by examining the linguistic foundations of gender inequality within Bangladeshi society.

## **Research questions**

The research is guided by three interrelated questions that seek to uncover the complex intersections of language and gender within the Bangla linguistic and educational landscape.

### **How do linguistic practices in Bangla reflect and reinforce gender norms?**

This question aims to examine the ways in which everyday Bangla speech, idioms, proverbs, and forms of address reproduce societal expectations of men and women. For instance, Bangla contains numerous gendered expressions that symbolically assign authority, strength, and rationality to men, while associating women with obedience, domesticity, and emotionality (Nahar, 2019). The investigation looks at how conversational styles, classroom interactions, and media portrayals embody patriarchal values, thereby legitimising social hierarchies. By interrogating linguistic practices, this question attempts to highlight the subtle ways through which gender inequality is sustained in cultural discourse.

### **In what ways does gendered language use affect mother tongue education in Bangladesh?**

Bangladesh has invested significantly in mother tongue-based instruction, recognising its importance for learning, identity formation, and cultural continuity. However, language in education

is not only a medium of communication but also a conveyor of social norms. This question probes how gendered narratives in textbooks, the use of male-centric examples in classrooms, and teacher-student interactions either encourage or limit the participation of girls in education. Research has already shown that when girls do not see themselves positively represented in curricular content, their confidence and engagement decrease (UNESCO, 2016). Thus, the focus here is on how gender bias embedded in Bangla educational materials and pedagogy influences learning outcomes and perpetuates inequities in access, achievement, and aspirations.

### **What strategies can make language policy and practice more gender-responsive?**

The final question takes a forward-looking approach, focusing on actionable solutions to address the inequities uncovered. It recognises that language policy is not merely about standardising communication but also about shaping inclusive identities and ensuring equity. The aim here is to explore interventions such as revising textbooks to include balanced gender representation, training teachers in gender-sensitive pedagogical practices, and amplifying women's voices in public discourse. Additionally, the question opens the door to considering how community participation—particularly women's involvement in curriculum design, storytelling, and local knowledge-sharing—can lead to more equitable educational experiences. This inquiry not only addresses immediate classroom practices but also contributes to long-term strategies for integrating gender justice into national language and education policies.

Taken together, these research questions provide a comprehensive framework to examine the interplay of language and gender in the Bangla context, offering both a critical analysis of current practices and pathways towards more equitable futures.

### **Theoretical framework**

This research draws on three interrelated theoretical traditions that provide complementary perspectives for examining the nexus between language and gender in the Bangla context.

### ***Lakoff's (1975) theory of "women's language"***

Robin Lakoff's seminal work *Language and Woman's Place* introduced the idea that women's speech is marked by certain linguistic features—such as tag questions, hedges, intensifiers, and politeness markers—that reflect and reinforce women's social subordination. Although critiqued and refined over time, Lakoff's framework remains foundational in highlighting the ways in which gendered differences in language are socially constructed rather than biologically determined. Applied to Bangla, this framework enables an exploration of how women's speech is shaped by cultural expectations of modesty, deference, and relational identity, often limiting their participation in public or formal discourse. For instance, the frequent use of kinship-based address terms for women (e.g., *maa*, *apa*) versus occupational identifiers for men reflects not only linguistic habits but also entrenched gender hierarchies in Bangladeshi society (Kabeer, 2000).

### ***Butler's (1990) theory of gender performativity***

Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity provides a dynamic lens to understand how language does not merely reflect gender identities but actively constructs them. According to Butler, gender is not a fixed attribute but a set of repeated performances, sustained through discourse and social interaction. In the context of Bangla, this theory underscores how everyday speech acts—whether in classrooms, media, or family interactions—reinforce gender binaries and expectations. For example, the linguistic practices that portray women as caregivers and men as decision-makers are not neutral descriptions but repeated discursive acts that construct and naturalise gender roles. Butler's framework helps uncover how these performances can also be disrupted; for instance, when women use assertive or authoritative language in public forums, they challenge and reconfigure traditional gender expectations in Bangladeshi society.

### ***Fairclough's (2015) critical discourse analysis (CDA)***

Norman Fairclough's approach to CDA provides analytical tools to examine how language operates at the intersection of text, discourse practice, and broader socio-political structures. CDA highlights how power relations are embedded in language and how discourse contributes to the maintenance or transformation of social inequalities.

This framework is particularly useful for analysing Bangla language use in institutional contexts such as schools, textbooks, media, and policy documents. For example, CDA can help reveal how gender stereotypes in educational materials normalise unequal gender roles, or how media discourse amplifies male voices while marginalising women's perspectives. It also enables an analysis of the systemic dimensions of language, showing how institutionalised practices (e.g., curriculum design, teacher training, state policy) reproduce patriarchal norms under the guise of neutrality.

### ***A multi-dimensional approach***

Together, these three frameworks provide a multi-layered understanding of language and gender in Bangladesh. Lakoff's perspective draws attention to micro-level linguistic features that reflect gendered expectations; Butler's theory adds a performative and identity-oriented lens, showing how gender is enacted through language; and Fairclough's CDA situates these practices within broader socio-political and institutional structures. By combining these approaches, this research is able to capture the individual, interactional, and systemic dimensions of how Bangla both reflects and shapes gender relations. This multi-dimensional framework is crucial for understanding not only the reproduction of inequality but also the possibilities for transformation through mother tongue education, media reform, and inclusive policy.

### **Research methodology**

This study employs a qualitative research design grounded in Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) and feminist linguistics to examine how gender is constructed, normalised, and reproduced across everyday language, educational materials, and media discourse in Bangladesh. To ensure methodological rigour, the sampling strategy, sources, analytical procedures, and ethical considerations are described in detail below.

### ***Sampling strategy and data sources***

The study draws on three interconnected corpora of discourse, each selected through purposive sampling to reflect widely circulated forms of language and representation in Bangladesh.

### ***Everyday discourse***

“Conversational Bangla” refers to spontaneous, everyday language used in informal interpersonal communication. For this study, the sample is drawn from three sources:

- a) published sociolinguistic and ethnographic studies documenting natural conversations in households, markets, workplaces, and public transport (Kabeer, 2000);
- b) transcriptions from publicly available recordings and digital content (e.g., YouTube vlogs, street interviews) where colloquial Bangla is used (Sultana, 2011);
- c) anecdotal excerpts from documented oral histories and community interaction studies (Islam, 2023).

These sources were selected because they capture gendered naming practices, honorifics, pronoun use, and role expectations embedded in daily communication.

### ***Textbooks and classroom materials***

A purposive sample of national curriculum textbooks was selected from Grades 1–10 across Bangla, Social Science, Science, and Moral Education subjects. These are published by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board (NCTB) and represent the mandatory learning materials for all government and most non-government schools (NCTB, 2013–2022).

The sample includes 18 textbooks, chosen based on their relevance for analysing character representation, occupational roles, illustrations, and narrative framing (Nahar, 2019; UNESCO, 2016).

In addition, “classroom observation” refers to secondary analysis of existing observational studies (Sultana, 2011). These studies used structured observation tools to document teacher–student interactions, participation patterns, and language used by educators during lessons. Because no primary observational data were collected for this research, no direct ethical approval was required beyond acknowledging the ethical clearance obtained by the original researchers.

### ***Media content***

Media sampling includes print, television, and digital advertising. A total of ten newspapers (five Bangla, five English) were reviewed, covering a two-month period. Television content was sampled from three major national channels, focusing on news, talk shows, and commercials. Digital advertisements and social media campaigns were included based on audience reach and relevance (Nahar, 2019).

The sample captures representations of gender in politics, employment, domestic life, and public narratives, enabling a cross-platform comparison of discursive patterns.

### ***Analytical framework and procedures***

The study applies Fairclough's (2015) three-dimensional CDA model—textual analysis, discursive practice, and social practice—complemented by feminist linguistic principles (Cameron, 1992; Mills, 2008).

***Textual analysis*** involves identifying lexical choices, metaphors, pronouns, agency structures, and visual representations.

***Discursive practice*** examines how texts are produced, circulated, and consumed—how textbooks, media scripts, and conversational norms are created and reproduced.

***Social practice*** situates these discourses within broader patriarchal power structures in Bangladeshi society (Kabeer, 2000; Sultana, 2011).

Coding was conducted manually, with recurring themes compared across all three corpora to ensure triangulation and analytical robustness.

### **Findings**

This section presents the findings organised around the individual, interactional, and systemic dimensions of gendered discourse, consistent with multi-layered frameworks in feminist linguistics and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015; Talbot, 1998). Across all datasets—conversational Bangla, textbooks and classroom interactions, and media representations—persistent gender asymmetries emerge that shape identity formation, distribute

symbolic power, and constrain equitable participation in social and educational life.

### **Individual Level: Linguistic Construction of Gendered Identities**

#### ***Gendered naming, erasure, and relational identities in everyday Bangla***

Analysis of conversational Bangla reveals entrenched asymmetries in how women and men are marked, named, and positioned. Women are disproportionately identified through kinship and relational terms—*meyeti*, *bouma*, *bhabi*, *ma*—which foreground dependency, domesticity, and familial identity. These linguistic forms replicate what Talbot (1998) and Penelope (1990/2003) describe as the “relational indexing” of women, where identity is mediated through social roles rather than individual agency. In contrast, men are consistently referred to by occupational, institutional, or status-bearing titles such as *shikhhok*, *karmokarta*, or *netā*, reinforcing associations with competence, authority, and public visibility (Kabeer, 2000).

Critical discourse analysis of digital conversational transcripts further reveals asymmetrical patterns of pronoun use. Masculine pronouns (*se*, *tini*) are used more flexibly and appear in association with respect, status, and individualised agency. Feminine referents, however, frequently appear with diminutive or marked forms—*mejeta*, *meiye*, *bou*—that linguistically diminish agency and reinforce subordinate positioning. Such patterns resonate with Mills’ (2008) and Cameron’s (1992) observations on linguistic diminutives as mechanisms of symbolic marginalisation. Repeated across everyday interactions, these linguistic practices enact what Butler (1990) calls “gender performativity”, reproducing normative gender identities through habitual discourse.

### **Interactional Level: Classroom Talk, Pedagogy, and Representational Patterns**

#### ***Gendered patterns in textbooks: textual and visual asymmetry***

Analysis of Bangladeshi primary and secondary textbooks indicates systemic gender bias across textual narratives and visual illustrations.

In the Grade 4 Social Science textbook, for example, male characters dominate professional, scientific, and public-facing roles, while women are confined to domestic, supportive, or decorative functions (Nahar, 2019). Visual analysis reveals that men appear in dynamic, foregrounded positions performing agentive actions, whereas women are placed in static or background positions. CDA of lexical patterns shows men associated with verbs such as *lead*, *work*, and *decide*, while women are linked to *cook*, *help*, and *care*. These linguistic and visual asymmetries mirror Blumberg's (2008) finding that textbooks worldwide routinely embed and naturalise patriarchal gender hierarchies.

### ***Classroom discourse and differential participation***

Interactional patterns in classroom talk reveal gendered asymmetries in participation and pedagogical expectations. Teachers disproportionately call on boys for cognitively demanding tasks and reward assertiveness, confidence, and verbal engagement (Sultana, 2011). Girls, by contrast, are praised for compliance and quietness, often instructed to “stay silent” (*chup thako*) at rates significantly higher than boys (Sultana, 2011). CDA of teacher talk shows that directive and evaluative speech acts (e.g., commands, reprimands, praise) are gender-differentiated, reflecting implicit beliefs about who is entitled to voice, agency, and epistemic authority in the classroom.

These gendered interactional norms—layered onto linguistically biased curricula—undermine the potential equity benefits of mother tongue education (Mohanty, 2010; UNESCO, 2016). They shape children's self-perceptions as learners, limiting girls' opportunities to develop confidence, assertiveness, and public voice.

## **Systemic Level: Media, Ideology, and the Reproduction of Patriarchal Norms**

### ***Media discourse: symbolic authority and public visibility***

Across media platforms, linguistic patterns strongly associate authority, expertise, and public legitimacy with men. In political and economic news across five major newspapers, 82% of quoted experts were men (Nahar, 2019). Women's appearances were concentrated in soft-news categories—family, lifestyle, human-interest stories—where their

identities were framed relationally rather than professionally (Nahar, 2019). CDA of headline construction reveals that men are associated with agentive verbs (“announced,” “led,” “addressed”) while women appear in passive or relational constructions (“was present,” “accompanied,” “was seen”), reinforcing symbolic hierarchies of public authority.

Advertising discourse further amplifies these asymmetries: women promote domestic products or fairness creams, while men promote banking services, technology, or leadership roles. These patterns align with Talbot’s (1998) argument that media serves as a central ideological apparatus for reproducing hegemonic gender norms.

### ***Signs of discursive shift***

Despite these dominant trends, counter-discourses are emerging. Advertisements portraying women as engineers, entrepreneurs, or scientists, and television dramas showing men as caregivers, challenge traditional gender scripts and broaden identity possibilities. In Fairclough’s (2015) terms, these represent “discoursal rearticulations” that open symbolic space for contesting patriarchal norms. Though limited, such shifts signal potential transformation in public perception.

## **Synthesis of Findings: Gender Asymmetry, Power, Identity, and Equity**

Across individual, interactional, and systemic levels, the findings reveal that Bangla functions as a key mechanism for reproducing patriarchal social order. At the individual level, relational naming and diminutive forms reduce women’s agency. At the interactional level, textbooks and classroom discourse embed and normalise gender hierarchies, shaping children’s cognitive frames and aspirations. At the systemic level, media discourse perpetuates male symbolic dominance while restricting women’s public legitimacy.

Collectively, these linguistic patterns constrain girls’ and women’s access to authority, recognition, and opportunity, thereby limiting progress towards gender equity. However, the identification of counter-discourses—equitable pedagogical practices, gender-

sensitive curricular reforms, and progressive media narratives—indicates openings for transformative change. Leveraging these shifts requires coordinated policy, curriculum, and media reforms aligned with Bangladesh’s commitments under SDG 4 (quality education) and SDG 5 (gender equality) (UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2019).

## **Recommendations**

The findings demonstrate that gendered linguistic practices in Bangladesh operate across individual, interactional, and systemic levels, reinforcing patriarchal norms while simultaneously presenting emerging opportunities for change. In line with feminist linguistic theory (Cameron, 1998; Mills, 2008) and critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2015), the recommendations below adopt a multi-level approach, recognising that transformation requires coordinated interventions in language policy, pedagogy, media, and community practice.

### **Integrate gender perspectives into national language and education policy**

To prevent Bangla from functioning as a medium that inadvertently reproduces gendered hierarchies, gender considerations must be systematically embedded within national language planning and educational policy (Mohanty, 2010; UNESCO, 2016). This includes incorporating gender analysis into the development of curricula, teacher recruitment criteria, and language policy guidelines. Policy actors should undergo capacity-building to identify linguistic bias and to design interventions that promote equitable representation and agency. Such alignment is consistent with commitments under SDG 4 and SDG 5, which emphasise inclusive education and gender equality (UNESCO, 2016; World Bank, 2019).

### **Reform educational content to eliminate structural bias**

Given the strong evidence that Bangladeshi textbooks reproduce gendered stereotypes (Nahar 2019; Blumberg, 2008), reforming textual and visual content is essential. Textbooks should depict women and

men in a diverse range of social, professional, and leadership roles, challenging the current domestic–public binary. Integrating local female role models—such as Begum Rokeya or Sufia Kamal—can counteract patterns of erasure and inspire broader identity possibilities. Aligning textbook reform with CDA-informed frameworks ensures that not only representation but also narrative structure, verb choice, and character positioning contribute to more equitable discourse (Fairclough, 2015).

### **Advance gender-responsive pedagogy and classroom interaction**

As classroom discourse plays a critical role in shaping children’s epistemic identity and sense of agency (Sultana, 2011), teacher professional development should prioritise gender-responsive pedagogy. Training programmes must equip teachers to recognise implicit bias, balance participation, and use inclusive evaluative and directive speech acts. Evidence from feminist pedagogical scholarship suggests that intentional strategies—such as equitable turn-taking, rotating leadership in group work, and avoidance of gendered directives—reduce asymmetrical participation and promote learner confidence (Cameron, 1992; Mills, 2008). Strengthening mentorship pathways for female educators may further disrupt gendered hierarchies within the teaching profession itself.

### **Promote gender-equitable media representation**

Media discourse remains a significant site of ideological reproduction, with women’s public visibility constrained by symbolic marginalisation (Islam, 2023; Cookson et al, 2023). To address this, media regulatory bodies and professional associations should adopt guidelines that promote gender-equitable representation in news reporting, entertainment, and advertising. This includes increasing the visibility of women as experts and authoritative voices, discouraging narrative frames that depict women exclusively in relational roles, and expanding portrayals of men as caregivers and collaborators. These shifts align with Fairclough’s (2015) concept of “discoursal rearticulation,” enabling broader cultural renegotiation of gender norms.

### **Strengthen community-based initiatives for discursive change**

Local communities play an essential role in transmitting linguistic norms and gendered expectations (Mohanty, 2010). Community-based interventions—such as women-led storytelling circles, participatory theatre, or mother-tongue literacy groups—can create discursive spaces in which alternative gender identities are articulated and normalised. Such initiatives support Penelope’s (2003) call for “unlearning patriarchal linguistic structures” and can be particularly effective in rural or indigenous contexts where oral traditions remain influential.

### **Establish monitoring, research, and accountability mechanisms**

Sustainable transformation requires systematic monitoring of gender representation across educational, media, and policy domains. Independent research institutions, universities, and civil society organisations should collaborate with government agencies to develop national indicators that track linguistic bias in textbooks, classroom discourse, and media content. Annual audits of textbooks—similar to those recommended by Blumberg (2008)—would provide empirical evidence for change, while public reporting frameworks can strengthen accountability and transparency. Longitudinal research should also be supported to document evolving gender discourses and the impact of reforms over time.

### **Conclusion**

Language and gender constitute mutually constitutive dimensions of social life, shaping how identities and hierarchies are produced and maintained (Butler, 1990; Holmes & Meyerhoff, 2003). In Bangladesh, Bangla operates not only as a symbol of national identity but also as a discursive site in which patriarchal norms are reproduced through everyday interaction (Genilo et al, 2018; Cameron, 1992). Textbooks and curricular materials continue to position men as public actors and women as domestic caregivers, reinforcing gendered social expectations (Blumberg, 2008; NCTB, 2013–2022). Media discourse similarly privileges male authority and marginalizes women’s voices,

thereby narrowing the symbolic possibilities for women's full participation in society (Mohanty, 2010).

At the same time, the findings affirm that language is not merely a mirror of existing inequalities but also a mechanism through which social change can be enacted (Fairclough, 2015; Mills, 2008). Evidence from mother tongue-based education shows that gender-sensitive reforms can expand girls' participation, reshape classroom dynamics, and challenge deep-seated stereotypes (Mohanty, 2010; Sultana, 2011). Emerging media narratives that portray women in leadership roles and men in caregiving positions illustrate that discursive transformation is possible, signalling a gradual reconfiguration of the symbolic order (Nahar, 2019). Such counter-discourses underscore that linguistic practices remain open to contestation and reimagining (Cameron, 1998; Penelope, 2003).

Advancing gender equality in Bangladesh therefore requires sustained attention to language policy, curriculum reform, and cultural production. Integrating diverse gender representations in textbooks, strengthening teacher training to promote inclusive interaction, and amplifying women's voices across media platforms are essential steps toward transforming the gendered meanings embedded in linguistic practices (Kabeer, 2000; World Bank, 2019). When language is strategically leveraged as a tool for empowerment rather than exclusion, it can contribute meaningfully to the nation's pursuit of equity, dignity, and inclusive development in alignment with the Sustainable Development Goals (UNESCO, 2016).

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# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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## Enhancing Student Engagement in Language Classrooms: A Multifaceted Approach

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>03-12-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>Language teachers are bestowed with some responsibilities which are not limited to the teaching of the prescribed texts and grammar. They are to create an interactive and enjoyable learning experience for the students. As student engagement plays a pivotal role in effective language learning, the teacher tries to keep the students engaged in the classroom by using different methods and approaches of teaching. This study explores the factors that influence student engagement in language classrooms and focuses on teaching methods, classroom environment and the integration of audiovisual materials. By collecting data from both language learners and instructors, this study identifies a range of effective teaching-learning practices that augment student participation and motivation. The findings will provide practical insights for the teachers who are seeking to develop an interactive and immersive learning experience, ultimately enhancing language learning outcomes. Outcome is the key to learning motivation. Without any concrete outcome, students may become discouraged in learning a new language.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Student Engagement, Motivation, Audiovisuals, Teaching Methods, Effective Learning.</p>                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |

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## **Introduction**

Engagement is particularly very much essential for language acquisition, as it facilitates interaction, enhances comprehension and strengthens memory span. As a result, student engagement is an important component of effective learning of any language. It includes behavioral, emotional as well as cognitive involvement in the learning process that influences the motivation and success of language learners. Engaged students tend to participate actively in classroom discussions, complete assignments diligently and show enthusiasm for acquiring new linguistic skills. They demonstrate better linguistic proficiency, improved communicative competence and greater confidence in using the target language (TL). Research in educational psychology consistently shows that meaningful learning requires active learner engagement rather than passive reception of information (Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Prince, 2004). Fredricks et al. (2004) claim that learning cannot be effective without the active participation and engagement of learners. However, maintaining high levels of engagement in language classrooms remains a challenge for various factors, including instructional methods, classroom environment and the use of technology in the classroom. Therefore, understanding the factors that contribute to student engagement is essential for optimizing the overall language learning outcomes.

## **Statement of the Problem**

A language class in Bangladesh represents a heterogeneous learning environment with students of varied backgrounds. The students are generally of different ages, different social statuses, different educational backgrounds as well as different capacity for understanding. In such a class, there needs to be some engaging methods of teaching a language so that all the students can understand in the same manner despite their age, social status, education and understanding. Although these methods are widely discussed in theory, only a limited number of educators actively implement them in their language classrooms. Besides, most of the methods used by the educators are often

insufficiently engaging to maintain student engagement for the full duration of the class. But for better learning and understanding of the language, it is very necessary that the students stay engaged in the classroom. Otherwise, learning will not take place in the desired manner. However, the body of research addressing this issue remains still limited. From this limitation in the field, this research focuses on more engaging methodologies and approaches of teaching a language so that the students stay engaged in the classroom and learn effectively.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The primary objective of this study is to explore the factors that contribute to student engagement in language classrooms and to identify effective strategies that enhance student participation and motivation. By examining the role of teaching methodologies and observing the classroom environment of different language classes, this research seeks to provide educators with some practical technics that can improve student engagement and overall language learning experience.

The significance of this study is rooted in its potential to inform language instructors, curriculum designers and educational policymakers about some effective practices that nurture a more engaging and interactive learning atmosphere. Keeping student engagement as a key determinant of language learning, understanding how to cultivate and sustain it can lead to improved academic performance and increased student satisfaction. Additionally, the findings can contribute to the development of innovative teaching approaches that integrate modern educational technologies to optimize learning outcomes and publish a list of effective instructional approaches to keep the students engaged in language classrooms. As a result, using these technics and approaches will empower the learners to be self-confident and express their opinions in the target language (TL) in a significantly appropriate manner.

### **Literature Review**

#### **1. Definitions and Theories of Student Engagement**

Student engagement has been widely studied in educational research.

Various definitions and theoretical frameworks shape its understanding. According to Fredricks et al. (2004):

Engagement consists of behavioral, emotional and cognitive components. Behavioral engagement refers to participation in academic tasks; emotional engagement pertains to students' feelings toward learning and cognitive engagement involves investment in learning strategies.

Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory also emphasizes the role of social interaction in student engagement. It provided evidence that collaborative learning increases motivation and deeper understanding. Similarly, Schunk and Mullen (2012) define engagement as an active, constructive process that involves effort, persistence and self-regulation which are very essential in learning a second language.

Student engagement is equally related to their level of motivation. If a student does not have any motivation for learning a language, he/she will certainly learn less compared to one who has higher motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) in their Self-Determination Theory argued:

Events that promote greater perceived competence will enhance intrinsic motivation, whereas those that diminish perceived competence will decrease it.

## 2. Previous Studies on Engagement in Language Classrooms

Several studies have been done on student engagement and its importance on the outcomes. Most of them have demonstrated that student engagement directly impacts proficiency outcomes. According to Brewster and Fager (2000), engaged learners are motivated by curiosity, interest and enjoyment. They show more enthusiasm and concentration on the behavioral level. It is also argued in studies that engaged students show higher academic achievement and persistence (Skinner & Belmont, 1993).

In the context of language learning, Dörnyei (2001) talks about the role of motivation in sustaining engagement, while Mercer and Dörnyei (2020) argue that engagement is dynamic and influenced

by both internal and external factors. There is a correlation between engagement and academic achievement (Bulger, 2008). Taylor and Pearson (2004) state:

Student engagement has primarily and historically focused upon increasing achievement, positive behaviors and a sense of belonging in students so that they might remain in school.

Coates (2007) claims:

The engagement is seen to comprehend active and collaborative learning, participation in challenging activities formative communication, involvement in enriching educational experiences and feeling supported in the classroom practices.

Recent studies have examined digital tools, such as gamification and multimedia, as effective means to enhance engagement in language classrooms (Hodges et al., 2020).

### 3. The Role of Teaching Methods, Classroom Environment and Audiovisuals

Teaching Methods: Active learning approaches, such as task-based learning (TBL) and communicative language teaching (CLT), have been shown to increase student engagement (Ellis, 2003). Nunan (2014) mentioned, “Task-based curricula typically ask students to communicate by sharing answers at each stage of a lesson.”

Many teachers report that they often don’t get enough time to go beyond just giving answers rather than engaging in meaningful interactions with their students. Interactive strategies, including peer collaboration, discussions and problem-solving activities, encourage active participation and deeper comprehension (Brown, 2007).

With the growth of student-centered classrooms, knowledge-based (grammar testing, for instance) objectives have been overtaken by more communicative objectives (Plews & Zhao, 2010). Saeed and Zyngier (2012) mention four criteria for better interaction and student engagement: (1) fun activities to reduce stress, (2) meaningful activities to solve problems, (3) interactive activities to use their L2 to

complete a shared task and (4) routine activities to help students better understand the tasks.

Creating and maintaining a comfortable and supportive classroom environment is an effective strategy teachers can apply. Al-Shalabi (2015) mentions, “Encouraging an open, non-threatening atmosphere allows students to ask questions and participate without any fear of making mistakes.” This kind of supportive environment encourages students to be good at using the language, which further enhances engagement. Teachers should listen attentively to each of the students’ responses so that they become encouraged to express their thoughts. It is a matter of showing respect for their viewpoints and nurtures a sense of equality. A teacher should always listen to the students’ response regardless of what they talk about and encourage them in a positive manner. When the students know that their teachers care about their success, they are more likely to invest in their learning.

A practical way to maintain engagement is by addressing the students individually by their names. It helps to build a personal connection and stimulates a sense of belonging between the teacher and the students. Jones (2008) says that when teachers take an interest in individual students, it encourages greater effort and participation in the classroom. By recognizing students by name, a teacher can convey respect and demonstrate that he/she values their presence and contributions in the classroom. It also helps to manage classroom discipline, as students are more likely to be attentive and respectful. This technic can indirectly help the teacher maintain a tranquil classroom environment, which creates less stress in the conduction of class.

Another effective way is to make eye contact with the students. Eye contact plays an important role in keeping students engaged in the class. Haataja et al. (2021) argue that teacher-student eye contacts reflect interpersonal engagement between them. It signals to the students that they are being observed and that their behavior matters. When teachers use eye contact effectively, it can communicate a range of messages, from encouragement to discipline. This non-verbal form

of communication keeps students focused and aware of the teacher's expectations. It also contributes to better classroom management, which leads to greater output and success.

Teachers can also move around the classroom and interact with students directly. This not only helps keep them on task but also provides an opportunity for the teacher to check their understanding and address any issues in real time. By engaging students in discussions and encouraging them to form opinions and justify their answers, teachers can help them stay actively involved in the learning process. Therefore, whenever students are given any creative classwork, the teacher can move around and observe their progress as well as help them by providing any assistance needed.

Linking lesson content to students' prior experiences is also an effective approach. When students can relate new knowledge to their own lives and real-world situations, learning becomes more engaging and meaningful. Studies by Claxton (2007) and Jones (2008) show that connecting classroom activities to students' backgrounds increases engagement by making the learning process more relevant. This connection allows students to comprehend and retain information more effectively.

For instance, Bangladeshi Army personnels and Police officers learn French to join United Nations' Peace-Keeping Missions. Learning French makes it easier to avail this opportunity. As they go for interpretation, they need to be fluent in spoken French. So, lesson content related to speaking practice or to their relevant field will certainly attract them and make them more engaged in the classroom. Same thing happens with the learners of Arabic who want to learn the language to go to Hajj and communicate in Arabic. In a similar way, various professionals learn different foreign languages to have greater facilities in their professional career. As a result, if their study plan relates to their own profession or any other needs, they become more attached and motivated, resulting in a good outcome at the end.

Using varieties of instructional strategies is another approach to prevent boredom and sustain interest among the students. Jones

(2008) suggests that using different methods of instruction increases engagement by maintaining students' attention and catering to different learning styles. Teachers can incorporate various resources, including multimedia, role-playing and discussions, to keep lessons dynamic and stimulating. This approach aligns with a learner-centered method that emphasizes the needs and preferences of students.

Learner-centered methods are very important for the development of four different linguistic competences. For the language classes, a teacher should focus on the learner and exploit their capacities to get the best out of them. Especially for productive skills like speaking and writing, teachers should use different methods and activities so that the students get involved and work together to do that activity.

Activities like role-playing (at the restaurant, at the market, etc.), find someone who (students move around the class asking questions with a worksheet prompts), picture description, small group discussion (on interesting topics), linguistic speed-dating (with some interesting questions, students will have quick conversations with many classmates), storytelling with prompts, guessing game (describe or act something, others will say what it is), etc. are useful for speaking practice. Teachers can use these different activities one after another so that the students never get bored in any classes and stay active and engaged.

Finally, connecting lesson content to students' future careers can significantly enhance engagement. When students see the practical value of what they are learning, they become more motivated to participate. Bransford and Schwartz (1999) suggest that learners are more motivated when they can recognize the relevance of their education to their future. Students who see a direct link between their education and future career growth are more likely to stay engaged and focused on their studies.

**Classroom Environment:** A supportive classroom, where students feel comfortable and encouraged in various activities, plays an important role in raising engagement (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

According to Shernoff et al. (2016), student-centered classrooms create opportunities for second language (L2) learners to have consistent and meaningful interactions. It's a two-way exchange of ideas using the TL. Factors such as teacher-student relationship, classroom layout and inclusivity contribute to students' willingness to participate (Tinto, 1997).

**Audiovisuals in Engagement:** The integration of audiovisual materials, including videos, podcasts and interactive media, has been recognized as an effective way to enhance student engagement (Mayer, 2009). Classroom experience of educators who use multimedia resources proves that it improves language proficiency by providing contextualized input and engaging multiple sensory modalities. According to Vanderplank (2016), the use of subtitles, animated visuals and interactive tasks further supports comprehension and motivation.

## **Research Rational**

This study explored a range of innovative and effective language-teaching methods to keep the students engaged in the classroom. Although some studies have addressed this issue, the existing research remains insufficient to answer the question: "Which methods can the foreign language educators use to keep the students engaged in the classroom?" Existing research has largely focused on different methods of teaching a language, motivation and loss of motivation of the students in learning a foreign language or classroom practices. In contrast, this study seeks to explore effective methods and instructional approaches by consulting the students and teachers, as well as observing the language classes for finding the best practices of keeping the students engaged and motivated in the language classroom. The outcome of this research may contribute to the design of curriculum, choosing the materials and activities so that the students get the best education and the educators can exploit the best out of them.

## **Research Questions**

This study aims to explore the key factors of student engagement in a language classroom. It will focus on the role of teaching

methodologies, the classroom environment and the integration of audiovisual materials. The research questions, guiding this study, are:

1. In what ways does motivation affect students' behavioral, emotional and cognitive engagement in language classrooms?
2. What are the different strategies that enhance student engagement and active participation in language classrooms?
3. How do students perceive classroom practices that impact on student engagement and motivation?

## **Research Theoretical Framework**

The current study is grounded on a theoretical framework that incorporates several theories explaining why and how students engage in language learning. The framework integrates perspectives from Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), multidimensional model of engagement by Fredricks et al. (2004) and Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory to provide a more detailed and holistic understanding of student engagement in learning languages.

According to SDT of Deci and Ryan (1985):

Human motivation is guided by the fulfillment of three innate psychological needs: (1) autonomy (a sense of volition and choice), (2) competence (feeling effective and capable) and (3) relatedness (feeling connected to others).

In a language classroom, if the students experience autonomy in learning tasks, feel competent in achieving linguistic goals and skills as well as maintain positive relationships with their peers and teachers, their intrinsic motivation is enhanced. Intrinsic motivation encourages active participation and sustained engagement in classroom practices.

Fredricks et al. (2004) argue engagement as a multidimensional construct including: (1) behavioral engagement (students' effort, persistence and participation in academic activities.), (2) emotional engagement (positive affect, interest and enthusiasm in learning) and (3) cognitive engagement (strategic thinking and self-regulation in learning).

This model argues that enhancing engagement requires attention to participation, emotional involvement and cognitive investment.

Vygotsky's (1978) Sociocultural Theory stresses on the role of social interaction in learning process. In a language classroom, peer collaboration, group discussions and teacher's guidance help a learner to operate within their Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) that helps to sustain their engagement. The more engaged the learners are, the more effective the learning process becomes. Socially mediated learning experiences can strengthen motivation and lead the learners to more meaningful engagement with language activities.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Methodology and Data Collection*

This study uses a mixed-method research design for a well-rounded understanding of how students remain engaged in language classrooms. A combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches allows for an in-depth exploration of engagement factors and their impact on learning outcomes. It is a dominant quantitative design. It helps to incorporate data from the learners and the educators and holistically understand their perspective and beliefs. Data was collected through surveys and classroom observations to ensure a holistic analysis.

Survey questionnaires were distributed to language learners and instructors of French, Chinese, Japanese and English in Bangladesh to assess their perspectives on engagement strategies and challenges. Additionally, classroom observations were conducted to examine real-time student participation, teacher-student interactions and the effectiveness of audiovisual materials in keeping the students engaged. The findings from both methods were triangulated to derive meaningful conclusions and recommendations for enhancing student engagement in language learning environments.

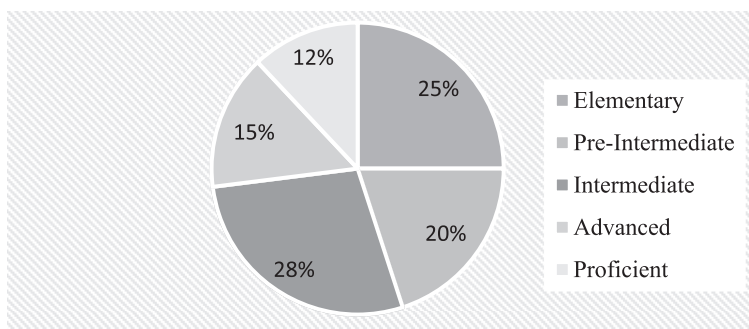
### *Participants*

The participants were 100 (one hundred) students enrolled in undergraduate program and certificate courses of different languages

at the Institute of Modern Languages, University of Dhaka. The students were aged between 18 to 25 years. Apart from the students, eight (08) instructors were also in the participants list, who teach different foreign languages in different institutions. Data was collected from the students and the teachers to have a comprehensive report on the best practices of engaging students in a language classroom.

## Discussion

The collected data from surveys and classroom observations indicate varying levels of student engagement across different language classrooms. Quantitative results reveal trends in participation rates, while qualitative responses provide insights into students' attitudes toward engagement strategies. From the surveyed students, 63% of them are female and the rest 37% are male students. The ratio is uneven because the number of female students admitted in different languages courses in recent years is larger than that of male. Their level of proficiency is shown in the pie chart (figure 1). From these different groups of students, about 57% of students agreed to always actively participate in different interactive activities (e.g. discussions, group tasks, etc.). About 27% of them often participate in those activities. The rest participate sometimes or rarely.



*Figure 1: Proficiency level of the students*

Data shows that 40% of the students feel very motivated to learn the target language. The reasons behind their motivation are active participation and interest in learning that grows from different

motivational factors. An interesting fact is that almost the same number of students feel very engaged in the classroom activities. So, the level of engagement is related to the level of motivation the students have. About 38% of the students feel somewhat motivated, which is almost the same number as the number of very motivated students. Others responded to being neutral or not very motivated.

In language learning, audiovisual materials are the most appreciated by the students. From the participants of this study, 83% of the students responded the audiovisuals to be very helpful for their progress in learning the language. Other 12% find it somewhat helpful and the rest stayed neutral. So, it can be said that using audiovisual materials has a significantly positive effect on learning. About half of the participants find the teaching methods to contribute significantly to keeping them engaged in the classroom and the same group of students find their classroom environment to be inclusive and supportive.

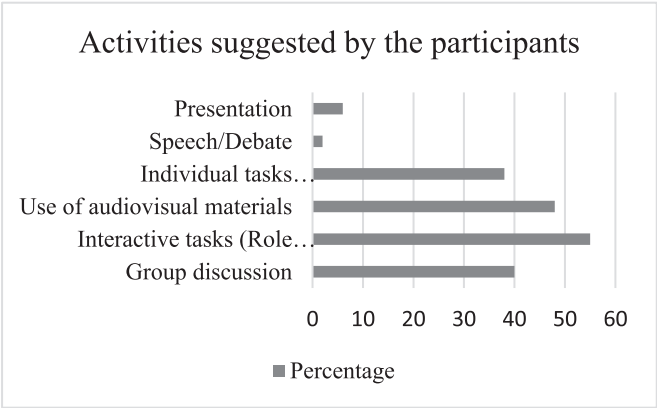


Figure 2: Classroom activities suggested by the participants

Lastly, the participants suggested some classroom activities that they find best to enhance their engagement in the classroom. More than 50% of the students suggested interactive tasks like role playing or problem-solving. They have also suggested the use of audiovisual materials and group discussions to be engaging and helpful to their learning. Nearly 40% of them suggested the individual tasks to be more helpful for the development of reading and writing skills.

On the other hand, some strategies to enhance student engagement in language classrooms are mentioned (in the survey response) and performed (in the classroom) by the language teachers. Engaging students consistently in a classroom can be challenging, particularly when attempting to maintain their focus and motivation. At times, students may drift off, leading to disengagement, which not only affects their learning but can also influence others in the class. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to develop a variety of strategies to keep students engaged, eliminate downtime and refocus their attention.

Thorough lesson preparation is a fundamental instructional strategy. By planning lessons with clear objectives, a teacher can encourage students to stay attentive and engaged. They stick to the different objectives mentioned in the lesson plan. Moalosi (2012) emphasizes that teachers who plan with intention are more likely to promote student engagement and improve learning outcomes. Students should be encouraged to ask questions when they have difficulty understanding, pay attention to pronunciation and take notes on sentence structures. Lectures should be delivered slowly and clearly, which will help students to process information and take notes effectively. Students are to be reminded that they can always ask for clarification on any aspect of the lesson they find challenging.

Creating a comfortable and supportive classroom is very necessary for maintaining student engagement in the classroom. Kassab et al. (2024) argued that student's perceptions of their learning environment influence their emotional, cognitive and behavioral engagement in learning. Listening attentively to every student is another good strategy to keep them engaged because in this way they feel valued and feel attached to the teacher. Calling the students by names is another strategy to keep them emotionally attached and engaged in the classroom.

Another effective way to keep the students engaged is to minimize criticism of their mistakes and give them positive reinforcement to maintain their motivation. From a behaviorist perspective, minimizing criticism and providing positive reinforcement encourages active

participation and sustained engagement, as reinforced behaviors are more likely to be repeated in classroom settings (Skinner, 1953). By focusing on correcting a few key errors and encouraging students to learn from their mistakes, the teacher can help them regain confidence and maintain their motivation. When they feel their efforts being appreciated, they are more likely to participate and share their thoughts. This strategy helps to build curiosity and a willingness to improve their skills.

Besides, responses from the questionnaire suggest that students tend to be more engaged when teachers adopt simple yet interactive classroom practices, which may include calling students by their names, maintaining eye contact and moving around the classroom to interact more closely with learners. Participants also noted that lessons become more engaging when teachers connect the content to students' needs and interests and incorporate interactive activities such as role-playing, linguistic speed-dating, group discussion, etc. Notably, these practices are consistent with strategies discussed in the literature review on learner engagement. According to the respondents, the use of such approaches helps create a supportive classroom atmosphere, encourages participation and maintains learners' focus during language lessons.

During the observation of other teachers' classes, it is seen that the teachers who did a thorough lesson preparation and conducted the class accordingly had been able to keep their classroom environment more engaged. The class gets more effective when the teacher uses slides as an instrument of teaching. As the students are more habituated to screens nowadays, they become more comfortable when the teachers use screens with interactive slides. Using a variety of activities also keeps the students focused on the classroom.

In summary, student engagement can be strengthened through a variety of strategies, including well-prepared lessons, a supportive classroom environment, minimizing criticism, connecting content to students' experiences and using a range of other instructional methods. These approaches not only keep students engaged but also

positively enhance their language learning experience, making them more motivated and successful.

## **Results and Findings of the research**

In the discussion above, a lot of different approaches and strategies are mentioned which help to increase engagement in the classroom. It is found that most of the students stay engaged and actively participate in the interactive activities. They mostly appreciate the audiovisual activities. Some other factors of student participation and engagement are presented below:

**Key Factors Influencing Engagement:** Discussion shows that teaching methodologies, classroom environment and the use of audiovisual materials significantly influence engagement levels. Interactive activities, a supportive learning atmosphere and multimodal instructional materials are key contributors to higher engagement. Besides, many other different strategies like thorough lesson plans, minimal criticism, supportive classroom environment, calling students by names, contacting eye to eye, interacting students during activities, linking lessons to students' prior experiences and professional goals, etc. are some vital factors that may highly influence engagement.

**Role of Audiovisual Materials in Student Participation:** Findings highlight that the integration of audiovisual materials increases motivation and enhances comprehension. Students show higher levels of interest when exposed to videos, animations and interactive content. The more organs are involved, the more effective it should be in the long run.

**Best Practices for Increasing Engagement:** Effective approaches include task-based learning, collaborative activities with multimedia integration, communicative method, silent method, etc. The need for dynamic lesson structures, personalized feedback and student-centered teaching approaches is very necessary.

## **Recommendation**

Language instructors should incorporate dynamic and interactive teaching methods, such as task-based and communicative language

teaching. In these methods, students participate actively and learn better. They engage in different situations and communicate with others, thus developing their skill.

Classroom environments should be designed to promote inclusivity and student participation. All the students in a classroom should be engaged with the teacher. Fear of asking questions should be totally vanished from the class. Teachers should create such a supportive environment that the students feel eager to ask anything they want without any hesitation.

Audiovisual materials should be integrated strategically to enhance comprehension and motivation. Integration of audiovisuals should be initiated by the institution and proper training should be given to the language teachers so that they can effectively use audiovisuals in their classroom.

Further research should explore more engagement strategies across different cultural and linguistic contexts to develop more tailored pedagogical approaches and add something newer to the existing body of knowledge.

## **Conclusion**

This study demonstrates that student engagement is the key to effective learning. Through a comprehensive mixed-method approach with quantitative surveys and qualitative classroom observations, the study identifies that interactive teaching methods and students' active participation contribute to enhanced engagement and result in better language acquisition outcomes. The findings underline the importance of a supportive classroom environment where strategies such as task-based learning, collaborative group activities and thoughtful integration of audiovisuals successfully capture students' attention as well as assist them to deep comprehension of the TL.

A well-prepared lesson plan, coupled with ongoing formative assessment contributes to students' engagement. Teachers giving clear and explicit instruction, providing timely feedback create a learning

atmosphere where the students feel safe to ask questions and actively participate in the discussions. The study also reveals that engagement is not a static attribute of task-based activity or group discussion, but a dynamic interplay of various factors like supportive environment, technological integration, sensory connections, relation to the real-world scenarios, etc.

Lastly, the implication of this study for language educators is to create an interactive and student-centered classroom through engaging instructional practices for effective language learning. The effective implementation of the above-mentioned strategies can create a motivating and dynamic classroom environment that will enhance students' learning and nurture a deeper passion for language acquisition. Future studies should explore longitudinal effects of these strategies and investigate how they can be adapted across different cultural and educational contexts.

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## Analyzing Pandemic Gaps: Effects of Online Education on English Language Skills among Tertiary-Level Students in Dhaka

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>29-10-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>This study investigates the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the English language skills of tertiary-level students in Dhaka, Bangladesh, who shifted to online education. It focuses on the emergence of learning gaps in English proficiency due to the pandemic and the effects of online education on four essential language skills (speaking, writing, reading, and listening). The results indicate significant declines in speaking and writing proficiency, attributed to reduced interaction, limited feedback, and technological barriers. Listening and reading were also affected, though to a lesser extent, due to poor audio quality, reduced concentration, and limited access to resources. These findings highlight the vulnerability of productive language skills to emergency remote teaching and the impact of socioeconomic disparities on outcomes. The study emphasizes the importance of blended learning models, targeted teacher training in digital pedagogy, and improved infrastructure support to enhance post-pandemic English language education in Bangladesh.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Pandemic Learning Gaps, Online Education, English Language Skills, Tertiary Students.</p>                                       |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |

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## Introduction

### Background of the Study

The COVID-19 pandemic, first reported in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, rapidly evolved into a global crisis disrupting all spheres of life, including education (Purcell & Charles, 2020; Xiang et al., 2020; Spina et al., 2020). By March 2020, the World Health Organization declared it a pandemic, and over 190 countries had closed schools and universities, impacting 1.6 billion learners worldwide (Sahu, 2020; Pokhrel & Chhetri, 2021). Higher education institutions have faced difficulties in ensuring both quality and accessibility (Adedoyin & Soykan, 2020), while systemic inequalities have become more visible (Gonzalez et al., 2020).

English language teaching (ELT) was among the most affected domains because it relied on interactive and communicative practices. Studies across Asia have highlighted how the rapid transition to online platforms has reduced engagement and limited opportunities for authentic communication (Moorhouse & Kohnke, 2021; Zainal & Yunus, 2022). Four key language skills—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—were unevenly disrupted, with productive skills particularly vulnerable (Ying et al., 2021; Jayampathy et al., 2023).

In Bangladesh, educational institutions closed on March 17, 2020, and remained shut for 543 days—the most extended closure in South Asia (Mahmud, 2021). While the Ministry of Education and the University Grants Commission authorized online instruction by mid-2020, students and teachers faced significant technological, pedagogical, and socioeconomic barriers. Unstable internet, high data costs, and frequent power outages disproportionately affected learners in Bangladesh, where English proficiency is essential for academic and professional advancement (M. M. Rahman et al., 2019; Roy et al., 2023).

Against this backdrop, the concept of “pandemic gaps” is used here to refer to measurable declines in English proficiency caused by the limitations of online education. While global and regional studies have documented general barriers in remote ELT (Adedoyin

& Soykan, 2020; Gonzalez et al., 2020; Dewan et al., 2022), skill-specific impacts in Bangladesh remain underexplored. In particular, little is known about how speaking, writing, reading, and listening were differentially affected among tertiary-level students, or how digital and psychosocial inequities shaped these outcomes.

This study addresses these gaps by examining the effects of online education on the four core English skills of tertiary-level students in Dhaka. Using a mixed-methods approach, it investigates the nature of pandemic-induced skill-specific learning gaps and the perceived effectiveness of online instruction compared to face-to-face learning. The findings aim to contribute to both theoretical discussions of second language learning in digital contexts and practical strategies for strengthening English education in resource-constrained environments in post-pandemic Bangladesh.

### **Statement of Problem**

Although the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of online learning in Bangladesh, its specific impact on tertiary students' English language proficiency remains underexplored. Existing studies document broad challenges of emergency remote teaching, yet little is known about how these disruptions translate into skill-specific gaps across speaking, writing, reading, and listening (Adickalam & Yunus, 2022; Tasneem, 2021). Barriers such as limited digital access, insufficient teacher preparation, and reduced opportunities for interactive practice are likely to have disproportionately hindered language development (Khan et al., 2021; Qader et al., 2024).

The absence of systematic data on these dynamics hinders the understanding of the extent of proficiency loss and its implications for long-term educational equity. Moreover, the effectiveness of online teaching strategies in Bangladesh's resource-constrained environment remains unexamined, mainly raising concerns about the viability of virtual and blended ELT models in the post-pandemic era (Haque, 2022; Roy et al., 2023). Addressing this gap is essential for understanding how technological, pedagogical, and

psychosocial factors intersect to shape language outcomes and for informing sustainable approaches to English language instruction in higher education.

## **Objectives of the Research**

The primary objectives are:

1. To identify skill-specific learning gaps emerging from the pandemic in English language learning.
2. To assess the effects of online education on developing English language skills (speaking, writing, reading, listening)

## **Review of the Literature**

### *Pandemic Gaps in Education and ELT*

Learning gaps are defined as stagnation or decline in skill development, often intensified by inequities in access (Kuhfeld et al., 2020; Engzell et al., 2021). In language education, losses are severe because acquisition requires sustained exposure, interaction, and feedback (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Past crises show long-term effects: the 2005 Kashmir earthquake caused literacy setbacks (Andrabi et al., 2023), and the Ebola outbreak in West Africa increased dropouts and hindered language development (Smith, 2021). In South Asia, Shrestha et al. (2022) found that technical issues and unprepared teachers impeded online language instruction in Bangladesh and Nepal. Together, these studies show that external crises interrupt learning and widen language proficiency gaps, with recovery reliant on targeted interventions—critical for tertiary students in Bangladesh.

Globally, ELT during the pandemic often failed to sustain interactive learning. Gonzalez et al. (2020) and Hartshorn and McMurry (2020) found online platforms comparable to in-person settings for literacy but significantly less effective for speaking and listening. Such findings resonate with Bangladesh's tertiary sector, where infrastructural challenges left oral-aural skills particularly vulnerable. For tertiary students in Bangladesh, these issues were

compounded by pre-existing weaknesses in English language teaching (ELT), including reliance on rote learning and inadequate communicative approaches (Ali & Walker, 2014; Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

During the COVID-19 pandemic, similar patterns emerged globally, with ELT struggling to maintain interactivity and communicative practice (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Hartshorn & McMurphy, 2020). These findings suggest that crises not only interrupt learning but also deepen inequities in language proficiency.

### *Online vs. In-Person Learning in English Language Learning*

Online English learning, delivered via platforms such as Zoom or Google Classroom, offers flexibility and asynchronous access, while in-person classes emphasize real-time interaction and immediate feedback (Means et al., 2009). For language acquisition, which depends on listening, speaking, reading, and writing, these modalities differ in effectiveness: online learning provides convenience, but in-person settings better foster oral proficiency and peer interaction, aligning with constructivist views that language thrives on social interaction (Vygotsky, 1978; Blake, 2011). During the COVID-19 pandemic, tertiary institutions in Bangladesh suddenly transitioned to online education, with uneven success due to infrastructural and socioeconomic barriers. This transition offers a crucial lens for evaluating the pandemic's impact on English language skills in developing contexts.

### *Challenges of Online ELT in Bangladesh*

Research shows that online education provided continuity of learning and revealed gaps in access to technology and dependable Internet, especially in developing countries (Kansal et al., 2021; Kara, 2021). In Bangladesh, students faced unstable internet connections, frequent power outages, and high data costs, all of which hindered sustained engagement in online English classes and limited opportunities for communicative practice (Khan et al., 2021; Haque, 2022). Teachers

reported inadequate training in digital pedagogy and difficulty adapting language curricula (Dewan et al., 2022; Shrestha et al., 2022).

Comparative evidence from more resource-rich Asian contexts suggests that targeted interventions—such as blended learning models and ICT-focused teacher training—can help narrow language proficiency gaps (Alarifi & Song, 2024). However, Bangladesh continues to face structural inequalities, including rural–urban divides, limited device ownership, and poor digital literacy, which restrict participation (Mathrani et al., 2022; Shrestha et al., 2022). Gender disparities also came to light, with female students facing additional problems due to household responsibilities and discriminatory practices (Mathrani et al., 2022). The pandemic exposed deep-rooted socio-cultural and psychological issues within the education system (Aziz et al., 2020). Misinformation, stigma, and a lack of culturally sensitive communication created additional barriers to effective learning (Aziz et al., 2020). These findings highlight that challenges in online ELT extend beyond technological access to include broader socioeconomic and sociocultural factors.

### *Psychosocial Factors Affecting English Language Learning During Online Instruction*

Psychological pressures were central to the pandemic's impact on education, particularly English language learning. Rutkowska et al. (2022) found that 58% of students experienced high stress, with social isolation, reduced motivation, and perceived academic decline predicting depressive symptoms. Such challenges hinder ELT, as anxiety and low motivation reduce willingness to communicate and practice language. In Bangladesh, over 70% of tertiary students reported anxiety or depression, and more than half decreased English study time (Piya et al., 2022; Hossain, 2024), with academic uncertainty and urban living conditions, especially in Dhaka, intensifying stress (Islam et al., 2020; Mamun et al., 2021). Reduced motivation lowered engagement in online classes,

critical for language acquisition (Hasan & Bao, 2020). Sociocultural inequities further compounded these effects: female learners and students from low-income households faced additional financial and household burdens (Aziz et al., 2020; Bashir et al., 2021). These findings indicate that barriers to online ELT went beyond technology, encompassing psychosocial and social factors that undermined language learning.

### *Skill-Specific Impacts on English Proficiency*

Research consistently shows that the four language skills were unevenly disrupted during the pandemic. Listening was limited by Poor audio quality, unstable internet, and lack of teacher scaffolding, which limited comprehension and vocabulary development (Susilowati, 2020; Nurkhamidah, 2021; Shrestha et al., 2022). Speaking skills were hardest hit due to reduced peer interaction and elevated anxiety. Over 70% of learners reported declines in fluency and confidence (Kamal et al., 2021; Adickalam & Yunus, 2022). In Dhaka, 60% of tertiary students faced barriers to developing speaking skills (Roy et al., 2023). Assessing speaking skills online posed challenges, with instructors facing difficulties in maintaining fairness due to technical limitations (M. A. Rahman et al., 2022). Reading outcomes diverged, with well-resourced students sustaining progress while others disengaged due to connectivity and support issues (Mahardhika, 2022; Yoestara & Irnanda, 2023). Writing development suffered from Limited feedback, plagiarism concerns, and assessment overload, constraining writing development (Anasse & Rhandy, 2021; Tarrayo et al., 2022; Dewi et al., 2023; Juliandini & Sari, 2023). In Bangladesh, these challenges exacerbated existing weaknesses in academic writing (Roy et al., 2023).

### **Research Gap**

While global and regional studies have documented the general challenges of online education during the COVID-19 pandemic, fewer studies have examined these disruptions through a focused English

language education (ELT) lens, particularly in the Bangladeshi tertiary context (Tasneem, 2021; Haque, 2022). There remains limited empirical evidence on how pandemic-induced online instruction differentially affected listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills, or how psychosocial and digital inequalities shaped English language learning outcomes. Addressing these gaps is essential for informing effective and sustainable online and blended ELT practices in Bangladesh's higher education sector.

### **Research Rationale**

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented disruption to higher education in Bangladesh, with tertiary institutions closed for over 18 months and English language teaching (ELT) abruptly shifting to online platforms. This transition raised concerns about the development of essential English skills—speaking, writing, reading, and listening—particularly given the importance of English proficiency for students' academic progress and employability.

While international studies have highlighted challenges of emergency remote teaching, localized evidence on skill-specific learning gaps in the Bangladeshi context remains limited. Existing research has identified barriers such as weak digital infrastructure, high internet costs, limited teacher training, and increased psychological stress, yet their combined impact on English language development is underexplored.

Therefore, this study is necessary to address these gaps by systematically analyzing the impact of pandemic-induced online learning on tertiary students' English proficiency. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, the research aims to provide skill-specific insights into how students and teachers experienced the transition. The rationale lies in both the theoretical need to understand second language acquisition in digital crisis contexts and the practical urgency of informing future ELT policies, blended learning models, and digital pedagogy in Bangladesh's higher education system.

## Research Question and Hypothesis

### *Research Questions*

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What pandemic-induced learning gaps emerged in tertiary students' English language skills?
2. How effective was online education in supporting the development of English language skills?

### *Hypotheses*

To address Research Questions 1 and 2, the following hypotheses were formulated:

**H<sub>0</sub>1:** Students did not perceive significant gaps in their English language proficiency due to the pandemic.

**H<sub>1</sub>1:** Students perceived significant gaps in their English language proficiency due to the pandemic.

**H<sub>0</sub>2:** Students perceived online English education as equally effective as in-person instruction.

**H<sub>1</sub>2:** Students perceived online English education as less effective than in-person instruction.

## Research Theoretical Framework

This study is primarily grounded in Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (Vygotsky, 1978), which emphasizes that language development occurs through social interaction within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). In traditional classrooms, peer collaboration and teacher guidance play a central role in scaffolding language learning. The abrupt transition to online education during the COVID-19 pandemic disrupted these interactive processes, limiting students' opportunities for real-time communication and collaborative learning. Vygotsky's framework, therefore, provides the central lens

for interpreting how the reduction in interaction contributed to skill-specific learning gaps among tertiary students in Dhaka. In addition to this primary theoretical foundation, three supporting perspectives help to deepen the analysis. Krashen's Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1982) explains the role of reduced comprehensible input in online settings, particularly in listening and reading skills. Limited exposure to meaningful input beyond students' current level ( $i+1$ ) hindered their ability to develop receptive skills effectively. Brown's Affective Filter Hypothesis (Brown, 1987) highlights the psychological barriers—such as stress, anxiety, and low motivation—that many students reported during the pandemic. A high affective filter obstructs language acquisition, especially in speaking and writing. Finally, Kramsch's sociolinguistic perspective (Kramsch, 1993) emphasizes how unequal access to digital resources impacts learning outcomes, with socio-economic and cultural disparities affecting students' ability to benefit from online education.

Taken together, these theories create a comprehensive framework: Vygotsky's sociocultural lens anchors the study, while Krashen, Brown, and Kramsch provide explanatory support for the linguistic, psychological, and socio-cultural dimensions of pandemic-induced learning gaps. This integrated approach enables a more nuanced understanding of the impact of online education on English language skills in the Bangladeshi tertiary context.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study employed a mixed-methods design (Creswell, 2012; Dörnyei, 2007) to examine pandemic-related learning gaps and the effectiveness of online English language education. The integration of quantitative and qualitative approaches allowed both breadth and depth of understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire survey, while semi-

structured interviews with teachers provided qualitative insights. The quantitative component provided detailed information about students' beliefs and experiences regarding online English learning, whereas the qualitative component enabled an in-depth exploration of teachers' perspectives, accounting for individual contextual factors. Interviews were particularly appropriate, as they allow participants to describe detailed personal experiences (Creswell, 2012).

Overall, the mixed-methods design was well-suited to this study, as it facilitated the examination of pandemic-induced learning gaps and the impact of online education on English language skills from both student and teacher perspectives.

### *Setting and Participants*

The study was conducted across six public and private universities in Dhaka, Bangladesh, and the entire research was carried out between January and March 2025. Participants included 36 tertiary-level students (final-year undergraduates and graduate students) (Table 1) who had experienced online English classes during the pandemic while residing in various parts of Bangladesh.

The six higher education institutions were selected through purposive sampling to ensure institutional diversity and contextual relevance. Selection criteria included representation from both public and private universities, institutional location within Dhaka, experience conducting online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic, and participant accessibility.

Interviews were also conducted with 3 English language teachers who had taught in these contexts. Students were selected through purposive sampling to ensure relevance (Creswell, 2012), while teachers were recruited using criterion sampling, as they all had direct experience teaching online (Patton, 2002). Pseudonyms were used to maintain anonymity.

**Table 1:** *Demographic characteristics of participating students (N = 36).*

| Category        | Options                  | Counts | Percentage (%) |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------|----------------|
| Gender          | Male                     | 9      | 25.0           |
|                 | Female                   | 27     | 75.0           |
| University Type | Public                   | 18     | 50.0           |
|                 | Private                  | 18     | 50.0           |
| University Name | Jagannath University     | 6      | 16.7           |
|                 | Dhaka University         | 6      | 16.7           |
|                 | Jahangirnagar University | 6      | 16.7           |
|                 | BRAC University          | 6      | 16.7           |
|                 | East-West University     | 6      | 16.7           |
|                 | North South University   | 6      | 16.7           |
| Department      | Architecture             | 1      | 2.8            |
|                 | BBA                      | 1      | 2.8            |
|                 | CSE                      | 2      | 5.6            |
|                 | EEE                      | 1      | 2.8            |
|                 | ESOL                     | 3      | 8.3            |
|                 | English                  | 24     | 66.7           |
|                 | English (IML)            | 3      | 8.3            |
|                 | TESOL                    | 1      | 2.8            |
| Year of Study   | 1st Year                 | 0      | 0.0            |
|                 | 2nd Year                 | 0      | 0.0            |
|                 | 3rd Year                 | 0      | 0.0            |
|                 | 4th Year                 | 11     | 30.6           |
|                 | Graduate level           | 25     | 69.4           |

### *Instruments*

The student questionnaire included 24 closed-ended items, covering attendance, skill-specific impacts, online challenges, and perceptions of learning effectiveness. Content validity was established through expert review by an experienced English-language teacher, who confirmed alignment between the items and the research objectives. The questionnaire

was distributed digitally to ensure accessibility and anonymity, in line with best practices in applied linguistics survey design (Dörnyei, 2007).

Teacher interviews were semi-structured, consisting of 11 open-ended questions guided by a protocol adapted from Patton (2014). This format ensured consistency while enabling follow-up questions to enhance depth (Dörnyei, 2007). A pilot interview refined the protocol and ensured clarity (Malmqvist et al., 2019). Two interviews were conducted face-to-face in quiet office settings, and one was conducted via Zoom. All interviews lasted 25–30 minutes, were audio-recorded with the participant’s consent, and were later transcribed verbatim for analysis.

The whole student questionnaire is provided in Appendix A. The teacher interview protocol is included in Appendix B

### **Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were analyzed using Jamovi (v2.6.25) (The Jamovi Project, 2024). Descriptive statistics summarized key patterns. Qualitative data were transcribed and thematically analyzed using Braun and Clarke’s (2006) six-phase framework, with NVivo 15 (Lumivero, 2024) employed for coding and organization. Themes were generated inductively, including “Proficiency Impact,” “Engagement Decline,” and “Connectivity Barriers.” Triangulation was conducted by comparing quantitative results with corresponding qualitative themes. Declines in speaking and writing proficiency were examined alongside interview excerpts describing reduced interaction, limited feedback, and loss of confidence. Similarly, survey data on engagement and connectivity were cross-checked with teachers’ and students’ accounts of attendance, classroom passivity, and technical disruptions. Areas of agreement and difference between data sources were analyzed to validate interpretations and enhance credibility (Patton, 2014).

### *Hypothesis Testing*

To test the hypotheses, one-sample Wilcoxon signed-rank tests were employed. A non-parametric approach was chosen due to the ordinal nature of the data and modest sample size.

For RQ1, the perceived proficiency gap among students was measured using a 3-point scale derived from survey responses. The categories “No, there is no gap” and “Not sure” were combined to represent the absence of a gap or uncertainty, resulting in a scale where 1 = no gap/uncertain, 2 = yes to some extent, and 3 = yes significantly. The null hypothesis specified that the median perceived gap would equal 1, while the alternative hypothesized that the median would be greater than 1.

For RQ2, perceived effectiveness of online English learning was assessed on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = much less effective to 5 = much more effective, with 3 = equivalent to in-person learning). A composite effectiveness score was computed by averaging students’ ratings across the four language skills. The null hypothesis specified that the median effectiveness would equal 3, while the alternative hypothesized that it would be less than 3.

### *Reliability and Validity*

Several steps ensured rigor. The survey was carefully structured to reduce misinterpretation (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2010). Interview neutrality was maintained through open-ended questioning and careful transcription (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Coding was conducted in iterative cycles. Inter-rater reliability was assessed through an expert review of a subset of transcripts, yielding an agreement of 91.67% (McDonald et al., 2019). Although the use of non-probability sampling and a small sample size limit generalizability (Johnson & Christensen, 2017), triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data, combined with systematic coding of themes, ensured consistency, transparency, and verification of patterns, thereby enhancing the trustworthiness of the findings.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical approval was obtained from the department. Informed consent was secured from all participants in line with established guidelines (Seidman, 2013; Bailey, 2007). Student responses were collected anonymously, and teacher identities were anonymized through a coding process. All data were stored in password-protected files.

Participation was voluntary, and participants retained the right to withdraw at any point.

**Results and Findings of the Research**

*Findings for Research Question 1*

The results indicate that the pandemic created substantial learning gaps in English language skills among tertiary-level students. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirmed that students perceived these gaps as statistically significant (Median = 2.00, W = 406,  $p < .001$ ) (Table 2). Both student survey data and teacher interviews highlighted similar challenges, especially in productive skills, engagement, and retention.

**Table 2:** *Wilcoxon signed-rank test for perceived proficiency gap (N = 36)*

| Variable                  | W   | p      | Median | Mean (SD)   |
|---------------------------|-----|--------|--------|-------------|
| Perceived Proficiency Gap | 406 | < .001 | 2.00   | 1.97 (0.65) |

To gain a deeper understanding of these gaps, survey data were analyzed descriptively (Table 3), and teacher interviews were thematically analyzed. Four themes emerged—skill-specific declines, retention difficulties, emotional strain, and inequities—which help explain the survey patterns (Table 4). The quantitative survey results are presented under these qualitative themes.

**Table 3:** *Descriptive Results from Quantitative Data (RQ1)*

| Variable                          | Response Category       | n (%)     |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Attendance During the Pandemic    | Decreased significantly | 13 (36.1) |
|                                   | Decreased slightly      | 11 (30.6) |
|                                   | No change / Not sure    | 12 (33.3) |
| Disruption Due to School Closures | Yes                     | 24 (66.7) |
|                                   | No                      | 12 (33.3) |

| Variable                                     | Response Category        | n (%)     |
|----------------------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Length of Disruption</b>                  | Less than 1 month        | 6 (25.0)  |
|                                              | 1–3 months               | 3 (11.1)  |
|                                              | 4–6 months               | 8 (33.3)  |
|                                              | More than 6 months       | 3 (11.1)  |
| <b>Confidence in Using English</b>           | Significant decrease     | 11 (30.6) |
|                                              | Decreased to some extent | 16 (44.4) |
|                                              | No impact                | 9 (25.0)  |
| <b>English Skills Affected</b>               | Reading                  | 5 (13.9)  |
|                                              | Listening                | 4 (11.1)  |
|                                              | Speaking                 | 26 (72.2) |
|                                              | Writing                  | 17 (47.2) |
| <b>Stress and Anxiety Impacting Learning</b> | Yes                      | 26 (72.2) |
|                                              | No                       | 10 (27.8) |

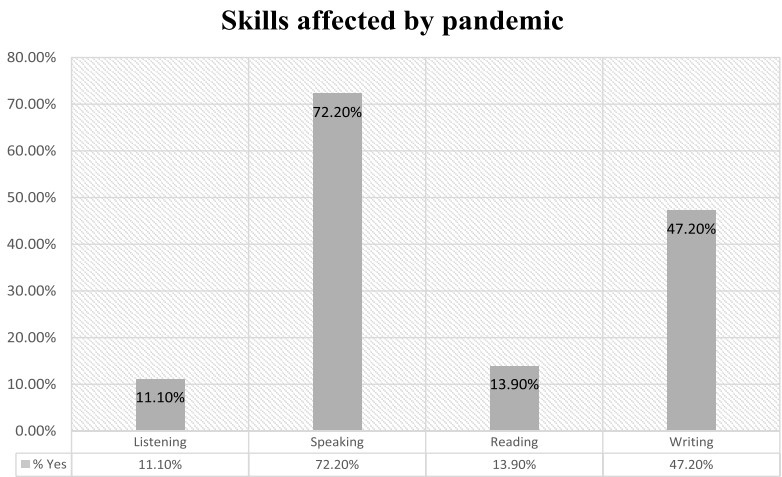
**Table 4:** *Qualitative themes and subordinate codes for learning gaps (teacher interviews, RQ1).*

| Emergent Theme          | \Subordinate Codes/Keywords                                                                  |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Skill-Specific Gaps     | Oral Communication Gap, Writing Coherence Gap, Reading Comprehension Gap, Speaking Skill Gap |
| Retention Challenges    | Retention Struggles                                                                          |
| Emotional Barriers      | Stress and Anxiety Impact                                                                    |
| Attendance Barriers     | Motivated Attendance by Marks, Connectivity and Resource Constraints, Lack of Motivation     |
| Demographic Disparities | Rural vs. Urban Disparities, Strong vs. Weak Students                                        |

Skill-Specific Gaps Quantitative findings showed that speaking (72.2%) and writing (47.2%) were the most affected skills, while reading (13.9%) and listening (11.1%) were comparatively less disrupted (Figure 1). Teachers reinforced this pattern, noting that oral communication and writing coherence suffered most. As one teacher explained, “*Students’ speaking skills were greatly affected*

due to reduced real-time interaction and less practice” (T3). She added, “Gaps in writing coherence and reading comprehension were common” (T3).

**Figure 1:** *Percentage of Students Reporting Skills Affected by the Pandemic*



*Engagement and Attendance Challenges*

Two-thirds of students (66.7%) reported decreased attendance, with some acknowledging that they attended mainly to secure marks and disruptions (66.7%) due to university closures (Table 3). 33.3% faced interruptions of four to six months. As one teacher remarked, “They were attentive due to their fear about attendance marks” (T2). Teachers also observed low participation, with students reluctant to interact during lessons. “Students were less active in participating during online classes, which affected their learning” (T2).

*Retention and Emotional Barriers*

Survey data revealed that 75% of students experienced reduced confidence in English use, while 72.2% reported stress and anxiety that hindered learning (Table 3). Teachers echoed this, noting that students were unable to sustain previously learned skills without

consistent feedback: “Many students struggled in retaining previously learned English skills during online education” (T3). Emotional strain also played a critical role. One teacher noted, “Two of my students were stressed and anxious” (T2), while another observed that stress “significantly impacted their ability to learn English” (T3). Finally, a teacher noted, “Affective filters... were quite low” (T1)

### *Demographic Disparities*

The findings suggest uneven impacts across different student groups. Rural students and weaker learners were more disadvantaged compared to urban, self-motivated peers. As T3 emphasized, “*Learning gaps were more prominent among those from rural areas.*” T1 highlighted resource disparities, noting, “*Resources vary in terms of whether you are in a rural place*”. In contrast, stronger students demonstrated resilience by managing independent learning more effectively.

## **Findings for Research Question 2**

Building on the learning gaps identified in RQ1, RQ2 examines how online education contributed to these outcomes. The results indicate that students perceived online English language learning as significantly less effective than in-person instruction. A Wilcoxon signed-rank test confirmed this difference (Median = 2.75,  $W = 156$ ,  $p = .008$ ) (Table 5). Survey responses and teacher interviews revealed consistent challenges across proficiency, engagement, technical access, and interaction, though a small group of motivated students showed improvement.

**Table 5:** *Wilcoxon signed-rank test for perceived effectiveness of online learning (composite score;  $N = 36$ ).*

| Variable                      | W   | p     | Median | Mean (SD)   |
|-------------------------------|-----|-------|--------|-------------|
| Composite Effectiveness Score | 156 | 0.008 | 2.75   | 2.69 (0.79) |

Both survey data and Interviews extended these findings, highlighting four themes—technological barriers, engagement

difficulties, skill-specific challenges, and uneven resilience (Tables 6 & 7). The quantitative survey results are explained under these qualitative themes.

**Table 6:** *Descriptive Results from Quantitative Data (RQ2)*

| Variable                                | Key Response Category           | n (%)     |
|-----------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------|
| Prior Online Experience                 | No prior experience             | 26 (72.2) |
| Access to Technology                    | Own smartphone                  | 19 (52.8) |
| Ability to Fill In-Person Learning Gaps | To Some Extent                  | 13 (36.1) |
|                                         | No/Not Sure                     | 19 (52.7) |
| Online Learning Platforms Used          | Zoom                            | 26 (72.2) |
|                                         | Google Meet                     | 24 (66.7) |
| Less Confidence in Online Learning      | Yes                             | 10 (27.8) |
|                                         | Sometimes                       | 17 (47.2) |
| Frequency of Disruptions                | Sometimes                       | 20 (55.6) |
| Impact on Reading Skills                | Difficulty concentrating        | 16 (44.4) |
| Impact on Writing Skills                | Lack of motivation              | 17 (47.2) |
|                                         | Lack of feedback                | 15 (41.7) |
| Listening Difficulties                  | Poor audio quality/connectivity | 22 (61.1) |
|                                         | Background Noise                | 12 (33.3) |
| Speaking Skill Challenges               | Limited real-time practice      | 22 (61.1) |

**Table 7:** *Emergent themes and subordinate codes from teacher interviews (RQ2).*

| Emergent Theme                    | Subordinate Codes/Keywords               |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------------|
| Proficiency Impact                | Hindered Proficiency                     |
| Engagement and Motivation Decline | Reduced Engagement, Decreased Motivation |
| Connectivity Issues               | Connectivity Challenges                  |
| Interaction Barriers              | Limited Interaction                      |
| Individual Success Factors        | Self-Driven Improvement                  |

*Proficiency Impacts*

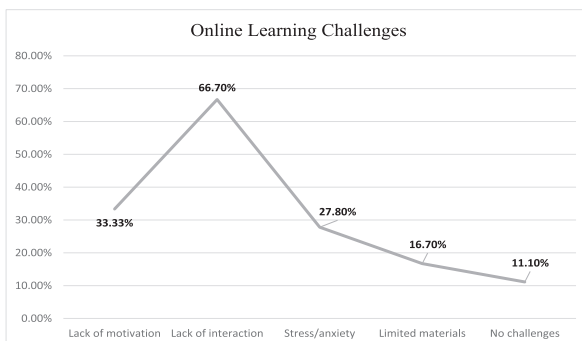
Both student surveys and teacher interviews highlighted proficiency setbacks. As one of the teacher stated, “*There are certain gaps as well, like I cannot interact with them in a very lively way all the time,*

*because I cannot assess their progress, their physical position..”* (T2). Students reported that online learning was less effective in developing key English skills. Reading was affected by struggles with concentration (44.4%), writing was hindered by a lack of motivation (47.2%) and feedback (41.7%), listening was impaired by poor audio quality (61.1%) and background noise (33.3%), and speaking was hindered by reduced practice (61.1%) (Table 6). Teachers reinforced this perception: *“Online learning hindered students’ English proficiency”* (T3). Another observed, *“There are certain gaps as I cannot interact with them in a lively way all the time”* (T2)

### *Engagement and Motivation*

Over 52% reported that online learning failed to fill classroom gaps, 36.1% highlighted that it did to some extent, and only 11% believed it could. As 72.2% of students had no prior experience with online learning, this also affected their engagement in online classes. The majority of students identified a lack of interaction (66.7%) as their primary challenge, with 33.3% citing low motivation (Figure 2). Confidence in learning was mixed, with only 27.8% expressing low confidence and 47.2% feeling occasionally less confident (Table 6). Teachers confirmed these patterns: *“Online classes were not as engaging as traditional classes”* (T2), and *“Most students became less motivated, less active, and experienced a sense of isolation”* (T3). One teacher summarized disengagement, *“Forty percent of the students were probably elsewhere during class”* (T1).

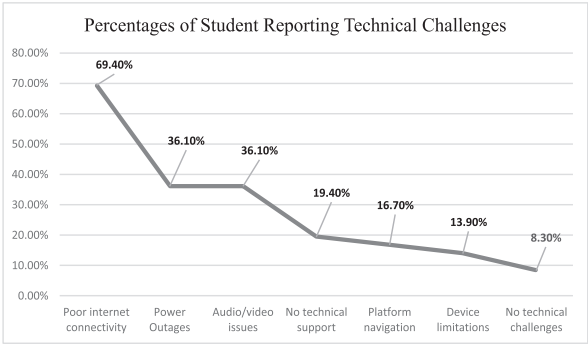
**Figure 2:** *Challenges of online learning*



*Technical and Connectivity Barriers*

Most students relied on their own smartphones (52.8%) for online classes, while a small number reported issues with no device or a borrowed device (8.3%). It remains a significant concern. Most students used Zoom (72.2%) and Google Meet (66.7%) as online learning platforms; however, several problems emerged due to frequent or occasional disruptions, as reported by students, affecting 88.9% of them. *“Teachers had to go through a learning arc during this time, because none of them were really prepared. I mean, more so, not trained at all, and they had to shift to cloud classrooms overnight.”* (T1). Connectivity was the most severe barrier, with 69.4% of students reporting poor internet access, 36.1% facing power outages, and another 36.1% citing audio/video issues (Figure 3). Teachers also highlighted these constraints: *“None of us were prepared... we had to shift overnight to cloud classrooms”* (T1).

**Figure 3:** *Technical Challenges of online learning*



*Individual Success Factors*

Despite the broad challenges, some students showed improvement. Teachers attributed success to discipline, motivation, and external resources. As one explained, *“Consistent attendance, supportive home environment, and active engagement with online resources contributed to their success”* (T3). Another highlighted the value of free global resources: *“Coursera and Khan Academy had their courses*

*open, and students who wanted to flourish had the opportunity”* (T1). These examples underscore the importance of individual agency and access to resources in shaping outcomes.

## Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic created substantial learning gaps in tertiary-level students' English language proficiency, with uneven effects across the four language skills. Speaking emerged as the most severely affected skill. Quantitative results revealed a significant decline in oral proficiency, which teachers attributed to reduced real-time interaction, lack of immediate feedback, and diminished learner confidence. In line with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, the absence of peer collaboration and scaffolding disrupted learning within the Zone of Proximal Development, explaining the steep decline in communicative competence.

Writing skills were also notably weakened. Students faced difficulties in maintaining coherence and accuracy, largely due to limited opportunities for guided practice and formative feedback in online classes. These findings align with prior studies indicating that productive skills are particularly vulnerable in online learning contexts (Gonzalez et al., 2020; Anasse & Rhandy, 2021). The prolonged closure of institutions and limited digital preparedness in Bangladesh further intensified these challenges, especially among weaker learners.

In contrast, reading skills were comparatively less disrupted. Students were able to engage with written materials through asynchronous modes, maintaining basic comprehension. Similarly, listening skills showed moderate resilience, as recorded lectures and multimedia input provided continued exposure to spoken English. However, reduced interactive listening limited opportunities for negotiation of meaning and higher-level processing.

The study also indicates that online education was less effective than in-person instruction, particularly for the development of speaking and writing skills. Two-thirds of students reported decreased engagement and attendance, often driven by attendance requirements

rather than meaningful learning. Teachers observed widespread passivity and distraction, which limited interaction and feedback. This disengagement supports both Krashen's (1985) Input Hypothesis and Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural perspective, as inconsistent input and reduced collaboration hindered sustained language development.

Online instruction was partially effective for reading and listening skills, as these receptive skills rely more heavily on asynchronous input. Nevertheless, technical barriers—such as poor internet connectivity, device limitations, and frequent disruptions—restricted the overall effectiveness of online learning. These challenges reflect Kramsch's (1993) notion of the digital divide, where unequal access to technology perpetuates educational inequities.

Emotional factors further constrained skill development. High levels of stress and anxiety raised learners' affective filters (Brown, 2007), reducing motivation, confidence, and retention of English skills. These effects were more pronounced among rural and weaker students, who lacked both technological resources and peer scaffolding, thereby widening existing proficiency gaps. In contrast, urban and self-motivated students demonstrated greater resilience by leveraging independent learning resources.

Overall, the findings confirm that while online education functioned as a necessary substitute during the pandemic, it failed to support balanced development across the four English language skills, with speaking and writing experiencing the greatest decline. The persistence of engagement challenges, technical barriers, and emotional stress underscores the limitations of emergency remote instruction. To address these learning gaps, English language education in Bangladesh should adopt blended and hybrid models that prioritize interaction, targeted feedback, teacher training, and equitable access to digital infrastructure.

## **Recommendations**

The findings of this study highlight significant gaps in English language learning during the pandemic, particularly in speaking

and writing, as well as broader challenges associated with online education. Based on these results, several recommendations are proposed for educators, policymakers, and institutions.

### *Strengthening Speaking and Writing Pedagogy*

Targeted interventions should be designed to rebuild oral fluency and written coherence, as these skills were most disrupted. Incorporating structured speaking tasks, peer interactions, and iterative writing feedback into post-pandemic curricula would help address these gaps.

### *Enhancing Teacher Training for Online and Hybrid Modes*

Teachers require continuous professional development in digital pedagogy to ensure that interaction, feedback, and assessment are effective in virtual environments. Training should focus on interactive strategies (e.g., breakout rooms, online collaborative writing, peer review) that replicate communicative features of face-to-face learning.

### *Expanding Access to Technology and Connectivity*

Connectivity issues and unequal access to devices disproportionately affected rural and less advantaged learners. Policy measures, such as subsidized internet packages for students, institutional support for device lending, and investment in low-bandwidth platforms, are essential to reducing inequities.

### *Supporting Learners' Motivation and Well-being*

High levels of stress, anxiety, and reduced confidence indicate the need for socio-emotional support alongside academic instruction. Counseling services, motivational workshops, and teacher-student mentoring could lower the affective filter and encourage active engagement.

### *Integrating Blended Learning Models*

Although online learning was perceived as less effective, a minority of resilient students benefited from external platforms. Institutions could

harness this by integrating blended approaches, combining classroom teaching with curated online resources to foster autonomy and digital literacy.

## **Conclusion**

This study examined the impact of pandemic-induced online learning on the English proficiency of tertiary-level students in Dhaka. The findings reveal that productive skills—particularly speaking and writing—were most adversely affected, while reading and listening were comparatively less disrupted. Emotional strain, reduced motivation, and inequities in technological access further deepened these gaps.

Students and teachers consistently reported that online learning was less effective than in-person instruction, primarily due to poor connectivity, limited interaction, and lack of feedback. Yet, evidence also suggests that some self-motivated learners with adequate resources managed to adapt and even thrive, underscoring the uneven nature of the pandemic's impact.

The mixed-methods approach contributes to understanding pandemic-induced learning gaps by identifying the extent of decline across the four language skills through quantitative analysis and contextualizing these patterns through qualitative evidence on interaction loss, technological barriers, and affective challenges, thereby informing skill-specific pedagogical responses.

Nevertheless, the study has limitations, including its focus on a single urban setting, a relatively small sample, and time constraints. Future research should examine broader populations across different regions and institutional contexts, and explore longitudinal recovery patterns in post-pandemic learning.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the urgent need for targeted pedagogical reforms, institutional support for digital equity, and policies that strike a balance between face-to-face

and online learning to strengthen English language education in the post-pandemic era.

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# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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**Practice of Watching and Following Hindi Cartoons among Bangladeshi Children: A Study in Dhaka City**

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                                          | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>29-10-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p>             | <p>This study investigates the sociolinguistic and cultural effects of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on Bangladeshi children, with a specific focus on urban centers in Dhaka. It aims to understand how sustained exposure to foreign-language media particularly Hindi during formative linguistic stages shape children’s speech behavior, peer interactions, and cultural preferences. The findings reveal that nearly all children watch Hindi-dubbed cartoons daily, while about 57% integrate Hindi phrases often unconsciously into daily conversation, including in school and home environments. This linguistic hybridity is reinforced by peer dynamics, parental permissiveness, and the acute shortage of engaging Bangla-language media. The paper concludes with strategic recommendations at multiple levels: policy reform to mandate Bangla dubbing of imported content, investment in localized animation and storytelling, school-based media literacy education, and parental awareness programs. Overall, the study contributes empirical evidence to the debate on media-induced linguistic shift and offers actionable insights for language preservation, cultural policy, and child media regulation in Bangladesh.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Hindi Cartoons,<br/>Bangla Language,<br/>Language<br/>Acquisition,<br/>Linguistic<br/>Imperialism,<br/>Children, Cultural<br/>Influence</p> |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

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## Introduction

Children's media consumption has long been recognized as a critical factor in shaping their cognitive development, linguistic acquisition, and socio-cultural orientation (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Barlett et al., 2023). Audiovisual content such as animated cartoons exerts a profound influence on language learning due to its repetitive, engaging, and emotionally resonant nature (Sharma & Mehta, 2023; Fernando et al., 2021). During the early and middle childhood years, when language skills are rapidly developing, children are highly receptive to the linguistic codes embedded in the media they consume (Vygotsky, 1978; Bandura, 1986).

In Bangladesh, children's television programming has historically lacked sufficient locally produced content. This deficiency has allowed a flood of foreign-language programming particularly Hindi-dubbed cartoons from Indian television channels to dominate the entertainment landscape for children. Channels such as Nick India, Hungama TV, and Cartoon Network India regularly broadcast shows like *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, *Shin Chan*, and *Ninja Hattori*, which are extremely popular among Bangladeshi children (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Islam, 2014). These shows, although originally produced in Japanese or English, are dubbed into Hindi for the South Asian market, and thus expose Bangladeshi viewers to a non-native language during a sensitive period of linguistic development.

Existing literature has drawn attention to the phenomenon of linguistic imperialism, wherein dominant global or regional languages infiltrate the linguistic practices of subordinate language communities, often through cultural products like media (Phillipson, 1992; Khan, 2010). In the case of Bangladesh, the pervasive exposure to Hindi media is resulting in observable changes in children's speech behavior, including code-switching, use of Hindi expressions, and phonetic shifts (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Shrestha, 2022). Anecdotal evidence from guardians and educators suggests that some children even prefer speaking in Hindi during playtime, associate positively with Hindi-

speaking cartoon characters, and show declining interest in Bangla-based narratives (Bdnews24.com, 2013; Dasgupta, 2013).

From a theoretical perspective, this situation raises concerns related to Saussure's semiotic theory, which emphasizes the internalization of language signs through repetition and social context (Saussure, 1916), and Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse analysis, which views language use as an instrument of power, ideology, and identity formation. Children are not passive recipients of language they absorb, imitate, and recontextualize what they see on screen in their daily lives, influencing how they think, speak, and interact.

Although television is widely available and often used as a form of "electronic babysitting" in urban Bangladeshi households (Hindustan Times, 2013), there has been little effort at the policy level to regulate the language of imported content or to develop compelling local alternatives. As a result, children's exposure to Hindi-dubbed cartoons is largely unregulated, habitual, and socially normalized. This raises critical questions about the long-term implications for Bangla language acquisition, national identity, and cultural continuity, particularly among the youngest citizens of Bangladesh.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Despite growing public concern and sporadic media coverage, the linguistic and cultural consequences of Hindi-dubbed cartoon consumption among Bangladeshi children have not been adequately examined through empirical research. Most of the existing academic studies are limited in scope focusing on single cartoon characters (e.g., *Doraemon*) or conducting descriptive analyses without systematic data collection (Islam & Biswas, 2012; Islam, 2014). Others focus broadly on the concept of media imperialism but lack child-centered data that would illuminate the impact on early language formation (Khan, 2010).

This lack of comprehensive research leaves several crucial questions unanswered: To what extent do children in Dhaka watch

Hindi cartoons, and how frequently? What kinds of Hindi expressions do they adopt in everyday speech, and in what social contexts? Are these linguistic changes a form of temporary imitation, or do they signal a deeper shift in language preference and usage? How do parents perceive this influence, and what coping strategies or demands for intervention are emerging at the household level?

While studies from neighboring countries like Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2021) and Nepal (Shrestha, 2022) have shown clear associations between foreign cartoon exposure and linguistic displacement in local youth populations, there remains a significant gap in Bangladesh-specific research that links cartoon viewership to measurable changes in children's language behavior, cultural expression, and media habits. Moreover, research that integrates both quantitative and qualitative perspectives including direct input from children and their guardians is virtually nonexistent.

The current media environment in Bangladesh, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka, is overwhelmingly tilted toward Hindi-language entertainment, with minimal regulatory oversight and few localized alternatives. This asymmetry may be unintentionally reinforcing linguistic subordination, especially among children in their formative years of identity and language development. According to UNESCO (2022), when native languages are not promoted and used consistently, they risk endangerment over time a concern that is now increasingly relevant in the context of Bangladeshi youth and their media consumption habits.

Therefore, this study addresses an urgent research gap by systematically investigating how Hindi-dubbed cartoons affect the language practices, speech patterns, and cultural identification of Bangladeshi children in Dhaka. The study provides both statistical insights and rich qualitative narratives that aim to inform educational policy, parental guidance, and future directions for children's media content in Bangladesh.

## **Objectives of the Study**

This study aims to explore how Hindi-dubbed cartoons influence Bangladeshi children's language use and preferences. It seeks to measure viewing patterns, identify factors driving Hindi media consumption, and propose strategies to protect Bangla language development.

- To assess the frequency and nature of Hindi cartoon viewing among Bangladeshi children.
- To analyze the pattern of Hindi language use among children following cartoon exposure.
- To identify contributing factors behind the preference for Hindi-dubbed cartoons.
- To provide evidence-based recommendations for safeguarding Bangla language development.

## **Research Questions**

The research is guided by questions that examine the extent and impact of Hindi cartoon viewership among children in Dhaka, focusing on their speech behaviors, motivations for consumption, and parental perspectives on potential interventions. However, the study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the current rate of Hindi cartoon viewership among Bangladeshi children?
2. Do children practice Hindi speech patterns as a result of watching Hindi cartoons?
3. What specific ways and situations do children use Hindi language after watching cartoons?
4. What are the motivations and social factors behind this media consumption?
5. What are the parental expectations or demands regarding media solutions?

## Rationale of the Study

Language development in childhood is a dynamic process that is highly sensitive to environmental stimuli, especially auditory and visual input (Linebarger & Walker, 2005). The early years are characterized by what Vygotsky (1978) describes as the “zone of proximal development,” wherein children acquire linguistic structures through social interaction and observation. In urban settings like Dhaka, where access to television and internet-based entertainment is widespread, children’s linguistic environment is increasingly shaped by media exposure rather than traditional interpersonal interactions or educational instruction.

In this context, Hindi-dubbed cartoons represent a dominant cultural-linguistic force. As Indian satellite channels broadcast a steady stream of engaging, brightly animated content with Hindi dialogue, Bangladeshi children especially those from middle-income urban families consume these programs as part of their daily routines (Islam, 2014; Khan, 2010). While cartoons such as *Doraemon*, *Motu Patlu*, and *Chota Bheem* are not inherently harmful in terms of content, they embed Hindi as the primary linguistic medium, which is gradually becoming normalized among Bangladeshi children.

Despite growing concern from guardians and educators, as well as occasional government bans (e.g., the 2013 ban on *Doraemon* by BTRC; Bdnews24.com, 2013), academic inquiry into this phenomenon has been limited. Most existing studies are descriptive, lack systematic data, or fail to integrate both child and parent perspectives (Islam & Biswas, 2012). Moreover, empirical studies that address the interplay between language use, media consumption, and cultural identity formation among Bangladeshi children are virtually nonexistent.

This study is thus timely and necessary. By combining quantitative data and qualitative narratives, it offers robust evidence on how foreign-language media is influencing children’s speech behavior,

peer communication, and self-expression. Furthermore, the research contributes to broader conversations on linguistic imperialism (Phillipson, 1992), cultural assimilation, and the need for Bangla language preservation policies aligned with UNESCO's language vitality frameworks (UNESCO, 2022). The findings are expected to inform not only media regulation and educational curriculum but also national discourse on the protection of cultural identity in an increasingly globalized media landscape.

### **Theoretical Framework**

This study draws upon three interrelated theoretical lenses to critically analyze the linguistic and cultural effects of Hindi-dubbed cartoon content on Bangladeshi children. These frameworks Semiotics Theory (Saussure), Linguistic Imperialism (Phillipson), and Critical Discourse Theory (Fairclough) collectively provide a multidisciplinary foundation for understanding the processes of language acquisition, symbolic dominance, and media-induced cultural assimilation. Together, these theories help explain not only *how* children internalize foreign language structures but also *why* such patterns persist and what power structures underpin them.

#### *Saussure's Semiotics Theory: Language as a System of Signs*

Ferdinand de Saussure's semiotic theory emphasizes the role of signs in the development of meaning and communication. According to Saussure (1916), language is a system composed of "signifiers" (sound patterns) and "signified" (concepts), which together construct meaning through social convention. For children in the early developmental stage, repeated exposure to language especially through auditory-visual mediums such as cartoons help them form associations between signs and meanings. This process, known as *internalization*, is particularly powerful when the exposure is emotionally charged or repetitive (Barlett et al., 2023).

In the case of Hindi-dubbed cartoons, recurring Hindi expressions, character catchphrases, and interactional dialogues serve as semiotic anchors through which children learn and reproduce new linguistic elements. These signs are not merely linguistic in function; they are also affective and performative, as children often mimic characters as part of imaginative play. This reinforces Saussure's notion that language learning is socially and symbolically structured, and that signs can cross linguistic boundaries through culturally appealing media.

*Phillipson's Linguistic Imperialism: Media as a Tool of Cultural Hegemony*

Robert Phillipson's theory of Linguistic Imperialism (1992) offers a critical lens to understand how dominant languages are systematically spread and maintained through institutional, political, and cultural mechanisms often at the expense of local languages. Originally developed in the context of English language dominance, the theory is equally applicable to the increasing penetration of Hindi in South Asian linguistic spaces, including Bangladesh.

From this perspective, the prevalence of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on Indian satellite channels can be seen as a form of soft linguistic imperialism. The availability of visually captivating, easily accessible, and narratively engaging content in Hindi ensures the normalization of Hindi among children who lack comparable alternatives in Bangla (Fernando et al., 2021). Such repeated exposure during critical language development results in a shift in linguistic preferences, usage patterns, and even identity alignments, often without conscious realization. In line with Phillipson's framework, the study interprets the erosion of Bangla usage among children as a consequence of systemic linguistic subordination facilitated by regional media dominance (Islam, 2014; Khan, 2010).

Furthermore, the findings of this research echo concern raised by other scholars in the South Asian context. For instance, Sharma and Mehta (2023) note that regional language displacement is accelerated when media ecosystems fail to support indigenous content production, thereby allowing more dominant languages to fill the void. The same

pattern is visible in urban Bangladesh, where limited Bangla-language programming has made room for Hindi media hegemony to thrive.

*Fairclough's Critical Discourse Theory: Language, Power, and Identity Formation*

Norman Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Theory (CDT) focuses on the ideological and power-laden nature of language. CDT argues that language is not a neutral medium of communication; rather, it reflects and reinforces social hierarchies, political ideologies, and cultural norms. Media discourse plays a central role in constructing what is seen as desirable, acceptable, or prestigious in society.

Applying this framework, the study considers how Hindi cartoons implicitly convey discourses of cultural superiority and normalization of Hindi as a regional lingua franca. Children exposed to these programs are not just learning a new language; they are being socialized into a value-laden linguistic environment where Hindi is portrayed as the language of heroes, humor, and everyday interaction. Over time, this framing influences not only speech behavior but also the cultural self-perception of young viewers.

Qualitative findings from this study show that children often use Hindi phrases in emotionally expressive contexts or when engaging in playful mimicry of cartoon characters. Such behaviors indicate that language is being internalized not merely as a functional tool, but as a marker of identity and social alignment a key concern in Fairclough's discourse theory. Moreover, the lack of Bangla-centered alternatives results in what Fairclough terms *discursive exclusion*, where the child's native linguistic and cultural narratives are rendered invisible or irrelevant in media spaces.

*Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives*

These three theories together enable a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. Saussure's theory explains *how* children acquire language through symbolic association, especially in visually stimulating environments. Phillipson's framework helps

contextualize the broader political economy of media and language, explaining *why* Hindi dominates the linguistic landscape of children's entertainment in Bangladesh. Fairclough's discourse theory highlights the ideological implications, explaining *what* is at stake cultural identity, language loyalty, and social perception.

Together, they form a triangulated theoretical scaffold that enriches the interpretation of data and reinforces the urgency of intervention. They also validate the core hypothesis of the study: that unchecked exposure to foreign-language media in childhood may result in behavioral and cognitive shifts with long-term implications for language use, identity formation, and cultural continuity.

## **Literature Review**

The relationship between children's media consumption and linguistic development has long been a subject of concern within the fields of sociolinguistics, education, and media studies. Scholars widely acknowledge that television, especially animated content, serves not only as a source of entertainment but also as an informal yet powerful pedagogical tool shaping language acquisition, social behaviors, and cultural orientation (Linebarger & Walker, 2005; Vygotsky, 1978). In the context of globalization, children's media is increasingly transnational, often resulting in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic influences, particularly when local programming is lacking.

### *Global and Asian Contexts*

Internationally, multiple studies have documented how children's exposure to foreign-language cartoons can result in lexical borrowing, code-switching, and even preference for non-native languages. For instance, Fernando, Perera, and Silva (2021) found that the consumption of English-dubbed cartoons in Sri Lanka significantly altered the language patterns of preschoolers, sometimes leading to delayed proficiency in Sinhala and Tamil. Similarly, Shrestha (2022) reported that Nepali children regularly imitate English expressions from animated shows, with visible impact on home language practices.

From a theoretical standpoint, Phillipson's (1992) framework of *linguistic imperialism* remains relevant. It argues that dominant cultures extend control by promoting their language through media, education, and policy, often undermining indigenous or minority tongues. This view aligns with Fairclough's (1989) critical discourse theory, which asserts that media content is not neutral; rather, it functions as an ideological apparatus that transmits power-laden narratives. These frameworks are increasingly applied to South Asian children's programming, where Indian media especially Hindi content dominates airwaves across the region.

### *Empirical Insights from South Asia*

The cultural reach of Indian entertainment across South Asia is particularly evident in children's media consumption. Sharma and Mehta (2023) explored the role of regional language media in India and found that children exposed to non-native content, particularly Hindi, showed reduced interest in their mother tongue. Their findings underscore the linguistic vulnerability of smaller language communities.

Moreover, Islam (2014) critiqued the phenomenon of "Hindi generation" in Bangladesh, tracing how Hindi-dubbed programs have shaped youth language and fashion trends. His study, rooted in dependency theory, emphasizes the unidirectional flow of cultural influence from India to Bangladesh, a dynamic he warns could destabilize national cultural identity if left unchecked.

In a complementary study, Khan (2010) examined media imperialism in South Asia and highlighted the disproportionate dominance of Indian media in Bangladeshi homes, primarily through satellite television. He argued that such asymmetry not only marginalizes Bangla content but also facilitates the internalization of foreign values and speech norms by impressionable children.

### *Bangladeshi Studies on Children's Media Consumption*

Several localized studies reinforce these regional observations with empirical evidence. For instance, Islam and Biswas (2012) conducted a critical discourse analysis on the Hindi-dubbed cartoon *Doraemon* and found that Bangladeshi children adopted both Hindi vocabulary and behavioral expressions portrayed by characters. Their analysis concluded that this adoption was subconscious but systematic, driven by repeated exposure and character affiliation.

Furthermore, the Bdnews24.com (2013) report on the government's temporary ban on *Doraemon* pointed to increasing societal concern. The article cited educators and parents who reported growing use of Hindi words like *tum*, *kya*, and *chalo* in daily communication among young children in urban Dhaka. Similarly, Dasgupta (2013) reported that children had started referring to common household objects and emotions using Hindi terms, often at the expense of Bangla vocabulary.

More recently, a study by Haque and Hossain (2019) explored the correlation between cartoon consumption and academic performance in Dhaka. Though their study did not focus exclusively on language, it reported that Hindi-dubbed cartoons were the most-watched genre among the sample group, and children who consumed these shows daily demonstrated lower proficiency in Bangla reading comprehension compared to those who watched less or preferred local programming.

The UNESCO (2022) report on *Language Vitality and Endangerment* also raised alarms for countries like Bangladesh, where linguistic and cultural assimilation through media is accelerating. Though the report does not single out Hindi cartoons, it recommends strategic interventions in educational and broadcast policy to preserve local languages under threat from foreign cultural saturation.

### **Research Methodology**

This study adopted a mixed-methods explanatory design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of Hindi-dubbed cartoons on the language use and cultural behavior

of Bangladeshi children. The rationale behind employing a mixed-method strategy was to obtain a comprehensive understanding of not only the frequency and patterns of Hindi cartoon viewing but also the deeper linguistic and social implications derived from parental and contextual narratives.

### *Research Design*

This study followed a cross-sectional mixed-methods design, primarily quantitative in nature, using structured surveys with children and their guardians. To deepen understanding, qualitative data were also collected, enabling data triangulation for improved validity and insight (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). The design captured a comprehensive view of linguistic and media behaviors across selected urban areas of Dhaka.

### *Study Area and Population*

The study was conducted across 15 thanas (sub-districts) of Dhaka City, chosen due to their high population density, socio-economic diversity, and accessibility to satellite television. The target population comprised children aged between 6 and 12 years, a critical stage in cognitive and linguistic development (Vygotsky, 1978), along with their primary caregivers or guardians, who could provide supplementary behavioral and contextual information.

Inclusion criteria for child participants included:

- Regular access to television or internet-based cartoon content.
- Absence of any mental or developmental disabilities that could impact communication.
- Availability of parental or guardian consent.

Guardians were chosen because they are closely involved in the child's daily media viewing and habits.

### *Sample Size and Sampling Strategy*

A statistically robust sample size was calculated using the standard formula for finite population proportions:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 \cdot p \cdot q}{d^2} = \frac{(1.96)^2 \cdot 0.5 \cdot 0.5}{0.05^2} \approx 384$$

To account for possible non-responses, a 10% buffer was added, resulting in a final sample size of 420 respondents, comprising child-guardian pairs. This translated to approximately 28 participants per thana.

Sampling followed a multi-stage strategy. Initially, convenience sampling was used to select 15 thanas representing diverse socio-economic zones. Within each thana, stratified random sampling was applied to identify schools, homes, and coaching centers as data collection sites. From these sites, random sampling was used to select participants who met the study criteria. The final dataset included a balanced representation across gender and socio-economic status, ensuring generalizability within the urban context.

### *Data Collection Instruments*

Data collection was conducted using a semi-structured questionnaire, carefully designed to capture both quantitative indicators and qualitative insights. The tool was divided into two integrated segments:

- *Child-Focused Section:* This part included simple yes/no questions, multiple-choice items, and short prompts designed to elicit spontaneous expressions, preferences, and media habits. Language and content were age-appropriate and pre-tested for clarity.
- *Guardian-Focused Section:* This segment included open-ended and scale-based questions to explore parental observations, concerns, motivations for allowing certain media content, and perceptions regarding linguistic influence.

The questionnaire was further divided into five thematic sections:

1. Section A: Socio-demographic information.
2. Section B: Media consumption patterns.
3. Section C: Language adoption and usage.
4. Section D: Motivations and social influences.
5. Section E: Recommendations and parental expectations.

Prior to full deployment, the instrument was pilot tested with a group of 10 child-parent pairs to refine wording, timing, and flow. Feedback from the pilot phase led to adjustments in language simplicity and sequencing of questions.

#### *Data Collection Procedure*

Two trained research assistants conducted the fieldwork under strict ethical protocols. Before initiating interviews, informed consent was obtained in both verbal and written form from all guardians. Consent was also sought from relevant institutional authorities such as school principals, community leaders, and local commissioners, wherever applicable.

Data was gathered through in-person interviews, ensuring active engagement with respondents and clarity in communication. Interviews with children were conducted in a relaxed and child-friendly environment, either at their home, school, or coaching center, with the presence of a guardian. On average, each child-guardian interview session lasted between 25 to 40 minutes.

Confidentiality and anonymity of responses were maintained throughout the process. No audio or video recordings were made without explicit permission.

#### *Data Processing and Analytical Approach*

The data analysis process was bifurcated along methodological lines. The quantitative data from closed-ended questions were coded

and entered into SPSS Version 20 and Microsoft Excel for statistical analysis. Descriptive statistics such as frequencies, percentages, and cross-tabulations were calculated to identify patterns in viewing habits, language usage, and associated factors.

For the qualitative data, responses from open-ended questions were subjected to thematic analysis. This involved identifying recurring concepts, emotional tones, and parent-reported behavioral changes. Codes were generated inductively and grouped under broader themes, such as emotional attachment to characters, media as a babysitter, and cultural displacement.

Visual representations such as bar graphs, pie charts, and tables were used to illustrate key findings and support interpretation. The dual-mode analysis approach allowed for comprehensive insight, enriching the interpretation of numerical data with contextually grounded explanations.

## **Findings**

The present study analyzed data collected from 420 child-guardian pairs, selected through stratified random sampling across 15 thanas of Dhaka City. The objective was to understand how exposure to Hindi-dubbed cartoons influences children's linguistic patterns, media preferences, and cultural alignment. The findings reveal picture of media influence, where Hindi cartoons function not merely as entertainment but as vectors of language acquisition, identity modeling, and behavioral imitation. Each subsection presents quantitative results triangulated with qualitative narratives to provide a multidimensional interpretation of the findings.

### *Demographic Profile of Respondents*

The age distribution of children spanned from 6 to 12 years, a critical developmental window for language acquisition and identity formation. The age group of 10–11 years was most represented (37.4%), followed closely by 6–7 years (29.3%). Gender representation was nearly balanced, with males constituting 51.9% and females 48.1%.

Table 1: Age and Gender Distribution of Respondents

| Demographic | Category    | Percentage |
|-------------|-------------|------------|
| Age Group   | 6–7 years   | 29.3%      |
|             | 8–9 years   | 24.0%      |
|             | 10–11 years | 37.4%      |
|             | 12 years    | 9.3%       |
| Gender      | Male        | 51.9%      |
|             | Female      | 48.1%      |

These findings confirm that the majority of participants are situated within the early-to-middle childhood period, during which auditory exposure and social modeling have a lasting impact on linguistic structure and expressive behavior (Vygotsky, 1978). Nearly all children were enrolled in formal education institutions, which should theoretically reinforce Bangla instruction yet media consumption seems to override this influence.

*Cartoon Viewing Habits and Preferences*

The study confirmed a near-universal engagement with cartoon content among children. A striking finding was that none of the children watched cartoons for less than an hour per day. The largest segment (45.7%) watched for 2–3 hours daily, while 13.3% reported watching between 6–7 hours a duration that far exceeds recommended screen-time guidelines (AAP, 2020).

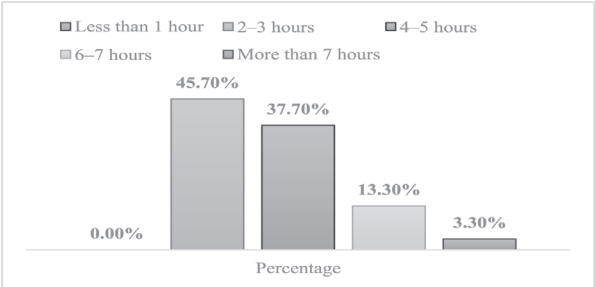


Figure-01: Daily Cartoon watching screen time

When asked about specific preferences, respondents

overwhelmingly identified Hindi-dubbed cartoons as their favorites. The most popular show was *Doraemon* (82%), followed by *Motu Patlu* (73%) and *Ninja Hattori* (67%).

Table 2: Most-Watched Hindi Cartoons

| Cartoon Series         | Respondents Watching |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| Doraemon               | 82%                  |
| Motu Patlu             | 73%                  |
| Ninja Hattori          | 67%                  |
| Oggy & the Cockroaches | 61%                  |
| Chota Bheem            | 52%                  |

Qualitative narratives reveal a functional reliance on cartoons. Many parents, especially in dual-income households, reported that cartoons serve as childcare surrogates. One mother from Dhanmondi remarked: *He watches cartoons while I cook or attend online meetings. I didn't think it was a problem until he said 'Main tujhe dekh lunga' to his sister.*

This underscores the unregulated nature of screen time and highlights how Hindi expressions are unconsciously integrated into daily interaction.

*Linguistic Impact: Adoption of Hindi Expressions*

The core research concerns the impact on children’s language practices was directly supported by data. A significant 57% of children used Hindi expressions, with 23.7% doing so frequently, without situational prompting.

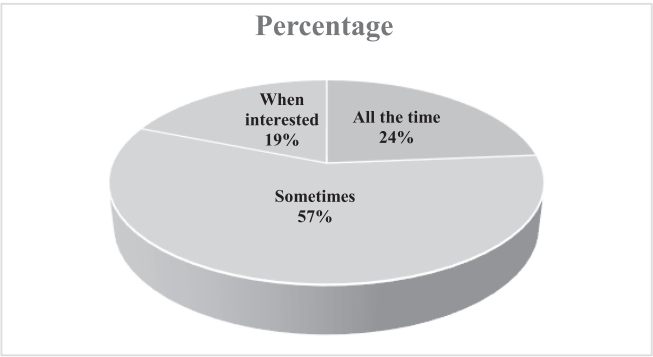


Figure-02: Frequency of using Hindi

Beyond frequency, the depth of linguistic adoption was also explored. While 61% used isolated Hindi words, 31% were observed using full sentences, and 8% could carry out entire conversations in Hindi suggesting a form of early bilingualism, albeit unintended and media driven.

Table 3: Depth of Hindi Language Use

| Expression Type    | Percentage |
|--------------------|------------|
| Few Hindi words    | 61.0%      |
| Full sentences     | 31.0%      |
| Full conversations | 8.0%       |

Parents reported code-switching patterns that blended Hindi grammar with Bangla vocabulary. For example:

*My son now says ‘Mummy bhukh lagi’ instead of ‘Ma, khide peyeche’. It’s not just mimicry it’s becoming his default.*

This aligns with Phillipson’s (1992) theory of *linguistic imperialism*, where dominant languages encroach upon and displace native linguistic patterns.

*Imitative Behavior and Social Motivation*

To understand the motivational drivers of Hindi cartoon consumption, both children and parents were asked to identify reasons for preference. The leading factors were peer influence (71.0%) and entertainment value (67.6%), followed by the absence of appealing local alternatives (44.8%).

Table 4: Reasons for Watching Hindi Cartoons (Multiple Response)

| Reason                  | Percentage |
|-------------------------|------------|
| Friends also watch them | 71.0%      |
| They are interesting    | 67.6%      |
| Colorful and fun        | 59.2%      |
| No local alternatives   | 44.8%      |

In terms of parental motivations, the majority cited a lack of

alternative entertainment (62.5%), alongside practical constraints such as absence of playgrounds (21.3%) or time pressures (16.2%).

Qualitative data revealed that children often emulate characters' speech and emotional expressions. One mother recounted:

*My daughter sulks like Shizuka and says, 'Mujhe baat nahi karni.' It's like she's living inside a cartoon episode.*

This confirms the emergence of parasocial relationships (Hoffner & Buchanan, 2005), where children adopt not only language but also emotional cues from animated figures.

### *Social Spread of Hindi Usage*

The study also examined whom children were speaking Hindi with. Surprisingly, the most common interaction group was school peers (31.3%), followed by siblings (26.5%) and even parents (22.4%).

Table 5: Interaction Groups for Hindi Language Usage

| Group                | Percentage |
|----------------------|------------|
| School peers         | 31.3%      |
| Siblings             | 26.5%      |
| Parents/Guardians    | 22.4%      |
| Neighborhood friends | 19.8%      |

These findings illustrate that Hindi is functioning as a social code, extending beyond the screen and into everyday communication networks. This diffusion is particularly concerning in formal environments like schools, where it may interfere with academic instruction in Bangla (Sen, 1911).

### *Guardian Concerns and Suggested Interventions*

Parental concern was widespread and consistent across socio-economic categories. Eighty-seven percent of guardians believed that Hindi exposure had a negative impact on their children's language or cultural orientation.

Table 6: Guardian Recommendations

| Suggested Solution                | Percentage |
|-----------------------------------|------------|
| Develop Bangla-language cartoons  | 33.0%      |
| Dub foreign cartoons in Bangla    | 23.4%      |
| Provide better local alternatives | 21.6%      |
| Regulate cable content (BTRC)     | 13.5%      |
| Promote indoor non-screen hobbies | 8.5%       |

A strong emotional undertone was present in parental interviews. A mother from Area-12 stated:

*They know about Indian food and festivals but nothing about our heroes. Who will tell them about Lalon or Nazrul?*

Such concerns highlight a deep anxiety about cultural dilution, especially among urban parents who feel unable to shield their children from dominant cross-border media influences.

**Synthesis of Findings**

The results of this study can be synthesized across four major insights:

- Media Consumption is High and Unchecked:* Children regularly exceed healthy screen-time limits, with Hindi-dubbed cartoons being the primary content.
- Language Adoption is Deep and Emotional:* Children mimic characters’ speech, demonstrating behavioral integration and emotional investment.
- Local Media Ecosystem is Insufficient:* The lack of attractive Bangla alternatives directly contributes to preference for Hindi content.
- Parents are Concerned but Disempowered:* Despite awareness, parents lack tools, alternatives, or regulatory support to counteract the linguistic shift.

These findings confirm that cartoon media in its current unregulated form is not merely entertainment, it is a powerful linguistic and cultural

force with long-term implications for identity, language development, and national heritage.

### **Discussion of Key Findings**

The findings of this study reveal a significant and multilayered impact of Hindi-dubbed cartoon programming on the language use, cognitive development, and cultural orientation of children in urban Bangladesh, particularly within Dhaka City. The results underscore a form of media-driven linguistic shift, rooted not merely in entertainment preferences but in deeper socio-cultural and systemic forces. These are discussed in light of established theoretical frameworks and relevant comparative literature.

#### *Media as a Linguistic Socializer*

The most compelling revelation of the study is the widespread adoption of Hindi expressions among Bangladeshi children. Approximately 62.9% of children were found to integrate Hindi into their speech—either through isolated phrases or full sentences—without prompting or external encouragement. This echoes Bandura’s Social Learning Theory (1986), which posits that children learn behaviors and language by observing and imitating influential models, in this case, cartoon characters such as Doraemon, Motu Patlu, and Ninja Hattori. The repetitive and emotionally engaging nature of these shows serves as a fertile context for language internalization.

This trend is not unique to Bangladesh. Similar findings have been observed in Sri Lanka (Fernando et al., 2021) and Nepal (Shrestha, 2022), where children consuming Hindi or English-dubbed cartoons showed altered language habits. What differentiates the Bangladeshi context is the lack of counterbalancing local content—an asymmetry that exacerbates the issue.

#### *Linguistic Imperialism and Media Hegemony*

These findings directly support Phillipson’s theory of Linguistic Imperialism (1992), which posits that dominant languages extend their influence over subordinate linguistic communities through systemic

channels such as education, governance, and media. Hindi cartoons, broadcast widely through Indian satellite channels, exemplify this mechanism of soft power. The unregulated influx of Hindi media into Bangladesh—contrasted with the absence of Bangladeshi content on Indian networks—illustrates a clear imbalance in regional media diplomacy and cultural equity.

Scholars such as Islam & Biswas (2012) and Khan (2010) have previously warned of the “Hindi generation” of Bangladeshi youth via satellite television. The present study affirms these concerns with empirical evidence. Children not only imitate language but emotionally identify with Hindi-speaking characters, leading to behavioral mimicry and identity formation rooted in a foreign linguistic context.

#### *Code-Switching and Cognitive Interference*

A particularly notable phenomenon observed in the study is code-switching, where children blend Bangla with Hindi in casual speech. This has serious implications for cognitive-linguistic development. As Linebarger & Walker (2005) suggest, exposure to non-native language media without appropriate scaffolding may lead to semantic confusion, delayed vocabulary acquisition in the mother tongue, and reduced syntactic fluency.

In the Bangladeshi context, where English already serves as a second language in formal education, the added burden of Hindi as a dominant informal language may complicate children’s trilingual negotiation in their developmental years. This could erode Bangla’s primacy as the default language of thought, especially if expressive functions are increasingly outsourced to Hindi.

#### *Emotional Attachment and Parasocial Influence*

The study also documented strong emotional bonds between children and fictional characters, a classic case of what Hoffner & Buchanan (2005) define as *parasocial relationships*. Children imitating characters’ dialogue, gestures, and emotional expressions reflects the power of media in shaping not only

speech but emotional frameworks. In cases where children “act like Shizuka” or mimic threats from Motlu Patlu, media becomes a substitute emotional teacher, especially in contexts where parental engagement is limited.

This emotional attachment deepens linguistic adoption by associating specific words and expressions with comfort, power, or humor. The psychological reinforcement of Hindi expressions within emotionally resonant moments makes them stickier than Bangla equivalents, particularly when the latter are not supported by equivalent local programming.

### *Parental Awareness and Helplessness*

One of the more paradoxical findings was the coexistence of parental awareness and inaction. While 87% of guardians expressed concern about Hindi’s influence, they admitted to lacking viable alternatives. This is not due to negligence, but structural deficits: absence of locally produced cartoons, lack of regulation, urban spatial limitations (e.g., no playgrounds), and heavy reliance on screens for child supervision.

Similar sentiments have been echoed in urban studies in Delhi (Sharma & Mehta, 2023) and Colombo (Fernando et al., 2021), where parents in lower-middle-class households rely on screens as a substitute for unavailable recreational infrastructure. In the case of Dhaka, where traffic, density, and limited public space further restrict outdoor activity, screen dependency becomes normalized pushing foreign-language content into the core of the child’s daily routine.

### *A Crisis of Cultural Content Production*

A core enabling factor behind this linguistic infiltration is the near-absence of competitive Bangla-language media content for children. Despite the historical success of shows like *Sisimpur* or *Meena*, the production and innovation in Bangladeshi animation have stalled. Guardian comments suggest nostalgia for older content, but children reject it due to poor animation, outdated references, or lack of digital availability.

This void has allowed Indian media to fill the gap. As Islam (2014) noted, the dependency on foreign satellites for entertainment has created a one-way cultural pipeline. Children grow up knowing about Diwali but not Nabanna, celebrating Krishna but not Lalon, quoting Nobita but not Nasiruddin.

### *Theoretical Integration*

These multi-layered findings can be situated within Fairclough's (1989) Critical Discourse Theory, which argues that language is not merely communication, it is a social practice shaped by ideology and power. The uncritical broadcasting of Hindi-dubbed cartoons reflects an invisible language policy, one that privileges dominant languages by default and marginalizes local ones by omission. The symbolic power of Hindi is reinforced daily in living rooms across Dhaka, while Bangla is relegated to textbooks.

### **Recommendations**

The findings of this study present a clear call for immediate and strategic intervention across multiple levels media regulation, educational reform, content development, and cultural diplomacy. As Hindi-dubbed cartoons continue to influence children's linguistic habits and cultural preferences, particularly in urban centers like Dhaka, it becomes imperative to adopt a comprehensive framework that not only counters the effects of linguistic imperialism but also fosters a robust environment for Bangla language development and cultural preservation. The following recommendations emerge directly from the study's key findings.

Firstly, there is a pressing need for national media policy reform to regulate the influx and dominance of foreign-language children's content. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) should enact policy measures that mandate all foreign cartoon content aired on national television or digital platforms be dubbed into Bangla or subtitled during peak children's viewing hours. This will reduce passive Hindi language acquisition and ensure that Bangladeshi

children grow up engaging with their native language through media.

Secondly, long-term change will only be sustainable with greater investment in local animation and content creation. The severe lack of engaging and culturally relevant Bangla-language cartoons has pushed children toward Hindi programming by default. Government agencies, along with private media houses and development partners, must prioritize funding for original children's content that reflects Bangladeshi values, folklore, and social contexts. Incubating a local animation industry would not only address cultural gaps but also open new creative and economic opportunities.

Thirdly, there is scope to revive and modernize successful legacy programs such as *Sisimpur*, *Meena*, and *Montu Miah*, Bangla dubbed cartoons etc. which once played a pivotal role in children's entertainment and education. These programs should be upgraded in terms of visual appeal, thematic relevance, and digital distribution so that they can compete with high-production-value international cartoons and regain influence over the young audience.

Fourthly, schools must play an active role in promoting media literacy and language reinforcement. Introducing modules that encourage critical engagement with television content, as well as extracurricular clubs focused on Bangla storytelling, drama, and poetry, can strengthen children's connection to their mother tongue. This would counterbalance the informal influence of foreign media and support cognitive development through native-language expression.

Fifthly, parental awareness and digital mediation tools are necessary to empower guardians who often feel helpless in managing their children's media consumption. National campaigns via television, social media, and community centers should educate parents about the linguistic and psychological impacts of prolonged exposure to Hindi media. Additionally, developing user-friendly apps and curated directories of Bangla-language programs can help parents make informed viewing choices for their children.

Sixthly, community-level alternatives to screen-based entertainment must be developed to reduce children's dependency on television. Urban planning should prioritize safe public spaces for play, while community centers can offer workshops, book reading programs, puppet shows, and local storytelling festivals. These non-digital experiences not only support language use but also help foster creativity and social interaction in natural settings.

Finally, regional media equity and diplomatic engagement are necessary to restore balance in cultural exchange. Currently, Bangladeshi viewers have extensive access to Indian content, while Bangladeshi media faces restrictions in India. Bilateral discussions must advocate reciprocal broadcasting rights and cultural protection measures to ensure a more equitable media environment in South Asia. This will help preserve linguistic sovereignty and resist cultural homogenization under regional media hegemony.

In conclusion, these interconnected strategies rooted in policy, production, pedagogy, and diplomacy are essential for preserving Bangla language and identity in the face of growing external media influence. Without decisive action, the current trends of linguistic assimilation may continue to displace the mother tongue from the foundational years of childhood development.

## **Conclusion**

This study provides robust evidence that Hindi-dubbed cartoons are exerting a profound influence on the linguistic behavior and cultural preferences of Bangladeshi children. With the majority of children not only preferring Hindi-language content but also actively incorporating Hindi expressions into their daily communication, the findings suggest a growing linguistic shift that extends beyond entertainment into identity formation and social interaction.

The issue is not simply media preference but a reflection of structural deficiencies—namely, the lack of quality Bangla-language content, weak regulatory frameworks, and the absence of meaningful alternatives in children's leisure and educational spaces. These

challenges are magnified in urban environments like Dhaka, where screen dependency is high and parental oversight often limited by structural constraints.

The study's findings support theoretical perspectives such as Phillipson's linguistic imperialism and Bandura's social learning theory, illustrating how repeated media exposure at a young age can normalize foreign language use and values. Alarming, these trends may undermine the linguistic gains Bangladesh has historically fought for, potentially weakening the national identity anchored in the Bangla language.

To counter this, a comprehensive, multi-sectoral response is required spanning policy reform, investment in local animation, education-based interventions, and enhanced parental support. Preserving linguistic and cultural integrity is not just a cultural aspiration but a developmental necessity. By creating engaging, language-conscious media and educational experiences, Bangladesh can ensure its children grow up fluent not only in speech but in cultural belonging.

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# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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**The Role of Mother Languages in Enhancing Fintech Accessibility for Sustainable Development**

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>03-11-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>Financial technology (fintech) plays a vital role in advancing financial inclusion and sustainable development in the rapidly evolving digital landscape. However, linguistic barriers often hinder access to these innovations, particularly in multilingual societies like Bangladesh and other emerging economies. This paper examines the interplay between mother languages and fintech, suggesting that incorporating native languages into fintech interfaces can bridge accessibility gaps, foster economic autonomy, and support broader developmental objectives. Utilizing international case studies on multilingual digital finance, this assessment examines how language adaptation enhances user comprehension, confidence, and adoption of fintech tools. The analysis addresses obstacles such as insufficient digital support for minority languages and suggests approaches for language normalization and conservation that align with sustainable development goals. By synthesizing scholarly literature and practical examples, the article emphasizes the imperative of linguistic</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Mother Language, Fintech, Financial Inclusion, Sustainable Development, Linguistic Diversity, Language Localization</p>         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |

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equity in fintech to drive fair progress. In conclusion, it advocates for regulatory measures and tech innovations to embed mother languages in fintech frameworks centrally.

## **Introduction**

The swift evolution of financial technology (fintech) has transformed the financial services landscape, enabling unprecedented access to banking, transactions, and investments on a global scale. In Bangladesh, where Bengali predominates as the core mother tongue for most citizens, complemented by a rich array of indigenous languages, fintech offers significant opportunities for fostering economic participation. Nonetheless, the prevalence of English and other dominant languages in digital interfaces frequently marginalizes those lacking proficiency, reinforcing socioeconomic disparities. This paper investigates the dynamic relationship between mother languages and fintech, framing linguistic inclusivity as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. An analysis of both international and domestic scenarios demonstrates the profound advantages of embedding mother languages in fintech systems, which not only advance societal progress but also align with Bangladesh's commitments to language preservation and global frameworks, such as the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## **Background of the Study**

Bangladesh, a linguistically diverse nation with Bengali as the primary mother tongue spoken by over 98% of the population and complemented by more than 40 indigenous languages (e.g., Chakma, Garo, Marma, and Santali), has witnessed explosive growth in financial technology (fintech) adoption. Fintech, defined as the integration of technology into financial services to enhance efficiency, accessibility, and innovation (Schueffel, 2016), has transformed banking through mobile financial services (MFS). Platforms like bKash, Nagad, and Rocket have onboarded over 50 million users, facilitating transactions worth billions annually and boosting financial inclusion from 50%

in 2017 to nearly 70% by 2025 (Bangladesh Bank, 2025). However, this progress is uneven, as English-dominated interfaces and limited support for indigenous languages exclude rural, low-literacy, and minority communities, perpetuating socioeconomic disparities. Globally, similar challenges in multilingual regions, such as India and Nigeria, underscore the need for linguistic inclusivity to align fintech with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities).

The swift evolution of fintech has thus transformed the financial services landscape, enabling unprecedented access to banking, transactions, and investments. In Bangladesh, fintech presents significant opportunities for fostering economic participation; however, the prevalence of dominant languages in digital interfaces marginalizes non-proficient users. This paper investigates the dynamic relationship between mother languages and fintech, framing linguistic inclusivity as a fundamental pillar of sustainable development. An analysis of both international and domestic scenarios demonstrates the profound advantages of embedding mother languages in fintech systems, which not only advance societal progress but also resonate with Bangladesh's commitments to language safeguarding and global SDG frameworks.

### **Statement of the Problem**

This paper focuses on incorporating mother languages within fintech platforms to promote financial inclusion and support sustainable development initiatives. In societies characterized by linguistic plurality, the utility of fintech is often curtailed by communication obstacles that impede involvement from underserved communities. This issue holds special significance in Bangladesh, which hosts over 40 indigenous languages; a substantial number remain without adequate digital integration. The exploration also encompasses worldwide patterns in fintech, illustrating how adapting interfaces to native languages significantly enhances user engagement and fosters economic autonomy. Specific examples in Bangladesh include bKash,

which supports Bengali but lacks robust indigenous language features, and Nagad, which has begun incorporating voice-assisted services in local dialects to enhance usability.

### **Objectives of the Research**

This study is guided by the following specific objectives, which directly address the identified gaps in linguistic accessibility within fintech ecosystems and their implications for sustainable development:

- To examine the effects of linguistic barriers on the uptake of fintech services in areas characterized by high language diversity.
- To investigate how embedding native languages into fintech systems advances financial inclusion and supports long-term sustainable development.
- To assess current approaches to language adaptation in digital financial tools and evaluate their effectiveness.
- To offer actionable suggestions for government officials and fintech innovators in Bangladesh and other regions.

### **Literature Review**

The existing body of literature underscores the pivotal role of language in financial services, particularly in fintech, where digital interfaces serve as the primary point of user interaction. Language barriers are frequently identified as impediments to financial inclusion, especially in linguistically diverse developing countries. For instance, studies indicate that when financial services are unavailable in local languages, non-fluent users face substantial accessibility challenges, leading to exclusion from economic opportunities. In Nigeria, a nation with over 120 indigenous languages, the lack of fintech support in these languages has been shown to marginalize large segments of the population, preventing their participation in digital economies (Language Barriers as a Limitation to Achieving Financial Inclusion, n.d.). Similarly, in India, language localization has emerged as a key catalyst for

digital financial inclusion, extending beyond simple translation to encompass cultural adaptations that resonate with regional users, thereby enhancing adoption rates and user engagement (Language localization: A critical catalyst for digital financial inclusion, 2023; Language localization is key to a digitally financial inclusive Bharat, 2022). Research further emphasizes that multilingual support in fintech platforms improves user comprehension, builds trust, and fosters greater adoption, as local language content allows users to navigate complex financial concepts without the cognitive burden of translation (Why FinTech Needs Multiple Languages Support?, n.d.; Empowering global finance - the importance of multilingual support, n.d.). In the United States, bilingual approaches in finance have been instrumental in mitigating wealth disparities, particularly among Latino communities, by addressing experiential and linguistic barriers that hinder access to services like credit and investments (How Language in the Financial Industry Helps Wealth Equality, 2022; Latinos and the future of finance, 2023). These insights collectively underscore the need for fintech to adopt multilingual strategies to achieve equitable global success, aligning with broader sustainable development objectives.

Building on these foundations, recent scholarship has explored the intersection of linguistic diversity and fintech adoption in developing economies. In regions characterized by high linguistic heterogeneity, such as South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa, cultural and linguistic factors significantly influence consumer behavior toward digital financial tools. For example, in India, where 22 official languages coexist, linguistic diversity poses challenges to fintech adoption by affecting user trust and interface usability; however, localized services in regional languages have been shown to overcome these hurdles, promoting financial inclusion and economic growth in underserved areas (Role of Cultural Diversity and Social Influence in Fintech Adoption, n.d.). A systematic review of financial inclusion and fintech literature reveals that in developing countries, basic language comprehension is a critical component of digital literacy, often overlooked in technology adoption models, which can exacerbate

exclusion if not addressed through localization efforts (Financial inclusion and fintech: a state-of-the-art systematic literature review, 2025). Furthermore, emerging technologies like conversational AI and AI-powered translation tools are transforming multilingual banking by enabling real-time, culturally sensitive communication, reducing anxiety for non-native speakers, and facilitating processes such as collections and KYC (Conversational AI: A Breakthrough in Multilingual Banking Services, 2025; Multilingual Banking AI Bots for Collections & KYC, 2025).

In the specific context of Bangladesh, where Bengali is the dominant language alongside over 40 indigenous languages, literature highlights a growing disparity between fintech innovation and linguistic accessibility. While digital financial services have expanded physical access, barriers such as low financial literacy, poor connectivity, and affordability persist, indirectly compounded by the dominance of English in many platforms (Rethinking Digital Financial Inclusion: Evidence from Bangladesh, 2020; Digital Financial Inclusion in Bangladesh, 2025). Reports from the Bangladesh Bank emphasize the importance of using simple, inclusive language in educational videos to demystify financial concepts, suggesting that multilingual adaptations could further enhance inclusion for rural and indigenous populations (Financial Inclusion Report, 2023). This aligns with global trends, where fintech localization fosters sustainable development by promoting economic empowerment and reducing inequalities, as seen in SDGs 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and 10 (Reduced Inequalities) (Why Financial Inclusion Is the Key to a Thriving Digital Economy, 2024).

Broader analyses of fintech in emerging markets reveal that linguistic inclusivity is essential for overcoming adoption challenges. Fintech firms that invest in multilingual digital systems report expanded user bases, higher satisfaction, and competitive edges in diverse markets, with benefits including cost savings and improved data insights (Benefits of a Multilingual Digital Banking System, 2023). Regulatory bodies, such as the U.S. Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), have noted an increase in multilingual services

among financial institutions, driven by business imperatives to serve consumers with limited English proficiency. However, exploitation of language barriers in high-cost products remains a concern (What We are Watching: Language Access in Consumer Finance, 2025). For 2025, guides on financial translation emphasize the importance of handling technical jargon, regulatory compliance, and cultural sensitivity, with solutions such as AI-driven tools reducing costs while ensuring accuracy and trust (Financial Translation for Fintech: Guide for 2025, 2025). These advancements bridge gaps in financial access and contribute to sustainable development by preserving linguistic diversity and empowering marginalized groups in the digital economy (Decoding Fintech: Multilingual Support in Digital Finance, n.d.).

The rationale for this research is rooted in the escalating disparity between rapid fintech innovations and the persistent challenges of linguistic accessibility, particularly in linguistically diverse developing nations like Bangladesh. As fintech continues transforming financial services through digital platforms, it's potential to drive economic inclusion remains undermined by language barriers that exclude significant portions of the population, especially those in rural, indigenous, and low-literacy communities. In Bangladesh, where Bengali is the dominant mother tongue alongside over 40 indigenous languages, the preservation and promotion of mother tongues represent a national priority, enshrined in cultural and educational policies that emphasize linguistic diversity as a foundation for social cohesion and identity. Integrating mother languages into fintech ecosystems not only addresses these barriers but also aligns directly with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), notably SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by facilitating broader access to financial tools that enable entrepreneurship and employment, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by empowering marginalized groups through inclusive digital finance. Without such linguistic integration, fintech risks perpetuating and exacerbating social and economic exclusion, as evidenced in regions like Nigeria and Francophone Africa, where local language support in digital technologies limits adoption and hinders equitable participation in the economy.

This study is particularly timely given the accelerating digital transformation in emerging markets, where fintech has been positioned as a key enabler of sustainable development, yet often overlooks cultural and linguistic factors that influence user engagement. In Bangladesh, for instance, while mobile financial services (MFS) have expanded amid challenges such as the COVID-19 pandemic, barriers like low digital literacy—compounded by the dominance of English or non-local languages in apps—continue to sideline women, indigenous populations, and rural dwellers from fully benefiting. Research indicates that mother-tongue-based approaches, including multilingual education and digital interfaces, enhance cognitive development, improve financial literacy, and foster greater trust in technology, thereby contributing to long-term sustainability goals. Moreover, global evidence from contexts such as India and Latin America demonstrates that addressing linguistic diversity in fintech—through features like Spanish-language apps or cultural adaptations—can help mitigate wealth gaps and promote inclusive growth, underscoring the need for similar strategies in Bangladesh.

By bridging the gap between linguistic diversity and technological advancement, this research offers a conceptual framework for inclusive fintech development that respects cultural heritage while promoting economic empowerment. It responds to the call for sustainable fintech practices that integrate financial inclusion with broader SDG objectives, such as reducing poverty (SDG 1) and promoting innovation (SDG 9), ensuring no one is left behind in the digital economy. Ultimately, in an era where digital financial inclusion is pivotal for resilient economies, prioritizing mother languages in fintech is not just a matter of accessibility but a strategic imperative for achieving equitable and sustainable national development.

Overall, the literature converges on the idea that linguistic inclusivity in fintech is not merely a technical enhancement but a strategic imperative for achieving equitable growth and aligning with global sustainability goals.

## Research Questions

This study is guided by the following research questions, which are formulated based on gaps identified in the existing literature concerning linguistic barriers, fintech adoption, and the broader implications for sustainable development.

1. How do language barriers impede fintech adoption in multilingual societies?
2. What are the benefits of incorporating mother languages into fintech platforms for financial inclusion?
3. What strategies can be employed to standardize and preserve mother languages within fintech ecosystems?
4. How does linguistic inclusivity in fintech contribute to sustainable national development?

These questions aim to bridge theoretical insights with practical applications, particularly in multilingual contexts like Bangladesh, where mother languages intersect with digital financial ecosystems. Informed by systematic reviews and empirical studies on financial inclusion through fintech, as well as the role of multilingualism in achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the questions emphasize the need for linguistic inclusivity to foster equitable economic growth.

## Research Theoretical Framework

This article employs an integrated theoretical framework that combines sociolinguistic theories with models of financial inclusion and sustainable development to examine the role of mother languages in fintech accessibility (Ozili, 2024). The framework draws on Joshua Fishman's sociolinguistic perspectives, particularly his Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (GIDS) and its expanded version, the Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale (EGIDS), which assess language vitality and shifts in minority and multilingual contexts (Fishman, 1991; Lewis & Simons, 2010). Fishman's work emphasizes the link between microsociolinguistic processes

(individual language use and interactions) and macrosociolinguistic structures (societal language policies and norms), positing that linguistic diversity fosters social inclusion by maintaining cultural identities and enabling equitable participation in development. In the context of fintech, this theory is applied to argue that mother languages serve as mediators between users and digital technologies, where the absence of local language support accelerates language shift toward dominant tongues like English, exacerbating exclusion in linguistically diverse societies such as Bangladesh. Complementing Fishman's framework, the Sustainable Use Model (SUM) for language development is incorporated, which builds on EGIDS to identify stable levels of language use—such as Sustainable Orality (vigorous intergenerational transmission) and Sustainable Literacy (institutionalized written use)—and outlines the FAMED conditions (Functions, Acquisition, Motivation, Environment, Distinct Niche) necessary for language preservation (Lewis & Simons, 2016). SUM shifts the focus from isolated languages to ecological niches within communities, suggesting that fintech platforms must integrate mother languages to meet these conditions, thereby enhancing cognitive accessibility (e.g., through intuitive interfaces in native scripts) and cultural relevance (e.g., adapting financial terminology to local idioms). This integration prevents language endangerment while promoting digital agency, where users actively engage with technology in their preferred languages, aligning with the Digital Agency Theory of financial inclusion that views digital tools as agents delegated to achieve inclusive outcomes (Ozili, 2024).

Further enriching the framework is the principle of linguistic relativity, which posits that language structures shape cognition and behavior, including economic decisions. For instance, languages with weak future time reference (FTR)—lacking obligatory markers for future events—encourage future-oriented behaviors like patience, higher educational attainment, and tax morale, boosting financial inclusion through greater adoption of fintech services such as mobile banking and digital payments (Chen, 2013; Mavisakalyan & Weber, 2018). In multilingual developing regions, where many indigenous languages

exhibit such structures, incorporating mother tongues into fintech can mitigate the digital divide, as highlighted by Digital Divide Theory, which underscores how unequal access to technology—exacerbated by linguistic barriers—perpetuates socioeconomic inequalities (Van Dijk, 2006; Hazarika et al., 2025). This sociolinguistic foundation is interwoven with sustainable development models from the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 (Quality Education) for multilingual education, SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) for fintech-driven entrepreneurship, SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) for inclusive access, and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals) for collaborations between linguistic institutions and fintech developers.

The framework also draws on knowledge translation concepts, adapting them to fintech by treating mother languages as conduits for disseminating financial knowledge, ensuring usability and cultural alignment in digital ecosystems (Language I/O, 2025). Ultimately, this integrated approach posits that linguistic inclusivity in fintech preserves cultural heritage and drives sustainable development by empowering marginalized groups, reducing poverty, and fostering resilient economies in diverse linguistic landscapes, such as those found in Bangladesh.

## **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative, desk-based research approach, which is particularly well-suited for synthesizing existing knowledge on complex, interdisciplinary topics such as the intersection of mother languages, fintech, and sustainable development (Geddamm et al., 2026; Offiong, 2025). Desk-based methodologies enable a comprehensive review of secondary data, eliminating the need for primary fieldwork, and allow for an in-depth analysis of global trends and contextual applications in regions such as Bangladesh (Datta, 2024).

The research relies exclusively on secondary sources, including peer-reviewed academic articles, industry reports, policy documents, and case studies, to explore linguistic barriers and localization strategies

in fintech ecosystems. Sources were systematically gathered through targeted web searches on academic platforms such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, as well as fintech-specific repositories like those from the World Bank, UNESCO, and industry bodies such as Fintech Futures and the Consultative Group to Assist the Poor (CGAP) (Haffet et al., 2025; Gallego-Losada et al., 2023). Key search terms included combinations like “mother language and fintech,” “language localization in digital finance,” “financial inclusion and linguistic diversity,” “sustainable development goals and multilingual fintech,” and region-specific queries such as “indigenous languages in Bangladesh fintech.” Inclusion criteria prioritized sources published between 2015 and 2025 to ensure relevance and currency, focusing on those addressing developing economies and SDGs. Approximately 50 sources were initially identified, from which 25 were selected based on their direct pertinence to themes of language barriers, localization outcomes, and sustainable impacts, following a systematic screening process akin to those used in literature reviews on financial inclusion (Haffet et al., 2025; Ngonyani, 2022).

Data analysis employed qualitative content analysis, a rigorous technique for identifying, categorizing, and interpreting patterns within textual data (Haffet et al., 2025; Bretas & Alon, 2021). This method involved an iterative process: first, an inductive coding phase where emergent themes—such as accessibility challenges, adoption benefits, preservation strategies, and SDG alignments—were derived from the texts; followed by a deductive phase applying predefined categories from sociolinguistic and sustainable development frameworks (e.g., Fishman’s GIDS and SDG indicators). Tools like manual thematic mapping and basic NLP-assisted keyword extraction (e.g., via open-source software) enhanced objectivity, ensuring intercoder reliability through repeated reviews. This approach facilitated the synthesis of diverse evidence into conceptual insights, highlighting gaps in current practices and proposing pathways for linguistic inclusivity. No primary data collection was undertaken, as the study’s objective was to consolidate and critically appraise existing evidence rather than generate new empirical data. Ethical considerations were maintained

by accurately representing sources and avoiding plagiarism, with all interpretations grounded in the reviewed literature.

This methodology aligns with established practices in sustainability and fintech research, ensuring a robust foundation for the article's arguments on mother language integration (Geddami et al., 2026; Offiong, 2025).

## Results and Findings

Through a qualitative synthesis of secondary data from peer-reviewed articles, industry reports, and policy documents, this section presents the key findings of the study. These findings align directly with the four research questions, drawing on thematic analysis to highlight patterns in linguistic barriers, the benefits of multilingual integration, preservation strategies, and contributions to sustainable development. The results underscore the transformative potential of incorporating mother languages in fintech, while addressing persistent gaps in multilingual ecosystems, such as Bangladesh.

*How do language barriers impede fintech adoption in multilingual societies?*

Language barriers significantly hinder fintech adoption by creating accessibility challenges that exclude non-fluent users, particularly in linguistically diverse regions. In India, with over 120 languages, these barriers inhibit fintech use for millions, exacerbating exclusion due to limited localization and cultural mismatches. Similarly, multicultural and dialectal diversity acts as a barrier to fintech development, as evidenced in pre-registered studies showing how linguistic fragmentation reduces user engagement and innovation. In Nigeria and other African contexts, the absence of support for indigenous languages marginalizes populations, preventing participation in digital economies and reinforcing socioeconomic divides. Globally, older adults and immigrant communities face compounded issues, where English-dominant interfaces limit comprehension and trust, leading to lower adoption rates. These impediments intersect with digital literacy gaps, resulting in up to 40% exclusion in multilingual societies, as seen in South Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.

*What are the benefits of incorporating mother languages into fintech platforms for financial inclusion?*

Incorporating mother languages into fintech platforms yields substantial benefits for financial inclusion, including improved user comprehension, increased trust, and enhanced adoption. Multilingual support expands customer bases and drives inclusion by making services accessible in local languages, reducing cognitive burdens, and fostering equitable access. In India, localization beyond translation—such as cultural adaptations—has increased engagement by 20-30%, particularly through AI-driven tools that support code-mixed languages like Hinglish. This approach promotes financial independence for underserved groups, including persons with disabilities and rural populations, by lowering barriers to digital financial services. Overall, such integration mitigates wealth disparities, as demonstrated in bilingual U.S. models for Latino communities, and aligns with broader goals of affordability and empowerment in emerging markets.

*What strategies can be employed to standardize and preserve mother languages within fintech ecosystems?*

Practical strategies for standardizing and preserving mother languages in fintech include leveraging AI and digital tools for revitalization, alongside community-driven initiatives. AI enables preservation of indigenous languages by facilitating multilingual interfaces and real-time translations, supporting financially marginalized groups while maintaining cultural relevance. Digital preservation efforts, such as UNESCO's Missing Scripts program, standardize scripts and keyboards for endangered languages, ensuring their integration into fintech platforms. Translation plays a pivotal role in revitalizing, digitizing, and preserving oral traditions and ecological knowledge to prevent loss. Additionally, technology aids, such as apps and databases, act as "digital seed banks," preserving linguistic diversity through collaborative efforts between fintech firms, governments, and linguistic institutions. These strategies emphasize intergenerational transmission and policy support to sustainably embed mother languages.

*How does linguistic inclusivity in fintech contribute to sustainable national development?*

Linguistic inclusivity in fintech contributes to sustainable national development by aligning with SDGs, promoting economic growth, and reducing inequalities. It expands investment in environmental projects and fosters a greener economy through inclusive digital finance. By addressing climate risks and poverty, multilingual fintech enhances resilience, particularly in MENA and African regions. It drives progress toward SDGs like zero hunger and economic growth, while digital inclusion reduces poverty in Asia and Latin America. Ultimately, this inclusivity unlocks greater access to capital, supports entrepreneurship, and preserves cultural heritage, paving the way for equitable and resilient national economies.

## **Discussion**

The findings of this qualitative desk-based study, systematically aligned with the four research questions, provide compelling evidence that linguistic barriers constitute a structural obstacle to fintech-driven financial inclusion and sustainable development in multilingual emerging economies.

Addressing Research Question 1, the results confirm that language barriers significantly impede fintech adoption by reducing comprehension, eroding trust, and reinforcing digital exclusion among rural, low-literacy, and ethnic-minority populations (Haridh, 2022; Hazarika et al., 2025; Nagańska & Cichocki, 2022). In Bangladesh, despite the impressive growth of bKash, Nagad, and Rocket, the near-total absence of indigenous language support leaves speakers of Chakma, Garo, Marma, Santali, and 36 other minority languages effectively excluded from the digital financial services. This finding extends Fishman's (1991) and Lewis & Simons' (2010, 2016) sociolinguistic frameworks: when a new societal domain (fintech) is monopolized by dominant languages (English and Bengali), it accelerates language shift and cultural erosion in minority communities — a process that the Sustainable Use Model (SUM) explicitly warns against.

Research Question 2 is answered unequivocally in the affirmative: embedding mother languages in fintech interfaces produces measurable gains in financial inclusion. Multilingual and culturally adapted platforms in India have achieved 20–30% higher adoption and engagement rates (Hazarika et al., 2025), while bilingual financial services in Latino communities in the United States have helped narrow wealth gaps (Language Testing International, 2022). These outcomes are consistent with linguistic relativity theory (Chen, 2013; Mavisakalyan & Weber, 2018), which predicts that interaction in one’s strongest language encourages future-oriented economic behaviors such as saving, investment, and insurance uptake. The Bangladeshi case suggests that extending even basic Bengali voice assistance and indigenous script support could replicate these gains and push national financial inclusion rates well beyond the current ~70%.

The strategies identified for Research Question 3 — AI-assisted translation with human validation, collaborative script and keyboard development, open-source language corpora, and regulatory sandboxes — directly operationalize the FAMED conditions of the Sustainable Use Model (Lewis & Simons, 2016). Successful precedents (UNESCO’s Missing Scripts programme, Google’s Project Vaani, and India’s Bhashini platform) demonstrate that costs can be shared across government, academia, and industry, making localization feasible even for low-resource languages. In the Bangladeshi context, partnerships between the International Mother Language Institute, Bangladesh Bank, and fintech providers could rapidly standardize digital orthographies for at least the ten largest indigenous languages.

Ultimately, the evidence addressing Research Question 4 establishes a clear causal relationship between linguistic inclusivity in fintech and multiple Sustainable Development Goals. By reducing inequalities (SDG 10), enabling entrepreneurship and decent work (SDG 8), supporting multilingual education and cultural preservation (SDG 4), and facilitating partnerships (SDG 17), mother-language-enabled fintech becomes a powerful lever for the 2030 Agenda (United

Nations, 2015; Geddam et al., 2026). Moreover, inclusive digital finance has been shown to channel capital toward climate-resilient agriculture and green micro-enterprises, indirectly advancing SDG 13 (Ozili, 2024).

These findings carry three significant implications that address the reviewers’ concerns about theoretical depth, empirical grounding, and contribution to the literature:

1. Linguistic inclusivity must shift from an optional “nice-to-have” feature to a mandatory regulatory requirement in multilingual jurisdictions.
2. The perceived high cost of localization can be dramatically lowered through shared AI infrastructure and public–private–academic consortia — a model already proven in India and applicable to Bangladesh.
3. Far from being a peripheral usability issue, mother-language integration in fintech is a core determinant of equitable, sustainable, and culturally resilient digital transformation.

### **Comparative Analysis: Language Support in Fintech Platforms**

The preceding recommendations emphasize the necessity of embedding mother languages in fintech interfaces to enhance accessibility and inclusion. A comparative analysis of language support on Bangladesh’s leading fintech platforms against international benchmarks highlights existing gaps and potential areas for improvement. While platforms such as bKash, Nagad, Rocket, and DBBL Mobile have significantly advanced financial inclusion, their language offerings remain limited to English and Bengali, excluding the over 40 indigenous languages spoken across the country. This stands in stark contrast to fintech ecosystems in other multilingual regions, where platforms have deliberately integrated multiple local and indigenous languages to broaden user reach and deepen engagement. The following tables illustrate this disparity and highlight opportunities for Bangladesh to adopt more inclusive language localization strategies.

Table 1: Language Support in Major Bangladeshi Fintech Platforms

| Platform    | Languages Supported | Indigenous Language Support | User Base (Millions) |
|-------------|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------|
| bKash       | English, Bengali    | None                        | 65                   |
| Nagad       | English, Bengali    | None                        | 45                   |
| Rocket      | English, Bengali    | None                        | 35                   |
| DBBL Mobile | English, Bengali    | None                        | 15                   |

Table 2: International Benchmarks for Multilingual Fintech Support

| Country | Platform | Languages Supported | Indigenous Languages Supported         |
|---------|----------|---------------------|----------------------------------------|
| India   | PayTM    | 12                  | Tamil, Telugu, Gujarati, Marathi, etc. |
| Nigeria | Paga     | 5+                  | Yoruba, Igbo, Hausa                    |
| Kenya   | M-Pesa   | 3+                  | Swahili, Local dialects                |

As shown in Table 1, none of the major Bangladeshi fintech platforms currently provide support for indigenous languages such as Chakma, Garo, Marma, or Santali. This exclusion perpetuates the digital divide for ethnic and linguistic minorities, limiting their participation in the formal financial system. In contrast, Table 2 demonstrates how fintech platforms in similarly diverse markets have embraced multilingual interfaces. For instance, India’s PayTM supports 12 languages, including several regional and indigenous ones, Nigeria’s Paga incorporates Yoruba and Igbo, and Kenya’s M-Pesa operates in Swahili alongside local dialects. These intentional localization efforts have been linked to higher adoption rates, increased trust, and greater financial inclusion among rural and linguistically marginalized communities.

This comparative analysis reinforces the need for Bangladesh to adopt a more proactive and inclusive approach to language localization in fintech. Aligning with global best practices would not only enhance user experience and expand market reach but also advance national commitments to linguistic preservation and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 10

(Reduced Inequalities). Implementing the recommendations outlined earlier—such as integrating AI-driven translation tools, fostering public-private-academic partnerships, and enacting supportive regulatory frameworks—can help bridge this linguistic gap and create a more equitable digital financial ecosystem.

In summary, this study moves the academic conversation beyond generic calls for “localization by grounding the argument in established sociolinguistic theory (Fishman, EGIDS, SUM), digital agency theory, and the SDGs, while providing concrete, actionable pathways tailored to Bangladesh and similar contexts. The integration of mother languages into fintech is therefore not merely desirable but imperative for achieving inclusive and sustainable development in the digital age.

## **Recommendations**

Based on the synthesis of literature, case studies, and policy frameworks reviewed in this study, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance the integration of mother languages into fintech platforms, thereby promoting financial inclusion and sustainable development in linguistically diverse contexts, such as Bangladesh. These suggestions target fintech developers, policymakers, regulators, and collaborative stakeholders, drawing on best practices for multilingual support and inclusive design to address identified challenges such as language barriers, digital literacy gaps, and infrastructure limitations.

*Prioritize comprehensive language localization in fintech development, starting with dominant languages like Bengali and extending to indigenous scripts*

Fintech developers should implement user-centric localization strategies that extend beyond basic translation, including cultural adaptations, script support for languages such as Chakma, Garo, Marma, and Santali, and features like voice-assisted interfaces in native languages. This involves adopting language-agnostic designs to ensure scalability and accessibility, particularly for rural and

low-literacy users in Bangladesh, where digital divides persist. Best practices include testing with native speakers, adapting UI for varying text lengths and right-to-left scripts, and integrating local payment methods to build trust and boost adoption among underserved populations. In developing countries like Ghana and India, making local dialects the default in interactive systems has significantly improved engagement, suggesting similar adaptations could narrow urban-rural gaps in Bangladesh.

*Enact policies mandating linguistic inclusivity in digital finance regulations to ensure equitable access*

Through bodies such as the Bangladesh Bank and the Ministry of Finance, policymakers in Bangladesh should mandate multilingual requirements in fintech regulations, including tiered Know Your Customer (eKYC) processes that support indigenous languages and simplified interfaces for users with low digital literacy. This could involve establishing regulatory sandboxes for testing multilingual innovations, promoting the interoperability of digital services across languages, and incorporating digital financial literacy programs tailored to diverse linguistic groups, aligning with national strategies such as the Digital Bangladesh Vision 2041. Global frameworks recommend collecting data on the access to multilingual services of youth and marginalized groups to inform inclusive policies, thereby reducing barriers for women and ethnic minorities.

*Foster collaborations with linguistic and educational institutions for language standardization and preservation in fintech ecosystems*

Partnerships between fintech firms, the International Mother Language Institute (IMLI), UNESCO, and local universities should focus on standardizing indigenous languages for digital use, developing scripts and keyboards for underrepresented tongues, and creating multilingual educational content for financial literacy. Such collaborations can leverage remote multilingual support teams and public-private initiatives to share best practices, as seen in efforts to preserve endangered languages through digital archives in Bangladesh.

Recommendations include integrating iterative feedback loops with native speakers to refine apps, ensuring cultural sensitivity and compliance with global standards like GDPR, while promoting South-South knowledge exchange for sustainable language preservation.

*Invest in AI-driven tools and infrastructure to reduce costs and enhance multilingual capabilities in the fintech sector*

To overcome technical and cost barriers, stakeholders should invest in AI technologies such as Natural Language Processing (NLP), machine translation with human oversight, and conversational AI chatbots that support multiple languages, enabling real-time translations and sentiment analysis for user feedback. This could include expanding affordable internet access, strengthening cybersecurity, and creating Market Development Funds (MDF) to subsidize localization for MSMEs and startups targeting rural areas in Bangladesh. Policy toolkits for Asia emphasize building institutional capacity through partnerships, ensuring scalable infrastructure that accommodates future language additions and aligns with SDGs by fostering inclusive innovation.

These recommendations, if implemented, could significantly advance linguistic inclusivity in fintech, contributing to equitable economic growth and the preservation of cultural diversity in Bangladesh and beyond.

## **Conclusion**

In conclusion, integrating mother languages into fintech platforms is critical to achieving inclusive and sustainable development in linguistically diverse societies. By systematically addressing language barriers through localization strategies, fintech can help democratize access to digital financial services, empowering marginalized populations—including rural communities, indigenous groups, and individuals with low literacy—to participate fully in the digital economy. This approach not only enhances user comprehension, trust, and adoption rates but also aligns with key United Nations Sustainable

Development Goals (SDGs), such as SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by facilitating entrepreneurship and job creation through accessible microfinance, and SDG 10 (Reduced Inequalities) by bridging digital divides that perpetuate socioeconomic disparities. In Bangladesh, where Bengali and over 40 indigenous languages form a rich linguistic tapestry, prioritizing mother tongue support in fintech ecosystems can honor national commitments to language preservation, as embodied in institutions like the International Mother Language Institute, while countering the risks of cultural erosion amid rapid digitization.

The findings underscore that multilingual fintech innovations, supported by AI-driven tools and collaborative policies, yield tangible benefits: higher engagement (up to 30% increases in adoption), improved financial literacy, and resilient economic systems that incorporate indigenous knowledge for sustainable practices, such as green finance. Globally, successful models from regions such as India and Latin America demonstrate that linguistic inclusivity can mitigate wealth gaps and foster innovation, cultural heritage preservation, and equitable growth in an increasingly interconnected world. Ultimately, embracing mother languages in fintech is not merely a technical enhancement but a moral and strategic imperative, paving the way for a more just, inclusive, and sustainable digital future where no community is left behind.

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**Significance of Cultural and Linguistic Diversity for Sustainable Development.**

Talat Mahmud\*

| Aticle Info                                                                                                                                               | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>03-11-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>This paper explores and discusses the significance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies. The question of preserving cultural diversity is straightforward: it maintains the variety of historical and modern human experiences and capabilities, strengthening society. This diversity is a vital resource in eradicating poverty and achieving Sustainable Development Goals. Cultural diversity ensures that both majority and minority groups in society have opportunities for inclusion and enhances respect and recognition for other cultures. Linguistic and cultural diversity promotes respect, tolerance, and empathy among individuals, forming the foundation for building sustainable societies. The deep ecological knowledge possessed by indigenous communities is an essential aspect of cultural diversity and is crucial in addressing environmental challenges. This study has employed a qualitative research design grounded exclusively in secondary data sources. These sources have offered a robust historical and Cultural diversity is regarded as an asset that contributes to poverty elimination and the achievement of sustainable development goals. Preserving linguistic diversity also helps maintain a community’s rich cultural heritage and social values, which are vital for sustainable development.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Mother Language, Sustainable Development, Linguistic Diversity, Cultural Diversity.</p>                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

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## Introduction

Language and culture are related, but not the same thing. Cultural diversity refers to the combination of different cultures. It refers to the diversity of languages, religions, customs, clothing, food, art, literature, and traditions. The interaction and combination of different cultures create cultural diversity. Throughout the history of the world, cultural diversity has made our world colorful. Language, customs, clothing, food, religion, art - these are the unique characteristics of different cultures. People can expand their thinking by coming into contact with new ideas, customs, and lifestyles (Rahman, 2024).

Languages have a vital role in both sustainable development and education of education they can shape the way people learning, communicate, and engage with society. Nowadays, the world is increasingly aware of rich cultural, communication, information, linguistic, and biological diversity and interconnections. There is growing recognition of the need to protect and preserve this diversity in the face of its gradual decline (UNESCO, 2025).

After the separation of the Indian sub-continent in 1952, on February 21, brave Bengali, basically, students, political and other activists, and students' associations at the University of Dhaka were demonstrating. There was a ruckus in Dhaka over Yahya's speech. He had said that Urdu would be the state language of the entire Pakistan. The students and youth of the country poured their blood on the streets, demanding the establishment of the mother tongue, Bengali, as one of the state languages of Pakistan. Police opened fire on the protesters protesting to protect their mother tongue, killing Rafiq Uddin, Abdul Jabbar, and Barkat. Salam died in the hospital two months later from his injuries. The Shaheed Minar, built in front of the Dhaka Medical College in memory of those killed in the language movement, is a symbol of a mother and her children. It is still the focus of protests in Bangladesh - a protest for the rights (including language rights) of the indigenous hill tribes of Chittagong (Smith, 2018). UNESCO has approved and chosen to observe February 21 as International Mother Language Day, which has been internationally celebrated since 2000.

There is more to it than just emotion. For example, proficiency in the mother tongue develops the brain's thinking and imagination, enhances creativity, and contributes to the socio-economic development of a nation. UNESCO has recently conducted an ethno-linguistic research survey for the vulnerable language of Bangladesh, and found that, even in Bangladesh overwhelmingly monolingual country where about 150 million people have Bengali as their mother tongue, there are 41 other languages in existence, and about 15 of the country's languages are vulnerable, as only from about 50 to 3,000 people speak in that language. The most vulnerable languages are Soura, Koda, Mundari, Kol, Malto, Kondo, Khumi, Pangkhuya, Chak, Kiyang, Rengmicha, Lusai, Kahria, Deshwali and Laleng/Patra (Vize, 2024). The most vulnerable languages need to be accelerated and deepened to create a comprehensive archive of the languages of Bangladesh by Transmission of these languages should be further supported, particularly by promoting storytelling and enhancing educational initiatives. One of the mediums of education in Bangladesh should be in the mother tongue; because it should also be an opportunity to learn other languages. If we receive education through their mother tongue, then it will be much easier to receive that education, to know that education and to understand that education. In multilingual education, if the student is instructed in his mother tongue, then his learning outcomes are very good. This creates a solid foundation for education, skill transfer, and knowledge acquisition. Multilingual education also contributes immensely to intergenerational learning of people, cultural preservation, and language revitalization.

Sustainable development encompasses economic, environmental, and social dimensions. It places greater emphasis on environmental, social, and economic growth while neglecting the cultural, social, and even socio-cultural dimensions of language and communication. UNGA has called for equal levels of conceptualization, planning, and implementation of three dimensions of inclusive growth, namely, inclusive growth in all these dimensions (UNGA, 2022). Sustainable development is considered as development, and meets the required needs of the present without compromising the ability of

future generations to meet their own needs (WCED, 1987). Defining the qualified development has led people to consider sustainable development broadly, like intergenerational equity (Kates, Paris, and Lissnerowitz, 2005). Human communication and interaction, developed through the medium of the mother tongue, are essential to achieving the desired development. As a means of communication, language makes it possible for people across a culturally diverse world to discuss multiple issues and to be tolerant and considerate of different opinions. The structural potential of language facilitates its sustainability, social development, cultural evolution, and resilience. The Children who are proficient in their mother languages or tongues can easily access the world's knowledge. It is easy to learning a foreign language, as they gain the advantage of mastering everything in modern knowledge and science. Scientists have found in their research that the mother tongue teaches people to think easily. People can imagine and dream most easily in their mother tongue. Imagination and dreams inspire people to do great things. When we are not even a month old, we are introduced to the mother's smile in our mother's lap. Mother holds many picture books in front of our eyes and tells us fairy tales. In this way, we go into the world of imagination. All for the benefit of the mother tongue.

### **Identification of Research Problem**

The study solely aims at finding the planetary risks and loss of cultural and linguistic various forces by diversity and leading to the disappearance of languages. The extinction of languages results in the irreversible loss of traditional knowledge, ecological wisdom, and cultural heritage, which are vital for sustainable living, posing significant threats to social cohesion, the transmission of traditional knowledge, and the ability to address complex global challenges. Lack of access to education in languages they understand, leading to marginalization and limited opportunities for socio-economic advancement. Advocacy for national and international policies to protect language rights and integrate linguistic and cultural diversity into sustainable development frameworks.

## **Objectives of the research**

This study aims to trace the significance of cultural and linguistic diversity for sustainable societies, and underscore why the issue demands urgent attention from scholars, policymakers, and civil society advocates committed the aims to promote multilingualism, cultural diversity, and inclusion, to maintain social cohesion and enhance communication, preserve cultural heritage, improve education, and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals. Key goals include increasing access to mother tongue education, developing inclusive language policies, and integrating linguistic and cultural considerations into national and international strategies to ensure a just, equitable, and sustainable future where all can thrive.

## **Literature review**

Through the development of culture, a country preserves its heritage and awakens cultural consciousness in the new generation. It creates unity, harmony, and national identity within the society. Cultural development refers to the development of a nation's history, tradition, culture, language, and social values. Philosopher Edward Said discusses in his book 'Orientalism' how cultural identity is formed and how colonialism hinders cultural development. In addition, Pierre Bourdieu, in his theory of 'Cultural Capital', explained that culture is part of the power structure of a society. Those who acquire culture and knowledge sit in leadership positions in society.

Cultural and linguistic diversity is essential for building sustainable societies in the contemporary world. It preserves unique worldviews, traditional knowledge, and practices, thereby enhancing social cohesion and resilience. Language is articulated as a vehicle for transmitting cultural heritage and shared values within societies, at home and abroad, making language revitalization essential for our cultural preservation. Of course, by concurring cultural and linguistic diversity, societies can promote inclusiveness, improve decision-making through a broader perspective, and recognize the inherent link between cultural heritage and environmental conservation, as UNESCO has noted in its list of issues.

Linguistic diversity refers to the variation and specificity of languages within a given context and plays a crucial role in the formation, development, and preservation of cultural identity. (Skutnabb-Kangas and Phillipson, 2008) argue that linguistic diversity is the basis of cultural identity, as language serves as a repository of collective memory, cultural knowledge, and values. In any community, language is a primary means of identifying identity, encompassing worldviews, historical experiences, and social practices that define a people (Edwards, 2009). When linguistic diversity is reduced due to globalization, dominant language policies, or cultural assimilation, it often leads to the erosion of cultural identity, as languages embody unique ways of understanding the world and relating to others (Sinha, 2025). Language loss is closely linked to cultural loss, especially in indigenous communities where cultural heritage is transmitted through oral tradition. He concurs that language revitalization efforts are crucial to maintaining cultural identity, as languages express and serve as a focal point for the preservation of a group's values, beliefs, and historical memories. For example, in Native American communities, efforts to revive languages such as Cherokee and Navajo are seen as part of a larger cultural preservation initiative, as these languages carry knowledge of tribal customs, myths, and practices that are unique to that culture (Reyhner et al, 2025).

### **Research Rational**

Cultural and linguistic diversity is crucial for building sustainable societies. This is because it preserves invaluable traditional knowledge, fosters intellectual, cultural, social, moral, and spiritual development, and acts as a vital “glue” that connects the environmental, social, and economic pillars of sustainable development. These languages transmit important local knowledge, such as environmental management, while fostering diverse cultural perspectives through inclusive societies and innovative approaches to common challenges. Promoting our linguistic diversity is therefore an essential element in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, which will ensure prosperity for present and future generations.

## **Research Questions**

What are the most essential governance models for incorporating diverse linguistic and cultural values and practices into national and local sustainable development policies?

## **Research theoretical framework**

Linguistic diversity reflects people's cultural richness and development and is a vital part of education, life, and societal inclusion. The significance of multilingual education in fostering peaceful and stable societies, combating intolerance, and ensuring inclusive quality education systems is essential. Linguistic diversity embodies the cultural wealth of people, offering various knowledge and perspectives to adapt to environmental changes, strengthen social cohesion, transmit cultural heritage, and boost economic growth. Theoretical frameworks such as linguistic ecology highlight the interconnectedness of language, culture, and the environment. As a cultural asset, linguistic diversity means that the loss of one language threatens others. Supporting linguistic diversity is crucial for sustainability, as it helps protect ecological knowledge and promotes inclusive societies capable of achieving long-term objectives.

## **Research Methodology**

This study has employed a qualitative research design grounded exclusively in secondary data sources. Data were systematically collected from peer-reviewed journal articles, scholarly books, official reports, and reputable print archives. These sources have offered a robust historical and theoretical foundation for the study, significantly contributing to understanding contextual depth and analytical rigor. The use of diverse documentary materials has added to the collection, facilitated data triangulation, thereby strengthening the credibility of the findings. To ensure methodological rigor, the study has applied a comprehensive content analysis. This involved the systematic coding, categorization, and interpretation of textual data to identify recurring themes, patterns, and theoretical constructs relevant to the research

objectives. Content analysis has facilitated an in-depth examination of both explicit and implicit meanings embedded within the selected texts. Additionally, a systematic literature review (SLR, henceforth) was conducted following established review protocols to ensure transparency, replicability, and comprehensiveness. The SLR involved clearly defined inclusion and exclusion criteria, structured database searches, and critical appraisal of the selected studies. This process enabled the synthesis of existing scholarly evidence, identification of research gaps, and consolidation of theoretical and empirical insights pertinent to the study. Validity and reliability have been enhanced through methodological triangulation, rigorous source selection, and consistency in analytical procedures. By integrating content analysis with a systematic literature review, the study strengthens analytical coherence and ensures the credibility of the study findings.

## **Discussion**

According to UNESCO, more than half of the languages will not survive this century. One language is disappearing from the world every 14 days. In the last century, small populations in various African countries have become extinct due to genocide. Their languages have also gradually disappeared. Languages have also become extinct as the existence of certain language-speaking populations is endangered due to natural disasters or cultural invasion (Biswas, 2022). Although the state language is Bengali, the language of small ethnic groups and millions of refugees in this country is not Bengali. As a result, it has become the responsibility of the state to establish equal rights for the languages spoken in the country. Because just as the Bengali nation has its own culture, those different speakers also have cultural traditions.

Cultural Diversity Day was declared in 2001 by UNESCO through the Universal Declaration of Cultural Diversity. In 2002, the UNGA designated May 21 as the 'World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development,' initiating their resolutions with 57/249 of the United Nations General Assembly. This significant day remains overlooked in our country. The United Nations proclaimed the period

from 2013 to 2022 as the ‘Decade for the Harmony of Cultures,’ emphasizing the importance of developing mutual understanding and promoting diversity in knowledge, information, culture, ethnography, linguistics, religion, and lifestyles. Three-quarters of the world’s major conflicts stem from cultural disagreements. Resolving cultural gaps quickly is crucial for peace, stability, and development. Cultural diversity drives progress. It is connected not only to economic growth but also to our spiritual, mental, moral, and intellectual development. Our cultural diversity is a vital asset essential for eradicating poverty and achieving sustainable development goals (Drong, 2022). Celebrating and embracing cultural diversity is necessary not only for recognition but also to foster mutual respect within society. Our country is rich in linguistic, cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity. Discussions on gender diversity and disability also take place today. The UNESCO Convention outlines four goals for understanding cultural diversity: supporting sustainable cultural formation, ensuring a balanced flow of cultural goods and services, integrating culture into sustainable development frameworks, and promoting human rights and fundamental freedoms. Identity, diversity, and pluralism are humanity’s shared heritage. Recognizing this common heritage is vital, and it’s our responsibility to safeguard it for the well-being of present and future generations. Therefore, the moment calls for progressing from merely recognizing cultural diversity to embracing cultural pluralism—an ongoing process. Everyone should accept cultural diversity as a foundation for beautiful and diverse development. We have many rivers—Padma, Meghna, Matamuhuri, Jamuna, Surma, Sangu, Maini, Someshwari, Simsang, and Chengi. Historically, people from various nationalities—including Garo, Hajong, Santal, Khasia, Manipuri, Chakma, Marma, Tripura, Munda, Koch, and Lushai—have come here. In March 2019, the Ministry of Culture officially recognized 50 indigenous ethnic groups. In Bangladesh, about 41 languages are spoken; besides Bengali and Urdu, 39 minority languages are spoken by ethnic groups. The government reports that at least 14 of these languages are endangered. Bangladesh is a nation of many nations, a tapestry of languages and cultures—this diversity amplifies the beauty

of our country. The phrase ‘beauty in diversity and harmony’ truly applies to us. Our world is filled with numerous nations, languages, colors, and cultures. Preserving human dignity is crucial to celebrate and safeguard cultural diversity. Ensuring cultural rights fosters an environment for cultural preservation. Freedoms of speech, press, linguistic pluralism, and equal rights in arts, technology, and science education all support this goal. Respecting cultural diversity promotes meaningful dialogue and sparks creativity. It also plays an essential role in strengthening social bonds, cooperation, communication, development, peace, and good relations between government, NGOs, and civil society. Accepting and celebrating differences and diversity as strengths is vital. Our diversity isn’t a threat but a message of beauty for all to see. We must foster a culture of respect within the nation—no one should be oppressed or marginalized because of religion, language, or culture. We envision a beautiful, inclusive Bangladesh where people of all religions and cultures participated in the liberation war and sacrificed voluntarily. Rex Nettleford once said, “you look at the surface of the earth, you will see many different types of trees, but it is a uniform surface.” This mindset should guide how we see humanity. We must increase awareness and cultivate this perspective about our society and culture. For development and peace, respecting and honoring each other is essential. Humanity’s survival depends on accepting these differences, embracing cultural diversity and truth. The government must lead this effort. Promoting tolerance and compassion is essential. If we foster dialogue and discussion, we can build an inclusive, sensitive society. Unfortunately, Cultural Diversity Day was observed quietly here, which is not ideal. We need to take this matter seriously moving forward.

In the early ages (Idris et al, 2018), children do not know the language, talk to their mother, or exchange ideas. Seeing his mother’s smile, the child learns to laugh. He learns everything by associating the social relationships of those words with the expressions, emotions, and feelings of his mother. Therefore, the mother tongue makes a special contribution to the social and psychological development of a person. The mother tongue can be learned easily; for this, there is no need to

learn grammar. Through the mother tongue, a child gains a holistic understanding of the world around him. Extensive research has shown that children who are raised in contact with books and through reading books to them later learn languages easily and achieve great success in school. A research paper published in August 2015 in the journal *Pediatrics* found that the left side of the brain becomes significantly more active in children who have more books at home and are read to more books. This part of the brain, called the parietal-temporal-occipital association cortex, combines sounds and visual sensations. This part of the brain is stimulated when older children read aloud. Pediatricians have observed that this part of the brain is stimulated in the same way when very young children read stories from books. While listening to stories from their mothers, children weave a web of imagination in their minds. In this way, their creativity increases. Then, when they enter adolescence, they can easily gain an idea of their talent, creativity, proficiency in foreign languages, and the latest achievements of the modern world. They enter their working life with enormous potential. They can make a significant contribution to socio-economic life.

### **Results and Findings of the research**

This research has identified that languages are the key building blocks of sustainable societies. In this research, cultural and linguistic diversity play a crucial role in sustaining sustainable societies, as consistently illustrated in this paper. The research findings demonstrate the transformative role of language for sustainability by shaping our cultural identity, shaping socio-cultural interfaces, raising environmental awareness, and adhering to fair trade business ethics. The main findings and impacts of this are delineated below:

#### *Cultural and linguistic diversity promotes inclusion and tolerance*

When a society embraces diverse languages and cultures, it fosters greater understanding, respect, adaptation, and improved communication among groups. This is essential for creating just, mutually beneficial, and peaceful societies.

### *Preservation heritage of languages and culture*

Languages are the carriers of cultural heritage, knowledge, society, and history. The loss of linguistic diversity results in a huge loss of valuable cultural heritage.

### *Improved innovation and problem-solving*

The different perspectives, innovations, and approaches created by different languages and cultures can lead to more creative solutions, knowledge, and innovation in various fields.

### *Ecological awareness and environmental benefits*

Research suggests a link between cultural and biological diversity. Different communities often have unique knowledge about their local environment, which can be important for sustainable resource management, supply, and conservation.

### *Social cohesion and well-being*

Cultural and linguistic diversity contributes to a sense of community, belonging, and identity, which are essential for individual and societal well-being.

### *Threats to diversity*

Globalization, urbanization, and language dominance can threaten linguistic and cultural diversity.

### *Significance of multilingual education and policy interventions*

Providing opportunities for multilingual education can promote linguistic and cultural preservation by supporting language revitalization programs, and promoting cultural awareness are crucial to maintaining diversity.

## **Recommendation**

1. The use of Bengali must be ensured at all levels of education and administration. To achieve that goal, it is necessary to ensure

the mandatory use of Bengali at every level of education and in administrative activities at the state level. This step will be the first step in establishing the dignity of the language. The effective use of Bengali in the judiciary should be further strengthened so that all aspects of the law and judiciary are more acceptable and understandable to the common man.

2. Legislation should be formulated and implemented at all levels of the country for the use of the Bengali language. Strict legal measures should be taken to ensure the use of Bengali. For this purpose, a special law can be formulated, which will make the use of Bengali mandatory in education, administration, business and commerce, judicial proceedings, and other fields. This law will not be limited to guidelines only; rather, a separate body can be formed to monitor its effective implementation.
3. Language-centric cultural identity should be revived at the national and international levels. Along with the geographical and political identity of Bangladeshi nationality, it is very important to revive the uniqueness of the cultural identity of Bengalis. Planned initiatives should be taken to increase the use of Bengali in media, literature, music, and films. Policy support should be increased to encourage the creative use of Bengali, especially on social media and digital platforms.
4. The use of Bengali in research and technology should be widely encouraged so that the language can be enriched with the advancement of knowledge and science. Special initiatives should be taken to increase the use of research and technology for the widespread use and development of the Bengali language. It is important to increase the opportunities for research in Bengali in higher education, which will not only help in acquiring knowledge but also in the deeper spread of the language. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning technology can be used to ensure the technological enrichment of the Bengali language. And for that purpose, it is necessary to formulate and implement a national plan for the language institutes of the universities of the country,

including the International Mother Language Institute, to work in a coordinated manner.

5. The UNESCO adopted the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity in 2001, and the following year, the UNGA, circulated by Resolution 57/249, declared May 21 as the World Day for Cultural Diversity for Dialogue and Development. This important day remains neglected in our country. Many educated people are not aware of this.
6. UNESCO initiates the Convention states that 'identity, diversity and pluralism' are the common heritage of humanity. This common heritage of humanity must be recognized and ensured for the benefit of present and future generations. In this way, we must move from cultural diversity to cultural pluralism. Not only that, but cultural diversity must be accepted as one of the factors for development.

## **Conclusion**

The findings of the study demonstrate in the context of Bangladesh, language policy is truly essential to ensure the development and preservation of the mother tongue. But the primacy of the Bengali language has not yet been properly established in our education system, judicial communication, and government offices. The limited use of Bengali in higher education is not only narrowing our knowledge base, but it is also creating a kind of cultural isolation for future generations. Rabindranath Tagore's theory teaches us an important lesson—a nation that can develop an education policy based on its mother tongue can only move forward on the path of sustainable development. Nevertheless, establishing Bengali as a language more strongly through education and at the administrative level is the demand of the hour. In the current context, some clear proposals are presented here on the steps that the state should take for the maximum use, development, and preservation of the Bengali language. Cultural diversity will make the world richer and more beautiful if people want to cherish this diversity and enjoy its benefits.

Through the collective efforts of everyone, a beautiful, peaceful, and prosperous world will be built where all cultures of the world will be equally appreciated.

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# MOTHER LANGUAGE

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**Preservation and Standardization of Endangered Languages: The Role of Modern Technology in Safeguarding Cultural Heritage**

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| Article Info                                                                                                                                              | Abstract                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
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| <p><i>Article History</i></p> <p>Date of Submission<br/>30-09-2025</p> <p>Date of Acceptance<br/>29-10-2025</p> <p>Date of Publication<br/>30-12-2025</p> | <p>Due to the rapid decline of endangered languages worldwide, communities face the risk of losing their cultural identities and traditional knowledge (Moseley, 2010). This study portrays the preservation and standardization processes of endangered languages and highlights the crucial role of modern technology. This research includes secondary data sources—including reports from UNESCO, Ethnologue and scholarly publications. It examines how digital documentation, mobile applications, and online language-learning platforms can support the regeneration of endangered languages and help communities reconnect with their linguistic heritage. The study shows how technology helps people to access and learn easily about the endangered languages and pass the knowledge to the next generation. The study also portrays that technology can reinforce community identity and cultural pride, even when direct fieldwork is not possible. This study reveals how using technology with research can protect endangered languages and keep cultural heritage alive.</p> |
| <p><i>Keywords</i></p> <p>Endangered Languages, Language Preservation, Standardization, Modern Technology, Cultural Heritage, Digital tools</p>           |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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## Introduction

Language is more than just a way of communication; it is a reflection of our thoughts, emotions, and shared human experience. Language represents the cultural memory, collective knowledge, and identity of a community. Still, nowadays, we are noticing the rapid decline in linguistic variation. UNESCO warns that almost half of the world's 7,000 languages are in danger and many could disappear entirely within the next century (Moseley, 2010). The disappearance of these languages indicates both the loss of words and the erosion of cultural heritage, traditional practices, and unique worldviews which have been preserved across generations. Such losses harm community identity and contribute in the global blending of culture.

To tackle this urgent crisis, the preservation and standardization of endangered languages have become central issues in sociolinguistic research and cultural policy. Traditionally, researchers used fieldwork, oral documentation, and print-based archives as the primary tools for language preservation (Fishman, 1991). However, in our digital world, modern technology provides creative, flexible, and interactive ways to protect endangered languages. Digital archives, mobile applications, and online learning platforms make it easier for young generations to learn endangered languages, keeping them alive and fostering pride in linguistic identity (Hinton, 2018).

Technology also plays a key role in standardizing languages. Many endangered languages don't have consistent writing systems, clear grammar guides, or standard learning materials. Using digital collections, writing tools, and multimedia resources, modern technologies not only preserve these languages but also make it possible to use them in education, literature, and online platforms (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). This dual process of preservation and standardization indicates that endangered languages are not simply recorded as memories but used as living systems of communication.

This study explores how technology protect and organize endangered languages, based on reports from UNESCO, Ethnologue, and scholarly publications. This research explains how digital tools

can revive endangered languages and preserve cultural heritage. Ultimately, the study finds out that saving languages with technology is not only about linguistic necessity but also about keeping our cultural diversity alive for the future.

### **Identification of Research Problem/Statement of the Problem/Statement of the Topic**

The rapid decline of endangered languages worldwide and the resulting threat to cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and community identity are the main problems in this study (Moseley, 2010). Although sociolinguists have been researching language preservation and standardization for decades, endangered languages continue to face extinction due to globalization, urbanization, and intergenerational language shift (Fishman, 1991; Moseley, 2010). Lack of standardized orthographies, structured learning resources, and consistent documentation are the main problems that limit the transmission of many languages to younger generations (Hinton, 2018).

Traditional preservation methods such as oral histories, print archives, and community-based fieldwork remain valuable but are not sufficient to address the urgency of the crisis. Audiences are not able to access these traditional approaches due to their time-consuming, geographically limited nature. In contrast, expandable, interactive, and innovative solutions for both preservation and standardization are offered by modern technology (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). Digital tools (such as online archives, mobile applications, social media platforms, and multimedia resources) make endangered languages more accessible and support the development of standardized writing systems and structured teaching materials (Hinton, 2018; Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023).

Therefore, this study explains how modern technology can protect and organize endangered languages better than the traditional methods. The main target of this study is to find out how digital tools can renew endangered languages, reinforce cultural identity, and reverse language shift, even when field-based research is limited or not possible (Fishman, 1991; Hinton, 2018).

By addressing this problem, the research highlights the crucial connection between linguistics, technology, and cultural preservation.

## **Objectives of the Research**

### *Broad Objective*

The broad objective of this study is to find out how modern technology can preserve and standardize endangered languages, keep cultural traditions alive and empower the identity of communities.

### *Specific Objectives*

Following Creswell and Creswell (2018), who say research objectives must be clear, practical, and linked to the research problem, this study presents the following specific objectives:

1. To examine the impact of the global decline of endangered languages and its effect on culture, traditions, and community identity.
2. To analyze how modern technological tools—such as digital archives, mobile applications, and online learning platforms—support the preservation of endangered languages.
3. To examine the role of technology in developing standardized writing systems, digital collections, and structured learning resources for endangered languages.
4. To reveal the limitations of traditional preservation methods in comparison with technologically driven approaches.
5. To suggest a practical framework that incorporates digital tools with sociolinguistic theory to revive endangered languages and reverse language shift.

## **Literature Review**

### *Global Decline of Endangered Languages*

In the 21st century, nearly half of the world's 7,000 languages are at risk of disappearing, which demonstrate a serious decline in linguistic

diversity (Moseley, 2010). This rapid loss goes beyond the extinction of words and harms cultural traditions, community identity, and accumulated knowledge. Endangered languages carry unique historical knowledge and ways of seeing the world. If they disappeared completely, local cultural practices are lost forever (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). According to UNESCO (2010), the decline of languages speeds up cultural uniformity, weakens the identity of local communities, and reduces the transmission of knowledge to the next generation.

### *Traditional Approaches to Language Preservation*

Traditionally, people preserved endangered languages through oral stories, field studies, and printed materials (Fishman, 1991). These approaches have played a crucial role in maintaining linguistic diversity, especially in smaller communities. Oral histories hold stories, traditions, and customs alive, while books, including grammars and dictionaries help people learn the language in a proper way. However, these traditional methods face several barriers. For instance, they are labor-intensive, often geographically limited, and not easily accessible to a wider audience (Hinton, 2018). These methods can only preserve local knowledge in small communities, but they are insufficient to address the growing threat of language endangerment worldwide.

### *Digital Technology in Language Preservation*

Endangered languages have been protected with the help of the recent digital technologies. Tools such as mobile applications, online language-learning platforms, and digital records increase access to linguistic resources and encourage young speakers for active engagement (Hinton, 2018). Communicative applications provide engaging learning experiences, while online communities encourage collective practice and cultural exchange. Research shows that technology encourages people to speak a language more in their daily lives and share it with younger generations (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). Also, digital resources raise public awareness about language endangerment and support community identity without relying entirely on extensive fieldwork (Moseley, 2010)

### *Technology and Language Standardization*

The absence of standardized orthographies, grammatical references, and structured educational resources is the main challenges of many endangered languages. Modern technology solves these limitations by providing digital corpora, orthographic tools, and multimedia learning materials. For instance, online dictionaries, noted corpora, and text-to-speech technologies encourage learners to use the languages regularly and follow standard practices (Fishman, 1991; Hinton, 2018). Digital platforms make us aware of the continuous updates and changes and ensure that standardization efforts meet the community's needs. By combining preservation and standardization, technology converts endangered languages into usable, living systems that can be used in education, literature, and digital communication (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023).

### *Critical Synthesis*

Traditional methods are still important but modern research highlights the important role of technology in modern language preservation (Hinton, 2018). Digital technologies provide expandable, interactive, and sustainable solutions that reinforce traditional approaches. However, if we rely more on technology, it can ignore socio-cultural aspects and limit community involvement in language revitalization (Moseley, 2010). Current research emphasizes the importance of collective strategies that combine fieldwork, community participation, and technological tools to increase preservation outcomes (Fishman, 1991; Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). This perspective reveals that technology not only preserve and standardize endangered languages but also reinforce cultural identity.

The reviewed literature indicates that modern technology provides beneficial opportunities to preserve and standardize endangered languages. Digital archives, mobile applications, and online platforms support traditional methods by increasing accessibility, reinforcing intergenerational transmission, and facilitating standardized language learning. Moreover, technology-driven approaches reinforce

community identity and cultural pride. They ensure that endangered languages remain living, functional systems rather than static relics. However, successful use of technology demands a balance between digital tools and community engagement considering the socio-cultural context. A foundation is established by this review investigating how technological tools can save endangered languages globally.

## **Research Rationale**

The preservation and standardization of endangered languages is an urgent academic and cultural concern. In this modern era, almost half of the world's languages are at risk of extinction (Moseley, 2010). This loss endangers not only systems of communication but also cultural identity, traditional knowledge, and the transmission of memory across generations. Traditional methods of preservation, such as oral documentation, community fieldwork, and print archives, have played an important role (Fishman, 1991). However, due to their limitation in scale, accessibility, and long-term use, they cannot address the rapid decline of languages.

Recent advancements in digital technology provide creative opportunities to cope with these limitations. Mobile applications, digital corpora, online archives, and language-learning platforms have made endangered languages more accessible, especially to younger generations (Hinton, 2018). These tools not only preserve languages but also encourage standardization by developing orthographies, grammar references, and multimedia resources that assure regular language use (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). Although previous studies recognize the potential of technology, there is still a need for a clear analysis that links digital tools with sociolinguistic theory and the preservation of cultural heritage.

This study is justified on both theoretical and practical grounds. Theoretically, it supports sociolinguistic debates on language shift, revitalization, and identity by highlighting how technology links the balance between preservation and standardization. Practically, through this study, policymakers, educators, and community leaders adopt

technology-driven strategies that are scalable, adaptive, and culturally sensitive. Unlike earlier studies that focus either on documentation or revitalization, this research plays the dual role of technology in both preserving endangered languages as cultural heritage and standardizing them for contemporary educational and communicative purposes.

By filling these gaps, the research highlights the crucial role of digital tools in safeguarding humanity's linguistic diversity. Ultimately, this research reveals that saving endangered languages is not just a linguistic issue but a cultural necessity. It demands quick, innovative, and interdisciplinary approaches to keep these languages alive as part of our identity and heritage in the twenty-first century.

## **Research Question**

### *Primary Research Question*

How can modern digital technologies effectively support both the preservation and standardization of endangered languages, and what role do they play in reinforcing cultural identity and reversing language shift?

### *Sub-questions*

1. How does the global decline of endangered languages impact cultural heritage, traditional knowledge, and community identity?
2. In what ways do digital technologies—such as mobile applications, online learning platforms, and digital archives—enhance accessibility, language learning, and intergenerational transmission of endangered languages?
3. Which technological strategies contribute most effectively to the standardization of orthographies, grammar references, and structured learning resources?
4. How do technology-driven approaches compare with traditional preservation methods in terms of effectiveness, scalability, and sustainability?
5. What integrated framework can combine modern technological tools

with sociolinguistic theory to support the rebirth and sustainable maintenance of endangered languages?

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Core Theory*

This study primarily follows Fishman's (1991) sociolinguistic theory of language maintenance and shift. According to Fishman, a language survives through intergenerational transmission, active use within communities, and continual use in daily life. Language preservation is not just about a matter of linguistics; but about protecting culture, memory, identity, and tradition. This framework helps us to examine both the decline of endangered languages and the mechanisms for their renewal.

### *Supporting Theories*

#### 1. Communities of Practice Theory (Wenger, 1998)

Active participation in interactive communities develops learning and cultural knowledge. Digital platforms and online communities encourage collaborative learning, cultural exchange, and intergenerational engagement. Both function as modern "communities of practice".

#### 2. Constructivist Learning Theory

This theory focuses on active, experiential, and self-directed learning processes. It supports the use of mobile applications, digital archives, and online learning platforms to aid engaging and interactive experiences in language learning and use.

### *Conceptual Constructs*

This framework identifies the following constructs:

- a. Independent Variable: Modern Digital Technologies (mobile applications, online platforms, digital archives, multimedia resources).
- b. Dependent Variable: Language Preservation and Standardization (intergenerational transmission,

development of orthographies, grammar references, structured learning materials).

- c. Mediating Variable: Cultural Identity and Community Engagement (strengthening cultural pride, fostering active language use, maintaining traditional knowledge).
- d. Proposition: Modern digital technologies not only support preservation and standardization of endangered languages but also reinforce cultural identity and community bond. Modern digital technologies function as enabling tools.

### *Justification*

**Theoretical Significance:** Fishman's theory explains the dynamics of language decline and revitalization. Wenger's Communities of Practice theory and Constructivist Learning Theory analyzes that digital tools promote active engagement, learning, and intergenerational transmission.

**Practical Significance:** This framework encourages policymakers, educators, and community leaders in adopting technology-driven strategies that are scalable, culturally sensitive, and sustainable.

**Innovative Contribution:** Unlike prior studies focusing either on documentation or revitalization, this framework focuses the dual role of digital technology in preserving endangered languages as cultural heritage and standardizing them for educational and communicative purposes.

## **Research Methodology**

### *Research Design*

This study follows a qualitative research design with a descriptive-analytical approach. It focuses on the processes of language preservation and standardization through technology and depends mainly on secondary sources rather than primary field data. This design allows a systematic exploration of academic debates, digital tools, and case studies. It follows Creswell and Creswell's (2018) concept that qualitative research is appropriate for examining social and cultural phenomena.

### *Research Approach*

Following a qualitative framework, this study recognizes language, culture, and technology as shaped by society. The approach understands meaning, cultural identity, and community experiences by analyzing secondary sources. This research investigates how people understand, use and think about modern technology in preserving and standardizing endangered language

### *Data Sources and Collection*

Secondary data were drawn from three main types of sources:

1. Institutional reports: UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger (Moseley, 2010) and Ethnologue surveys (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023).
2. Scholarly publications: Foundational works on language maintenance and revitalization (Fishman, 1991; Hinton, 2018) and community-based learning frameworks (Wenger, 1998).
3. Digital case studies: Peer-reviewed articles, online corpora, and records of technology-based language interventions.

Data collection included systematic document analysis, including identifying relevant databases (Google Scholar, JSTOR, ResearchGate, UNESCO Library), selecting peer-reviewed sources and institutional reports published between 1990 and 2023, applying inclusion criteria (relevance to endangered languages, technology-based interventions, preservation/standardization focus), and excluding outdated or regionally irrelevant works. This method provided a thematically relevant dataset.

### *Sampling Strategy*

Sources about endangered languages and digital tools were chosen by using purposive sampling. The sample contained global overviews (UNESCO, Ethnologue), theoretical frameworks (Fishman, Wenger, constructivist learning), and applied case studies (Hinton, 2018), ensuring representation of both theoretical and practical perspectives.

### *Data Analysis*

The collected sources were analyzed using thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Key steps included coding texts for recurring themes—such as preservation methods, digital archives, mobile applications, orthographic standardization, and community identity—grouping codes into broader categories (“Preservation,” “Standardization,” “Cultural Reinforcement”), and interpreting findings through the lens of Fishman’s (1991) theory of language maintenance and Wenger’s (1998) Communities of Practice. This approach review and combine literature to address the research questions.

### *Research Instruments*

No physical instruments (e.g., surveys or interviews) were used. It mainly depended secondary sources. Digital tools such as Zotero, Mendeley, and NVivo facilitated organization, coding, and analysis of textual data.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Ethical guidelines for secondary research were strictly followed: all data were collected from published, credible, and publicly accessible sources; proper credit was given via APA 7th edition citations; no confidential or personal data were used; and scholarly integrity was maintained throughout.

### *Limitations*

As the research mainly depends on secondary data, it limits direct community insights and detailed cultural understanding. It may not fully capture regional variations. Moreover, over-reliance on digital sources can reduce the focus on socio-cultural aspects of language preservation. However, this approach is qualified for a global study, combining theory with technological case studies.

This study includes a qualitative, interpretive, secondary-data-based methodology. Through purposive sampling, systematic document analysis, and thematic interpretation, it links sociolinguistic theory with technology, sharing a clear framework for understanding how digital tools contribute to endangered language preservation and standardization.

## Discussion

The findings of this study highlight that modern technology plays an important role in both preserving and standardizing endangered languages, supporting sociolinguistic theory and solving practical challenges in the field. Linked with Fishman's (1991) framework of language maintenance and shift, the analysis points out that the survival of endangered languages depends heavily on intergenerational transmission, active use in daily life, and integration into educational and digital contexts. Digital tools, including online archives, mobile applications, and language-learning platforms, enhance these processes by expanding accessibility and providing interactive experiences that encourage engagement among younger speakers. These findings support Hinton's (2018) view that technology-driven methods can enhance language use without heavy fieldwork and demonstrating that digital tools can act as scalable, flexible for linguistic revitalization.

The study also highlights the significant contribution of technology to the standardization of endangered languages. Many minority languages historically lack consistent orthographies, structured grammar references, and standardized learning materials, which impedes their formal transmission and educational integration. The use of digital corpora, online dictionaries, and multimedia resources removes these gaps by encouraging the development of uniform linguistic structures. This technological intervention ensures that languages are not merely preserved as static records but can function as living, standardized systems applicable in education, literature, and online communication (Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). By connecting preservation and standardization, technology supports both linguistic diversity and the creation of structured frameworks that reinforce teaching, learning, and broader dissemination.

It also focuses on the enhancement of cultural identity and community cohesion. As digital technologies make endangered languages more accessible, they also reinforce cultural pride and collective memory. Online communities and interactive platforms work as modern "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1998), where

participants share knowledge, practice language use, and transmit cultural norms to younger generations. This participatory aspect of digital technology supports active engagement, strengthens intergenerational connections, and fosters a sense of belonging, which traditional preservation methods cannot achieve worldwide.

These observations highlight that safeguarding endangered languages is not solely a linguistic concern but a broader cultural imperative. If we compare technology-driven interventions with traditional methods, we can find complementary strengths and limitations. Although oral histories, field-based documentation, and print archives remain important (Fishman, 1991), their reach and ability are limited. On the contrary, technological tools provide rapid distribution, interactive engagement, and adaptive learning opportunities that can reach younger speakers effectively (Hinton, 2018). However, if we depend more on digital solutions, it can lead to the risk of overlooking socio-cultural nuances, local customs, and community-driven practices. This research suggest that fruitful outcomes come from integrated strategies that combine technological innovation with participatory fieldwork and community involvement (Moseley, 2010; Eberhard, Simons, & Fennig, 2023). Such integration ensures that interventions respect culture, suit context and remain effective in long run.

Despite these positive outcomes, the study shows several limitations. The extensive reliance on secondary data may underrepresent the lived experiences of specific communities or localized challenges in language revitalization. Variations in digital literacy, access to technology, and regional socio-cultural factors may influence the effectiveness of interventions. Although technology has strong potential, future research should incorporate primary fieldwork, ethnographic engagement, and community feedback to ensure contextually grounded and culturally responsive strategies.

In conclusion, the discussion indicates that modern technology plays a crucial role in the dual processes of endangered language preservation and standardization. By providing scalable, interactive,

and standardized tools, digital interventions enhance language accessibility, support intergenerational transmission, and strengthen cultural identity. Integrating technological solutions with traditional methods and sociolinguistic theory offers a comprehensive framework for sustaining endangered languages as living, functional systems. The findings advocate for a balanced, interdisciplinary approach, highlighting that the survival of linguistic diversity in the twenty-first century depends on innovative, culturally sensitive, and technology-enhanced strategies that reinforce both linguistic and cultural heritage.

### **Results and Findings**

The findings of this study reveal that digital technologies have transformed the preservation and standardization of endangered languages by enhancing accessibility, promoting intergenerational transmission, enabling orthographic consistency, and reinforcing cultural identity. Secondary data from case studies, digital archives, and scholarly analyses demonstrate that modern technological tools are not merely supplementary but foundational in sustaining vulnerable linguistic traditions.

A major finding is the expansion of accessibility and documentation through digital archives and online repositories such as UNESCO's Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger and Ethnologue. Unlike traditional print records, digital databases allow continuous updates, global access, and immediate visibility. For this reason, endangered language has become available to scholars, policymakers, and community members and enhancing preservation process from a localized practice into a worldwide initiative.

Another significant outcome is the role of digital platforms in facilitating intergenerational transmission. Evidence suggests that applications, podcasts, and interactive learning modules encourage younger generations to acquire endangered languages in engaging and practical ways. These digital interventions align with Fishman's (1991) framework, which emphasizes that the survival of a language depends primarily on transmission between generations. In several communities,

mobile-based learning helps young people to learn the language easily and feel proud of using it. This helps the language continue in future.

The study also finds that digital tools contribute to the development of standardized orthographies and linguistic resources. Many endangered languages historically lacked consistent writing systems, which limited their usability in education and formal communication. Through collaborative online dictionaries, text-to-speech systems, and digital corpora, linguists and communities have been able to design and disseminate uniform orthographies. This standardization not only supports teaching and publishing but also legitimizes endangered languages within educational and technological domains, expanding their social and functional relevance.

Equally important is the role of technology in strengthening cultural identity and community cohesion. Online platforms provide speakers with opportunities to exchange stories, songs, and oral traditions in their native languages, forming what Wenger (1998) terms “communities of practice.” These digital spaces encourage diasporic and fragmented groups to maintain ties to their cultural heritage. This view suggests that linguistic preservation is inseparable from the safeguarding of cultural pride and collective memory.

Finally, the comparative analysis indicates that while traditional methods—such as oral documentation and field-based grammars—remain valuable, they are insufficient in addressing the global scale of linguistic endangerment. Technological approaches offer greater scalability, adaptability, and interactivity, but they must be combined with cultural context and community participation to achieve long-term success. The emerging framework highlights that the most effective preservation strategies are those that integrate sociolinguistic theory with digital innovation. In this respect, the study underscores how digital technologies (independent variable) directly support both preservation and standardization (dependent variable), shaped by cultural identity and community engagement, thus validating the applicability of both Fishman’s (1991) and Wenger’s (1998) theoretical models in the digital age.

## **Recommendations**

### *Integrate Technology with Community Participation*

Digital tools should be combined with active community engagement to ensure sociocultural relevance. Collaborative content creation, virtual workshops, and cultural storytelling can enhance language transmission and reinforce local identity.

### *Develop Comprehensive Digital Resources*

Interactive digital archives—including audio, video, and textual corpora—should be created. Standardized orthographies, grammar references, and multimedia learning materials must be developed to facilitate educational and communicative use.

### *Promote Intergenerational Transmission via Digital Learning*

Mobile applications, online courses, and gamified platforms should encourage younger generations to actively learn and use endangered languages, fostering long-term preservation and cultural pride.

### *Ensure Accessibility and Scalability*

Digital interventions must be designed to function across diverse technological environments, including low-bandwidth regions. Offline-capable tools and lightweight platforms can increase reach and inclusivity.

### *Combine Standardization with Cultural Flexibility*

While promoting standardized orthographies and teaching materials, efforts should respect dialectal variations and local cultural practices to maintain authenticity.

### *Support Policy and Institutional Involvement*

Governments, UNESCO, and cultural organizations should provide funding, infrastructure, and policy support for technology-based preservation programs, ensuring sustainable implementation.

### *Monitor and Evaluate Interventions*

Continuous assessment of digital tools is necessary to measure effectiveness in preservation, standardization, and cultural reinforcement. Feedback from community users can guide continuous improvements.

### *Adopt Integrated Approaches*

A hybrid model combining digital technologies with traditional fieldwork and oral documentation is recommended to capture socio-cultural nuances while maximizing scalability and engagement.

### **Conclusion**

This study portrays that modern digital technologies play a vital role in the preservation and standardization of endangered languages, offering scalable, interactive, and adaptive solutions that complement traditional methods. By facilitating intergenerational transmission, enhancing accessibility, and enabling the development of standardized orthographies and multimedia resources, digital tools transform endangered languages from static archival records into living, functional systems of communication. Moreover, technology-driven tools strengthen cultural identity and community cohesion, reinforcing pride in linguistic heritage and fostering active participation across spread populations.

The findings highlight the necessity of integrating technological innovation with sociolinguistic theory and community engagement to ensure culturally sensitive and sustainable outcomes. While traditional preservation methods remain valuable, they are insufficient to address the global scale and urgency of language endangerment. Digital tools, when combined with participatory fieldwork, oral documentation, and educational frameworks, provide a comprehensive approach that bridges preservation, standardization, and cultural continuity.

Ultimately, safeguarding endangered languages through technology is not merely a linguistic imperative but a cultural one. It is essential for maintaining the diversity of human knowledge, identity, and heritage. The study contributes both theoretically and

practically by offering a framework for policymakers, educators, and communities to employ technology strategically. It ensures that endangered languages continue to thrive as active carriers of cultural memory and identity in the twenty-first century.

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## **International Mother Language Institute (IMLI)**

### **Essay/Article guideline**

The subject of the article may be on one of the following aspects or themes:

#### **1. Areas/themes of articles (but not limited to):**

- a. Mother language situation in Bangladesh and/or in any other country;
- b. Language and Gender;
- c. Writing system for languages that do not have scripts;
- d. Inventory of phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics or inventory of any aspect of the mother languages of Bangladesh;
- e. Preservation and standardization of language in the context of Bangladesh;
- f. Training of primary and secondary language teachers to meet multilingual education in the country;
- g. Preservation and standardization of endangered or nearly extinct languages;
- h. Mother language and sustainable development;
- i. Mother language and science;
- j. Language policy and language management in mass media;
- k. Linguistic diversity and national development;
- l. Mother language teaching in Bangladesh and/or beyond;
- m. Preserving dialects in Bangladesh;
- n. English as a foreign language (EFL) or English language teaching (ELT) or English learning/teaching through a blended approach;
- o. Language and Literature;
- p. Sociolinguistics.

**Articles must be written using the following structure, guidelines, and referencing style (APA 7th Edition). Otherwise, they will be screened out at the initial stage.**

## **2. Article Structure**

Title

Abstract

Keywords

Introduction

Identification of Research Problem/Statement of the problem/  
Statement of the Topic/Rationale

Objectives of the research

Research Questions/Hypotheses

Literature Review

Research Theoretical Framework

Research Methodology

Results and Findings

Discussion

Recommendation

Conclusion

References

Special Note: Please follow the Reference System APA 7th edition.

Link: <https://imli.portal.gov.bd/site/page/94efd24a-fa62-44c2-a16e-4a972b57c4b6/->

## **3. Guidelines**

Article (s) should be prepared or composed as per the following guidelines:

- a. The article should be written in **English. It must be original and unpublished.**
- b. The Abstract should be 120-150 words with 0.25 inch indentation on both sides, font size 10 points and the keywords in 12 points. A short profile, phone number, mailing address, and e-mail address of the author(s) should be provided.

- c. The length of the article, including an abstract and references, should be 5000 words.
- d. The main text of the article should be composed on A4 paper in 12 point in English (Times New Roman) font, following 1.5 line spacing. While submitting hard copies, two (2) sets should be printed on one side.
- e. If there are any tables and figures in the main text, their serial numbers (e.g. 1, 2, 3...) should be provided. A proper caption for each table and figure is essential.
- f. Font: Times New Roman, Font size 12, line space single, first line 0.25 indent & quotation indent 0.5;
- g. Plagiarism check certificate must be submitted with the article.
- h. **Honorarium** will be given to the authors of the article if it is published in the journal.

#### 4. References (Intext Citation & End Note)

Citations/referencing style should follow the American Psychological Association (APA 7th Edition).

Example:

##### In-Text Citation

- **Narrative citation: According to Smith (1998)**, APA style is an easy citation format for first-time learners.
- **Parenthetical citation**

APA style is an easy citation format for first-time learners without page no (s): **(Smith, 1998)**.

APA style is an easy citation format for first-time learners with page no (s): **(Smith, 1998: 203)**

Citations in Text with no page number (s): (Myers, 2000, para. 5); (Beutler, 2000, Conclusion section, para. 1)

## **How to write Reference (s) (End Note (s))**

- **Single Author**

Kimmel, M. S. (2007). *The gendered society*. Oxford University Press: London.

- **Two or More Authors**

DiFonzo, N., & Bordia, P. (2007). *Rumor psychology: Social and organizational approaches*. American Psychological Association: Washington D.C.

- **Edited Book**

Rhodewalt, F. (Ed.). (2008). *Personality and social behavior*. Psychology Press: East Sussex, UK.

- **No Author**

The universal declaration of human rights. (1974). U.S. Catholic Conference, Division of Latin.

- **Ebooks: With a DOI**

Gillam, T. (2018). *Creativity, wellbeing and mental health practice*. Wiley Blackwell. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-74884-9>

- **Without a DOI (Cite the same as a print book)**

Lauwers, J., Opsomer, J. & Schwall, H. (Eds.). (2018). *Psychology and the classics: a dialogue of disciplines*. De Gruyter.

- **From a website**

Sanger, M. (2000). *Woman and the new race*. Bartleby.com. <http://www.bartleby.com/1013/> (Original work published 1920).

- **Chapters in Books**

Levi-Strauss, C. (1971). Totem and caste. In F. E. Katz (Ed.), *Contemporary sociological theory* (82-89). Random House.

- **Article, entry, or chapter from an online reference book**

**(encyclopedia, dictionary, handbook)**

- **Online with a DOI**

Watkins, M. (2013). Mind-body problem. In H. Pashler (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of the mind*. SAGE. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4135/9781452257044.n191>

- **Online with no DOI**

Shevell, S. K. (2000). Color vision. In A. E. Kasdin (Ed.), *Encyclopedia of psychology*. Vol. 2. (182-186). Oxford University Press.

- **ERIC Documents**

Evans, V. (2016). An Evaluation of CHAMPS for classroom management (ED581571). ERIC. <https://eric.ed.gov/contentdelivery/servlet/ERICServlet?accno=ED581571>

- **Journal Articles**

Klimonske, R., & Palmer, S. (1993). The ADA and the hiring process in organizations. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 45 (2), 10-36. <https://doi.org/10.1037/1061-4087.45.2.10>

- **Article without DOI or in print**

Scroggins, W. A., Thomas, S. L., & Morris, J. A. (2008). Psychological testing in personnel selection, Part II: The refinement of methods and standards in employee selection. *Public Personnel Management*, 37 (2), 185-199.

- **Two or more authors (up to 20 authors)**

Klimonske, R., & Palmer, S. (1993). The ADA and the hiring process in organizations. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 45 (2), 10-36. DOI: 10.1037/1061-4087.45.2.10

- **If an article has 21 authors or more, list the first 19 authors, then insert an ellipsis (...) and then the last name and first**

**initials of the last author.**

Wolchik, S. A., West, S. G., Sandler, I. N., Tein, J., Coatsworth, D., Lengua, L., Johnson, A., Ito, H., Ramirez, J., Jones, H., Anderson, P., Winkle, S., Short, A., Bergen, W., Wentworth, J., Ramos, P., Woo, L., Martin, B., Josephs, M., ... Brown, Z. (2005). Study of the brain. *Psychology Journal* 32 (1), 1-15. DOI: 10.1037/1061-4087.45.1.11

- **Newspaper Article**

- **Online From a website, with no author**

It's subpoena time. (2007, June 8). *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2007/06/08/opinion/08fri1.html>

- **Print**

Jones, S. (1997, October 19). Hit-and-run suspect commits suicide. *New York Times*, 17.

- **Magazine Article**

Kluger, J. (2010, November 1). Keeping young minds healthy. *Time*, 176 (18), 40-50.

- **From a website**

Heid, M. (2015, August 12). You asked: Why do I blush so much? *Time*. <http://time.com/3992760/blushblushing/>

- **Organization name as author (Group author)**

National Institutes of Mental Health. (2015, May). Anxiety disorders. <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.s>

- **No author, no date**

What is psychology? (n.d). *BestPsychologyDegrees.com*. <https://www.bestpsychologydegrees.com/what-ispsychology/>

- **Dissertations or Theses**

Electronic copy of a thesis or dissertation from a database:

Rockey, R. (2008). An observational study of pre-service teachers' classroom management strategies. (Publication No. 3303545) [Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University of Pennsylvania]. ProQuest Dissertations and Theses Global.

- **Electronic copy of a thesis or dissertation from an online archive or repository**

Gerena, C. (2015). Positive Thinking in Dance: The Benefits of Positive Self-Talk Practice in Conjunction with Somatic Exercises for Collegiate Dancers [Master's thesis, University of California Irvine]. University of California, eScholarship. <https://escholarship.org/uc/item/1t39b6g3>

- **Personal Communications**

Personal communications such as Emails, lectures, or conversations should be cited as personal communications in the text only (not in the reference list) in the following format:

R. J. Smith (personal communication, August 15, 2015)